Outdoor Pursuits is Open

The Recreational Sports Department opened up a brand new Outdoor Pursuits Center/Program on March 23rd in the Student Life Center. Outdoor Pursuits is a completely new program that consists of a Rental Center, Trip Planning Resource Area, Trip Planning Program, Community Bike Program and a Workshop Series.

Throughout the rest of the summer, the Center is open Monday through Friday 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday Noon to 3:00 p.m.

Rentals are based on an overnight daily rate (i.e. if you rented a tent today, it wouldn’t be due back until close of the next day).

Rentals are limited to two of the same item per person and can be rented for a period of up to 5 days. Gear can possibly be arranged to be rented for longer periods as well.

Equipment rentals range anywhere from $1 to $15 and must be paid when picking up of gear.

We currently accept cash, check or connections.

Patrons must have their Cortland ID and an updated Par-Q Form completed if not a student. The red sticker is no longer valid at the Student Life Center. Our OP Gear includes Mountain Bikes, Tents, Sleeping Bags, Stoves, Headlamps, Backpacks, Kayaks, Canoes, Skis, Snowshoes, and more, so come gEt OuTsIdE!!!!!!

Meet the OP Professional Staff

OP Assistant Director, Jason Harcum and Graduate Assistants Erica Behler and Rob Mead have been working non-stop to get the program up and running. Starting out in a closet right off of the dance studio in Park Center last fall, the program has come a long way. They finally feel that they have the foundation in place to be one of the best Outdoor Programs in the country. If you haven’t stopped by to see the OP Center yet, please do. There’s so much to see!!!!

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Special points of interest:

- Follow us on Cortland_OP
- Follow us on Facebook

SUNY Cortland Outdoor Pursuits
SUNY Cortland Climbing Wall
SUNY Cortland Community Bike Program
Outdoor Pursuits Tripping Program

Six student participants made history on Saturday, May 2nd as they joined OP Graduate Assistants Rob Mead and Erica Behler on the first ever SUNY Cortland Outdoor Pursuits trip.

The group met early Saturday morning and piled into a university van after a quick pre-trip meeting and headed to Letchworth State Park, which was just selected as the nation’s best state park in the country by the USA Today Readers Poll.

Overall, the consensus was that they really liked the park a lot. It can be a little bit of drive to make the trip in one day, but could easily be made into an overnight summer destination trip. The park is good for front country camping, has a lot of open space for grilling and Frisbee, and of course has absolutely stunning waterfalls, hence the name “Grand Canyon of the East.”

Outdoor Pursuits plans to build off of this first trip and hopes to offer at least one trip every weekend throughout the fall semester, starting the weekend of September 12th.

Trips will vary in length from day trips to overnight trips and even longer during breaks. Trips will also vary in activity and difficulty. There will be something for everyone. All OP trips will be advertised weekly on our website, on social media and by word of mouth.

We are open for trip ideas and want to hear what you would like to do. Please stop by the Outdoor Pursuits Center today to share your suggestions.

“Free” Outdoor Workshop Series

We hosted a “free” Monday night workshop series this past spring semester, available to all of the SUNY Cortland Community.

Workshops included an OP Staff Meet and Greet with the showing of an Outdoor Movie to kick the series off on March 30th. Workshops continued every Monday at 7:00 p.m. throughout the rest of the semester to include, Backcountry Baking on a Whisperlite Stove (one of OP’s backcountry stoves), Orienteering and a Lead Climbing Clinic at the Climbing Wall.

With the success and interest shown last semester, OP plans to continue the workshops in the fall and will host around 15 different workshops “free” to students, faculty/staff.

Workshops will include some more backcountry baking in addition to rappelling, adventure race prep, and etc.

Workshops will be arranged in monthly themes and will also include plenty of bike maintenance workshops.

Trip Planning Resource Area

Are you wanting to plan an outdoor trip somewhere that you can take friends and family but just are not sure of how to plan all of the details?

If so, that’s ok!! We have a trip planning resource area in OP that you can use. It consists of a map cabinet, Overhead Projector and plenty of tables and chairs.

The cabinet is stocked with a variety of great maps from detailed canoe maps of the Adirondacks to topographic maps of Cortland County. Whatever it might be, we probably have it or we can point you in the right direction.

We also believe that we have one of the best lounges on campus. It’s a great place to come and hang out and learn more about what Outdoor Pursuits has to offer.
OP Student Staff

Of course, we would not be where we are today without our student staff and volunteers.

OP currently employees 22 paid student staff that work at the OP Center and Climbing Wall and has a plethora of student volunteers that help with the Community Bike Program and Climbing Wall Maintenance/Route Setting.

Additionally, we are bringing in thirteen student leaders in the fall that will help out with our Tripping Program. They will attend a semester long apprenticeship and complete a training program consisting of peer mentors, outdoor expeditions and much more.

Outdoor Pursuits offers student workers the opportunity to apply theories learned in classrooms in more non traditional settings outside. Students also learn about Risk Management, the importance of planning and most importantly gives them a platform to use their Judgement and Decision Making in real life situations.

The whole concept is to offer students an opportunity to grow and develop as outdoor professionals, but also as individuals in addition to running a comprehensive Outdoor Pursuits Program for SUNY Cortland.

An end of semester staff Pot Luck was held on May 7th to celebrate OP’s first semester and show appreciation to the students that make it all happen on a daily basis. It included “gag” gifts and very tasty food cooked right outside of the center on our very own stoves.

OP Staff makes up just one part of the entire Recreational Sports Department’s student staff team that gets the job done.

Community Bike Program

The Community Bike Program continued to successfully provide an alternative transportation to the SUNY Cortland campus this past spring.

Every yellow bike was checked out within one week of opening and remained checked out throughout the entire semester.

OP is currently working on a digitized waiting list to make that program run smoother as well as planning a series of basic bike maintenance workshops and ride programs for the fall semester.

Just a reminder that, Yellow Bikes are free to checkout throughout the fall and spring semesters for a week at a time and red and blue bikes can be rented for the entire semester for $45.

The program plans to bring open hours when we will teach you how to work on your own bike during advertised times starting in the fall semester. You may use our tools and space to work on your bike, free of charge.

Learning from Other University Outdoor Programs

As we develop SUNY Cortland’s brand new Outdoor Pursuits Program, we have reached out to our neighboring universities in New York to learn more about their Outdoor Programs and to share knowledge and ideas.

We visited with the Cornell Outdoor Education Staff on April 21st and both Colgate’s and Hamilton College’s staff on May 7th.

The visits provided much insight and most importantly gave us an opportunity to build relationships and create connections with other local Outdoor Education Professionals.

We hope to continue to work with other universities and colleges in the state of New York in the future.
You should also check out the climbing facility in the SLC. It includes a 42 foot top rope area, a 13 foot bouldering wall and allows participants to perform 4 different types of climbing (top roping, auto belay, lead climbing and bouldering). Summer hours currently are, Monday—Friday 4:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday Noon—3:00 p.m. We are closed on July 4th.

Expect many new routes to come in the fall. All holds under each of the 9 anchors will be removed, cleaned and reset with new routes once a semester (meaning new routes every two weeks).

Collaborating with Other Departments on Campus

As we continue to build the Outdoor Pursuits Program, OP staff has worked with and plans on continuing to reach out and work with many other departments on campus.

OP would like to extend a special thank you to Maggie Haefele & Team, Information Resources (for helping to digitize our forms)

Gerry Hill & Team, Campus Technology Services (for helping us with all of our computers)

Brad Snyder & Team, Campus Technology Services (for helping us with our projector and stereo)

John Foley, Physical Education Department (for helping to facilitate an Adaptive Climbing Clinic at the wall),

Amy Shellman, Recreation Parks and Leisure Studies (for hosting the Adirondack Trail Blazers Reunion in the Outdoor Pursuits Center)

Residential Life Staff, Residential Life and Housing (for allowing OP to speak and share information at their meeting)

Thomas Pasquarello, Political Science Department (for sharing his knowledge on the history of the Adirondacks)

The entire Physical Plant Staff, Physical Plant (for helping us build storage systems for all of our equipment, etc.)

Robert Rubendall, Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education (for sharing outdoor knowledge and hosting a challenge course orientation training course)

Michelle Cryan, Publications and Electronic Media Office (for helping us with our website and social media)

Tom Quinn, Physical Education Department (hosting a class at the climbing wall)

Eamon O’Shea & Mason Young, Campus Security Systems (for helping us with our card access, etc.)

Our SLC Custodial Staff (for keeping our space amazingly clean)

and many, many more!!!!!

We would not be where we are at today without your time, help and support. Thank you!!