



# Structure and Program Advisory Committee

Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016

5:00pm VU460

- Members:** *Present:* Emma J. Opsal (AS Assessment Coordinator, Chair); Anujin Ganbat (Student-at-Large); A Blyth (AS Sexual Awareness Center Assistant Coordinator); Hannah Brock (AS VP for Business and Operations)  
*Absent:* Luciane DeAlmeida (AS Queer Resource Center Assistant Coordinator)
- Advisors:** Lisa Rosenberg (Assistant Director for Student Activities)
- Secretary:** Octavia Schultz (AS Board Assistant for Internal Committees)
- Guests:** Alzata Davis (AS Outdoor Center Challenge Coordinator); Stephen Magnuson (Outdoor Center Coordinator)

**Motions:**

No motions were made.

*Opsal called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.*

**I. Information Item**

a. AS Outdoor Center Challenge Course Recommendations

Davis stated the first recommendation of the Challenge Course was to create an assistant coordinator position. She stated that nineteen hours per week for the coordinator position was a lot to work along with a full course load. She stated spring was the busiest quarter because of hiring and increased bookings due to nice weather. She mentioned that there was already an assistant position that was paid through the Challenge Course budget. Rosenberg inquired how the assistant position was different from an assistant coordinator position. Davis stated the assistant position at the time was paid directly through the Challenge Course budget and was not working consistent hours. Brock noted that because many Outdoor Center programs created revenue their budgets were somewhat self-sustaining. She asked how many hours the assistant at the time was working. Davis stated the hours varied per week. She stated that because the Challenge Course was losing staff members, she tried to have the assistant come in as often as possible. Brock inquired if the Challenge Course budget could sustain paying an hourly position for ten hours per week. Davis speculated that it could. Magnuson entered. Brock restated her previous question. Magnuson confirmed that the budget could potentially support an hourly position. They noted that there had been many assistants employed in previous years, and agreed that having a consistent position would have been beneficial to the program. They noted that the coordinator position was expected to do a lot and needed someone to collaborate with. Opsal inquired if there was a formal job description for the assistant position at the time. Magnuson stated the assistants were Challenge Course facilitators. Brock clarified that facilitators who had the ability to do so were asked to assist with other parts of the Challenge Course program. Rosenberg asked whether an hourly or salaried position would have been more beneficial. Davis stated it would have been best if the position were a three-quarter hourly position, noting that winter quarter was not as busy. Magnuson agreed that winter quarter was less busy, but that it was an important time to plan for spring quarter. They suggested reducing the hours of the coordinator position from nineteen to fifteen hours per week, and setting the

assistant coordinator position to work fifteen hours per week. Blyth mentioned it may have been possible to set the weekly hours of the assistant coordinator position to different amounts per quarter based on need. They inquired if an internship-type training process were available for the assistant coordinator position during winter quarter. Magnuson stated in order to achieve the collaborative teamwork desired between the assistant coordinator and coordinator positions, it would have been most beneficial to have the positions working together for the entire term of employment. There was discussion about when the assistant coordinator position would be hired and begin working. Magnuson stressed that spring and summer quarters were the busiest times for the Challenge Course, and that winter quarter would have been the best time to reduce the hours of the position. Opsal suggested having the assistant coordinator position work thirty planning hours during winter quarter to prepare for spring quarter, similar to how many director and coordinator positions have planning hours during the summer to prepare for fall quarter. There was discussion about how to fund the position. Brock mentioned that the university was most likely going to be under enrollment the following year, meaning it would be an important year for budgeting. She suggested making the budget of the Challenge Course sustainable to pay the position. She noted that because the AS had a large reserve fund, the onetime expenses of adding another high element and a covered area were welcomed. Blyth clarified that the number of applicants to the university was high that year, however not as many people were accepting their admission. Davis stated the Challenge Course did not have a designated covered area at the time, and that the only covered space on the site, the Takewood lodge, was used so frequently that it was not available to the program. She stated the addition of a covered area would provide a space for trainings, greeting guests, eating, and group activities. Brock stated the request was reasonable. Magnuson stated there were discussions happening around the addition of the covered area within the Viking Union as well, and there were concerns about drainage in the area. They agreed that the covered space would have been beneficial to the program, especially in cases of inconsistent rain, noting that it was common for other challenge courses to have covered spaces. Opsal inquired where the covered area would go. Magnuson stated there was a space at Takewood that had been made into a volleyball court but was unusable because of drainage problems that caused the ground to become soggy and muddy. They stated it was a great location for the new covered area. Rosenberg suggested that the recommendations include language about beginning to research and develop options for creating and funding the covered space. Magnuson noted that Jeff Davis, the Takewood Manager, had already begun to research the cost of the project and that the figures they created were available to review. Brock added that once the full details of building the space had been gathered, the information could go to the AS Board of Directors as a separate proposal. Ganbat inquired if the inconsistencies in facilitator trainings were due to the lack of an adequate training space. Davis stated it was due to a lack of formal trainings. Magnuson stated that all areas of the Outdoor Center trainings were very specific. They noted that the lack of a formal training program and differences in staff each year were two of the reasons that facilitators received different levels of training. They stated that they were in the process of restructuring the training procedures of all Outdoor Center programs. They stated the goal was to hire fewer facilitators and train them more extensively. Davis reiterated that the hiring process for the facilitators was very informal. Blyth inquired if training for diversity and inclusion was being worked

on as well as general trainings about elements and facilitation. Davis stated the additional training was being worked on as well, though the program was looking for someone to lead that session. Ganbat suggested creating a more formal hiring process to ensure that facilitators were committed to the program. Opsal noted that facilitators were not comfortable or confident in performing their jobs the program was not as accessible as it should have been. Davis noted that many of the elements of the Challenge Course had been there for many years, and that many groups visited the course annually or multiple times a year. She stated the addition of a new element would make the course interesting and new for returning participants. She stated the addition of a new element would also allow the Challenge Course to charge higher rates, as comparatively the rates of the program were much less than other courses in the area. She noted the suggested element in the documents placed a focus on teamwork, mentioning that only one element on the course at the time did so. Ganbat inquired how many elements were on the course at the time. Davis stated the course had seven low elements and three high elements. Brock and Magnuson agreed that a new element would have been good for the program. Blyth inquired if there was a full list of the groups that had participated in the course. Davis stated there was but it was not available at the meeting. She noted that the course served an average of fifty groups per year. Magnuson mentioned that groups usually consisted of ten to forty people. Opsal stated her concern that raising the prices of the course would affect the number of groups the course served per year. Davis noted that the prices would only change for non-university groups. Magnuson agreed, stating the pricing of the Challenge Course was not competitive with other courses in the region. Brock stated the program could have been less expensive than other courses, but still priced competitively. Davis stated that the Challenge Course was not accessible to everyone, noting that even the path to the course was difficult to navigate. She stated she wanted to research ways to make the Challenge Course more accessible. Opsal suggested creating a list of common issues that came up with the course. Blyth inquired if the Challenge Course had partnered with the disAbility Outreach Center to conduct a survey about accessibility earlier that year. Magnuson stated the entire Outdoor Center was participating in the survey, but had not received many responses. They noted many of the responses had focused on mental health rather than physical disabilities. Ganbat inquired if the Challenge Course had received phone calls or emails inquiring if individuals could participate in the course with disabilities. Magnuson and Davis stated neither of them had received anything inquiries. Davis stated the advertising of the program could have been more inviting and inclusive. Ganbat inquired how the program was marketed. Davis stated the Challenge Course was primarily advertised through pamphlets, but was looking into advertising through Facebook and hosting a free Valentine's Day event. Ganbat asked if the Challenge Course had a website. Davis mentioned the Challenge Course had a webpage through the AS Outdoor Center. Magnuson stated the program was also requesting funding from the Large Event Opportunity Fund to host a Lakewood event to promote Viking Recreation and the Challenge Course. They noted the goal was to reach populations that traditionally did not partake in outdoor recreation. Brock stated it was nice to look through examples of some of the groups served at the Challenge Course. Davis stated that there was more data from previous years as well. Magnuson noted that the Challenge Course did not promote or advertise a lot, but many groups were returning groups. They noted it was important to work on outreach to bring new participants to the course. Ganbat stated

that because the course was designed to serve groups, it was difficult for students to participate unless they were in a club or other organization. Brock inquired if the Challenge Course was marketed to local businesses to host training sessions. Magnuson stated there were a number of organizations that used the Challenge Course each year. Davis cited an example of five people from the Food Co-op that had used the Challenge Course that year to solve a dispute. Brock noted that many people weren't aware that the Challenge Course was available, or that it was just for student use. Davis stated that was something good to work on. Magnuson inquired what the next step in the assessment process was for the Challenge Course. Opsal stated she wanted to set up an individual meeting time with Davis or Magnuson to finalize recommendations, then the committee would vote on them. There was discussion about which committees would review the recommendations after they were voted on by the Structure and Program Advisory Committee, and before they were reviewed by the AS Board of Directors. Rosenberg noted that some recommendations may have been approved with the stipulation that funding be available. Brock noted that if any changes could have been handled within the program's budget, the recommendations did not need to go through Budget Committee or Business Committee. Rosenberg inquired if a recommendation needed to be made about formalizing the hiring process for facilitators. Magnuson stated that the changes were not likely to have been implemented before the hiring process that year. They stated it was something they would continue to pursue the following year, and that a formal recommendation was not needed.

## **II. Debrief**

a. Ganbat observed a lack of communication about the creation of the formal hiring process between Magnuson and Davis. Brock stated that may have been because the issue was recently addressed with a change in the advising staff of the Outdoor Center. Brock stated she was in agreement with all of the recommendations. Opsal stated there was inconsistency with the language of whether the program was called the Challenge "Course" or the Challenge "Program", and stated some of the language of their recommendations needed editing. Rosenberg suggested some edits to the wording about inclusive language and trainings. Brock stated it was needed to bring someone from outside of the organization to lead those training sessions. Rosenberg asked the committee if they felt it was necessary to include a recommendation about creating a formal hiring process for the facilitators, noting that Magnuson was going to continue working on it but that it would have been important to inform the AS Outdoor Center Challenge Coordinator for the following year and preserve continuity. Brock stated that it would have been beneficial to review other challenge courses in the area and form ideas about how to accommodate the needs of all participants and make the course more accessible and inclusive. There was a discussion about "challenge by choice" and the need to accommodate and include individuals that were not comfortable participating in certain activities or roles. Ganbat inquired if there was any indoor space on the site. Brock stated that was no indoor space. Rosenberg noted that the Takewood Tounge was on the site, but was not always available to the Challenge Course. Brock stated it was possible to reserve both the lounge and the course if they were available, but it was more expensive to do so. Opsal noted that Davis's office space was housed in the Outdoor Center within the Viking Union. Ganbat expressed her concern that there was no resting space or indoor space for participants if an

emergency or medical concern arose. Brock stated that was a valid concern, and that she wanted to ensure that facilitators were CPR certified. Rosenberg pulled up the facilitator job description and noted that CPR training was required. Opsal stated it was important for facilitators to be able to calm participants and control a situation in the event that an emergency or difficult situation arose. Ganbat stated that before the addition of a new element, the facilitators needed extensive training and management. Rosenberg stated that it was important to include the recommendation about creating an improved training and hiring process for facilitators. Brock agreed, noting that it would have added a way to hold the Challenge Course accountable for maintaining progress toward restructuring those processes. Opsal stated she would bring that up in her meeting with Davis and Magnuson. She also stated that accountability needed to improve. There was discussion about requiring each office going through assessment to include a recommendation focused on evaluation and accountability.

b. Following this meeting Structure and Program Advisory Committee became a subcommittee of the AS Board of Directors and no longer required formal minutes. All information regarding recommendations was included in the AS Board of Directors meeting minutes.

### **III. Adjourn**

*Opsal adjourned the Meeting at 6:36pm.*