

**Weber State University**  
**Outdoor & Community Recreation Education Program Review**  
**February 26th, 2024**



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## Review Team:

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## A. Mission

The Outdoor & Community Recreation Education (OCRE) program at Weber State University focuses on training professionals in recreation for personal and community benefit. Its mission aligns with Weber State University and the Moyes College of Education, emphasizing health, wellness, and sustainability. The curriculum includes foundational knowledge, management skills, experiential learning, and a significant internship, designed to meet national standards and improve student outcomes. The program's alignment with the college and university missions supports broader educational and community goals. This evaluation highlights the program's effective mission, comprehensive curriculum, and alignment with institutional priorities.

## B. Curriculum

The curriculum of the Outdoor & Community Recreation Education (OCRE) program is a dynamic and evolving component, designed to meet the emerging needs of students and the recreation industry alike. Despite its relatively recent inception, the program has swiftly established a robust curriculum, reflective of thoughtful planning, review processes, and a clear alignment with the program's mission. This evaluation explores the strengths of the OCRE curriculum, acknowledges its challenges, and offers recommendations for future development, with a special emphasis on enhancing community recreation offerings to capitalize on unique local opportunities.

### Strengths:

- The curriculum reflects thoughtful planning and review, consistently aligned with the program's mission to prepare students for professional roles in outdoor and community recreation. The use of a cohort model to navigate degree requirements fosters a community among students, enhancing their learning experience through shared challenges and experiences.
- A core of dedicated full-time faculty and academically qualified adjunct instructors ensures comprehensive and current education. This faculty foundation supports a stable delivery of the curriculum, enabling students to complete their degrees in a timely manner.
- The program has been proactive in curriculum adjustments based on student feedback and industry needs, showcasing an iterative process that keeps the curriculum relevant and effective.

### Weaknesses:

- Given its recent establishment, the program has faced challenges in course scheduling due to faculty numbers, affecting the regular offering of major/minor/general education courses. This has been mitigated by adjusting the scheduling to ensure each required course is offered at least once an academic year.
- Feedback from senior and freshman/sophomore students indicates a need for enhanced focus on the community side of recreation, suggesting an area for curriculum

development that has not been fully capitalized despite the program's proximity to some of the state's largest community recreation departments.

**Recommendations for Change:**

- Strengthen the community recreation aspect of the curriculum by developing new courses or enhancing existing ones to better leverage the program's geographical advantage and meet the expressed interests of students at all levels.
- Pursue opportunities for curriculum enhancement through closer collaboration with local community recreation departments, leveraging these partnerships for both curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities for students.

The OCRE program's curriculum is a responsive and student-centered approach, laying a strong foundation for future growth and adaptation. By focusing on areas for improvement, particularly in expanding the community recreation offerings, the program can further solidify its position as a leader in outdoor and community recreation education.

## **C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

Since its establishment in 2027, the OCRE program utilized 8 different learning outcomes, which assessed the students' performance in courses of different levels. In the fall of 2023, the program underwent revision of its student learning outcome assessment plan as recommended by the Dean of the College. The new assessment plan included 3 core student learning outcomes, which aligns the key organization for the parks and recreation, and all assessments are completed in the capstone course in the program. This new assessment plan is meant to capture the knowledge, skills and abilities of the students at/near completion of the curriculum.

**Strengths**

- Student learning outcomes are stated clearly in 3 outcomes. The alignment of the expected outcomes is based on the national accreditation standards as defined by the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT). A detailed assessment plan indicates specific measures and criteria.

**Challenges**

- The new learning outcomes were recently established in Fall 2023 when the program self-study was completed. Therefore, no assessment data based on these new learning outcomes are not included in the self-study.

The assessment criteria are ambitious, but achievable.

**Weaknesses**

- Partly due to the absence of the assessment data, no weaknesses were identified at this time.

**Recommendations for Change**

- Learning outcome 1, measure 4 (major course GPA) may not effectively assess students' knowledge/competency level as course grades can be influenced by factors

other than student performance. Therefore, using another direct measure may be more appropriate.

## **D. Academic Advising**

The academic advising segment of the program is a critical facet, designed to guide students through their educational journey with precision and personalized support. This analysis delves into the strengths, challenges, weaknesses, and recommendations for enhancing the advising process. It underscores the program's commitment to continuous improvement, the pivotal role of dedicated staff like Brittini Strickland, and the potential for deeper faculty involvement to enrich student outcomes in academic planning and career readiness.

### **Strengths**

- The academic advising within the program, led by Brittini Strickland, is a model of commitment and effectiveness. Strickland's deep investment in the program and student success, combined with a clear strategy for advising that is regularly assessed, sets a high standard. Her ability to collaborate and foster faculty relationships enriches the advising experience, reflecting a well-defined approach to guiding students through their academic journeys.

### **Challenges**

- The impending shift to mandatory advisor meetings for all advisees poses a challenge, potentially diluting the personalized attention to career planning and placement assistance.

### **Recommendations for Change:**

- Enhance the advising strategy to include a formalized role for faculty, ensuring their expertise and relationships with students are utilized in planning academic and career paths.
- Continue to assess and refine the advising process, focusing on maintaining high levels of individual assistance while adapting to new advising demands.
- Expand support for students in making career decisions and seeking placement by integrating faculty advisement into the existing structure, ensuring a comprehensive advising experience that addresses both academic and professional development needs.

## **E. Faculty**

The faculty of the Outdoor & Community Recreation Education (OCRE) program stands at the heart of its success, embodying a dedication and caliber of expertise that significantly contribute to the program's distinction. This section evaluates the faculty's alignment with the program's mission, their qualifications, and the processes in place to ensure ongoing quality and innovation in instruction. With a collective reputation that extends beyond the university into the

professional community, the OCRE faculty are a testament to the program's commitment to excellence in education and student success.

### **Strengths**

- The OCRE program is anchored by three full-time faculty members who demonstrate deep involvement in delivering the core curriculum and emphasis areas. This dedicated core, complemented by academically and professionally qualified adjunct faculty, ensures the program's stability and facilitates ongoing quality improvements.
- All adjunct faculty hold at least a master's degree, underscoring the program's high standards for faculty qualifications and its commitment to providing a comprehensive educational experience.
- The thoughtful determination of teaching assignments and workloads, guided by the program director and department chair, leverages faculty strengths and performance to align teaching effectiveness with the program's mission.

### **Weaknesses**

- The program faces challenges with faculty turnover, which could impact the continuity and quality of instruction over time.
- While the program benefits from a strong foundational structure for supporting faculty, there is a noted gap in formalized support and mentoring processes, particularly for adjunct faculty, which may affect the consistency of teaching quality and effectiveness.

### **Recommendations for Change**

- Prioritize efforts to retain current faculty members, recognizing the significant impact of their caliber on the program's success. Implement strategies such as competitive compensation, professional development opportunities, and a supportive work environment to enhance faculty satisfaction and retention.
- Formalize support and mentoring processes for both full-time and adjunct faculty to ensure all instructors receive consistent guidance and resources necessary for their roles. This could include structured mentorship programs, regular professional development workshops, and clearer communication of teaching expectations and resources.
- Develop and implement strategies to address and mitigate faculty turnover, ensuring that the program remains resilient and maintains its high instruction and student support standards. The OCRE utilizes a few key adjunct faculty who have been teaching courses for a number of years. Creating permanent/contracted positions will ensure the quality and continuity of the instructions.

The faculty within the OCRE program is indeed its greatest strength, bringing a level of expertise and dedication that is unmatched. Their respect from administration, peers, professional communities, and those in the field speaks volumes about their impact and the quality of education they provide.

## **F. Support (staff, administration, facilities, equipment, and library)**

The OCRE program is equipped with substantial equipment and spaces to offer a variety of experiential learning and outdoor and recreational activities. Following describes the strengths and challenges of the program that offer substantial amounts of educational opportunities to the students in the program and beyond.

### **Strengths**

- The equipment and facilities available for OCRE/REC courses are quite extensive. The climbing wall and equipment are maintained by 15 hourly student workers and a full-time Recreation Manager.
- Proximity to outdoor recreational areas facilitate a wide variety of outdoor and recreational activities as well as experiential learning opportunities.

### **Challenges**

- Currently, one full-time Recreation Manager manages all recreation (REC) courses (scheduling courses, finding and training adjunct instructors, acquiring permits, etc.), supervises the hourly student workers, acquires and maintains equipment, and teaches some REC courses. The workload of the Recreation Manager is a big concern, especially with the increasing number of courses and enrollment.
- The program is limited in sustainable funding source and relies on internal grants for purchases and replacement of some equipment including mountain bikes.

### **Weaknesses**

- The classroom that the OCRE program uses (SW 405) has a strong ambient noise, which makes communication (lectures/discussion) difficult.

### **Recommendations for Change**

- Boundaries/limits on hours and duties may need to be created by the department chair and program director to protect the Recreation Manager from overworking and potential burnout. It is highly recommended that an additional staff position to distribute the work of the current Recreation Manager.
- Establish a sustainable mechanism (such as course fees) to acquire appropriate funds for purchase and replacement of outdoor equipment used in the program courses.
- It is also recommended to take measures to reduce the noise in classroom SW 405 to make it ADA-compliant and easier for both instructors and students to communicate.

## **G. Relationships with External Communities**

The Outdoor and Community Recreation Education program at Weber State University is strategically positioned to enhance both student outcomes and local community engagement through its focus on community recreation. While the program is well-aligned with its core mission, connecting closely with the surrounding communities, there are untapped opportunities for collaboration with nearby cities that offer rich possibilities for student projects, internships,

and community service. However, the program currently faces challenges in fully leveraging these partnerships and lacks structured approaches for engaging with community partners effectively.

#### Strengths:

- **Alignment with Program Core:** The program's focus on community recreation is directly aligned with its mission, providing a strong foundation for building partnerships with local communities.
- **Potential for Rich Collaboration:** The proximity to cities with established or developing community recreation departments offers a wealth of opportunities for collaborative projects, internships, and community service initiatives.

#### Weaknesses:

- **Underutilized Partnerships:** Despite the natural alignment and potential for collaboration, partnerships with local municipalities may be underdeveloped or not fully leveraged to enhance the community recreation aspect of the program.
- **Lack of Formalized Engagement Strategies:** There may be an absence of formalized strategies for engaging with these potential partners, limiting the program's ability to systematically integrate community recreation opportunities into the curriculum.

#### Recommendations for Change:

- **Develop Strategic Partnerships:** Actively pursue and formalize partnerships with cities like Clearfield, Clinton, Ogden, and Farmington to integrate community recreation projects, internships, and service learning into the curriculum. This could involve creating a structured partnership framework that outlines the roles, expectations, and contributions of both the program and the community partners.
- **Enhance Curriculum with Community-Based Projects:** Incorporate community-based projects and internships into the curriculum that involve students directly in planning, implementing, and evaluating community recreation programs. This hands-on experience is invaluable for student learning and professional development.
- **Establish a Community Recreation Advisory Board:** Consider creating a specific advisory board focused on community recreation, including representatives from local municipalities, to provide ongoing insights, opportunities, and feedback on curriculum development and student engagement in community recreation.
- **Host Joint Initiatives and Events:** Organize and host joint initiatives, such as community recreation events, workshops, and seminars, in partnership with local municipalities. These events can serve as practical learning experiences for students and opportunities to showcase the program's commitment to community recreation to the broader community.

## **H. Results of Previous Program Reviews: Not Applicable**

## Summary Table of Strengths, Weaknesses, and Recommendations for Change

Area	Strengths	Weaknesses	Recommendations for Change
<b>Mission</b>	<p>- The Outdoor &amp; 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>-na</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>
<b>Curriculum</b>	<p>- Thoughtful planning and review, aligned with the program's mission. - Dedicated full-time faculty and qualified adjunct instructors ensure comprehensive education. - Proactive adjustments based on feedback and industry needs.</p>	<p>- Challenges in course scheduling due to faculty numbers. - 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. - Collaborate closely with local community recreation departments for curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities.</p>
<b>Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment</b>	<p>- Clear statement of student learning outcomes aligned with national accreditation standards. - Detailed assessment plan with specific measures and criteria.</p>	<p>- Absence of assessment data for newly established learning outcomes. - Major course GPA may not effectively assess knowledge/competency.</p>	<p>- Consider using another direct measure for assessing student knowledge/competency beyond major course GPA.</p>



<b>Academic Advising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commitment and effectiveness led by Brittni Strickland. - Clear strategy for advising that is regularly assessed.</li> <li>- Collaboration and faculty relationships enrich the advising experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory advisor meetings may dilute personalized attention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance advising strategy to formally include faculty in academic and career planning. - Continue to refine the advising process to maintain high levels of assistance. - Expand support for students in career decisions and placement.</li> </ul>
<b>Faculty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Faculty turnover could impact instruction continuity and quality. - Gap in formalized support and mentoring processes for adjunct faculty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritize faculty retention with competitive compensation and professional development. - Formalize support and mentoring processes for all faculty members. - Develop strategies to mitigate faculty turnover.</li> </ul>
<b>Support (Staff, Administration, Facilities, Equipment, Library)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive equipment and facilities, including a climbing wall maintained by student workers and a Recreation Manager.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overloaded workload for the Recreation Manager due to increasing course and enrollment numbers. - Classroom SW 405 has strong ambient noise affecting communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create boundaries on hours and duties for the Recreation Manager to prevent burnout. - 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships with External Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong alignment with the program's core focus on community recreation. - Proximity to cities with active community recreation programs offers rich collaboration opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential partnerships with local cities like Clearfield and Ogden are underutilized. - Lack of formalized engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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.</li> </ul>