Whitman College

Outdoor Program

Five Year Strategic Plan

JANUARY 2015 - JANUARY 2020
WHITMAN COLLEGE OUTDOOR PROGRAM
FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Contributors: Brien Sheedy, Stuart Chapin, Lish Riley, Chris Bishop and numerous alumni, students and others via a survey in Fall 2014

Alumni, student and staff survey of program: Fall 2014
Vision phase and SWOT analysis: Nov 2014
Draft report: Jan 2015
Final report (this document): July 2015
Anticipated review: Each semester
Final review of progress: Fall 2019-Jan 2020
Restart of OP planning cycle for new five year plan: Fall 2019-Jan 2020

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COLLEGE MISSION: Whitman College is committed to providing an excellent, well-rounded liberal arts and sciences undergraduate education. It is an independent, nonsectarian and residential college. Whitman offers an ideal setting for rigorous learning and scholarship and encourages creativity, character and responsibility.

Through the study of humanities, arts, and social and natural sciences, Whitman’s students develop capacities to analyze, interpret, criticize, communicate and engage. A concentration on basic disciplines, in combination with a supportive residential life program that encourages personal and social development, is intended to foster intellectual vitality, confidence, leadership, and the flexibility to succeed in a changing technological, multicultural world.

STUDENT AFFAIRS MISSION: Student Affairs is an integral part of a Whitman education. Our work intentionally engages students in opportunities that place students at the heart of the learning experience and enhance a residential liberal arts education. Students augment their intellectual development through a purposeful co-curricular program emphasizing personal growth, community building and acquiring knowledge that will prepare them for life after Whitman.

OUTDOOR PROGRAM MISSION: The Outdoor Program fosters personal growth, facilitates learning, and creates recreational opportunities through skills and risk management training, leadership development, and environmentally sound trips in a supportive community.
**VISION:** Over the five-year period starting in January 2015 and ending January 2020, the Whitman College Outdoor Program would like to utilize our strengths and resources to support the mission of the College by partnering with Academics, Student Affairs, other departments and student groups to strengthen community and improve the student experience.
SWOT ANALYSIS

EXPLANATION: In the Fall of 2014 the OP leadership team met several times to do a self assessment of the program. They looked at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the program. They also solicited external feedback from others through a Google survey. The following SWOT analysis is a summary of the OP’s findings.

STRENGTHS

• DO WELL
  o Building community
  o Manage risk
  o Trip information management
  o Professionalism
  o Teaching and role modeling
  o Accountability
  o Constant assessment of students and program
  o Mentoring and student development
  o Growth oriented formalized feedback
  o Student involvement in decision-making and leadership
  o Teach and facilitate leadership development
  o Consistency through systems and attention to details
  o Student jobs and job training
  o Leader manuals
  o Website
  o Learning outcomes facilitation with intern positions

• ADVANTAGES
  o BCOF (Bob Carson Outdoor Program Fund) money to make trips affordable and accessible
  o OELF (Outdoor Environmental Leadership Fund) support
  o Permits to operating areas
  o Strives to teach and use industry best practices
  o Relationships within the College

• ASSETS AND RESOURCES
  o Equipment and Rental Shop
  o Climbing Center
  o Pool access
  o Vehicles and trailers
  o Budget money
  o Trained professionals
o Student leaders
o Support from administrators

• STRENGTHS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS, ALUMNI AND CUSTOMERS
  o SSRA classes and first aid trainings
  o Weekend trips – variety, length, type and level
  o Scrambles
  o Friendly staff
  o Banff Mountain Film Festival
  o Trainings and certification
  o Rental program
  o Good website with videos
  o Recent outreach to FGWC (First Generation/Working Class), Club Latino, Black Student Union and others. Interest in more of this.

WEAKNESSES
• WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER
  o More diverse student participant population
  o Internal consistency on policy and standards
  o Curriculum communication (better documentation and standardization of field curriculum)
  o Communicating what we do to the administration and other departments
  o Purposeful leadership development progression (debriefs, feedback, goal setting, clinics)
  o Communicate opportunities for groups and partnerships
Better job counseling students interested in outdoor field
Building in more educational components in natural history and service
Support route setting in the Climbing Center (training, incentives and consistency)
Finding ways to offer a better balance of beginner, intermediate and advanced trips
Do better at pre-trip communications to get participants ready for beginner trips (open
kayak – kayak trip) or doing the pre-trip at the pool

WHAT ARE WE CRITICIZED FOR OR GET COMPLAINTS ABOUT
Cost for trips – it would be nice to allow BCOF credit to cover the full cost of trips for
full need students. Currently all students pay a small portion of each trip in order to ensure
some commitment, and because of the technological challenges and impracticality of
performing complicated refunds.
Cost for Scrambles
Cost for SSRA course fees
Costs for rentals (at the Climbing Center and Rental Shop)
No bikes for rent
No down hill skis
Occasional comments about behavior of Scramble leaders after return to campus
Lack of participant and leader diversity on Scrambles and trips
Cost of becoming an OP trip leader and certifications
We have more students who want to be employees than number of available positions

WHERE ARE WE VULNERABLE
Incidents and accidents
Complacency
Student run outdoor clubs – ambiguous level of oversight (whitewater rafting/kayaking,
climbing [includes mountaineering], backcountry skiing, hiking)
Lack of access to certain wilderness areas due to permit challenges
Potential for a harassment case on an OP trip without continued attention/training in
this area
o Turnover in key student positions (Trips Coordinator, Climbing Center Manager, Media Technician)
o Temporary student managers do not provide the level of oversight management of the Climbing Center that a consistent professional would.

• CAPACITY ISSUES
  o Limit on number of advanced trips because Brien and Stuart have to lead certain kinds of trips
  o Access to vehicles and vehicles with hitches and certified drivers
  o Money
  o Storage space – bike shop space and location, raft house (old and small with difficult trailer backing challenges; regular vehicle and trailer damage occurs as a result of challenges with this location), stand up paddle boards, North Hall Boiler Room inadequate and dangerous for storing and moving canoes and kayaks
  o Student leaders for specialized trips and advanced trips

OPPORTUNITIES
• WHAT OPPORTUNITIES DO WE KNOW ABOUT BUT HAVE NOT ADDRESSED
  o Partnering with the SEC (Student Engagement Center) and Community Service office to promote and set up trips
  o On-campus opportunities for clinics (stove repair, knots, fire building, camping, cooking, etc.)
  o Fundraise for rental cost program similar to BCOF
  o Alumni trips
  o Networking among recent grads for jobs and skills development
  o Pre-trip meetings and skill sessions at pool or Climbing Center before day trips
  o Better communication with faculty and staff (new employee benefits)
  o Leader training during freshman orientation (time between Scramble end and start of classes)
  o Foreign language trips and academic hybrid trips
  o Partner with the native speakers program
  o Professor emeritus on trips
  o Offer camping skills training on academic field programs
  o More ACA and/or BCU certification courses in-house
  o More support for a bike share program on campus
  o Local navigation and orientation training
• **EMERGING TRENDS THAT WE COULD CAPITALIZE ON**
  - College would like to promote leadership and character development
  - First Generation/Working Class support
  - Power and Privilege Symposium involvement
  - Veterans rehabilitation through outdoor recreation
  - Growing popularity of SUPs (stand up paddle boards)
  - Sustainability

**THREATS**

• **WEAKNESSES THAT ARE LIKELY TO MAKE US CRITICALLY VULNERABLE**
  - Potential for lawsuit secondary to an accident
  - Being misperceived as an extravagant extra in a climate of cost consciousness

• **EXTERNAL ROADBLOCKS**
  - Land managers – permitting issues
  - Insurance issues

• **SIGNIFICANT CHANGES COMING**
  - Turnover in administration
  - Possible consolidation and reconfiguration of storage facilities

• **ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AFFECTING OUR FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY**
  - Potential disappearance of soft money (OELF and BCOF, etc.)
  - Increasing cost of transportation
  - Insurance costs
  - Financial pressure on students available spending money

**DESIRED OUTCOMES:**

**PARTNERSHIPS**

• Partner with Academics to support class offerings or department interests
  - Native speakers and foreign language trips
  - Field support for natural sciences field trips (biology, geology, environmental studies)
  - Semester in the West, Whitman in the Wallowas
• Identify ways to continue to support the missions of both Student Affairs and the College
• Partner with Residential Life and Student Affairs to support the sophomore experience program
• Work with the Intercultural Center to find inroads with a more diverse student population
• Partner with the SEC to promote and set up service trips and job skills development for students interested in the outdoor industry
• Alumni office to offer more outings and networking opportunities for alumni

DIVERSIFY OUR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
• Continue developing offerings for First Generation/Working Class, Club Latino, Black Student Union, international students and other groups currently underrepresented in Outdoor Program
• Develop ways to offer need-based funding for SSRA activity fees for developing leaders
• Streamline administration of BCOF to allow need-based students to waive trip fee deposit

RESOURCES: PHYSICAL, ACCESS, HUMAN AND FINANCIAL
• Lobby for, develop, hire and train a non-student Climbing Center Manager/OP Trips Coordinator fellowship position
• Identify and secure permits to meet OP, SSRA and Scrambles programmatic needs
• Fundraise for reducing costs to become leaders, climb at the Climbing Center and to support the priorities identified in the strategic plan
• Identify and ensure vehicles and access to vehicles to meet OP, SSRA and Scrambles programmatic needs
• Replace aging OP minivan with a more reliable vehicle with greater towing capacity
• Lobby for policies to assure a more equitable and useful fleet reservations system for all
• Explore opportunities to utilize appropriate technologies to better manage program information, and communication and marketing
  o Trip signups
  o Tracking of payments/refunds
  o Waiver tracking
  o Tracking of leaders
  o Backcountry communication
    • Satellite phones, SPOTs, GPS, marine band radios
• Get a structural engineering inspection done of the Climbing Center between 2017 and 2019
• Climbing Center operations audit in 2019 or 2020
• Research and plan for moving raft and sea kayak storage along with the bike shop to a consolidated, highly functional and more accessible location
PROGRAMMING
- On-campus opportunities for clinics (fire building, camping, cooking, navigation and GPS orientation)
- Hold some pre-trip meetings at the pool or Climbing Center to allow better prep for day trips
- Develop comprehensive leadership curriculum that includes debriefing leader experiences, mentoring, goal setting, training during freshman orientation, skills workshops and a classification or certification system
- In-house ACA (American Canoe Association) clinics
- Support for biking community
- Offer LNT (Leave No Trace) certification options

MARKETING AND OUTREACH
- Better communication with faculty and staff (new employee benefits)
- Consolidate and develop OP branding and marketing in conjunction with the Whitman communications office
  - Possible topics of exploration: website, videos, publications, logo, program name
- Provide tour and share OP mission with the president, provost and dean of students so as to better understand what the OP does and together find areas the administration wants the OP to focus on to support the College’s mission
- Encourage opportunities for Whitman’s president to interact with incoming students and their families via the Scrambles program
  - Possible mechanisms:
    - Intro welcome at Scramble picnic
    - Informal interactions before Scrambles trips launch
- Continue to market to broad student base for introductory trips and classes
- Create a student outreach coordinator position to facilitate partnerships identified elsewhere in the strategic plan
- Complete rewrite of the admissions paper
## OP Strategic Plan 2015-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Finish Date</th>
<th>Jan-15</th>
<th>Jul-15</th>
<th>Jan-16</th>
<th>Jul-16</th>
<th>Jan-17</th>
<th>Jul-17</th>
<th>Jan-18</th>
<th>Jul-18</th>
<th>Jan-19</th>
<th>Jul-19</th>
<th>Completion Metric</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner with Academics to support class offerings or department interests</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>Jan-15</td>
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<td>Partner with support at least one class per semester</td>
<td>Jan-a-day event with Patrick Frieson’s class 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native speakers and foreign language trips</td>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Jul-15</td>
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<td>壬</td>
<td>Run at least one language immersion trip per semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field support for natural sciences field trips (Biology, Geology, Environmental Studies)</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>Jan-15</td>
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<td>Partner with support at least one class or department per semester</td>
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<td>Semester in the West, Whitman in the Wallowas</td>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Jul-15</td>
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<td>Technical assistance offered and application fee provided</td>
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<td>Identify ways to continue to support the missions of both Student Affairs and the College</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>Jan-15</td>
<td>Jan-16</td>
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<td>One partnership per semester with an office in student affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with the Intercultural Center to find in-roads with a more diverse student population</td>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Jan-15</td>
<td>Jan-16</td>
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<td>Help to run at least one Sophomore event per year</td>
<td>Helped with the 3rd Annual Skyrunning Climbing event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner with Residential Life and Student affairs to support the sophomore experience program</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>Jan-15</td>
<td>Jan-16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with the SEC office to promote and set up service trips and job skills development for students interested in the outdoor industry</td>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Jul-15</td>
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<td>Run at least one volunteer program per year and invite them into leadership courses for job skills training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer to more outings and networking opportunities for alumni</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>On-going</td>
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<td>Run at least one event of alumni office per year</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Diversity of our Student Participants

- Continue developing offerings for FGWC group, Club Latin, Black Student Union, international students and other groups and clubs currently underrepresented in the outdoor program | Stuart | Jan-15 | On-going | | | | | | | | | | Run 1-2 activities per semester | Offered WCFG trips in Fall 14 and Spring 15 |

### Develop ways to offer need based funding for SSRA activity fees for developing leaders |

- A fund is created and campaign is started with development office or budget money is allocated to reduce the activity fees or provide need based aid for OP courses | Stuart | Jan-15 | | | | | | | | | | | Offered WCFG trips in Fall 14 and Spring 15 |

### Streamline administration of BCOF to allow need based students to waive trip fee deposit. |

- Student on need based aid will be able use their BCOF for the whole cost of trips. | Stuart, Lish | Jan-15 | Jul-15 | | | | | | | | | | |

### Resources: Physical, Access, Human and Financial

- Lobby for, develop, hire and train a non-student Climbing Center manager/OP trips coordinator fellowship position | Brien | Jan-15 | | | | | | | | | | | Approval for position is granted and an applicant is hired | Non-student climbing center manager/OP trips coordinator position was requested for FY 15-16, but ultimately did not get funded |

- Identify and secure permits to meet OP, SSRA and scrambles programmatic needs. | Heidi | Jan-15 | On-going | | | | | | | | | | Permits are stable with the largest permits being long term use, have long term use permits for Olympics, Joshua Tree and several BLM offices |

- Fund raise for reducing costs to become leaders, climb at the climbing center and provide the priorities identified in the strategic plan | Brien | Jan-15 | | | | | | | | | | | Work with the development office to create and implement a fund raising campaign |

- Identify and ensure vehicles and access to vehicles to meet OP, SSRA and Scrambles programmatic needs. | Brien | On-going | | | | | | | | | | | Replace OP vehicles on similar schedule to physical plant |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Replace aging OP minivan with a more reliable vehicle with greater towing capacity</td>
<td>Lish, Brien</td>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Jul 15</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>Own new vehicle to replace the minivan, and sale of minivan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobby for policies to assure a more equitable and useful fleet reservations system for all</td>
<td>Brien, Stuart</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with club sports, ASWC, WSU, Student Affairs to lobby Administration to make small changes to the reservation rules for vehicles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore opportunities to utilize appropriate technologies to better manage program information and communication and marketing</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dis research on systems on the market, research budget and purchasing one and implement a changeover</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Trip signups</td>
<td>Stuart, Intern</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Tracking of payments/refunds</td>
<td>Stuart, Lish</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Waiver tracking</td>
<td>Stuart, Intern</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Tracking of leader certs</td>
<td>Stuart, Intern</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Backcountry communication</td>
<td>Brien, Stuart</td>
<td>Jan 15</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secure appropriate communication for spring break trails and other select trips. Obtain GPS devices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Satellite phones, SPOTs, GPS, marine ban radios</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Mar 15</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have identified 3 satellite phones currently owned by WSU (Geology, Biology and SIW), have worked out borrowing these for spring break trips.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set a structural engineering inspection done of the climbing center between 2017 and 2019.</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have the inspection and assess the report</td>
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<td>Climbing center operations audit in 2019 or 2020</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have audit complete and assess for possible changes to operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research and plan for moving raft and sea kayak storage along with the bike shop to a consolidated, highly functional and more accessible location.</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Jan 15</td>
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<td>Submit a plan and budget request for in charge of facility</td>
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<td>On campus opportunities for clinics and activities (fire building, camping, cooking, navigation and GPS orientation)</td>
<td>Stuart, Intern</td>
<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>One or more on campus offering being attended by student participants each semester.</td>
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<td>Hold some pre-trip meetings at the pool or Climbing Center to allow better prep for day trips</td>
<td>Trips Intern</td>
<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setup consistent systems if when to pre trip at the pool or climbing center</td>
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<td>Develop comprehensive leadership program that includes debriefing leader experiences, mentoring, goal setting, training during freshman orientation, skills workshops and a classification or certification system</td>
<td>Brien, Stuart</td>
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<td>Hire an intern to initiate pilot project</td>
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<td>In-house ACA (American Canoe Association) clinics</td>
<td>Stuart</td>
<td>Jan 15</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start offers advanced kayaking every other year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for biking community</td>
<td>Lish</td>
<td>Mar 15</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bike share program owns and manages their own fleet of new bikes, and has an allotted budget from the sustainability office in order to pay for ongoing maintenance, repair, and eventual replacement of bikes</td>
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<td>Offer LNT (Leave No Trace) certification options</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>Mar 15</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNT trainer certification offered as part of some leadership courses.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


**FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

*ypsy = Yet to be finished
* Blue = Started but not finished
* Green = Finished

13
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Marketing and Outreach</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lish</strong></th>
<th><strong>Apr 21</strong></th>
<th><strong>Jul 15</strong></th>
<th><strong>Creation of one page insert detailing info about the OP and what it has to offer to Whitman employees.</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lish completed a 1-page new employee insert in July 2015. Next step: give a presentation to staff/faculty about OP opportunities.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better communication with faculty and staff (new employee benefits package)</td>
<td>Brien, Stuart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consolidate and develop OP branding and marketing in conjunction with the Whitman communications office</td>
<td>Brien, Stuart</td>
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<td>*Possible topics of exploration: Website, videos, publications, logo, program name</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide tour and share OP mission with president, provost and Dean of students so as to better understand what the OP does and together find areas the administration wants the OP to focus on to support the college’s mission</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage opportunities for Whitman’s president to interact with incoming students and their families via the scrambles program</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible mechanisms:</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Intro welcome at scramble picnic</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Informal interactions before scrambles trips launch</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue to market to broad student base for introductory trips and classes</td>
<td>Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a student outreach coordinator position to facilitate partnerships identified elsewhere in the strategic plan</td>
<td>Brien</td>
<td>2/1/15</td>
<td>6/1/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete re-write of the admissions paper</td>
<td>Brien</td>
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</table>

**Yellow** = Yet to be finished  
**Blue** = Started but not finished  
**Green** = Finished
CONCLUSION:

The OP strategic planning process that started in October 2014 provided an opportunity for the Outdoor Program to assess strengths, weaknesses and where we want to be in five years. What we initially thought would take a few weeks ended up taking over a half a year. However, this structured reflection allowed us to better assess and articulate where we want to be and identify the strategies, measures and targets to get there. This document and the Excel document in particular are intended to be living documents that are constantly being updated as targets are met. The most current and accurate Excel document with progress updates will reside in the Outdoor Program.

We invite feedback and partnerships with other departments and individuals and look forward to what we can accomplish as we strive to improve the Whitman community and the student experience. Targets will be assessed at least once a semester and the entire plan will be reviewed in the Fall of 2019 in time to start a new strategic plan in January of 2020. I would like to acknowledge and thank Stuart Chapin and Lish Riley for all their help and contributions in this process along with alumni, students, staff and friends of the OP who completed a survey in 2014 that provided us with valuable feedback.

Feel free to contact the OP leadership team if you have any questions.

Thanks,
Brien Sheedy
Outdoor Program Director
July 2015