

An Evaluation of University Recreation Center Outdoor Programs for People With Disabilities: Perspectives From Professionals

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Abstract

In this study, the researchers explored the perspectives of recreational practitioners currently working in the field of outdoor adventure programming on college campuses and their knowledge and interactions with students with disabilities participating in integrated outdoor adventure activities. A qualitative descriptive thematic analysis was used for data collection, management, and assessment. In-depth semistructured interviews were conducted with 10 professionals working in the field of collegiate outdoor adventure (outdoor recreation). Three themes and 16 categories were identified, which reflected the contemporary perspectives of the interviewed respondents. The themes identified were incomplete knowledge, positive outlook, and student success. The sample for this study consisted of two women and eight men. The findings show that the themes adequately address the research question pertaining to the lack of integrated outdoor adventure programming on college campuses.

KEYWORDS: outdoor adventure programs; students with disabilities; recreational programming

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; U.S. Department of Education NCES, 2016), enrollment in postsecondary education for individuals is at an all-time high, with 11% of individuals attending college self-identifying as having a disability. According to the NCES, in 2014 there were (in thousands) 20,207 individuals attending degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States (see Table 105.20 of U.S. Department of Education NCES, 2016, selected years, fall 1990 through fall 2025, for complete data). According to the U.S. Department of Education NCES, 11% of undergraduate students reported having a disability in 2007–2008 and 2011–2012 (see Table 311.10 of U.S. Department of Education NCES, 2016, for complete data). However, only 13% of individuals with disabilities have a college degree versus 30% of individuals without disabilities (Marshak, Wieren, Ferrell, Swiss, & Dugan, 2010). Research indicates that individuals with disabilities who participate in on-campus activities have a higher persistence rate in college than do nonparticipants (Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Seligmann, 1997; Gass, Garvey, & Sugerman, 2003; Getzel, 2008; D. Johnson, 2000). Persistence refers to college student success and the ability of students to stay in school until graduation. To date, there is limited research pertaining to programming for people with disabilities in higher education. Previous research has been focused exclusively on nonadaptive contexts (Bell, 2006; Bentley, 2003; Blinde & McClung, 1997; Gass et al., 2003; Lien & Goldenberg, 2012), and no research has been identified in which researchers examine integrated outdoor recreation on college campuses. Integrated outdoor recreation was defined as building community, assisting in relationship development, and creating positive change for individuals with and without disabilities in postsecondary education through a shared outdoor or wilderness experience.

If the aforementioned findings that students with disabilities are an underrepresented yet growing portion or demographic on college campuses and that outdoor programming can support their continued education are accepted, then there is justification for exploring the prevalence of outdoor recreation programming for college students with disabilities. According to the U.S. Department of Education NCES, undergraduate enrollment at 4-year institutions increased by 25% from 2000 to 2007 and is expected to reach 10.0 million students in 2018 (Planty et al., 2009). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of recreation practitioners' perspectives on outdoor adventure programming for students with disabilities. This information will help determine the current status of programming accessible to the aforementioned demographic and determine best practices and recommendations based on exemplary programs identified and discussed in the literature. This research will focus on answering the research question, in what capacity are college outdoor programs being offered to individuals with disabilities?

Literature Review

College Experience Integration

Integration is a key component in completing the transition from a high school setting to a postsecondary educational institution successfully (Parker, Summerfieldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2002; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). Student success concepts apply to students with and without disabilities (Blinde & McClung, 1997; Luckner, 1989; Neubert, Moon, & Grigal, 2004; Pascarella, Smart, & Ethington, 1986); however, students with disabilities have a higher need for integration (Marshak et al., 2010). Individuals with disabilities have lower attendance and graduation rates in postsecondary education than do students without disabilities (Marshak et al., 2010). The number of students with disabilities enrolling in postsecondary education has increased steadily over time, with recent figures showing an all-time high rate (U.S. Department of Education NCES, 2016). Studies indicate that 14% of junior and community college students, 11% of undergraduate students, and 8% of graduate students have a disability (Fichten et al., 2014). Because

more individuals with disabilities are attending higher education institutions, it is imperative that these individuals receive the requisite support (Blinde & Taub, 1999; Eckes & Ochoa, 2005; Paul, 1999) in order to be successful.

According to Getzel (2008), integration is more difficult for students with disabilities than for their peers without disabilities. In addition to academic coursework, challenges include managing accommodations, disability disclosure, and ignorance of and access to available campus services. Involvement in extracurricular activities has been identified as a positive contribution to student outcomes, especially for individuals with disabilities (D. Johnson, 2000). Studies have shown that partaking in student groups on campus, balancing academic and social involvement, and interacting with diverse peers contribute to cognitive and intellectual development (D. Johnson, 2000; Parker et al., 2004). Additionally, the more students interact with faculty and with other students, the more likely they are to graduate (Reschly & Christenson, 2006; Wessel, Jones, Markle, & Westfall, 2009).

Programs on College Campuses for Students With Disabilities

To address the persistence of students with disabilities in postsecondary education, universities are researching new strategies to aid students (Getzel, 2008). One program that has been recommended to assist individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education is Disability Allies (Evans, Assadi, & Herriott, 2005). The goal of this particular organization is to encourage and develop social justice attitudes and actions among students without disabilities toward students with disabilities. This type of program benefits individuals with disabilities by reducing the barriers that exist on college campuses (Evans et al., 2005). Research implies that interacting with peers and creating an inclusive environment (Evans et al., 2005) leads to greater persistence rates (Getzel, 2008). Once ties between students with and without disabilities are created, they can reach “equal status, common goals, intimate rather than casual contact, and a pleasant or rewarding contact” (Evans et al., 2005, p. 72).

College Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation for Individuals With Disabilities

Sport participation is directly linked to healthy lifestyles and therefore can be beneficial to individuals with or without disabilities (Jochheim & Strohkendl, 1973). An increase in physical activity has been directly linked to a reduction of the frequency and severity of chronic secondary health problems associated with disability, such as cardiovascular disease (Hedrick & Hedrick, 1993). In a study by Blinde and McClung (1997), 11 women and 12 men with physical disabilities participated in individualized recreation programs such as horseback riding, swimming, fitness, racquetball, bowling, tennis, fishing, walking, and tai chi. Blinde and McClung found that several aspects of the physical self were affected, including enhanced perceptions of the physical self, increased perceived confidence, and redefined physical capabilities.

There are substantial benefits for individuals with disabilities to participate in recreational activities, yet almost all relevant research on disability and physical activity in college settings is focused on competitive sport. Adaptive collegiate sport programs are needed to “enhance the quality of life” (Hedrick & Hedrick, 1993, p. 5) for individuals with physical disabilities through social, psychological, and physical means. Hedrick and Hedrick (1993) also noted that participating in integrated collegiate sports is linked to positive change in the attitudes of individuals without mobility impairments concerning their peers with disabilities. These programs are gaining some ground on university campuses (Larkin, Cottingham, & Pate, 2014) and even affect how the general population might see disabilities (Cottingham, Gearity, Goldsmith, Kim, & Walker, 2015; Cottingham, Phillips, Hall, Gearity, & Carroll, 2014). However, according to Hedrick and Hedrick, three major deficits for adaptive program development exist at the collegiate level: “(1) the need for collegiate adapted sports, (2) the major impediments to the devel-

opment of such programs, and (3) the actions required to stimulate their introduction” (p. 3). It was hypothesized that limited access was caused in part by programmatic access and outreach rather than interest.

Outdoor Adventure–Based Programs

Outdoor adventure orientation programs are activities that engage individuals in physical challenges, often in small groups and overnight (Bell & Starbuck, 2013). These programs have been shown to reduce stress in individuals enrolled at postsecondary educational institutions (Kanters, Bristol, & Attarian, 2002). Furthermore, Gass et al. (2003) found that wilderness orientation programs, a subset of outdoor recreation programming specifically designed for incoming college students, positively affected participants after graduation. Their research showed that students who participated as incoming freshmen gained a greater sense of self that persisted 17 years later, made lifelong friendships that participants attributed to their persistence in college, and experienced direct effects on goal setting and life choices. In another study, McAvoy, Schatz, Stutz, Schleien, and Lais (1989) noted further benefits, specifically after a wilderness experience in which some participants had disabilities and others did not. This programming is referred to as integrated or inclusive programming and was accomplished through a structured interview after participants participated in an integrated wilderness experience. Participants reported positive changes in their confidence levels, feelings about self, and goal-setting abilities and increases in their abilities to approach new situations (Anderson et al., 1997).

Some universities mandate that all freshman and incoming students participate in this type of program because participation has been linked to higher student success in college (Lien & Goldenberg, 2012). For example, students participating in a wilderness orientation program at the University of New Hampshire had higher GPAs and continued to have significantly lower dropout rates than did students who did not participate (Bell, 2006). Other benefits of wilderness orientation programs include higher levels of emotional and social development, greater levels of academic success, and a higher positive attitude toward the institution (Gass et al., 2003). Outdoor adventure orientation programs have allowed students to gain an “enhanced self-concept, improved social attitudes and behavior, improved physical health, reduced emotional problems . . . increased integration between people of mixed ability, and [have] longitudinal effects on lifestyle” (Anderson et al., 1997, p. 215). In 2004, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* listed Passages, a freshman orientation program at the University of Puget Sound in Washington state, as one of the five best college orientation programs, including other programs offered by Dartmouth, Princeton, and Georgetown (<http://www.pugetsound.edu/student-life/orientation/>). This program has been required for all incoming freshmen since 1985, and the retention rate from freshmen to sophomore year has increased significantly since the program was implemented (Stremba, 1988).

Related Programming for People With Disabilities

The effect on individuals with disabilities of participating in recreational and sport activities has been extensively researched (Berger, 2008; Blinde & McClung, 1997; Blinde & Taub, 1999; Furst, Ferr, & Megginson, 1993; Wu & Williams, 1999). However, limited research has been focused on how collegiate outdoor adventure programs have been used by students with disabilities. As shown in the results of this study, all professionals managing collegiate outdoor adventure programs encourage the participation of individuals with disabilities, but these opportunities have not traditionally been developed within outdoor programs. The perceived benefits shown through other sport and fitness mediums indicate a strong correlation to the positive effects of these types of programs. Because of the increase in the number of individuals with disabilities enrolling in postsecondary education, more opportunities are needed for college students to participate in integrated programming. Integrated outdoor adventure–based program-

ming is a logical step to take to meet that objective because this type of programming can assist in filling the gap in outdoor adventure programming.

Barriers

Despite the vast benefits that integrated orientation programs could provide, barriers exist, including lack of knowledge. No literature was identified that addressed the amount of knowledge necessary to run integrated programming in any capacity. The National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE, 1991–1993) stated that out of 17,000 respondents to a survey about participation in recreational activities, 91% of respondents noted personal safety concerns and 87% identified health problems (personal health, physical limitations, and household member limitations) as constraints to participation (Johnson, Bowker, & Cordell, 2001). In another study, other researchers reported a number of personal and environmental barriers for individuals with disabilities in regard to participation in recreational activities. Some of these barriers include the natural environment, facility front desks being too high for effective communication, narrow doorways, and lack of ramps leading to recreation areas (Rimmer, Riley, Wang, Rauworth, & Jurkowski, 2004). Other barriers identified in the same study included budgetary and equipment constraints and fear of the unknown.

Method

In this study, the researchers used a qualitative descriptive research methodology of data collection and thematic analysis. It is based on an inductive approach (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Sandelowski, 1995, 2000; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013), determined to be appropriate because of the limited current knowledge on the topic and the need to examine new data and observations to expand it. Qualitative research is a well-respected method for collecting textual data, particularly with small groups of participants (Pitney & Parker, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). Employing this method in this study enabled the researchers to gain descriptive validity by capturing an accurate accounting of events (Sandelowski, 2000). The researchers achieved increased auditability throughout the data analysis and collection protocol by discussing decisions and findings with trained qualitative experts (Krefting, 1991). The experts confirmed the researchers' approach, particularly in coding and categorizing during the data analysis stage (Krefting, 1991).

Participants

Ten collegiate recreation professionals working full time and intimately involved in the outdoor adventure field were the key informants in this study. They included directors, assistant directors, and coordinators of collegiate outdoor adventure programs. According to Sandelowski (1995), no specific criteria are necessary for how many individuals need to be interviewed to obtain a valid sample size. The researchers contend that the 10 key informants who participated in the in-depth individual interviews provided enough information for saturation to be reached. Saturation was defined as "the collection of data in a study until redundancy of the data has occurred" (Walker, 2012, p. 37). Data were collected with the intent of obtaining a diverse population of respondents who are intimately immersed in outdoor recreation programming activities.

Recruitment

Participants were chosen using two electronic mailing lists: the Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education (AORE), the collegiate outdoor adventure industry's leading national organization, and the Texas Outdoor Adventure Directors (TOADs), the electronic mailing list of Texas outdoor recreation. In addition, prospective key informants received an e-mail asking for volunteers willing to participate in a 30-min interview. The e-mail distributed to the AORE mailing list produced 11 respondents; however, only five met criteria to be interviewed. The TOADs mailing list produced six responses, and five key informants were interviewed.

Altogether, 10 volunteers participated in this study. Once individuals were contacted, they were asked to communicate with the primary investigator to schedule an interview time. Interviews were conducted over the phone.

Data Collection

After agreeing to participate in the research study, the prospective key informants received a preinterview screening question to verify that they were professionals currently working in the field. The prescreening questions and consent form were e-mailed to the key informants. Interviews were conducted between February and July 2015 and the average length was 35 min. Additionally, all interviews were audio recorded to provide a nonintrusive method of data collection and to facilitate an accurate record of interviewees' comments. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity. All procedures were approved by the university's Protection of Human Subjects Committee prior to the start of the study. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim into text format and proofread to ensure accuracy. Following procedures discussed by Elo and Kyngas (2008) and Vaismoradi et al. (2013), the researchers conducted an inductive thematic analysis on the 10 transcriptions. The researchers then compared the findings in an attempt to find commonalities in the themes and patterns related to integrated outdoor adventure programming.

An interview guide consisting of predetermined, semistructured interview questions was used to maintain consistency and organization. All participants responded to the same questions during each interview, thus lessening biases and inconsistencies throughout the research process. Subquestions and probes were used to expand on the main questions; however, all participants were encouraged to elaborate on any topic they found relevant.

Examples of the interview questions and probes used for this research include the following:

- What are the outdoor-related programs available?
- Do you have any disability-related programs available?
- What are the recruitment practices of your department toward individuals participating in outdoor adventure programs?
- What are the effects of recruitment practices of your department on individuals with disabilities in your programs?
- What are the benefits to offering programming to people with disabilities?
- What are the barriers to offering programming to people with disabilities?
- Does your program offer any special opportunities or programming for individuals with physical disabilities?

Verbal consent protocol was used for this study, which was verified by a third person and audio recorded. No incentives were offered for participation in this study.

Results

The sample for this study included 10 professionals working in the field of outdoor adventure programming on college campuses (ages 25–56; $M_{\text{age}} = 33.15$). The respondents had between 1.5 and 35 years of experience working in the field. Eight respondents identified as White, non-Hispanic, or Caucasian; one respondent identified as an American; and one respondent identified as mixed race Guyanese. Respondents were volunteers from a wide range of universities from around the United States that included small universities (10,000 students or less), medium universities (11,000–29,000 students), and large universities (30,000 or more students; see Table 1).

Table 1
Participant University Affiliation

University size	University type	Campus type	Number
Small	Private	Urban	1
Medium	Private	Suburban	1
Medium	Public	Small City	1
Medium	Public	Suburban	1
Medium	Public	Urban	3
Large	Public	Urban	3

Categories

Category sets were determined by grouping all data into higher order headings. The first interview question inquired about outdoor programs available through higher education institutions. This information yielded the categories of *current programs* and *disability-specific programs*. Current programs were defined as any programming currently being offered by a collegiate outdoor adventure program, including trips, challenge courses, gear rentals, climbing walls, workshops/clinics, programs (e.g., bicycle, academic, miscellaneous training), camps, freshman orientation, and team building. Disability-specific programs included any programs offered, if any, for specific populations with disabilities.

In coordinator Terry's case, he explained, ". . . Unfortunately we don't have anything super formal set up for that [integrated outdoor] program yet. It's more just trying to address it as it comes." Another coordinator, Suzie, gave another example:

Currently, I have done a little bit of partnership with our disability services and we run two programs in collaboration with them, and an additional program in collaboration with overcoming barriers, which is another student organization on campus. They work with middle schoolers primarily in the area who all have disabilities, but basically we had the office of disability service come out and experience a program with us so we could work through, see what can we offer, and it was a team challenge course program. So they did lows [low ropes course elements], games initiatives, and a section of our high course, and then from there we partnered with office of disability services, overcoming barriers, and a couple of other entities on campus who already do adaptive sports day.

The second interview question was focused on feelings pertaining to interacting with individuals with disabilities. The results yielded the categories of *professional staff feelings*, *student staff feelings*, and *feelings of students without mobility impairments*. Professional staff feelings are those demonstrated by members of upper staff, such as one coordinator, Lindsey, who remarked:

I love interacting with people in general, whether they have a disability or not. I don't think that's really a limiting factor. I think it's very interesting. I worked in adaptive sports before, so maybe I'm a little more comfortable with some of the sensitivities that you don't want to be sensitive because it's just you're a person, whether you have a disability or not. So love to see the interest in people with disabilities in our outdoor programs.

Student staff feelings were defined as the feelings that student staff experience regarding interacting with individuals with disabilities within the outdoor context, as observed by professional staff. For example, Monty, a coordinator, reported:

I think they're nervous at first, because they are relatively young and relatively inexperienced and so they think that the boundaries of what's possible are real boundaries. But they haven't yet really pushed it very far, so as an example of how could you ever do a brace to roll a kayak if you can't press down like I do, but on the foot peg. You can't do that right? So, until they learn that someone can do that, they believe that's an artificial barrier. I think for them, it's been a learning curve.

Participant feelings were defined as the perceived feelings students without mobility impairments have toward interacting with individuals with disabilities in an outdoor capacity. For example, one coordinator, Terry, offered:

I think they'll be fine, and I think it's just something that takes practice. And I've had a little bit of experience working with individuals with disabilities, and so I know most people's reactions who haven't worked with people, with groups like that before, it's just a little bit—it can be—I mean, just in general it can be uncomfortable. Like, you're not quite sure how to address someone. You kind of either overcompensate or undercompensate because you're not trying to make it weird, basically.

The third interview question was focused on recruitment practices for outdoor adventure programming. Results yielded these categories: *marketing, recruitment and target marketing, outside organizations*, and *populations*. Walter, an assistant director, explained marketing in this statement:

Our department has kind of a central marketing group. So, for general use trips. So, they do handbills, they make flyers, they have brochures—they kind of just hand stuff out to the masses. A shotgun approach, if you will. Shoot a lot out and see if you hit something.

Denali, an assistant director, discussed recruitment and target marketing:

No, I don't think we do [recruitment]. We do a good amount of tabling on the campus so—just so people can see us away from the rec center. But again, it's not targeting specific individuals. There's no targeted marketing.

The category *outside organizations* refers to experts outside of the university setting who assist in planning or running outdoor-related collegiate programs. Hank, a coordinator, described using an outside organization:

Our program hosted a large [adaptive climbing] clinic here at our climbing wall where we brought in Catalyst Sports . . . [and] a professional paraclimber. Then we also teamed up with a local organization called Bridge to Sports which provides adaptive programming for individuals in our immediate area. So we worked with those two companies and put on this large clinic.

The category *populations* was defined as specialized or underrepresented populations or populations with disabilities that have been targeted as a resource for outdoor adventure programs. Terry, a coordinator, explained:

We have started talking about just reaching out to specific groups on campus, in general. So we've had a very broad strategy approach to marketing so far, and we're trying to narrow that down and reach out to groups who are potentially underrepresented in our participation. So I'm thinking like veterans groups or women groups for climbing, something like that.

The fourth interview question, regarding *benefits to integrated programming*, was created as a stand-alone category defined as the perceived benefits resulting in a positive outcome for

individuals who participate in an integrated outdoor program. For example, Walter, an assistant director, asserted:

I think overall, we're just trying to take groups out on adventure trips that represent the population that we serve. So, taking out a group of people from all walks of life and undertaking a common mission—whatever it is that we're doing, really, it's as much about kind of the social experience and getting to know these people and understanding different ways of life. So, I could see that easily enriching kind of the underlying tones of what we're going for. The whole goal—the point to what I really want to do—is get people outside and connect them with the outdoor activities that I really enjoy. Kind of give them a lifelong leader habit. So, we're teaching a skill that you can keep with you and use for a lifetime. Where a lot of the other things that we're doing in campus recreation, aren't gonna stick with you for—you know, you're not gonna play flag football when you're 50 or 60, but you might go to a national park and go on a hike with your family.

The fifth interview question asked participants to identify *barriers to entry*. These were defined as any circumstance or obstacle that keeps an individual from participating in outdoor adventure programming. This category also includes anything that hinders progress toward participation. Hank, a coordinator, described barriers:

The biggest barrier is the unknown. There aren't necessarily a lot of—there aren't a lot of certifications out there. There isn't a whole lot of formal training on how to offer programming for individuals with disabilities. So a lot of it has been kind of learn as you go and utilize the resources that you have by working with other programs that have done this and have experience doing this. There are a lot of [non-university] programs out there that service individuals with disabilities but as far as the University goes specifically in outdoor adventures we haven't seen a lot.

Two categories were produced from the question and data set on barriers: *safety* and *resources*. Safety concerns were addressed when Terry, a coordinator, stated:

We run water-based trips quite frequently down in this area. And we have people who can't swim. In terms of safety at this point of time, we just don't allow them on certain water-based trips unless it's under very specific circumstances, and it's just because the risk profile is way too high for the trip.

Resources were defined as equipment, financial needs, or personnel necessary for the success of a collegiate outdoor adventure program. For example, Terry stated, "Trying to figure out what equipment we need, and for which programs, what's most effective." Further, Kevin, a coordinator, added:

There might be a barrier for a specific program being in the cost. It depends on your storage capabilities or transportation capabilities, whether or not you're going to do transfers into a standard van or have a wheelchair van—which, that could be a major barrier if you needed to borrow or rent one. Another overhead cost may be needing to get more professionals or experts from around the community who have this experience of dealing with people with disabilities and leading those trips, or perhaps even providing that training.

Themes

The themes that emerged across all data sets were *incomplete knowledge*, *positive outlook*, and *student success*.

Incomplete knowledge. The theme *incomplete knowledge* was identified because all respondents stated that there is minimal information on (1) how to create an integrated program, (2) which activities would be appropriate to offer, and (3) how staff should be trained to run an integrated trip successfully and safely. For example, Lindsey stated:

Sometimes it takes some real knowledge of disabilities and what you're really faced with, not with the physical part of it, but some of the consequences of medications or the consequences of this person falling or muscle definition or exposure to the sun. So a little bit [of] additional knowledge of people with disabilities [is required].

Walter offered another example:

One of the main roadblocks right now is just having training in place for the staff to be able to understand how to adapt the activities that we have to the individual. That's not something that we do intentionally now. So, having an understanding of that and being prepared for it rather than having a student that comes in and us having to react to that right before the trip—so, I think being intentionally prepared would probably be really helpful. So, finding a way to address that. It's really just an education piece of making sure that I'm educated and informed to do training for the staff so that they're educated when individuals want to participate—so we understand how they can participate, that we can get them to the place that they want to go.

Henry, an assistant director, stated:

I think that there would be an extensive staff training that would be mandatory and it would be a challenging experience. There's such a wide range of disabilities out there that to be able to consider all of them I think would be really challenging. Do you include—is this just physical disabilities? Is it mental disabilities? How do you cater to both? Does someone with a mental disabilities need a caretaker also on that trip? Are you taking the role of that caretaker? I think that there's a lot of things to consider around that before you roll out this program.

Positive outlook. The theme *positive outlook* was apparent because respondents noted that they believe interactions with individuals with disabilities create a positive outlook for professional and student staff members, participants without mobility impairments, and all university outdoor programs. For example, Hank said:

I love it [interacting with individuals with disabilities]. When I was a student in school as part of my major I worked at a camp for individuals with disabilities. That was what got me hooked on this idea of inclusive recreation and the ability to take a canoe or a challenge course, something that a lot of us have had experience on make it fully inclusive so that anybody can use it. It was a really powerful moment for me. I think us as human beings in this modern society don't have enough interaction with the natural world and with everything that we have between technology and jobs and our busy days it's easy to lose that connection. Then you throw a modern day disability into that and it just makes it that much more difficult. So I think it's imperative to have these opportunities to get outside and to experience something new and to find something that's going to benefit your physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Henry added:

The keynote speaker at [the AORE national conference] spoke about disabled vets and that was kind of his area. He said no one is more thankful or no one is more appreciative of the considerations that you've done than the people with disabilities. So while I think that there are a lot of challenges getting into it [integrated outdoor programming] and perhaps challenges with staff and other participants, I do think that there

is a—there is a large market out there for it and there's people that I'm sure would love to take part in it. So I definitely think if you're able to provide programming for people with disabilities, I definitely think the rewards are huge.

Monty further commented:

I've had here at [my university] two student staff have been kids with disabilities and then when I worked at [my former university], I had a student that worked for me as well. One guy that works [for me], his name is C [pseudonym], he's started to want to do more teaching for our staff, so he's putting together a syllabus type thing to teach our staff just better how to interact with folks with disabilities. Its things as simple as asking ahead of time. How to ask the correct question. It's not awkward to ask people weird questions, that's what they're used too. Just because it's awkward for you, it's not awkward for the person being asked. It's kind of cool that he's doing that for his fellow coworkers.

Student success. The theme *student success* was identified across all data sets because respondents stated that outdoor programming develops various attributes: leadership skills, life skills, camaraderie, community, and social involvement, which are all key components defined through the literature as student success variables (Anderson et al., 1997; Lien & Goldenberg, 2012). Lindsey stated:

I believe that outdoor recreation just has this mind, body, spirit of benefit to it, you don't just have this physical benefit, but you have this confidence and this trust and this camaraderie and community that is created when you participate with people and the outdoors. I think about the community at our climbing wall or the way people get to know each other on a deeper level on some of our trips. So I think everybody can really benefit from that.

Hank noted:

The biggest value for us is being able to provide our students with opportunities to get out, to experience the beautiful areas that they have right in their backyard and then taking a moment to just relax their mind for a little bit and get away from their studies so that they can refresh and then come back to them with a whole new sense of being. I think for us it's just really helped to create awareness and to kind of spread our mission to promote healthy lifestyles. I think it brings a whole new facet to the university experience.

Last, Denali supported, saying:

If we can offer more trips, then we can have more trip leaders getting trained. If we have more trip leaders getting trained, we can meet our student learning outcomes for the university retention.

Discussion

In this study, the researchers sought to answer the question, in what capacity are outdoor programs being offered to individuals with disabilities? The findings reveal that although a variety of outdoor adventure programs are offered on college campuses, no specific integrated programs currently exist within the 10 interviews of this study. As discussed in the literature, outdoor programming benefits all participants, especially individuals with disabilities, and thus, it is important that integrated outdoor adventure programs be added to existing programs. The industry professionals in this study agree on the benefits of integrated programming, yet they

struggle with recruitment and target marketing for individuals with disabilities. Only a generalized, nonspecific marketing strategy was reported in this study. Integrated recruitment and participation is so rare that several respondents stated that they have not encountered participants with disabilities at all during the duration of their employment. Further, target marketing and recruitment alone cannot sustain a successful program if there continues to exist a lack of knowledge on how to create and manage integrated outdoor adventure college trips. Respondents believe that increasing knowledge of the subject matter would lead to the development and improvement of more successful outdoor programs on college campuses.

The theme *incomplete knowledge* shows a lack of understanding on how to create an integrated outdoor adventure program, how to lead safe and successful outdoor trips with an integrated population, and how it ultimately affects all involved. The data collected in this research study suggest that creating and managing integrated outdoor adventure programming would foster a *positive outlook* of students with disabilities on college campuses, which is likely to lead to higher *student success* and retention rates.

Yet this study also points to the perceived barriers to participation in outdoor adventure programming, including personal safety and physical limitations, budgetary and equipment constraints, and fear of the unknown. These findings correlate with the categories and subcategories, *safety* and *resources*, and the theme *incomplete knowledge*. Despite these barriers, this study suggests that leisure sports are less likely to cause injury than are conventional sport and recreation programs. Integrated outdoor programs can offer the same physical benefits as sport participation and also contribute to student success. This study suggests that involvement in outdoor adventure programming encourages interactions with diverse peers and assists in increased self-confidence, social involvement, and stress management. These findings correspond to the theme *student success*. As identified in the literature, individuals who participate in extracurricular activities or student groups on campus and interact with diverse peers aid in retention, which is a key component to student success (Getzel, 2008; Johnson, 2000; Parker et al., 2002).

Acknowledging that these programs contribute to student success does not change that lack of knowledge and resources hinders the development of such programs. Notwithstanding, the researchers identified *positive outlooks* as another theme that runs across all categories. All respondents suggested that although there are no known integrated outdoor adventure trip programs offered on college campuses, they are willing to work with individuals with disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Respondents also stated that they have a positive outlook about managing integrated programming in the future and believe that this concept would benefit not only the professionals working in the field, but also the student staff and participants without mobility impairments participating in outdoor adventure programming.

The research at hand suggests that outdoor adventure programming addresses all of the data points identified as key contributors to student success and retention. Based on the theme of *student success* found in this study, outdoor adventure programming allows students to participate in activities that reduce or help manage stress and encourages social involvement and interactions with a diverse group of peers. Regarding the theme *positive outlook*, respondents clearly affirm that professionals in the field of outdoor adventure programming have positive perceptions and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities.

Regarding the theme *incomplete knowledge*, respondents agree that more information can greatly benefit the creation, planning, and running of successful integrated programs on college campuses. A training program in which best practices are identified will help practitioners gain valuable knowledge to manage more effective and successful programs.

Limitations

The study was limited in sample and scope, as there were only 10 respondents from two organizations, the AORE and TOAD. Researchers should consider increasing sample size and

selecting respondents from a more diverse range of individuals across multiple organizations. This would provide greater validation, visibility, and possibly new data to compare to this study.

Recommendations and Practical Implications

Based on the data collected in this study, further research is needed to corroborate the findings and add to the existing knowledge on the topic. This exploratory study illustrates the current state of integrated outdoor adventure programming throughout the industry. To address the theme of *incomplete knowledge*, professionals need to grasp all concepts related to integrated outdoor adventure trip programming. This can be accomplished through creating a training tool, such as a curriculum, designed to provide proper training on outdoor program opportunities to professionals and student staff.

The researchers also recommend the development of an integrated outdoor adventure pilot through a task force created within the AORE, as they are the principle professional organization in outdoor adventure programming on college campuses. This committee would be responsible for developing a step-by-step guide to create an integrated program that can be replicated and used throughout the industry. The researchers further suggest that a similar study be conducted based on interviews with students with disabilities on college campuses. This would inform industry professionals of (a) various programmatic obstacles (e.g., funding sources) and shortcomings, (b) specific needs of students with disabilities, and (c) best practices presently employed throughout the country. Ideally, the aforementioned recommendation will foster a more inclusive collegiate recreation environment, thereby enhancing student participation and facilitating a safer and more cognizant understanding of students with and without disabilities in integrated outdoor adventure programming.

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