

Outdoor & Community Recreation Education Program's Response to the Review Team Report

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The Outdoor & Community Recreation Education (OCRE) program team has carefully read through the external reviewers' commendations and recommendations. Our team appreciates the reviewers' time and thoughtful analysis of the OCRE program and have outlined our response in the table below.

Report Commendations

The review team has identified several strengths within the OCRE program, including:

1. A well-designed curriculum that effectively prepares students for professional roles in outdoor and community recreation.
2. Clear alignment of the curriculum with the program's mission, ensuring coherence and relevance.
3. A cohesive cohort model that fosters a strong sense of community among students, enhancing their learning experience.
4. Dedicated faculty members who provide comprehensive education and support to students.
5. Proactive curriculum development, incorporating feedback from students, industry stakeholders, and professional trends to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

The OCRE program team acknowledges these strengths and commits to leveraging them further. Specifically, the program will continue to prioritize the use of various High Impact Educational Experiences (HIEEs), such as undergraduate research, community engagement, internships, field experiences, study abroad, and experiential education. The extensive implementation of HIEEs sets the OCRE program apart within the College of Education and contributes to student engagement, persistence, and workforce readiness. As a new program that has launched a bachelor's degree with three emphases, an associates degree, and a minor within the span of seven years, ongoing engagement in program improvement is a program priority to ensure that students receive an excellent education that meets evolving needs and expectations.

Report Recommendations

The review team has identified several areas for improvement within the OCRE program, including curriculum updates, the development of new community recreation courses, fostering community partnerships, implementing assessment measures, enhancing advisement strategies, supporting faculty, assisting recreation managers, and leveraging industry support for students. While many of these recommendations are agreeable, there are certain constraints and additional information that need consideration.

Table 1. Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Recommendations and Program Response

Area	Strengths	Weaknesses	Recommendations for Change	Program Response
Mission	<p>- The Outdoor & Community Recreation Education (OCRE) program at Weber State University is well-aligned with the missions of both the university and the Moyes College of Education, emphasizing health, wellness, and sustainability. This structure ensures that students are well-prepared for professional roles in the recreation industry, equipped with the necessary skills and experiences to make a positive impact in their communities.</p>	<p>-n/a</p>	<p>- Regularly update the curriculum to include the latest trends and technologies in the field of recreation, ensuring that graduates are prepared for the evolving industry landscape.</p>	<p>AGREE. As noted in the self-study document (pp. 8-12) curricular revisions are ongoing, and recent updates reflect our commitment to ensuring the curriculum reflects the most current information, best practices, and a deliberate effort to be student-centered. Furthermore, as of the 2023-2024 academic year, we have aligned our curricular standards to national accreditation benchmarks, and beginning in 2024-2025, OCRE students will be required to take the Certified Parks and Recreation Professional exam. We see this as the first step to ensure that we are effectively meeting professional standards. To this end, we will use students' test scores across the core competencies to identify curricular areas that need to be addressed.</p>
Curriculum	<p>- Thoughtful planning and review, aligned with the program's mission.</p> <p>- Dedicated full-time faculty and qualified adjunct instructors ensure comprehensive education.</p> <p>- Proactive adjustments based on feedback and industry needs.</p>	<p>- Challenges in course scheduling due to faculty numbers.</p> <p>- Need for enhanced focus on the community side of recreation.</p>	<p>- Develop new courses or enhance existing ones to strengthen the community recreation aspect.</p> <p>- Collaborate closely with local community recreation departments for curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities.</p>	<p>DISAGREE. As a discovery major, limited knowledge exists on the opportunities to pursue careers in community recreation. Thus, a need exists to first increase awareness and visibility for current students, and students outside Weber County/state of UT. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the OCRE faculty has been working with University Marketing and Communications to create a comprehensive and targeted marketing campaign that will launch in the 2024-2025 academic year.</p> <p>As noted in the program enrollment (see appendix A), Despite significant workforce demand for Community Recreation Administration (CRA) professionals in Utah, enrollment in the CRA emphasis within the OCRE program remains low. Before expanding this emphasis, it is essential to increase enrollment and assess the learning outcomes of graduates to understand how the curriculum impacts their experience. With only a small number of CRA graduates (5) and insufficient enrollment to justify curriculum expansion, further evaluation is necessary. Notably, the program's faculty involvement in the Utah Recreation and Parks</p>

				Association and student representation in the organization demonstrate connections to the industry. OCRE will, however, prioritize reviewing our existing curriculum to identify opportunities where more community-based recreation examples can be integrated. Furthermore, OCRE will also prioritize hiring adjuncts and curricular consultants from within the community recreation sector to provide additional expertise.
Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear statement of student learning outcomes aligned with national accreditation standards. - Detailed assessment plan with specific measures and criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of assessment data for newly established learning outcomes. - Major course GPA may not effectively assess knowledge/competency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider using another direct measure for assessing student knowledge/competency beyond major course GPA. 	DISAGREE: The current assessment plan includes ten measures, only one of which uses GPA. OCRE faculty will evaluate the newly implemented assessment plan for the next few years to ascertain its effectiveness prior to making further changes.
Academic Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commitment and effectiveness led by Brittni Strickland. - Clear strategy for advising that is regularly assessed. - Collaboration and faculty relationships enrich the advising experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandatory advisor meetings may dilute personalized attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance advising strategy to formally include faculty in academic and career planning. - Continue to refine the advising process to maintain high levels of assistance. 	<p>AGREE. OCRE will continue to work closely with the HPER academic advisor, Brittni Strickland. OCRE program faculty currently send out advisement notes, and provide direct career planning support in OCRE 2890 and OCRE 4890. However, beginning in fall 2024, OCRE students will be required to create an eportfolio to enhance career planning. Assignments from each of the core courses (and thus different program faculty) throughout the curriculum will be required in the portfolio.</p> <p>AGREE. With new (and required) university-wide advisement systems taking effect beginning 2024-2025 academic year, the college academic advising team and program faculty will evaluate how effective it is in facilitating high quality student advisement.</p>

			- Expand support for students in career decisions and placement.	AGREE. OCRE students are currently required to meet with the OCRE program director as part of their capstone internship experience. Beginning fall 2025, OCRE will explore additional opportunities to integrate Career Services into our professional development courses (OCRE 2890 and 4890) to help facilitate students' transition to the workforce.
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three full-time faculty deeply involved in curriculum delivery. - All adjunct faculty hold at least a master's degree. - Thoughtful determination of teaching assignments and workloads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faculty turnover could impact instruction continuity and quality. - Gap in formalized support and mentoring processes for adjunct faculty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prioritize faculty retention with competitive compensation and professional development. - Formalize support and mentoring processes for all faculty members. - Develop strategies to mitigate faculty turnover. 	<p>NOTE. While more competitive pay would certainly facilitate the ability to recruit/retain faculty, the OCRE faculty compensation is in line with current college hiring practices (i.e. same starting salary and professional development funding opportunities).</p> <p>AGREE. Since its inception, OCRE has worked through building out the entire curriculum to help provide concrete support for our full and part-time faculty. With a small faculty team, this has been a work in progress and should be complete by the end of the 2024-2025 academic year. As of 2019, adjunct faculty are provided a mentor from a full-time faculty member most closely aligned to with the requisite teaching expertise.</p> <p>Note. Faculty turnover in OCRE has consisted of two faculty leaving the institution. This is equal to or less than what all other programs in the college have experienced in the last ten years. Like most turnover issues, it often comes down to two issues: performance and fit. That being said, the impacts of turnover in OCRE may be more pronounced due to the size of the program, and we continue to work towards stabilizing the program by having an established faculty team. To this end, OCRE will continue to work towards building a consistent faculty team (full-time and adjunct) to ensure our students consistently have a high-quality educational experience.</p>
Support (Staff, Administration, Facilities, Equipment, Library)	- Extensive equipment and facilities, including a climbing wall maintained by student workers and a Recreation Manager.	- Overloaded workload for the Recreation Manager due to increasing course and	- Create boundaries on hours and duties for the Recreation Manager to prevent burnout.	Note. The recreation manager, OCRE program director, and HPER department chair will meet in Summer 2024 to discuss strategies to identify factors affecting burnout and workload distribution.

		<p>enrollment numbers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom SW 405 has strong ambient noise affecting communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommend hiring additional staff to distribute the workload. - Establish a sustainable way to secure funds needed for replacement of outdoor equipment. - Take measures to reduce noise in classroom SW 405 for better communication and ADA compliance. 	<p>AGREE: In the 2024-2025 academic year, OCRE will work with our college development officer to identify opportunities to establish a gear/equipment endowment.</p> <p>AGREE: As of April 2024, this matter was discussed with university Facilities Management, and while the classroom is technically compliant with ADA, it is not a functional classroom. We have heard numerous complaints from students and faculty that it is challenging to hear in the classroom due to the overhead HVAC system. The OCRE program will work with the college and the university to prioritize securing the estimated \$80k-\$100k to install a ceiling with better acoustic qualities to improve the teaching/learning experience in SW 405.</p>
<p>Relationships with External Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong alignment with the program's core focus on community recreation. - Proximity to cities with active community recreation programs offers rich collaboration opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential partnerships with local cities like Clearfield and Ogden are underutilized. - Lack of formalized engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formally establish partnerships with local municipalities to integrate community projects into the curriculum. - Create a Community Recreation Advisory Board with local municipal representatives. - Organize joint community recreation initiatives and events. 	<p>Note. As described on page 37, table 12, OCRE has extensive community and institutional partners that we leverage to facilitate authentic community-based projects.</p> <p>AGREE. The OCRE program has identified a strategic priority to form an advisory board in the 2024-2025 academic year. We will leverage this advisory board to provide curricular input by industry professionals to ensure the OCRE program is meeting workforce needs.</p> <p>NOTE – OCRE currently engages with multiple community and industry partners on various events and initiatives including URPA, The Outdoor Retailer Show, the Outdoor Industry Association, and local nonprofit athletic/recreation events. However, once our advisory board is in place (2024-2025), OCRE will seek industry input to identify initiatives and events that may provide more impactful experiences for our students.</p>