



A woman wearing a dark puffy jacket, shorts, and a cap stands on a vast, white snowfield. In the background, a large, dark, cave-like opening is carved into the snow. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a sun flare in the upper right corner.

THE SUMMIT OF SUCCESS

Reed's Outdoor Recreation Program

by Cassidy Clevenger

Recently my best friend sent me an unprompted, cryptic message asking me, "So you are not really an out-doorsy person, are you?" My knee-jerk reaction was to dispute this claim and brag about the leisurely stroll I took three weeks prior, but realized she was right. I much prefer the idea of being the type of person who goes on weekly hikes and treks through mountains, but alas, I will happily protect the base and keep the fire going while everyone else rappels off cliffs. My best friend, on the other hand, has spent multiple weeks backpacking through the Outback, New Zealand, and various states across the US. I guess opposites really do attract.

While I researched the Reed Outdoor Programs and Education (ROPE) at Reed College, I found myself becoming increasingly envious of the students. Though I am no Bear Grylls, I was awestruck by the opportunities Reed provides its students year-round. Even someone like me, who can hardly swim in three-feet of water, felt inspired to grab my tent and head to the river. Reed College does a remarkable job of making outdoor recreation seem tangible and thrilling, even for the more timid and novice explorers.

Program Aspects

ROPE is one aspect of Reed's overall physical education department. In addition to the more standard amenities, such as a swimming pool, weight room, yoga studio, cardio center, climbing wall and basketball court, Reed College has expanded the PE program far off campus. Such outdoor activities include rock climbing, whitewater kayaking, backpacking trips, and mountaineering.

All students at Reed must earn at least six credits in Physical Education, and therefore, Reed wanted to ensure that all students could

find classes that best fit their interests and abilities. For the ROPE classes and excursions, there are several weekend trips that are catered to different skill levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Some of the key differences among the levels are related to distance and terrain. As an example, those on beginner trips may only hike five miles a day and stick to paddling only in gentle water; meanwhile, the more advanced students may walk up to ten miles daily, across more trying territories, and participate in white water rafting. Will Symms, Assistant Director of Athletics, Fitness and Outdoor Programs at Reed College, explained that these adventures are designed to push students to whatever difficulty level they are comfortable with attempting. Typically those students who choose the more advanced trips are encouraged to try new activities and explore their perceived limitations.

Training and Leading

In addition to students having the opportunity to practice their leadership skills by spearheading student-led adventures, Reed also offers professionally guided ice climbing and whitewater

kayaking. For those students who are interested in learning more about what it takes to embark with a group into the woods of Oregon, students have annual opportunities to take professional classes including Wilderness First Responder, Swift Water Rescue, Leave No Trace, and Avalanche One.

Not all the events focus heavily on learning survival tactics; in fact, many have a predominantly social initiative. One of Reed's programs, Outdoor Experiences, brings small groups of eight to ten students to wilderness areas that are within driving distance of the Portland campus. During these trips, the students can explore areas of the remaining old-growth forest around the Mount Adams and Indian Heaven wilderness areas. These trips can be led either by students or outdoor professionals. In either case, all are trained in outdoor leadership, first aid, and CPR.

Symms detailed the layers of benefit of the ROPE program. Students at Reed tend to be heavily dedicated to their education, and can become overly saturated with school stressors. By offering the students a weekend



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(or series of weekends) where they can blow off some steam, they are better prepared to thrive in their academics. Additionally, those students who choose to take advantage of the leadership opportunities ROPE has to offer can learn valuable skills about teamwork, preparation, responsibility management, and how to gracefully learn from failure—all of which can then be applied in lifelong learning.

Locations

Reed College, located in Portland, Oregon, is a permittee of the Mt. Hood National Forest, Gifford Pinchot National Forest and Columbia River Gorge Recreational Unit, and most of their trips take place either at Mount Adams or Indian Heaven. These areas provide a multitude of different environments for students to explore; different trips may be mostly coastal and allow for more water-based activities, while others are more mountainous and snowy. To paraphrase Symms, the environmental diversity is one of the greatest perks of being in the Northwest Pacific area, because the location allows for a bounty of different experiences.

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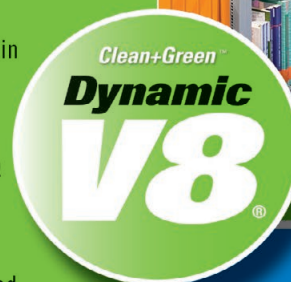
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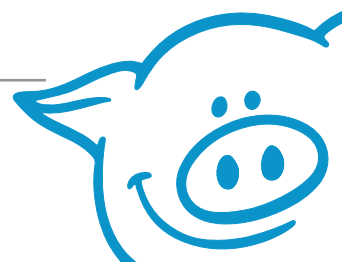
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Funding

Unlike many other universities and colleges, the ROPE program's travel, materials, boarding, and amenities all come either free or at low cost to students. The reason for this minimized price tag for students is thanks to the institute's funding. Betty Gray established the Gray Fund in 1992, with a series of goals to enrich students' lives. The Gray Fund aims to promote a sense of connectivity among students, faculty, and staff, to enjoy musicians, performers, and artists on campus, to explore the wilderness in and around Oregon, and generally engage in other cultures, socialize, and partake in recreational activities. In short, the pursuit and purpose of the Gray Fund is to have a good time.

This low-to-no-cost system helps guarantee that the outings are affordable for all of their students. Though any student can participate, the outings are mostly first and second year students. By making the trips easily accessible, the fund allows students to begin making friendships and connections early into their college experience and learn how to manage time and stress earlier, rather than later. Symms realizes this subsidized travel is a luxury for Reed, and he is grateful that he is able to give his students these opportunities.

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To any colleges looking to expand their outdoor recreation programs, Symms explains how beneficial these programs are to the students' academic successes. He believes that outdoor programs are correlated with increased student satisfaction and graduation rates. Therefore, when looking for increased funding, it is vital to show benefactors how outdoor recreation improves both student wellbeing and performance.

The Fun of it All

As we all know, college is hard; yet, it is somehow often among the best years of a person's life. When I get nostalgic about my undergraduate days, papers and projects are not the first thoughts that pop into my mind; it's the after-hour events I attended on campus, or the late afternoon coffee breaks with the girls in jiu-jitsu class. Symms and other Reed officials realize the fundamental importance of experiences such as these. Symms implores students to try and maximize their time at Reed and capitalize on their time in college. Programs like ROPE encourage students to step outside their comfort zones, while still being in a safe environment.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Cassidy Clevenger is a Samford University alum. She is currently in graduate school at Samford in the MSW program, while working as a staff writer.

A large, modern, blue acoustical shell is the central focus of the advertisement. The shell is made of many blue, angular panels and is illuminated with bright blue lights. It is set against a dark background with some stage lights visible. The text "STAGING CONCEPTS" is prominently displayed in white, bold letters, with "STAGING • ACOUSTICS • RIGGING" underneath it. Below this, the text "CUSTOM ACOUSTICAL SHELL SOLUTIONS" is written in large, white, bold letters. At the bottom, there is more text: "Portable Platforms • Seating Risers • Acoustical Shells • Rigging Solutions" and the website "www.stagingconcepts.com • 763-533-2094". The foreground shows rows of orange stadium seats.



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