

2015 Associated Students

# Outdoor Center Excursions

Proposed Recommendations



## *Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:*

The following are the Excursions Coordinator Team's recommendations for strategic goals over the next four years:

1. *Work with facilities and management to acquire more storage for Excursions gear and equipment.*

Currently the Outdoor Center is squeezed for storage space for all departments involved. Excursions used to use a storage space beneath Mathes Hall, but that was taken away during construction last year. It was replaced with a storage locker on south campus, but the locker's location is incredibly inconvenient and much of the gear needs to be accessed often and stays in the Cage. The Cage sits next to the Outdoor Center, and is shared with the Equipment Shop. It is a small space, and not nearly large enough to realistically meet both department's needs for gear and stay organized and neat. It is an open-air space, which Excursions would like to see turned into a closed-air space. An open-air space doesn't allow wet gear to dry as quickly, and leaves gather quickly inside the cage – this keeps the atmosphere damp and prone to mildew. The OC should investigate better storage options and improvements over the next few years. Our first priority would be to close up the cage. Our second priority would be to locate a closer storage option than the south campus storage locker.

2. *Work with facilities, the V.P. for Business and Operations, and management to acquire Outdoor Center specific vehicles, for Excursions and other Outdoor Center department use only.*

It is no secret vehicles are the crux to functionality of Excursions. Without them, many of our locations are out of reach for weekend and weekday trips. The AS only has a two realistic vehicles for the entire AS to use – and Excursions fights to reserve them every weekend. Often there are conflicts. Even if we don't need both vehicles, we often need the 8-person SUV since it can tow the trailer – this SUV is often reserved by the board because the minivan isn't large enough for them. The conflicts lead to both sides having to rely on Enterprise too many times, a much more expensive option that the Budget Committee does not allocate money for in their allocations for Excursions (they budget us to use Motorpool every trip). Especially with the

emergence of Weekend WOOT!, there are even more vehicle conflicts. This school year alone, Excursions has used Enterprise 3 times, more than all of last year. Last year, Excursions paid \$4,098.25 to Motorpool for 28 trips. This year, Excursions will nearly double trips and be forced to use Enterprise, making the \$4,098.25 in transportation seem cheap. Excursions is not budgeted for a reliance on Enterprise. This year, we have gained permission to go in and reserve all vehicles for every weekend of the quarter ahead of everyone else, and we recognize that this isn't fair for other programs – Excursions monopolizes vehicles because we have no other choice. Things would be much simpler and better for all parties if Excursions had two SUVs vehicles for Outdoor Center use only. Our current estimates predict the cost running at \$24,000 – 28,000 per vehicle, though going through GSA (Government Surplus) would bring cheaper vehicles. The logic for two SUV's is because if we were only to receive one, we would still need to be reserving one from AS Motorpool – and often it would be the SUV, because it holds more people, handles dirt roads better, and can tow the trailer (both vehicles *should* be able to tow trailer in order to make shuttles on river trips more efficient). In the long run, this saves a significant amount of money from Enterprise and avoids a lot of conflict. Programs and offices are often frustrated with the OC's monopoly over vehicles (which we completely under This savings would be reflected back on the students – if we have lower vehicle costs, we can offer excursions at a lower rate to the students. That is our number one priority in the way we structure excursions: how do we best serve the students? Offering lower rates would not only help us reach a wider student base, but it would also retain more students as we see participants able and enthusiastic to return to more and more trips. This request also ties into our next two rec's; outreach and expansion.

3. *Expand outreach programming*

In our SCOT worksheet, we identified “expanding the diversity of our participants and reaching out to more offices” as opportunities for the OC. This year has seen a handful of student-organized excursions, and there is a solid growth of outreach with campus departments and programs. However, there is a strong potential for more. Work with the marketing coordinator to identify clubs, department, and programs to work with. A flow-chart which details the process and information for these organization is currently being developed, and will need to be updated consistently. Identify excursions, such as snowshoe trips, raft days, and bike tours, which work well with larger groups. There is a lot of potential for outreach here, and these trips are always appreciated and met with success. Our expansion strategies include more advertising via social media, posters, website, handbills, newsletters, and emails to departments. See Plan Your Own Excursions as a foundation.

4. *Further expand and detail the Plan Your Own Excursion system/process*

The Plan Your Own Excursion system, available to students and staff, is new this year. In this trial year, we have received lots of encouragement and constructive feedback. The most important recommendation in regards to the Plan Your Own Excursion: increase marketing, through posters, social media, and other strategies. A flowchart for the process is currently being developed, similar to outreach programming, but this will need to be expanded upon as the program grows.

5. *Create an Excursions specific Mission Statement under the umbrella of the Outdoor Center mission statement*

The current statement of purpose is for the Outdoor Center as a whole. The Outdoor Center is made up of different programs which need their own statement of purpose to represent what they uniquely offer to the student body. Excursions should develop their own. Here is our suggestion:

The Excursions Department of the Associated Students Outdoor Center offers a fun, accessible and affordable way to get outside for students, faculty, staff and alumni. Emphasis is placed on group involvement, developing and refining skills, responsible environmental practices, fostering diversity, enriching the academic experience, and promoting life-long learning.