

The E.D.G.E. Program

AS Office of Assessment
Structure & Program Advisory Committee



The AS Assessment Process
2012 Board Recommendations

Introduction

The E.D.G.E Program does not currently have its own mission statement. Instead, it derives its purpose from the Outdoor Center (OC) from which it functions. The currently approved OC mission statement is as follows:

*The Associated Students' Outdoor Center provides a variety of **outdoor-related opportunities** and **activities** for all **students, faculty, staff, and alumni**. Emphasis is placed on developing and refining **skills**, responsible environmental practices, fostering diversity, enriching the **academic experience**, and promoting **life-long learning**. Resources include a knowledgeable staff, equipment rentals, the bike shop, excursions, educational resources, and instructional clinics.*

Programs/Services Provided

The program is centered on a few core services that reach not only students-at-large, but the Associated Students and all who work under that banner, should they choose to engage the resource.

Lakewood E.D.G.E offers a wide variety of options for meeting a group's unique goals through the use of a challenge course. This setting provides a wide variety of activities and surroundings to conduct team development activities. The myriad activity options incorporate an indoor lounge, multiple fields and meadows, along with the high and low ropes course located in the lush atmosphere of Lakewood.

The Mobile E.D.G.E Program is designed to offer a variety of activities that can be performed anywhere including on campus, in a classroom, or in any outdoor location. This allows the E.D.G.E. program to accommodate and provide services to groups who may not be able to get their group to the Lakewood facility or have far too many participants to make a high or low ropes session feasible.

The E.D.G.E Program provides training and development opportunities for its own staff and other leadership based offices. Monthly In-Service meetings have been implemented over the past year to bring facilitators together to learn from one another and improve services provided during their tenure. In addition to these monthly informational and training meetings facilitators are encouraged to seek other training opportunities as well as practice and shadowing opportunities as they arise.

Strategic Recommendations

1. Recommend the approval of a revised E.D.G.E Program Mission Statement

Currently the E.D.G.E Program operates under the mission statement of the OC. The E.D.G.E Program should implement its own mission in order to provide a framework from which the department can formulate its strategies/strategic support/support of the OC and outcomes.

The 2011-2012 mission statement is in the **Introduction** section of this document. The proposed statement is as follows:

The Associated Students E.D.G.E Program exists to aid in the development of group dynamics, provide leadership skills, and effective communication skills while helping the groups identify and reach their collective goals. This is accomplished through tailored group activities on Western's campus, at the Lakewood challenge course, and off campus. Our knowledgeable facilitators have been trained in leadership, risk management, group dynamics and Challenge Course Industry Standards.

2. Insist on the approval of changes to the Challenge Course Policy to accurately reflect the changes in challenge course management.

The current challenge course policy (see Appendix A) has not been changed or updated since 1991. This policy was written when the challenge course was managed by the WWU Recreation Manager. The challenge course is now managed and run by the Associated Students Outdoor Center Manager and the policy should reflect that change (see Appendix B).

3. Urge the change of the current E.D.G.E Program Assistant job description to accurately reflect the responsibilities of the position and improve managing the program's busiest and most demanding season.

The job is currently compensated as an hourly employee but treated as a salaried employee (see Appendix C). The position should be restructured to be more in line with other A.S. coordinators as a salaried position. Also, the position is currently mandated to serve for just three quarters. This is an issue due to the fact that summer is the busiest season for the E.D.G.E program, and there is no student coordinator during this period. This has caused many problems related to scheduling and client interface.

4. Advise the further study of the implications of employing a full time Challenge Course Manager.

Current trends in the challenge course industry suggest that challenge courses should have a full time challenge course manager who is certified to inspect and able to train and certify their own staff in the operations and management of their challenge course. While student run programs and site specific management practices have been an accepted practice for some time in the operation of challenge course programs this has begun to change with the emergence of industry standard practices and new research, data, and conclusions regarding challenge courses. Because of this, it is necessary that WWU's challenge course program conducts an in-depth investigation into its infrastructure, operations, and management practices and begin to shift them towards industry standards.

The E.D.G.E Program has already begun this investigation process through examining the systems currently in place by other courses in the industry and by attending the Association for Challenge Course Technology Conference and Symposium.

With the addition of the new high and low elements in the past two to three years, it is important that these new University resources are utilized to their fullest potential. A university run challenge course is a somewhat unique situation in the challenge course industry. While student involvement is a key focus for a university program, there is a consistency and professionalism that a full-time permanent position can bring to the program. WWU is in a special position to try and balance student involvement and professional standards on the challenge course. In order to maximize benefits to students as well as ensure the ongoing and long-term success of the E.D.G.E. program it is essential that this balance be investigated and developed. We suggest that the possibility of providing the E.D.G.E. program with a professionally trained and certified Challenge Course Manager be investigated further in order to bring this industry demanded professionalism and risk management to WWU's challenge course program.

5. Encourage the expansion of the Mobile E.D.G.E program.

The Mobile E.D.G.E Program currently consists of two mobile container units containing ropes, balls, cards, dots, rings, puzzles, blindfolds, Frisbees and other mobile activity materials. Additional and expanded mobile challenge course programs can bring more options and services to a wider range of clients. As mobile E.D.G.E. sessions are conducted off-site or on campus, there is little opportunity for groups to experience what they may experience at the Lakewood facility. Expanding the mobile E.D.G.E program with portable low-rope elements and other team building activities would surely provide a wider range of options for clients and allow for more on campus activities and programs to be conducted on WWU's campus. This rededication to these special services would bring much more business and visibility to the E.D.G.E. program as services would be conducted within sight of many Western students.

6. Advise the prioritization of an AS subsidy to allow each of its programs to use the E.D.G.E Program for staff development.

While some AS offices currently choose to utilize the E.D.G.E Program for staff development, an AS subsidy underwriting organization-wide use of the program would allow more offices to engage this unique internal program.

Given an initial canvassing of opinion from fellow AS offices, it seems as though there is a great interest for incorporating the E.D.G.E program into staff development trainings. However, these departments are currently lacking the funds to utilize this opportunity. This would be beneficial to the entire Associated Students organization as it would improve the quality and efficiency of the services it provides.