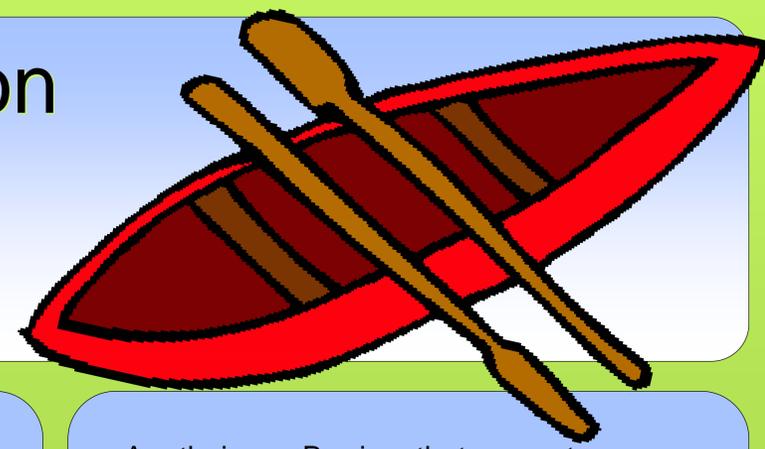


The Outdoor Center: Student Participation in Outdoor Recreation

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Introduction

Located in the White mountains of New Hampshire, Plymouth State University has much to offer in the way of outdoor recreation. The Plymouth State University Outdoor Center offers many opportunities for students, but surprisingly the services are under utilized.

This research is important because by using the information generated by this research, the Outdoor Center and Plymouth State University can improve programs to get the highest possible level of student participation.

Research Questions

How familiar are PSU students with the campus Outdoor Center

- Is the PSU Outdoor Center appropriately represented on campus?
- Is information about the PSU Outdoor Center easily accessible?

Are there any barriers that prevent students from utilizing the PSU Outdoor Center?

- Is it convenient/easy for students to get involved in the opportunities that are offered by the PSU Outdoor Center?
- Are equipment rentals and group trips adequate for all levels?



Theory

The theory of social stratification is one that is often examined when it comes to predetermining student involvement in extracurricular activities. The theory of social stratification in relation to this topic suggests that social class plays a large role in whether or no a student is going to participate in an activity offered by their university. For the purpose of this research the activity would be outdoor recreation. This theory is important to consider is the research because it may lead to the exposure of barriers that are causing the Outdoor Center to be underutilized.

Methods

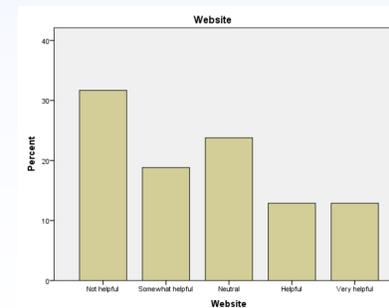
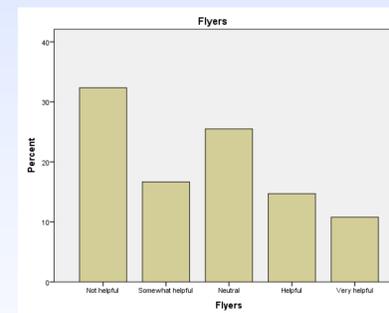
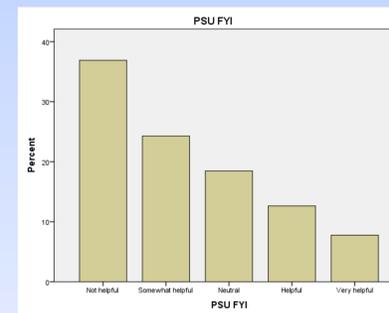
The data for this study was collected through a survey using a self-administered questionnaire. This method of research was effective because it allowed large amounts of data to be collected, in comparison to other methods such as interviews which would have produced much less generalizable data due to the smaller sample size. The questionnaire was administered to PSU students enrolled in randomly selected general education courses. The questionnaire was given to these classes in order to include a wide variety of students in the sample. Students from a variety of majors will do a better job in accurately represent PSU as a whole.

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Results

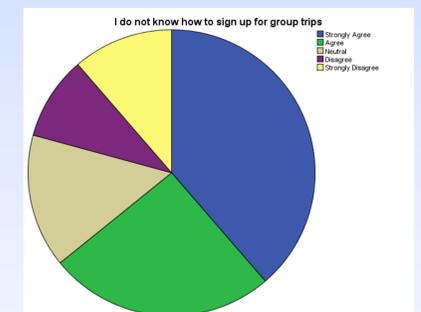
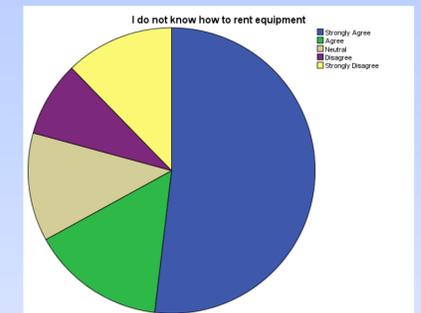
How familiar are PSU students with the campus Outdoor Center?

Data acquired from the questionnaire shows significant signs of underrepresentation of the PSU Outdoor Center on campus. The research suggests that information about the PSU Outdoor Center is not being effectively received by students. The below charts represent students' opinions' on how helpful certain sources are in providing information about the PSU Outdoor Center. In each category the majority of the participants found the information source “Not helpful”.



Are there any Barriers that prevent students from utilizing the Outdoor Center?

The two below charts represent a common barrier that has caused students to not use the PSU Outdoor Center. In the questionnaire, students were given several statements and asked to rate how these statements personally affected their lack of use of the PSU Outdoor Center. Being unable to easily and conveniently rent equipment or sign up for group trips were the two largest contributors to the lack of use of the PSU Outdoor Center.



Conclusions

The majority of the data collected found that students lacked knowledge about the PSU Outdoor Center in both specific and general terms. Other barriers regarding personal use of the Outdoor Center that did not relate to knowledge were examined, but few proved to be significant.