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Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks. Second Edition

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PARTNERS IN THE PARKS

*Field Guide to an Experiential
Program in the National Parks*

Second Edition



Heather Thiessen-Reily
AND Joan Digby, EDITORS

PARTNERS IN THE PARKS

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Program in the National Parks*

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Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks

Second Edition

Edited by **Heather Thiessen-Reily**
and **Joan Digby**

with

Melissa Antinori, Bill Atwill, Kristy Biolsi, Emily Blair,
James P. Clarke, Dalton Dorrell, Anjelica Harlow,
Laura Harrington, Brook Kelly, Kathleen King, Josh LaMore,
Johnny MacLean, Chloé Margulis, Kathleen Nolan,
Dana Reid, Connie Rudd, Alysia Schmidt, Brian White,
and Alison Mills Willis

Series Editor | Jeffrey A. Portnoy
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National Collegiate Honors Council
Monograph Series

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DEDICATION TO OUR PARTNERS THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

It is our honor to represent the National Collegiate Honors Council in congratulating the National Park Service on the occasion of its glorious centennial. The partnership that the National Collegiate Honors Council entered into with the National Park Service almost a decade ago, when the Partners in the Parks program was created, has immeasurably enriched the lives of undergraduate honors students and faculty from throughout the United States and abroad.

This second edition of NCHC's *Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks* has recorded with delight the pedagogy, relationships, anecdotes, photographs, journal entries, essays, poetic expressions, and intellectual and ethical development that have emerged from this educational partnership and the PITP experience.

We hope that this book reflects NCHC's appreciation for all that a host of NPS rangers and other staff members have done to welcome honors students and faculty into this nation's national parks and to assist with and enrich these Partners in the Parks adventures. We thank NPS for allowing America's national parks to become our honors classroom.

The National Collegiate Honors Council salutes the National Park Service for all that it has done to fulfill its mission to preserve "unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." We cherish this relationship and anticipate that it will endure and thrive throughout the second hundred years of the National Park Service.

With deepest gratitude,
Dr. Jerry Herron, President
Dr. Hallie Savage, Executive Director
National Collegiate Honors Council



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This monograph is the collaborative effort of people who have led and participated in Partners in the Parks programs all around the country. The contributors to our first edition provided words, experience, and encouragement, and many have continued to do so through the creation of our second edition, especially Bill Atwill, Joan Digby, and Kathleen King. With the second edition, we have increased the voices of students (Emily Blair, Dalton Dorrell, Anjelica Harlow, Josh LaMore, Chloé Margulis, and Dana Reid) and rangers (Connie Rudd, Alysia Schmidt, and Dalton Dorrell); we have also added new faculty perspectives (Melissa Antinori, Kristy Biolsi, Laura Harrington, Brook Kelly, Kathleen Nolan, and Alison Mills Willis) to longtime PITP faculty (Bill Atwill, James P. Clarke, Kathleen King, Johnny MacLean, and Brian White). All have generously contributed their ideas and experience so that others may find in this model encouragement to participate in existing Partners in the Parks programs and to propose new adventures.

A special debt of thanks is owed to Matt Nickerson and Todd Petersen, who oversaw these explorations and were our gurus and guides for many of the journeys. For years, their home institution, Southern Utah University, has been a most generous contributor to this program, for which we are extremely thankful. Matt, Todd, and SUU have influenced countless faculty and students with their passion, knowledge, and vision, and all of us who have come to know and embrace this program will forever be in their debt.

We are also grateful to have Paul Roelandt, Superintendent at Cedar Breaks National Monument, as our liaison with the National Park Service. He presents our proposals to the many park officers, rangers, and staff members who have shown us every courtesy imaginable. Our thanks to all at NPS who have enlightened our groups with their expertise and helped this program grow. NPS Rangers have shared their passion, enthusiasm, and commitment to their jobs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

with countless students and faculty and are an integral part of this program's success.

From the outset the National Collegiate Honors Council has encouraged and supported PITP with funding and advertising and stewarded the efforts of this standing committee for many years. As PITP's organization has fully transitioned from SUU to the NCHC national office, we celebrate the full partnership that has developed. Many thanks to all of our honors colleagues.

Finally, thanks to those who have read and guided this manuscript: Joan Digby; Bill Atwill; Kathleen King; and Jeff Portnoy, General Editor of the NCHC Monograph Series.

Heather Thiessen-Reily
Western State Colorado University
1 September 2016

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



EMILY BLAIR participated in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon PITP in 2012. Since then, she has graduated with honors from Virginia Tech with a major in English, double-focusing in creative writing and literature. A product of southwestern Virginia, she currently lives in Louisville, Kentucky, where she attends the University of Louisville's graduate program in English. If she had to pick something she misses most, it would be the mountains.



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JOAN DIGBY is Director of the Honors College at LIU Post and a past president of the National Collegiate Honors Council. She is a member of the PITP Committee and NCHC's Publications Board. She is a professor of English with a specialization in animal fables; animals real and fictional are her abiding interest.



DALTON DORRELL served as the TA for the 2015 Black Canyon/Curecanti PITP program. He graduated in May 2016 with honors from Western State Colorado University with a major in history. His honors thesis examined the role and development of the national parks of Utah. He is a passionate and knowledgeable advocate for the National Park Service and is well on his way to fulfilling his dream of becoming a permanent park ranger.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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LAURA HARRINGTON is an academic adviser in and proud alum of the University of Washington Honors Program. With her colleagues, she co-directs Partners in the Parks programs in Olympic National Park and Mount Rainier National Park. In her spare time, she loves exploring the beautiful Pacific Northwest by foot, paddle, or peddle, and she can be found tramping the high country at every opportunity, come rain, sun, or snow. Whether here in a national park system or in a park elsewhere around the world, some of her best memories are those of challenge, exploration, and quiet moments with fellow nature enthusiasts.



BROOK KELLY is Associate Director of Academic Services in the University of Washington Honors Program. She advises students, teaches both domestically and abroad, manages admissions, and directs the Bonderman Travel Fellowship for the honors program. She is a co-director of Partners in the Park in Olympic and Mount Rainier National Parks. In addition to her work at UW, she is a birth doula and spends considerable time thinking about maternal health issues all over the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



KATHLEEN KING has organized five PITP projects with three in Acadia (2008, 2009, 2016) and two in the Everglades (2014, 2015) and assisted with the Honors Director/Faculty PITP Retreat in Rocky Mountain NP (2015). She currently serves as Director of the Hillsborough Community College Honors Institute and has used the PITP model to develop other projects and programs for HCC students.



JOSH LAMORE lives in Brooklyn, NY. After his Partners in the Parks internship, he has worked for the Central Park Conservancy and was commissioned in 2015 by the Zion Natural History Association to write an official book for Cedar Breaks National Monument. Currently, he is working as a researcher and planning advisor for Cedar Breaks' new museum project: *Stories of the Past*. He will be pursuing an MS in library and information science at the Pratt Institute in the Spring of 2017.



JOHNNY MACLEAN has led Partners in the Parks trips each year since 2011. Through strong relationships with Sequoia, Glacier, and Great Basin National Parks, he has helped honors students from across the country to struggle with difficult and controversial issues, enjoy amazing recreational opportunities, and become stewards of spectacular mountains. He has also taught geology at Southern Utah University since 2010, building experiential-learning opportunities for undergraduates in America's public lands.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



CHLOÉ MARGULIS is a computer science major and pre-law student in the LIU Post Honors College. She has a passion for travel and participated in her second PITP adventure at Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i, during the summer of 2016. She writes and publishes articles about her journeys.



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CONNIE RUDD was an English, journalism, and ecology teacher at Arapahoe High School in Littleton, CO, from 1972–1977. She joined the National Park Service in 1979 as an educator and interpreter. She served as a park ranger at Grand Canyon National Park; Deputy Superintendent at Shenandoah National Park; and Superintendent at Oklahoma City National Memorial, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area. She retired from the NPS in 2014. She is also an accomplished professional nature photographer.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



ALYSIA SCHMIDT was an interpretive ranger at Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park for more than ten years. Dedicated to this powerful landscape, she spent several days sharing her expertise with students and faculty on both the 2012 and 2013 PITP trips.



HEATHER THIESSEN-REILY has led the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park/Curecanti National Recreation Area program since its inception and has participated in numerous NCHC mini-PITP programs as well as the first faculty-based binational PITP on the US-Mexican border. She is Professor of History at Western State Colorado University in Gunnison, Colorado. Her PITP experiences have resulted in the development of a history of the national parks course.



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FOREWORD

Heather Thiessen-Reily
Western State Colorado University

It was a clear day, and I was sitting in an Ancestral Tewa Pueblo cavate in the Tsankawi Village on the Pajarito Plateau, looking out over the juniper and piñon to the distant Sangre de Cristo Mountains. I could just hear the voices of my History of the National Park Service seminar students discovering ancient stairs in the cliffs and debating the age and authenticity of the abundant petroglyphs. I began, as historians are wont to do, to think about stories: stories that were embedded in this landscape over time; stories Bandelier National Monument and the NPS are preserving; stories I was teaching my students; and finally the story Joan Digby and I were writing in this monograph about the decade-long development of Partners in the Parks.

Partners in the Parks is first and foremost a story of collaboration among faculty who have a passion for the national parks. It is a story characterized by encouragement, communication, and inspiration. PITP co-founder Todd Peterson recently recommended Terry Tempest Williams's new book, *The Hour of Land*, to Joy Ochs, another PITP leader, and Joy posted this comment: "Reading this book feels like searching my own memory. Everything she describes, I have seen with my own eyes." Joy's words echoed Williams's observation: "Our national parks are memory palaces where our personal histories reside" (20). For ten years Partners in the Parks has facilitated opportunities for participants to experience these memory palaces and to create their own personal park histories. And while all visitors have their own experiences within these places, it is in the national parks where we see the personal coexisting with the universal. *The Hour of Land* is beautifully written, but in some ways it is a book any one of us involved with PITP could have also written for we speak the languages of the parks and find

FOREWORD

our passion mirrored in Williams's powerful words describing her connections to twelve national parks. For my story, I would include exploring the Dr. Seuss landscape of Joshua Tree National Park with my own children; gazing in awe over the Black Canyon as it inspires PITP students; sharing with my NPS seminar students, the fresh scent of apricot blossoms in the campsite of Capitol Reef National Park; risking the weather to find Navajo Arch in Arches National Park; exploring the cavates and petroglyphs of Bandelier NM; feeling the very first spring pulse of Medano Creek in the Great Sand Dunes National Park; and contemplating how and why to preserve a bomb testing site for the Manhattan Project NHP. The universal coexists with the personal.

How I became involved with the second edition of this book is a result of how my story intermingles with the 100 years of the National Parks Service and the ten years of Partners in the Parks programs. It includes five offerings of the Black Canyon PITP program and my new History of the NPS seminar. It is but one in this book, which contains stories of my colleagues, of our students and of rangers and the parks themselves. These stories of our passion for these sacred places and their importance to us all. I never could have imagined how my understanding of national parks could deepen until my path crossed with Matt Nickerson and Todd Peterson of Southern Utah University and even more so when they introduced me to the amazing Joan Digby of LIU Post. I had signed up for the first NCHC PITP Faculty Institute (Borders 2008) out of my own research and teaching interests in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. Little did I know and even less could I have expected that this experience would result in my developing a new Partners in the Parks program. After a week of camping in Organ Pipe National Park and in the Pinacate Nature Reserve in Mexico, I thought to myself, "I could do this, and I have a national park right down the road!" You have to understand that this decision was not easy for me, an historian and a Sage-on-the-Stage kind of teacher. The idea of developing a PITP program that requires living and camping with students and stepping boldly out of the four walls of the traditional classroom was daunting. But having served as Director of the

FOREWORD

Western State Colorado University Honors Program for four years and my own inter- and multidisciplinary interests gave me enough courage to approach Matt and Todd with the idea. They proved to be an incredible support duo, and when Joan came into my life, I was hooked: the following summer the PITP Black Canyon program was born.

I share this origin story because if I can do PITP, others can too. Over the years my involvement with PITP expanded my interest in the national parks to public history and finally to developing a course entitled History of the National Park Service. The heart of this engagement remains Partners in the Parks and the rangers, faculty, and students who quickly become its passionate supporters. It is a program that inspires and seduces its participants. In August 2014, Professors Gwen Jensen and Deborah Whitt of Wayne State College joined my Black Canyon program to “check PITP out,” and it was wonderful seeing them offer their own PITP for the Missouri National Recreational River in 2015 and 2016.

In *The Hour of Land*, Williams reflects how she “no longer sees America’s national parks as ‘our best idea,’ but our evolving idea” (13). As this second edition of *Partners in the Parks* attests, PITP has evolved as well. This monograph is addressed to all those people who might wish to propose, lead, or participate in a PITP adventure at any of the more than 400 National Park Service parks, forests, rivers, seashores, museums, monuments, recreation areas, and historic sites around the country waiting to be explored. While the immediate audience for this model is obviously undergraduate honors students, faculty, honors administrators, and program leaders, many elements of PITP might be adapted by other groups of all age levels with an interest in developing experiential programs in the national parks. Park rangers and other NPS professionals will also find in this monograph a sense of how much their work is appreciated and how great an educational impact their NPS programs can make.

This work is loosely divided into three parts that introduce the reader to the Partners in the Parks program and its evolution (the prefatory material and Chapters 1 and 2); reveal the impact of

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Partners in the Parks programs (Chapters 3, 4, and 5); and finally provide practical advice and logistics for establishing a Partners in the Parks program (Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9). For the second edition, we wanted to increase the number of ranger and student voices to highlight the value and impact of these programs. Student voices are embedded throughout the chapters and five of ten Field Notes are written by student participants. Essays by Rangers Connie Rudd and Alysia Schmidt appear in the book, and Dalton Dorrell unites the ranger and student voice in his Field Notes piece. The other chapters and Field Notes present the reflections and assessments of faculty who have led numerous Partners in the Parks programs over the years and who hope their experiences inspire others to develop new programs for the future. Information about current and future PITP adventures is available at partnersintheparks.org.

As the national parks head into their second century, they can look back on 100 years of development and progress. As John Hope Franklin observes, they “are greatly admired. Inspiring us, uplifting our spirits, they serve as powerful reminders of our national origins and destiny” (422). Indeed there is much to celebrate about their twentieth-century achievements, but they are already looking forward—determining how to maintain their relevancy and further the preservation of the most important sites of the United States into their second century. Their twenty-first-century vision is, write Howard Baker and J. Bennett Johnston, for “a future in which national parks—protected forever and for all—help forge a better world” (432). To accomplish this goal, Baker and Johnston observe, the NPS will be seeking “to strengthen education, reduce impacts of climate change, provide meaningful opportunities for young people, support a healthier and more interconnected citizenry, preserve extraordinary places that reflect our diverse national experience and safeguard our life-sustaining natural heritage on land and sea” (432). Partners in the Parks shares in many of those goals, especially for our student participants. And while Partners in the Parks and the National Collegiate Honors Council have accomplished much these last ten years, like the NPS, the PITP story is not yet finished—it will grow and flourish as long as we care for

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these landscapes and take the time to listen to the stories they offer. PITP will continue to offer programs that allow honors students to meet the miraculous in each park. These experiences will transform their lives, inspiring their passions and intellects, so that they will commit themselves to the protection of these places into the next century.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE PARTNERS IN THE PARKS COMMITTEE

Kathleen King and Bill Atwill

As current co-chairs of the National Collegiate Honors Council Partners in the Parks Committee, we are pleased to introduce this second edition of the monograph about this hallmark program. We both have been engaged from its inception, and following our experience as leaders of the Acadia PITP, we have expanded our commitment, leading adventures in the Great Smoky Mountains, Cape Hatteras, and the Everglades, which readers will hear about in the chapters that follow. A new variation for faculty and administrators to the PITP enterprise is a retreat for leaders and faculty; one was held in the Rocky Mountains in 2015, and another took place in Acadia in 2016.

As PITP has grown, so have the committee that guides it, the students who have participated in these adventures, and the engagement of the National Park Service. Over the years the participants have bonded as partners, and we hope that readers of this monograph will think about sending students—or even themselves—on these exceptional adventures, think about a national park in their region at which they might host a seminar, and consider how PITP can enrich experiential education in their honors program or college.

We have an open committee that meets at the NCHC annual conference; additionally, as representatives of that committee, we are readily available. Our mission is engaging students with our national parks. But we also encourage people to visit or join our committee, to participate in Partners in the Parks programs, and to help us grow this rich and unique college honors experience.

KING'S CANYON

Emily Blair

PITP Sequoia National Park participant in 2013

This place is beautiful
but not mine.

Will you lend me something?
I'm not sure what.
Someone hands me a flaming stick
and I think it will do
for now.

My mountains would say,
It's fine, baby.
Rest your feet. Stay awhile.
I'll be here tomorrow.
They are patient.

These mountains say,
You're weak, baby,
too used to those shaded woods.
Keep going—
there's a peak over there
with your name on it.
They are young and raw.

And you say,
Drink this water.
We can't have you too tired.
And it's not your voice I hear.

KING'S CANYON

This place is beautiful
but not home.
I'm running away
one plodding step at a time.

A borrowed reality—
I see the Milky Way for the first time
and admit I'm here for the wrong reasons,
blinking away funeral tears
and laughing over rice for the third night in a row—
when you ask how he died I wish there was something
more fitting for an adventurer—
maybe I can fabricate something
from leftover stars and trees grimacing
in windswept contortions—
I need something more like
something we'd like to talk about.

Will you lend me a hand?
I'm too heavy for me right now.
And someone always does.

I lie on my back and worship something new every day—
a sequoia older than my imagination,
the peak of a mountain I could not climb,
the sun, brilliant white in the thin sky,
my own aching body,
knees popping, back cracking—
I am growing into the image of a god.

KING'S CANYON

I eat granola and fall in love a lot,
and wipe funeral tears on a bandana.
You say you are proud of me,
as scared and wobbly and weak as I seem,
as green and thin and wispy as I used to be,
and I know I could walk toward a year of sunsets
like those I have seen here.

Will you lend me something?
An ear will be fine.
And someone always does.

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PHOTO BY JOHNNY MACLEAN

Sequoia National Park

CHAPTER 1

A Ranger's Welcome

CONNIE RUDD

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE—RETIRED

Connie Rudd left a career in education to join the National Park Service in 1979. Her first NPS assignments were as an educator and interpreter. During her career with the NPS, she served as a park ranger at Grand Canyon National Park; Deputy Superintendent of Shenandoah National Park; and Superintendent of the Oklahoma City National Memorial, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, and the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area.

The national park system has been called “America’s Best Idea,” a democratic concept that the parks belong to all citizens and should be enjoyed by all citizens and, in return, stewarded by citizens. It is also an idea so large that it has been shared with the world: many nations have adopted the idea and are creating millions of acres of protected land for scientific and recreational use.

The national park system has also been called the largest university in the world, with over 400 branch campuses, brimming with natural and cultural resources, ready for citizens to discover and to launch a lifelong learning quest. Every state in the union now hosts at least one unit of the national park system, so reaching a national park (or monument, historic site, battlefield, seashore, lakeshore, recreation area, or scenic rivers and trails) is a day's drive for most people. The National Park Service (NPS) is the keeper of this nation's treasures: its history, domestic struggles and wars, both at home and abroad; its natural resources including rivers, lakes, mountains, canyons, deserts, glaciers, forests, wildlife, and even microbes. The parks hold information we do not even know we need to know, and they challenge scientists and researchers in both the natural sciences and social sciences to unlock new understanding about the networks and complexities of the world we occupy.

National parks not only challenge the intellect, but they inspire the soul. Who can stand at the rim of the Grand Canyon National Park or the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and not be awed by the sheer scale of the landscape and the ancient walls of the canyon? Who cannot be thrilled by the thunder of a roaring river or the pounding surf at the ocean's edge? Who cannot ponder the interrelatedness of species when seeing a massive grizzly bear in the Grand Teton National Park, a flock of thousands of Sandhill Cranes at the Great Sand Dunes National Park, whales or dolphins breaching offshore at Assateague or Point Reyes National Seashore,



Ranger Connie Rudd extends a perch to a Harris's hawk.

or the quiet, quick run of a grey wolf in Yellowstone National Park? Who cannot contemplate the whys and wherefores of the Civil War while standing on the battlefield at Gettysburg National Battlefield, then at Fredericksburg, Shilo, and Appomattox Court House National Historic sites? Who cannot be moved when seeing the blood of a nation spilled on the pillow that held President Lincoln's head the night of his assassination at Ford's Theater? And who cannot internalize the root causes of terrorism at Oklahoma City National Memorial or Flight 93 National Memorial and then commit to being a part of the solution?

Each unit of the national park system is designated by the U.S. Congress for a specific purpose that is stated in the authorizing legislation. Uniting the over 400 units is the mission of the National Park Service, articulated in the Organic Act of 1916, which established the federal agency to manage its national park lands. The short version of the mission statement states: "The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." Three very important concepts are embedded in the mission statement: preservation, education, and values. Not many federal agencies have been granted such lofty and time-enduring missions: the park system was established in perpetuity. The National Park Service provides a nationwide network of educational resources incorporating nearly any discipline imaginable. Each park has specialists in interpretation and education on staff who have developed curriculum for many academic levels. Each park stewards its resources while offering a science or scholarship component supported by experts. PITP programs provide participants with access to all these resources by bringing university students into the parks, where the next generation will have a transformative experience and where new ideas develop and new careers are born.

As a park superintendent, I was introduced to Partners in the Parks through Western State Colorado University in Gunnison, Colorado. The WSCU Honors Program partnered with the NPS through two closely located units: Curecanti National Recreation

Area and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Honors students from all over the nation experienced an intensive week at both parks. At Black Canyon National Park, the natural and educational resources included geology, paleontology, archaeology, wilderness, and native plant and wildlife communities in a rugged canyon environment. For Curecanti National Recreation Area, they included geology, archaeology and paleontology, aquatic resources and ecology, recreation, riparian plant and wildlife communities, and pre-historic and pioneer history and landscapes. Partners in the Parks not only provides educational opportunities for students but helps faculty envision broader curriculum and experiential-education goals for all their courses. In addition, the website <<http://www.nps.gov>> offers imaginative possibilities for students and faculty.

The PITP experience has transformed career plans and trajectories because NPS hires students during the summer break to work seasonally in the parks, gaining academic as well as hands-on experience that enhances their resumé and prospects for future employment. Moreover, the local park employees are networked across the nation, helping students in the local university find opportunities in other parks that may suit their academic pursuits.

National parks are for people. If people do not embrace the value of these parks, then they will not endure and countless treasures will be lost. Lifelong learning is one of the greatest values parks have to offer—often at no cost. Educators, students, and park professionals have much to gain by strengthening such partnerships. The NCHC Partners in the Parks programs are an excellent and successful example of bringing these three constituencies together in pursuit of the goals of the National Park Service: enjoyment, education, and inspiration.



In our first Field Notes entry, University of Washington environmental science major Dana Reid illustrates the personal, professional, and educational benefits of Partners in the Parks programs.

Unexpected Discoveries at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

DANA REID
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

We had just set up our second campsite for the week at the bottom of Colorado's Black Canyon, along the roaring banks of the Gunnison River. The thousand-foot-tall sheer cliffs of the canyon towered above us and descended almost to the very banks of the river, allowing for only a narrow strip of vegetation on either side of the rushing waters. Together with Hannah, a program participant from Texas, I followed the rocky trail that meandered away from camp along the riverbank to see where it led. Neither of us expected to find what waited around a bend in the river. Not thirty feet above us on the steep, wooded incline that ran between the cliffs and the river was a small black bear. We both immediately froze, then quickly grabbed our cameras and snapped a few pictures. Ignoring us, the bear went about the business of eating acorns off the scrubby Gambel oaks. This was my first time seeing a bear in the wild, and even though we were only able to watch her amble through the brush for a few minutes, the moment was a magical experience. My first bear encounter was one of many unexpected discoveries I made at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

I go camping relatively often, and my parents have been dragging me to our local national parks for most of my life, so I thought I knew what I was getting into on this weeklong program to Colorado. I had clear expectations for what my Partners in the Park experience would entail: I would see some stunning scenery, learn a thing or two about the national park system, and, most importantly, get away from the city. I looked forward to being out in the wilderness and leaving behind all the bustle, deadlines, and worries of my urban life. Looking back, I was too focused on the simple goal of escape to consider what else this trip could offer me. Certainly the trip's surprising events—experiencing a pouring thunderstorm, jumping into an ice-cold river, watching a meteor shower from the top of a van, listening to a dozen informative talks with rangers, writing haikus, and enjoying a fireside presentation from a cowboy poet—were not in the original plan, but I am glad they happened.

As an environmental science major, I expected the highlights of my Partners in the Parks experience to focus on the natural world. At the start of my trip, I was especially excited to learn about Black Canyon's flora and fauna, participate in some amateur bird watching, and immerse myself in nature. I quite unexpectedly discovered, however, that the most engaging parts of the program often had nothing to do with nature at all. On the first day of the program, what I enjoyed the most was talking about archaeology and history with a student guide from Western State Colorado University, our program's host school. I listened attentively as we examined some of the dig sites on top of W Mountain—just two miles from downtown Gunnison—where artifacts of the Folsom people who had once lived in the region thousands of years ago were unearthed. We spent the second day with Black Canyon Park rangers and the park's superintendent; they gave lectures that I thought would be dry but ended up being fascinating. One of my favorite talks included a tour of the archives at Cimarron, learning about the history of Black Canyon and viewing some of the artifacts preserved from the early days of the park. Not being a huge history fan, I was surprised by how much I enjoyed the rangers' presentations.

The week continued in a blur of activities and surprises: spotting our infamous black bear, touring a dam, spying galaxies through the telescopes of amateur astronomers, and being treated to a thunderstorm with pouring rain and flashes of forked lightning that lit up miles of the canyon at a time. Our next-to-last day included ranger talks about water management history and invasive species, and we ended the week with a hike and three separate sessions of nature writing.

Reflecting on our group's experiences, I unexpectedly found that what I enjoyed the most had not been the nature-related activities but our talks with the rangers about history, geology, and park management. I enjoyed learning about their passions and goals and the strength of their belief in the good that national parks bring the world. I never met a group of people more committed to their job and more unified in their mission than the rangers of Black Canyon.

Their excitement about being able to work in such a beautiful place was awe-inspiring. It did not take long for me to decide that working at a national park alongside people like them was something I wanted for my own future. While seeing my first bear—as well as my first antelope, golden eagle, and dusky grouse—was certainly something I will never forget, the people I encountered on this trip are really what made my week special. Thus, the most influential part of my trip was not the nature within the park: it was the park rangers who protected it.



Ranger Murray Shoemaker talks about the geology of the Black Canyon.

CHAPTER 2

Origin and Evolution

HEATHER THIESSEN-REILY
WESTERN STATE COLORADO UNIVERSITY

JOAN DIGBY
LIU POST

As the National Park Service celebrates its centennial, Partners in the Parks marks a celebration of its own: a decade of providing honors students from across the country the opportunity to immerse themselves in some of America's most beautiful and transcendent landscapes.

Over the last ten years, PITP's weeklong immersion seminars have been predicated on a three-fold purpose: **to educate** students about the national parks, **to engage** them in recreational activities that are the essence of park experiences, and ultimately **to urge stewardship** of these treasured spaces through a lifetime of involvement. Terry Tempest Williams, in telling the story of two generations of Rockefellers and their role in the creation of the Grand Teton National Park, reflected that the "fervor of their

passion for parks” grew from their belief that “the national parks were centerpieces of a democratic society” (27). Partners in the Parks is a program designed to inspire commitment to not only America’s national parks but to our democratic values among honors students who will become professionals, parents, citizens, and leaders with a conscience.

PITP began as a core idea of Joan Digby, who presented it in a 2006 email to the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) membership. Joan recalls the birth of the idea as “a big bang inside my head.” After she had attended the planning meeting for the National Collegiate Honors Council Denver conference in 2006, she stood on a peak at Rocky Mountain National Park, looking across a sea of pines at a mountain range in the distance. It struck her that few of her Long Island students had ever seen this spectacular place. Joan recalled:

In the split second after that personal explosion caught me unaware, I felt the aftershocks. If my students had never been here, then other students might not have been here either. As the circles widened, I thought about how honors students from all over the country might be enriched and impassioned by the influence of this vista as well as other unique and staggeringly sublime landscapes that characterize America’s national parks. When I returned home, I took a straw poll in my English classes. I was fascinated by the results:

Fewer than 10% of the students had ever been west of the Mississippi. All of them were conscious of local beaches, but none knew that they were part of a national seashore under the administration of the National Park Service. Because of early school trips, many knew that Theodore Roosevelt, so critical to the inception and founding of the national parks, lived only six miles from campus in a presidential home, Sagamore Hill, but few were aware that the house is a national historic site administered by NPS. The students who had been to national parks, primarily on the east coast,

were thrilled at the prospect of going west to visit these preserves and wanted to sign up to attend. Their enthusiasm was contagious, and so PITP was born.

Four years earlier, in 2002, Ken Burns turned to the national parks for a new documentary series entitled *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*. In a live chat hosted by PBS on July 10, 2009, he responded to a question about his inspiration for the show:

I've always been interested in how my country works; all of my films have asked the deceptively simple question, 'Who are we?' I think our landscape, that is the physical geography of our country has been most revealing of character, good and bad, and to my mind the national parks represent our best selves, a place at least for this filmmaker where we can come the closest to deepening that simple question. (Burns, PBS)

That America's geography and its wild places are a source of national character is not a new idea. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, David Ross Brower, and many more have posited such notions, and many have used this connection to argue for the protection and preservation of landscapes across the country. But as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gave way to the twenty-first, America seemed more reflective of urbanization and an ever-growing disconnect with the land and wild places.

The idea that character could be connected to nature received an energetic boost with the 2005 publication of *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv. Louv made a persuasive argument that exposure to nature was essential for a child's physical and emotional health and development. Invoking the idea of Burn's question "who are we?" Louv observed at the end of his work: "We have such a brief opportunity to pass on to our children our love for this Earth, and to tell our stories. These are the moments when the world is made whole" (316). The same ideas were what motivated Joan Digby to send her email calling on the NCHC community of scholars, teachers, administrators, and students.

Among those who responded with considerable enthusiasm were two seasoned hikers and campers, Matt Nickerson, the honors leader, and Todd Petersen, his faculty colleague at Southern Utah University (SUU), an institution at the hub of Utah's red rock canyons. For them the project was ideal and spoke to the core of their imagination, passion, and expertise. There they were, surrounded by national parks and monuments, teaching at a university with a major in survival training, a rental shop filled with camping gear, and supportive students and faculty. The SUU administration embraced the program, offering to serve as a sponsor and to provide a home base. Matt and Todd had previously led many student explorations to Utah parks. Matt explained: "I feel a great need to provide students with opportunities to meet the world face-to-face. . . . Our campus curricula ask students to read, hear, watch, and discuss but rarely requires them to touch, taste, feel and do" (14).

It was their inspiration to discuss the project with their "parks guy," Paul Roelandt, Park Superintendent at Cedar Breaks National Monument, who responded with an offer of assistance that has proven invaluable. He remains for NCHC the National Park Service



Matt Nickerson and Todd Peterson—two pillars of PITP—prepare for the day's outing.

Key Official. Through his sponsorship, the PITP idea was presented to the National Park Service, which boosted the launch of the program with a \$63,000 challenge grant from the 2016 Centennial Initiative. This grant was met by matching funds and in-kind contributions from NCHC, including the member colleges and universities that hosted PITP programs. As it turned out, PITP was one of very few projects in higher education to be funded by the NPS.

From its inception PITP's success has been built on inspired and visionary support. Every species on earth has needed some help in getting started, and PITP could not have been better served. Like the national parks themselves, beginning PITP took tenacity, shared vision, and patience (Williams, *Hour* 28). Southern Utah University, the National Collegiate Honors Council, Cedar Breaks National Monument, and the National Park Service have been excellent and cooperative parents. One idea and four shepherding organizations built a solid foundation and transformed theory into praxis. Over the next ten years, educational institutions and their faculty and individual parks and their rangers have nurtured and promoted the evolution of the program.

The program's birth came at a decisive moment. During the summer of 2006, the Department of the Interior released a disturbing report on the decrease in per capita visits to America's national parks. The report demonstrated that since 1966, park attendance had dropped 4% (National Park Service). The implications were clear: unless visits increased among this and future generations, the preservation of national park lands would be in jeopardy. The year Joan initiated the creation of PITP, *National Geographic* devoted its October 2006 issue to "Global Places We Must Save." The cover showed Utah's Glen Canyon with looming smokestacks on the horizon, and Lynn Warren's feature story, "Our National Parks in Peril," raised the alarm of the damage and neglect coming from industrial pollution, urban encroachment, and loss of funding; she warned that the situation would only become worse if future generations stopped investing in this heritage.

More recently, in the January 2016 issue of *National Geographic*—looking ahead to the NPS centennial celebrations—author

David Quammen commented on some of the newer purposes of our parks: to preserve diversity of species and “to help us imagine” (31). The same issue featured an article by Florence Williams, which was based on compelling research on the benefits of outdoor education and how simply being in nature has demonstrable mental and physical benefits. Oddly, and quite sadly, these arguments have been countered by an assortment of people and groups who portray the parks as “fuddy-duddy. Antiquated, old-fashioned, cobwebbed” (Gessner). These ecomodernists make the case that the national parks are not wilderness but managed places frequently overcrowded with gawking tourists lining up to snap a selfie at a lookout or with wildlife: hardly places to fire the imagination or revive one’s mental or physical condition. In the summer 2016 issue of *The American Scholar*, David Gessner contemplated the national parks at the onset of their second century, pondering the ecopragmatist idea that the parks have become museums “that held works



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE MCINTYRE

The group discusses the future of the National Parks, the next 100 years, with NPS Ranger Matt Graves, Program Manager for Interpretation, Education, and Outreach, Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and NPS Interpretive Rangers Hope Midock and Amanda Lane at the Harpers Ferry PITP, 2016.

of beauty from long ago, curated for the curious and the many,” but that they have no further use in a world characterized by increasing technological and population growth (Gessner). When Gessner raised such concerns about the disappearance of wilderness as a result of visitation pressures with Doug Peacock, a man who had lived in Yellowstone’s backcountry among grizzly bears, Peacock said, “Just go a hundred feet off the road, and it’s still all there” (qtd. in Gessner).

Going that hundred feet away from the tourists and vistas is the essence of a Partners in the Parks journey. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the June 2016 New York City: Gateway to America exploration. For two nights the students camped not even a hundred feet from an overgrown runway at what was New York’s first airport, Floyd Bennett Field. They could hear planes coming in to JFK and helicopters taking off from police headquarters in the park. Yet, their glade was a piece of wilderness filled with birdsong since Gateway National Recreation Area is a major flyway for migrating birds. These students experienced what most would have thought impossible to experience: wilderness in Brooklyn. This experience of “urban nature” is reflective of the writings of Terrell Dixon, bell hooks, and other authors in Dixon’s anthology *City Wilds* who push us to expand our assumptions about where nature is located.

PITP’s decade-long commitment to knowing a park, learning its biodiversity, and living with it for a full-week immersion is an ideal that NPS embraces. But in spite of travel advertisements and



Camp Pheasant, Gateway National Recreation Area, Brooklyn, New York.



Not 100 yards from Camp Pheasant is an old runway at Floyd Bennet Field, now used for NYPD equipment storage.

research on the benefits of being in nature, Americans appear less inclined to spend significant time in nature generally and in our national parks specifically.

Co-authors Oliver R. W. Pergams and Patricia A. Zaradic, as well as Amy Sofka, have written about the demographics of park attendance, citing the shift from active recreation to computer games and from nature travel to nature TV as being some of the reasons for a decline in recent years. Economic factors also come into play, including the rise in gasoline prices, the increase in family working hours, and the affluent moving from luxury holidays in the United States to exotic global adventures. Ironically, America's national parks are exotic destinations for overseas visitors, who now constitute a significant percentage of annual visitors. Park rangers realized that building a new generation of enthusiastic Americans may be key to their survival. They reasoned that no one who has seen the oldest living tree, the bristle cone pine, would consider cutting one down. No one who has camped beside a silent lake or in a forest would vote for natural gas or oil drilling on those lands. No one who has walked the trails of the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Bryce, Zion, Acadia, Denali, Yellowstone, the Everglades, and so many other parks across the nation can ever forget the grandeur and beauty of unspoiled nature or the excitement of seeing elk, pronghorns, eagles, bears, alligators, wolves, or other species of wildlife. Indeed, no better way exists to hear echoes of the Big Bang and to get a sense of the universe than through the Dark Skies NPS programs or to experience time travel back to earth's crusty origin than standing on lava at Volcanoes National Parks, on the folds of Capitol Reef National Park, or on the rim of the Grand Canyon. Every impulse that excites our nerve endings as we look over the precipice of these vistas commands us to protect and preserve them. And while 2014 National Park Service visitor statistics showed a record 292.8 million visitors, only 14.1 million actually spent a night at a park, raising the question whether a quick stop and a few selfies can really result in the protection and preservation those vistas need (NPS Stats). And as more parks, like Zion, Bryce, Arches, and Yellowstone, are depleting their resources to accommodate the

rising numbers of visitors who are pursuing a drive-by, been-there, took-a-selfie experience, the necessity of inculcating a culture of stewardship is becoming even more important.

PARTNERS IN THE PARKS: THEN AND NOW

From the start, the purpose of Partners in the Parks was to bring together member institutions of NCHC in a student/faculty program **to educate, to engage, and to urge stewardship** of these special places. These goals remain intact today. Within the parks students engage in workshops with park rangers and participating faculty to learn about everything from fire management and photography to geological formations and philosophy. They become aware of the complexities of the parks and the twenty-first-century challenges facing the NPS. As they learn, they also discover what it means to be on a personal journey in nature. And finally, they give back to the park as volunteers. They have counted prairie dogs, recorded archaeological remains, mapped fire hydrants, uprooted invasive species, cleaned up beaches, and built trails. Every moment of service learning is intended to inculcate a philosophical consciousness that is the ultimate goal: to cultivate so deep an appreciation of America's natural heritage that honors students and their families will become regular visitors to and protectors of these places. As Matt Nickerson so aptly stated in the first edition of this book:

The aim of Partners in the Parks (PITP) from its inception has been to introduce, or reintroduce, collegiate honors students to this country: not the transformed environment that we have constructed on its surface but the bedrock world upon which it rests. Like de Tocqueville, Jefferson, Thoreau, Emerson, and so many others, we recognized that the unique place that is America cannot be separated from the land upon which it was built. (13)

Partners in the Parks, he continues, takes students into the heart of “places protected by the people to preserve for this and future

generations, original American landscapes, and important historical landmarks that illustrate and define what America was, is and can be” (13).

By design, of course, the national parks have always been destinations of affordable recreation. Initially, Partners in the Parks was planned in the same spirit; it was to be an inexpensive immersion of five to seven days based on the “Sleeping Bag Seminar” model



PHOTO BY BILL ATWILL

Danie Martin and other volunteers build a trail at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

developed by the Northeast Regional Honors Council. In these programs students essentially camped out, usually as dorm guests, for a few days in order to explore an issue related to the geographic or historic setting of the host campus. For PITP, host colleges or universities, typically situated reasonably near the park, utilize their faculty and students as local experts and guides. During the weeklong adventure, hosts get to know honors students from other regions as they explore the park with them—often in a new light. Camping, cooking, hiking, photography, and storytelling are all part of the primal experience of being out in nature for these honors students, just as they are for all the other visitors in campsites and lodges around the parks.

Today, keeping this opportunity affordable continues to be essential to making the program work. From 2012–2016, a \$500–\$700 onsite cost for the week, including food, transportation, and fees, has been standard. The initial National Park Service grant, discussed earlier, supported some student participation for the first several years. The Northeast Regional Honors Council, following suit, established an annual scholarship allotment of \$2,500 per year to be expended for travel funds of up to \$500 per student. The Southern Regional Honors Council soon offered similar support, as did the Florida Collegiate Honors Council. Many colleges and universities have also underwritten travel costs and/or registration fees to enable their students to participate in PITP adventures. Students apply for scholarships by using the application at the NCHC PITP website (partnersintheparks.org), which is also linked to the websites of their regional honors organizations. Student support underscores the institutional and organizational confidence in this growing program and insures that PITP can stay true to its origins by remaining affordable.

Partners in the Parks was originally conceived as a non-credit educational excursion of 5 to 7 days. But as in nature, the single species has already branched into unique, local adaptations. Some colleges and universities offer their participating students academic credit modeled on independent study or intensive short-term immersion courses. Indeed, the program is intensive. Students

receive a collection of readings before they rendezvous for a park exploration. And from the moment the group forms, they are living and learning together from dawn to late evening every day of the trip. Within any PITP group, some students may be participating for their own enrichment while others are earning credit. Thus far, the sub-species are sharing the territory in harmony. All students are required to join in reflective circles, keep journals, take photographs, and construct a group record that some will share on their home campus or at their regional honors meetings.

In 2016, the popularity and growth of the program is evident. NCHC has sponsored 83 PITP adventures with upwards of 1,000 alumni. PITP has also expanded to faculty development seminars for potential leaders and hosts of PITP adventures. The first was on the Texas/Mexico border at Saguaro/Organ Pipe National Park in 2008. This was followed in 2015 at Rocky Mountain National Park and in 2016 at Acadia National Park. The goal is to inspire the inception of new PITP programs by replicating the excitement of the adventure for faculty and staff who might then create a program at their local NPS site.

To further expose honors faculty and leaders to Partners in the Parks, mini-PITP NPS day trips became a feature at the National Collegiate Honors Council's annual meetings. The first was at the San Antonio Missions National Historic Park in 2008. Subsequent conference programs included the National Mall in Washington, D.C.; Montezuma Well in the Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot National Monument outside Phoenix; the Boston National Historical Park; the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park and the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve; the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge in Denver; and the Pullman Porters' Museum in Chicago. There is a complete list of all PITP projects at the end of the monograph. (See Appendix A.) As the program evolves, this list is certain to grow.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This monograph provides individuals with the information needed to begin a Partners in the Parks program. Readers may

particularly benefit from the Best Practices Manual (Appendix C), which includes an eighteen-month timeline as well as detailed suggestions for every step of the way, and the other appendices at the end of the book. Because the essays were written by trip leaders, faculty, students, and park rangers who have participated in PITP programs and have insights to share, this book may have the feel of a field guide. Although this monograph presents several models and ideas, program leaders are always encouraged to twist the original DNA. Partners in the Parks, as its name suggests, functions best when all the participants have a voice. A sample of those PITP voices are heard in this volume, which demonstrates how their enthusiasm, experience, and expertise have made them partners in the richest sense.

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FIELD NOTES



A confluence of roles comes together in the following essay by Dalton Dorrell, who is both an alumnus of the 2015 Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park Partners in the Parks and one of a number of former PITP participants who have committed themselves to working for the National Park Service.

Building for the Future

DALTON DORRELL

WESTERN STATE COLORADO UNIVERSITY

HONORS STUDENT, PITP TA, AND

SEASONAL INTERPRETIVE NPS RANGER

My week as a teaching assistant for the 2015 Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Curecanti National Recreation Area Partners in the Parks course will stick with me for a long time. As a seasonal interpreter at Capitol Reef National Park, I was interested in seeing how well the program taught groups of honors students the importance of the national parks and the National Park Service. After the week of study, I was convinced that all the members of the group would be lifelong promoters of the national parks in their own way because all of them developed a connection to the park and the National Park Service as a whole. Seeing connections develop is inspirational for any National Park Service employee, and I was no exception.

Many of the honors students established their connection to Black Canyon and Curecanti by seeing its value to park visitors and especially by learning about the complexity of managing land that is supposed to be wild. Within a day or two, many of the students

had a grasp of the dual mandate of the National Park Service and the tensions between them. Letting people enjoy their national parks while keeping the land unimpaired is not an easy task. The dual mandate was discussed often as the students learned about different facets of the park, but it became even more prominent when the story of Curecanti National Recreation Area, a unit managed together with Black Canyon, was introduced. Having a decent grasp of the mission of the National Park Service provided students with a good foundation to learn and connect to its values.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park has a dynamic history that taught the students some important lessons in how units are created and the way the National Park Service has balanced its dual mission over time. Thus the participants recognize that parks are not only protecting the stories that happen within their boundaries, but they are also creating stories after they become a National Park Service site. What I mean by this statement is that the history of a site does not end when the National Park Service takes over; the story of protecting and preserving can be just as interesting as the years before protection. Combining these histories makes the totality of the narratives of the national parks even more powerful. Black Canyon demonstrated this phenomenon to the students. They learned the history of Black Canyon: how local minister Mark Warner drew attention to the area, how a national monument was originally established, and how the community then helped convince Congress that the area should become a national park. The honors students realized that individuals and communities could have a major impact on preservation. I believe that this narrative helped them realize that their voices are extremely important to national parks and increased their interest in learning more about the nuts-and-bolts management of the park because they now feel that they can have an impact on the National Park Service.

After learning about how individual departments of the park tied into the National Park Service mission, the PITP students turned their attention to another site that seems very different from Black Canyon on the surface. Curecanti demonstrated how unique each of the National Park Service's over 400 units truly is. The idea

of a national recreation area seems fundamentally different from a national park even though the National Park Service can manage both site designations. Curecanti protects three reservoirs that humans created to use in the arid lands of the West. The creation of these large bodies of water obviously changed the ecosystem and the lands downstream. This effect can seem at odds with the mandate to keep areas “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations,” but after the students learned about the management of the recreation area, they saw that the National Park Service was doing something extremely important in the area and that it was also something to which they could connect. One of the important aspects the students learned was that the primary function of the national areas is providing recreation to the public, but at the same time they must abide by many of the ideals that govern all National Park Service units. This obligation meant that the recreation had to be done in a way that is sustainable and that still creates a healthy ecosystem. I believe that this demonstrated to the class how complex management is at National Park Service units and how many people with extremely different backgrounds must work together. The class witnessed biologists, interpreters, hydrologists, managers,



Ranger Curt Treichel travels with a group across the Blue Mesa Reservoir at the Curecanti National Recreation Area.

and others caring for many different natural as well as artificial aspects of the recreation area. By seeing all these groups working together, the class members could easily relate their personal academic interests to one or more of the departments operating in this environment.

The complications of park resource management dramatically increased when the students started to learn about the operators of the dams who created the lakes at Curecanti. The Bureau of Reclamation is an important part of the management at Black Canyon and especially Curecanti. Once the group realized that the mission of the Bureau of Reclamation was “Managing Water in the West,” they began to see that the goal of this agency was going to be different from what they saw in Black Canyon. After the students toured the dam and had several discussions about damming western rivers, the complexity of water management and allocation in western states became clear to many of them. Obviously, what national parks do is a balancing act that involves nature, resources, recreation, and other human needs depending on the site. I was particularly gratified to hear members of the group say that “this is really complicated, but I’m glad they’re trying to do it.”

Seeing people connect to the national parks and the National Park Service mission for the first time was absolutely amazing to me, not just because I work for the agency they were learning about, but also because I believe in national parks and what they stand for. Every day, especially during the summer, I work hard to try to show people that national parks are essential to this world, but I rarely get to see if people I come in contact with are changed by what they learn. Quite the opposite occurred during my Partners in the Parks experience. I was able to see the transformation of students from across the United States as well as some international students as they truly connected to the national parks and the natural and cultural resources the National Park Service is charged to protect. No, I do not think that all of them are going to run off to join the National Park Service, but I do believe that every person who came on the trip will become a supporter of the national parks. This commitment is important as the National Park Service prepares to

enter its second century. Park employees from all over the country have been wondering if the younger generations are connecting to the parks in a way that will preserve the sites for another one hundred years. After interacting with the students in my class, I believe that because of programs like Partners in the Parks, which have the power to bring people into the sites when they would not be able to visit otherwise and engage them in a rich way, the National Park Service will be around for not just another one hundred years, but for considerably longer than that. I will not forget my valuable experience as a teaching assistant for the Partners in the Park expedition at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park because I realized that by seeing people connect to our parks, my own connection to them became even stronger.

CHAPTER 3

Stepping into the Wild

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According to a 2010 study in the *National Parks Traveler*, National Park Service statistics indicate that only 18 national parks units out of 392 had visitors who stayed more than a day (Bernstein). Most tourists are drive-by observers of the grand vistas, coming with a bus group or by car, stepping out at the overlooks, snapping photos, and moving on. This behavior means that most visitors spend little time in any one park. By extreme contrast, PITP participants generally spend several days to nearly a week in an immersive living/learning experience. PITP adventures are not designed as tourist excursions. Understanding the nature of honors students and the purpose of these learning adventures, the National Park Service has given PITP expeditions unique access to back areas of the park where tourists never venture. While visiting a

park is exciting, understanding how a park runs is even more exciting. PITP adventures address key issues of park management: what it takes to keep trails open; track wildlife; ensure the flow of streams and rivers; manage fires; curate a museum; dig and record archaeological discoveries; cope with plant and animal disease; protect nesting birds; educate volunteers and visitors; run a weather station; handle medical emergencies; produce brochures and signage; and provide lodging, campgrounds, and food service.

PITP participants have been invited into all kinds of behind-the-scenes areas. At Grand Canyon—Parashant, the program has taken students with considerable outdoor skills and experience into rough canyon terrain that few people ever have the opportunity to explore. Other programs have taken participants under the feet of hundreds of tourists walking the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and into the heart of a Bureau of Land Management dam holding back 26,000 acre feet of water. PITP programs, which include hikes and camping into wilderness areas, are certainly among the wildest of journeys and may not be for everyone. Although students are encouraged to “step into the wild,” the definition of that wildness might have as much to do with self-revelation and self-expression as with wilderness adventures. The wide variety of PITP programs allows students to take as many steps into the wild as they desire. Indeed the PITP programs in national parks may be where we can realize what writer Barry Lopez called in his 1983 essay, “Searching for Ancestors,” “One of the great dreams of man . . . to find some place between the extremes of nature and civilization where it is possible to live without regret” (37).

PITP programs offer participants the opportunity to explore national park sites to find meaning and expression and to develop a human consciousness of the wilderness and not simply a human categorization or use of it. Experiencing the national parks through PITP programs is more than just a camping or hiking getaway. Stephen Mather, the first NPS Director (1917–1929), firmly believed: “He is a better citizen with a keener appreciation of the privilege of living here who has toured the national parks” (43). Historic sites offer insight into the complexities of our past and opportunities to

hear a multitude of stories human and natural, which come together into the story of ourselves.

At the core of all experiential-education models is the opening of a door that leads students out of a classroom bounded by walls into open space. The sense of awe is practically unimaginable when that space is a vast canyon, a misty harbor, or a seemingly endless desert. Freeman Tilden, the father of NPS Interpretation, wrote: “To know the natural world, to know one’s self, is to go where things are” (32). In PITP programs nature is the primal classroom without walls, and using Nature as Text is the first principle of PITP. During the course of a week of land and water voyages, participants learn to observe and interpret the landscape they encounter. For anyone from a frenetic culture, such as that present in contemporary America, slowing down to meet nature is a difficult first step.

During the first walk or hike on a PITP excursion, students are still wrapped up in meeting their fellow students and comparing their school lives, their families, their pets, and their friends. They hardly notice the trail or the woods. They are excited by the newness of the landscape but focused on each other. They are eager to see everything and are therefore moving too quickly from place to place. They are not yet still enough within themselves to ruminate



PHOTO BY JOHNNY MACLEAN

A PITP participant takes advantage of a mountain goat observation site at Glacier National Park.

on the nature around them; they often laugh and talk loudly and try to get that selfie at the canyon's edge before anyone else. Over the next few days, this initial excitement should cool, and as the group engages with park rangers and faculty on specific topics, their eyes will focus more on their surroundings. They are, as John Muir observed, "awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of Nature" (1). To aid in this transition, program coordinators may employ Sense and Place exercises, which can be modified from 30 to 60 minutes. These exercises help to settle the students, focusing their senses and person on place. The students find a place within walking distance where they sit quietly for five minutes with no other focus than just being quiet. They are then directed to shift attention to their senses and answer the following questions: What do you see? What do you hear with your eyes closed? What can you smell? What can you feel on the ground around you? Students should then write about their sensory observations in their journals. This type of exercise can be incorporated along a trail, in a campground, in a city park, or even in a canoe. It can, as Robinson Jeffers observed in his poem "Carmel Point," "uncenter our minds from ourselves / We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident / As the rock and ocean that we were made from" (676).

Walking with a botanist who was training volunteers for the forthcoming tourist season at Bryce Canyon, students learn to distinguish among pine, spruce, and fir. Later, when students see the decimation caused by white pine rust, they sigh in anxiety for the forest. Walking along an estuary beach with a Maine environmental artist, they gather driftwood, seaweed, shells, and pebbles to create their own organic sculptures, which the tide will soon carry out and bring back to shore in altered forms. Hiking a riverside trail to a hidden grotto and waterfall, students learn how a river gained the legal right to its water. Walking with a ranger along the dunes at Fire Island, students discover and delicately handle the carapace of a horseshoe crab, as mysterious and ancient as a dinosaur. Learning to walk with eyes fully concentrated on the environment is one of

the most meaningful acquisitions of the journey and possibly the beginning of a lifelong habit.

In writing about his walks, Henry David Thoreau raised a provocative question: “When we walk we naturally go to the fields and woods; what would become of us if we walked only in a garden or a mall?” (Thoreau). Needless to say his “mall” was a tree-lined promenade, like the National Mall in Washington, D.C., not today’s ubiquitous shopping centers. What he was asking about was the difference between walking in planned spaces and walking in the wild. Thoreau greatly preferred the wilderness because it harkens back to humankind’s primal roots and needs. A question such as this might lead to an excellent group discussion. Thoreau invites consideration of the ethical issues connected with a disappearing wilderness. In his day the transformation was already beginning. Nine decades later, in the 1950s, then NPS Director Conrad Wirth, architect of Mission 66—a ten-year program to expand NPS visitor services by its 50th anniversary, proclaimed: “without sunshine, fresh air and open space, man diminishes physically, mentally and emotionally. We need more parks. We need them now, before the cities and highways . . . take all the scenic lands” (48). Today Americans must continue to consider what “would become of us” if this country had no national parks, no wild landscape, no place to step into the wild, only private gardens, designed spaces, and shopping malls.

In that way both Nature as Text and Text as Text can lead inward to some contemplation of self. Among the first questions around the campfire are the following: What prompted you to make this trip? What interests you about this place? What do you hope to get out of this adventure? Some students have simply responded to advertising—an attractive poster or brochure—or the lure of an inexpensive trip. Others have always imagined going west or east or to a swamp, a desert, a cave, a mountain, an ocean, the Statue of Liberty, or the Lincoln Memorial. No matter what the reason, the students have all come for themselves since none of these adventures are required. Thus the likelihood of expanding their perceptual and intellectual horizons is great. Students who would sleep through alarm clocks

at home enthusiastically rise before dawn to see the sun creep its way up a canyon's walls or to climb a mountain to witness the sun come up over the most eastern point in America; students who lie awake on the top of a van to watch a meteor shower from the bottom of a canyon or those who see the Milky Way for the first time or those who contemplate the immigrant's journey or the Native American's struggle are all changed. These experiences take them out of themselves for a moment and can change their perceptions and lives forever.

Planning or conceiving all the ways that PITP will shape students and faculty is impossible. The hope is that one experience will make them want to engage in a second and a third or even more visits to national parks with family and friends throughout their lifetime. Perhaps students will also discover that learning happens as part of the natural course of daily life. Faculty may even become more attached to teaching in honors after they have seen a group of disparate honors students from institutions of every kind and region live, learn, and work together. For all who gather for these adventures in a national park, PITP deepens their reflections and commitment to step into the wild and to protect and preserve the national parks for generations to come. Participants learn what Enos Mills observed about John Muir's love for the national parks, "within national parks is room—room in which to find ourselves, in which to think and hope, to dream and plan, to rest and resolve" (qtd. in Tilden i).

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In the following two Field Notes, faculty Johnny MacLean and Brian White, Sub-district Interpretive Ranger Alysia Schmidt, and student Josh LaMore contemplate the idea of wilderness and its relationship to not only the national parks but to their lives.

The Unexpected Wilderness of Sequoia National Park

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INTRODUCTION

Each summer since 2012, the partnership between Sequoia National Park (Sequoia) and NCHC's Partners in the Parks program has introduced groups of honors students from across the nation to complex relationships between natural systems and human visitors. Honors students have transferred diverse and sometimes unanticipated lessons from Sequoia to their personal lives, campuses, and communities, using the park as a microcosm for our larger society. By facing challenges and recognizing opportunities, these students have reconstructed their perceptions of the outdoors and successfully completed research and creative projects, and some have changed their perspectives on life in transformative ways.

PITP adventures have been affecting students' lives in similar ways since the program's inception in 2007. Each adventure is focused on the central themes of education, stewardship, and recreation, but the details of the trips vary widely. This chapter describes the unique and highly adaptable model we refined during the 2012 and 2013 Sequoia trips. Key elements of our model include: (1) its focus on a weeklong scholarly investigation of the definition of wilderness, (2) its opportunity to measure academic rigor in an experiential setting where learning objectives cannot always be anticipated, and (3) its intimate and extended partnership with a ranger during a 4-day, 3-night backpacking trip in the backcountry. These elements can serve as a versatile framework whose components can be creatively incorporated into the development of future PITP programs. In doing so, learning outcomes can be more readily defined, a consistency across the various PITP programs can be identified, and the future success and growth of the NCHC partnership with the National Park Service can be secured.

LOGISTICS

Because of the remote location of many parks, finding a nearby NCHC-affiliated university with faculty available to lead adventures is sometimes difficult. Sequoia, located in the southern Sierra Mountains, is no exception, so three leaders from other states and 11 honors students from across the country met at the Fresno Yosemite International Airport in late summer in 2012 and 2013. We chose late summer because the Sierra Mountains receive large quantities of snow each winter, and many mountain passes often remain buried until July. After spending Sunday night in a local hotel, we set off in minivans on the approximately one-hour drive to Sequoia via Kings Canyon National Park.

Our first stop was General Grant Grove where students received their first taste of the giant sequoia trees (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), including the General Grant Tree, which is the third-largest tree in the world. The 3,000-year-old tree was designated by President Calvin Coolidge as the "Nation's Christmas Tree," and it served as a centerpiece for our students' introduction to the complicated

interplay of human actions and the evolving natural landscape. The unguided hike through the majestic General Grant Grove—juxtaposed against the crowds and noises of Fresno, not to mention the lingering stressors of honors students' everyday lives—helped us all decompress and transition our minds to this alternative educational setting. Previous PITP experiences had taught us that such decompression time is essential when disconnecting from the world of smartphones, Facebook, and endless task management. This is especially true when more than half of the week's activities take place in isolated wilderness settings where human contact is limited to just a few other students

From there we traveled to the Giant Forest in Sequoia, where five of the ten largest trees on the planet still stand. Bill Tweed, former Chief of Interpretation and author of six books about Sequoia's environmental history, met with us for several hours. Each year as he led us on a hike through the forest, the wildlife beneath the giant sequoia canopy—including bears walking close to the trail—provided an excellent backdrop for Tweed to discuss the complicated political history of the National Park Service (NPS), how politics and the environment are interrelated, and what current and future challenges Sequoia faces. These engaging topics allowed students to see how wilderness might not be as simple as previously imagined, which began the process of challenging some of their preconceived notions. As Alex B. noted in a follow-up interview:

How could man, whose existence on this earth is a blink of an eye in geological time, decide what is wild? Who is man to determine himself the regulator? Why does man need to interfere with nature? Is he not nature himself? If land is called *wild*, is it really wild? Many questions arose in my head and I was very frustrated. My perceptions were challenged and it was not an easy thing to accept.

After our afternoon in the Giant Forest, we traveled to the front country campground at Dorst Creek for our first night under the stars. Some students had never cooked or slept outside before, and others were quite experienced in outdoor environments. This

dynamic provided opportunities for teamwork, leadership, and humility, and we always find that everyone is eager to contribute. The front country campground experience, which includes camping near vehicles, bathrooms, and crowds of fellow campers, punctuated Tweed's points about the complexities of the NPS mission of preserving "unimpaired the natural and cultural resources" for the enjoyment of current and future generations. Many students were shocked at the lack of solitude, the visible impact of humans, and the difference between their expectations of being in nature and the reality of the situation.

The second day began with a tour of Crystal Cave led by the Sequoia Natural History Association. The marble cave boasts spectacular stalactites and stalagmites, as well as several endemic troglodytes, which are species that occur only in this location. The cave's delicate, and at times miniature, ecosystem stands in stark contrast to the previous day's magnificent forests, but students were struck once again by the huge number of visitors—including themselves—and their inevitable and irreversible impact on such a fragile environment.

The long drive from the Foothills Visitor Center to our second front country campground at the base of Sawtooth Pass produced several more bear sightings, which excited most of the students and harried the nerves of a few. Cold Springs Campground lies at 7,500 feet above sea level in the Mineral King area of Sequoia; although the number of visitors to this site is relatively small, it is crowded enough for students to feel as if their wilderness experience had not yet begun. Their backcountry portion of the week begins the following morning.

Sub-district Interpretive Ranger Alysia Schmidt, our main liaison and our co-author, joined us for the entire 4-day, 3-night backpacking trip in 2012 and for the first night in 2013. Chief of Interpretation Colleen Bathe joined us on the third night in 2013. The prolonged presence of these NPS officials increased the number of teachable moments and the level of discussion immensely. Faculty leaders from outside of the park simply cannot replicate the NPS staff's familiarity with the park's natural history and current challenges.

Our first day of backcountry hiking consisted of a steep 2,400-foot elevation change over 4.2 miles to Monarch Lakes. At 10,400 feet above sea level, we laid our sleeping bags down on barren rocks void of giant sequoias. Although we shared this area around the lake with a few other backpackers, students enjoyed their first sense of solitude, and the open vistas above the tree line gave them a new perspective of grandeur.



PHOTO BY JOHNNY MACLEAN

Nina Plocek revels during her climb at Sequoia National Park.

We awoke the following day, staring straight uphill toward Sawtooth Pass, another 1,200 feet higher than Monarch Lakes: Sawtooth Peak is a staggering 12,343 feet above sea level. The hike—with no defined trail and a near-vertical stair-climb up a shifting layer of scree—challenged the students physically and emotionally. They quickly felt the effects of the altitude and their heavy packs. Once they reached the spectacular 360° view at the top of the pass, feelings of accomplishment overflowed. The short, downhill hike to Columbine Lake flew by, and the group celebrated with a brisk swim and some well-deserved rest. Our second backcountry camp provided ample solitude and excellent vistas.

The 2013 adventure ended with a solemn occurrence and an unprecedented teachable moment. A solo hiker had been missing for a few days in the Mineral King area, and several search and rescue teams had been scouring the area. As we met with the Chief of Interpretation at Monarch Lakes during our last afternoon and evening, a helicopter continually flew around the surrounding cliffs, and teams from the NPS and local fire department covered the ground. We watched them find the body of the missing hiker directly above our campsite, and we listened in as the various agencies decided to schedule the recovery for the next morning. The event illustrated the dangers of the wilderness in a haunting way, but it also showed an unfortunate example of the complicated tensions between wilderness preservation and human visitation. This experience will not be easily forgotten by any of the participants, and we were lucky to have had Ranger Bathe with us to facilitate a conversation about these issues.

DEFINING WILDERNESS

The specific PITP model we have developed and refined for Sequoia employs an academic, broad-based theoretical topic as a scholarly umbrella shaping the week's intellectual, emotional, and experiential activities. Anecdotal evidence from students who have attended more than one PITP adventure point favorably to the ways this framework helps to focus and, later, refine their understandings related to the trip. It provides a familiar springboard in

the students' minds for the ways in which they can read the experience. Using a theoretical lens as a guiding umbrella is often how we approach topics, readings, and conversations in our traditional honors courses, so we have incorporated it into our Sequoia trips and, because of the structuring benefit, we will use it as an integral component in future PITP trips we lead.

For Sequoia, this theoretical lens revolves around this overarching question: What is wilderness? Before the trip begins, we ask the students a series of questions concerning their definitions of wilderness, where they think their ideas about wilderness originate, and how wilderness affects their lives. After receiving their initial answers, we provide a provocative article by William Cronon that questions the benefits of designated wilderness areas, and we ask follow-up questions. We then base the week's lectures and discussions on the students' individual perceptions of wilderness, the legal designation of wilderness, and the complications that have arisen because of our growing population. Because of this framework, the discussions with Tweed, Bathe, Schmidt, and other NPS officials have a context and provide students with much more to consider. Our circles each night involve lively debates and important reflection about the benefits and challenges of the NPS mission, our society's evolving values, and the complicated nature of the word "wilderness."

The Association for Experiential Education states that experiential education requires such reflection. We found students' reflections to be invaluable. As Tim H. stated during a follow-up interview:

I think the majority of us had a preconception of the dictionary definition of "wilderness" when we entered Sequoia. But the circles, the sharing of our differences and our experiences . . . questioning each other and creating discussions, that really had a lasting impact on how I traverse this world.

We believe that this singular focus throughout the entire week gives the trip a continuity that will affect participants' perspectives

for years to come. Student answers to follow-up surveys provide evidence for the impact of this continuity. A representative response from Natalie C. sums up the students' reaction to the adventure:

I think setting aside these spaces is invaluable. They are the best way to make sure people continue to appreciate the majesty and power of the earth, as well as serve as a juxtaposition to our lives in non-wilderness. Being in these places allows us to take a step back and realize how materialistic and absurd our society has become in some ways. It was very disorienting to come back to the paved paradise and go to In-N-Out Burger and see how we have all come to believe that type of living is perfectly natural.

THE RANGER CONNECTION

Perhaps the greatest advantage to our Sequoia adventure involves our close partnership with Alysia Schmidt, the Ash Mountain Sub-district Interpretive Ranger. Schmidt, who accompanied our students throughout the 2012 backpacking trip and during the first day and night of the 2013 backpacking trip, not only provides knowledgeable insight regarding the natural and human history of the park, she also guides discussions regarding wilderness, human visitation, climate change, and numerous other topics. Through asking difficult questions, Ranger Schmidt challenges students' preconceived notions, introduces complicated concepts, and elucidates divergent perspectives. Our conversations would not have had the same depth and breadth without her leadership.

Certainly a common practice for the various PITP adventures is including discussions, activities, and presentations with and by park staff. These form the foundation of our partnership. Yet, having a staff member be a participant-leader for an extended period of time fundamentally changes the relationship between the students and the park and strengthens the relationship between NCHC and the NPS.

Beyond her academic contribution, Schmidt also gives the students an emotional glimpse of the personal sacrifices and rewards

inherent in a career with the NPS. When she shares her story, which begins with her as a new NPS employee alone in the mountains in New Mexico and ends with raising a family at Sequoia, the students see how the decision-makers are actual people who live real lives. She also shows them how wonderful an NPS career can be. Her perspective does not go unnoticed since many students are now considering careers in the outdoors. The Southern Utah University Honors Program is currently tracking participants from all PITP adventures in a comprehensive study to assess the long-term impact of PITP.

This partnership has been quite beneficial for the students, but we believe it provides a benefit for Sequoia as well. Below is a passage from Schmidt that describes her view of what Sequoia has gained from the PITP program.

It has been a privilege to join groups of bright and inquisitive young people. As a representative of the National Park Service (NPS) and an Interpretive Park Ranger, I find that traveling with the Partners in the Parks honors students



PHOTO BY JOHNNY MACLEAN

Ranger Alysia Schmidt talks with students at Sequoia National Park.

gives me the chance to get to know students individually. On a day-to-day basis, I seldom interact with visitors for more than an hour or so. During my trips with Partners in the Parks, I spend two to three days using inquiry to discuss the concepts of wilderness and park policies. These students openly share their thoughts and concerns during the backpacking trips. Working with the Partners in the Parks program gives me a chance to receive in-depth feedback and exchange with those I'm working with. It helps me become more attune to young people's thoughts and ideas, while contributing to future programming ideas and content.

I surmise that NPS benefits from these future leaders' developing knowledge and interest in public lands. Whether these experiences inspire them to seek a career in the park service or be environmentally conscious as they carry out careers in the private sector, it is likely that they will take wilderness into greater consideration.

In an age when pollution and climate change know no boundaries and parks face unprecedented challenges, my hope is that the students who partake in the Partners in Parks program will be active participants in a more sustainable future.

SUBSEQUENT PARTNERSHIPS

Like all trips, the Sequoia adventure includes aspects that enhance students' academic and emotional experiences. Shortly after this trip, we applied this model to new PITP expeditions at other NPS locations. The first PITP adventure to Glacier National Park (Glacier), for example, took place in August 2014, and it utilized some of the same strategies in a more service-oriented trip. Our liaison at Glacier, Jessica Kusky, is the coordinator of the Volunteer Program. She helped us design a Citizen Science Project in which students monitored vegetation and wildlife in the front

country and backcountry and then brought their research findings to NPS staff at the end of the week. We used the same wilderness framework as we did in Sequoia, but Glacier certainly offered a much different set of variables.

Regardless of the location, students on PITP adventures experience education in the school of nature differently than in the classroom setting: nature is entirely open and without walls. The Sequoia framework we have outlined here can be adapted to refine and improve PITP for future students. Exposure to the outdoors and the endless educational opportunities therein set the stage for complex discussion, integrative learning, and reflection. In the end, though, the point is to push people out of their comfort zone to learn what nature has to teach us and to ask new questions. Alex B. put it well when she wrote:

In moments I will never forget, I experienced wilderness. At Columbine Lake a ground squirrel sat on a rock looking at the lake just as I did. The squirrel was not occupied with survival instincts; it was simply enjoying nature in the same way I was. Could it be possible this squirrel and I experienced wilderness in the same way? If we did, what does that mean?

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FIELD NOTES



In “Defining Wilderness,” Josh LaMore recounts how nature and wilderness subtly influence people and how he came to understand the importance of keeping himself physically, mentally, and spiritually in the moment.

Defining Wilderness

JOSH LAMORE

LIU BROOKLYN ALUM AND PITP INTERN

In August of 2013, I was in my Brooklyn apartment, debating what books to bring on the PITP trip to Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park. I was not concerned with packing my camping supplies and clothes, although in three hours I would have to flag down a cab and head to the airport. My only concern was books.

I finally took Henry David Thoreau’s advice to let nature be the book and live only by means most necessary. For those reasons, I left *Walden* at home. I felt I knew the words and that there would be many things to learn from the new perspective I was sure to find on the PITP excursion. I did, however, end up taking a collection of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essays and speeches that encouraged me to mine from the experiences of life directly and not first and foremost from books. Engaging in books is something that should be done in-between mining from life. This practice does not lessen the importance of books but instead shows us the importance of maintaining a balanced combination of experience and study, something college students are rarely able to do. At the time, it did not occur to me that the study portion of my life had already been maxed out and that this trip would be mostly about experience

even though this insight should have been obvious. I never ended up opening the book, but I pondered it and many others as we sauntered through the wilderness.

One of the main themes and objectives of this trip, besides a week of immersion, stewardship, and experiences with nature, was to personally define and grapple with the complicated web of maintaining and experiencing wilderness. I am glad actually that this subject and struggle can never fully be resolved for more than a moment and that its complexities are always slipping, sliding, growing, and evolving, like all things natural. Defining and maintaining wilderness, I have found, have the depths of an endless jungle; like the mind as an endless woods, there is always something new to discover, roam, ponder, and be bewildered by.

The trip started in the front country of the park, where we gathered along with the masses of tourists around the giant and majestic sequoia trees. We went with the crowds to the museums and interpretation centers and, rather ironically, discussed the Leave No Trace ethic as the presence of snapping and flashing cameras, ringing cellphones, and music dissolved the magic of the world around us. Throughout the trip I could not help but think back to the quotation by Col. J. R. White that was inscribed on one of the visitor center walls:

We should boldly ask ourselves whether we want the national parks to duplicate the . . . entertainment of other resources, or whether we want this to stand for something distinct . . . in our national life.

I thought that White's suggestion and the response to the question were rather obvious, but from my experiences on this trip in the front country, I was surprised to find that they were not. I noticed that many visitors desired something more than the natural wonders of the world. In a way, many wanted to bring the city to the woods. Visitors wanted cellphone service, restaurants, movie theaters, and other forms of entertainment. Many experienced the park more thoroughly from their excursions in the gift shops than among the mountains and trees. Several groups would drive up, look at

the natural landscape, take a picture of themselves near a huge sequoia, and leave five minutes later. What can anyone possibly get out of a five-minute scan of an area filled with organisms that have been growing for thousands of years or mountains that have been developing for millions? It is baffling to even begin to wonder at this need for external entertainment and the lack of time people are willing to spend in such a remarkable natural setting.

We finally escaped the crowds that night by hiking to the top of a rather bald mountain. Upon arriving, I instantly lay down. The air was cold, but the rocks still held the heat from the day's sunshine. I soaked it all in: the lingering heat, the rocks, and my new classmates. The stars' divinity, as they took over the night sky, inflated our hearts and pushed us to the brink of escape. We began to lose ourselves in the present context. As I focused on the grandeur of existence outside our small refuge from society and outside our small group, I felt for a moment that I ceased to exist.

* * *

We walked together down the mountain, coming back to earth, creating an invisible society and culture amidst an ecosystem and geologic state we were not initially part of. With our flashlights we became phantom lights in the dark, walking down the cliff, talking as we went. An infinite space seemed to exist between each light and the surrounding darkness, yet we felt connected to each other and everything around us, like the heat we soaked up from the sun in the rocks and the light that we shared from the stars in the sky.

We traveled further into the backcountry as the days progressed, carrying all our supplies on our backs and relying solely on each other for support. The further we and the time went, the more I forgot about wilderness, even though that was what we were in and should have been contemplating. Instead, I focused purely and simply on living. What this phenomenon suggests to me is that experiencing wilderness is nothing like the ideologies or concepts we carry of it in our minds; it is always changing and requires personal perspective.

I also cannot help but think that the influence of wilderness on people has something to do with consciousness. If consciousness is

the present—that place in-between the past and future—how can our concepts and/or ideologies of wilderness be in tune with what it actually feels like to experience it in the present? On this wilderness excursion, my mind became almost exclusively locked into the present moment as if in a meditative state. The past, thoughts of the future, and other things going on elsewhere did not seem to matter. It felt as if time had stopped and that each moment as it arose was the most important one.

This living-in-the-moment experience, I feel, was amplified because it was shared with the right group of people. With Johnny MacLean and Brian White's emphasis on all of us taking care of each other, we created a conscientious and conscious community that together flourished in the moment. Because every group member cared more for the well-being of all the other group members than their own, everything outside the rugged and cold wilderness of Mineral Canyon and our group ceased to occupy our thoughts and time. This resulted in a freedom, a sense of belonging, and a companionship that are rare to find.

Living in the present as we did does not invite recklessness, as it might seem, but instead it produces a caring existence. By taking care of each other in the present, we were able to maintain the present itself. Wilderness, the situation and experiences that provoke such present living and caring, must be left alone and unmodified so it can remain a place that demands being present and not a place of scarring pasts and foreshadowed catastrophes.

I concluded my wilderness presentation on the last evening with the following remarks:

Wilderness is an opportunity to find things both mentally and physically that you never have before. It is a privilege and a resource that should only be plundered with the heart and mind. Wilderness is the art of nature and does not require (except in dire circumstances) the paintbrush of humankind. We can and should come to play here, but we should in the least way possible be the agent of its change.

A year later, as I write this essay, I realize the significance this Partners in the Parks excursion has had on me. A few days before graduating, I was offered an intern position with PITP, which required me to, within a week's time, graduate, give a valedictorian speech, get rid of everything in my apartment, and move across the country to Utah. From the Sequoia excursion, I have gained a significant understanding of the importance of trying to keep myself mentally and physically in the moment. This time around, I did not have an internal debate about what books to bring; I set all three hundred of them on the stairs in front of my apartment for passersby to pick up and read. I donated my furniture and most of my clothes. As a result I moved to the seclusion of Cedar Breaks National Monument with only a guitar, backpack, and suitcase. I have not looked back. Living in the present does not require having nearly as many material objects as we may think; as a matter of fact, I believe that it is easier to live in the moment with minimal baggage as we did for a week among the Sequoias with only the contents of our backpacks. I have learned that present living also requires a particular state of mind, a consciousness of the immediate world and community around us. Surrounding ourselves with the pristine nature of America's national parks is one of the best ways to remind ourselves of the world around us. I further believe that all of America's future leaders and professionals should have an opportunity to be immersed in and enlightened by this country's greatest treasure, wilderness. It is one of the best ways to guarantee the future of our parks and our culture.

CHAPTER 4

Urban Landscapes

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The greatest number of Partners in the Parks adventures have occurred in wilderness settings; however, the National Park Service also operates a significant number of parks, monuments, and affiliated museums that are in urban locations. Partners in the Parks has embraced these urban locations not only in the weeklong New York City programs (Fire Island to Ellis Island and Gateway to America) and in Boston but also in several mini-adventures held during the annual NCHC conferences in San Antonio; Washington, D. C.; Boston; Denver; New Orleans; and Chicago.

National parks and monuments in urban settings can be the basis for fascinating full PITP programs although they may not always—though they have so far—include camping, cooking, or the same kind of hiking that one experiences on wilderness trails.

On city explorations participants may walk for even more hours in a day than on backcountry trips, but they are likely to stop for quick meals and find themselves engaged in significantly different explorations. The purpose of PITP is to encourage visits to the greatest possible range of national park sites across America, so people living in urban centers with NPS sites should consider constructing local adventures. These might be shorter than a week and use residence hall housing. They might compare national parks with state or city parks. They might raise the question of how NPS-administered museums, presidential homes, monuments, or even rivers and seashores contribute to the interpretation of American history.

The National Collegiate Honors Council has developed a number of experiential-education models over the last several decades. Undoubtedly the most well-known and widely applied is City as Text™, which is utilized at every annual conference to engage students and faculty in learning to interpret urban neighborhoods: architecture, history, demographics, and culture in the broadest sense. Many honors programs and regional organizations have adapted the model to construct local interpretive workshops, study abroad options, and other special programs. In addition, NCHC has employed similar explorations in faculty development workshops. Other experiential models have included Sleeping Bag Seminars, which are weekend adventures hosted by one institution drawing students from regional colleges to study some unique aspect of the local environment, history, or culture. These and other models are explored in the NCHC monograph *Place as Text*, which is extremely useful reading for anyone developing a Partners in the Parks program.

Urban parks invite some of the same techniques as City as Text: using public transportation; learning to observe historical, cultural, and demographic aspects of the neighborhood in which the park is situated; and talking both with residents of the area and with visitors about the personal significance of place. In urban parks as well as in the other national parks, PITP recommends that participants move about in small, low-impact groups of four or five and observe

the decorum of quiet conversation. This practice is an important element of the Leave No Trace philosophy.

One difference from City as Text is that while students often move across the cityscape with limited context, in PITP excursions students have the benefit of interpretive park rangers to pull back the curtain to reveal the workings of not only the park sites themselves but also how those sites interface with the city, its visitors, and local population. Boston's National Historic Park, for example, resides in the heart of the city where businessmen, tourists, residents, and students all jostle and bustle along the streets. For the NCHC Boston mini-PITP, participants met at Faneuil Hall, "the Cradle of Liberty," and from there, accompanied by a park ranger, walked the Freedom Trail. Tales of the revolutionary past of the United States intermingled with the commercial life of the city as the ranger spoke of the cooperative agreements the NPS has developed with several historic sites that are not owned or operated by the NPS. The group continued on to the Charlestown Navy Yard and the U.S.S. Constitution, where they met with one of the Yard's law enforcement rangers. He spoke about the complexities of protecting an historic site in a busy and often dangerous city and reflected upon the cooperative agreements with the NPS and the Boston Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies. (Of course, everyone had to get a photo in the small holding cell in the NPS office to complete the experience.) Given the student interest in this session about the legal complexities, one recommendation is that future PITP programs, both urban and non-urban based, include a session with NPS law enforcement rangers to enrich the content. Issues of security, drug enforcement, handguns in national parks, and illegal immigration, while uncomfortable topics, are growing concerns in the national parks, and the law enforcement rangers deal with park management issues that visitors rarely consider or even notice.

Something about PITP programs and their participants always seems to result in what New Orleanians call *lagniappe*, a little extra something. During the 2014 PITP excursion to the Old U.S. Mint in New Orleans, participants walked through the French Quarter,

marking all the restaurant fare they would return to sample later that afternoon and evening: muffaletas at the Central Grocery, crawfish étouffé, and jambalaya established a tone for the day's excursion. The Old U.S. Mint is now part of the Louisiana State Museum. The group explored the currency and minting displays, which served as a branch of the nation's mint from 1838–1861 and 1879–1909. Today it is a performance venue for jazz concerts in partnership with the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

Ranger Bruce Barnes guided the group through the Louisiana Music Museum, answering questions about the displays, the history of jazz and New Orleans, Mardi Gras, and the marching societies; he was a fount of knowledge about New Orleans music and culture old and new. This expertise should not have been surprising since Ranger Barnes is better known in New Orleans circles as “Sunpie Barnes,” a veteran blues, zydeco, and Afro-Louisianan musician. The PITP visit concluded with live music in the concert hall, a fitting end to a PITP adventure in New Orleans.

Another example of the little extra that enriches PITP occurred when the Fire Island to Ellis Island PITP group was invited to travel to Liberty Island on the 7:30 a.m. staff boat to gain entry into the museum before the tourists arrived. Despite a two-year hiatus since last organizing the program, when Joan Digby called Ranger Katherine Craine, the Education Specialist, she, of course, remembered PITP because the PITP experience is not just memorable for the participants. Ranger Craine took that year's group behind the scenes to witness the latest stages of the Statue of Liberty's restoration. Boat travel was also part of the first year of the Black Canyon/Curecanti PITP; the program had to rent a pontoon boat to go out on the reservoir with the rangers to discuss the challenges of managing a national recreation area and its fisheries. The students were so engaged and interested in the topics and the challenges that the next year and on subsequent visits, the rangers provided park boats for the program to explore the reservoir.

With almost every PITP experience, there are off-script moments when rangers reveal information and aspects of the site the average visitor would never experience. For example, the 2009

NCHC conference mini-PITP focused on the monuments and memorials on the Washington, D.C., National Mall. As the students and faculty stood at the base of the Washington Monument surrounded by tourists from around the world, rangers spoke of the complexity of managing not just the monuments and memorials but the open spaces. Unlike the National Mall, most national parks sites are not subjected to mass demonstrations, festivals, and protests. From there the rangers directed the group's attention from the linear simplicity of the Washington Monument to the classical wreaths, columns, and fountains of the World War II monument. The group was taken by surprise when the hydraulic engineer, Ranger Terri Branzell, revealed the inner workings of the WWII fountain. While tourists walked across the National Mall, the PITP group was astonished to be led underground to investigate the subterranean machinery of the fountain before emerging to rejoin the crowds moving towards the minimalist power of the Viet Nam War Memorial and the sculptural realism of the Korean War memorial, with its troop of life-size soldiers seeming to edge



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

The World War II Memorial Fountain on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., is part of the Mini-PITP excursion during the 2009 NCHC convention.

forward across the field. At each memorial, Ranger Bethany Bagent turned the group's attention to those tourists whose personal histories and losses were framed in these monuments. Students are often moved to silence by the power and beauty of the natural landscapes of national parks, but here, too, in the heart of one of the world's busiest cities, the power of place, memory, and story made a profound impact on all.

Urban-based PITP programs present their own challenges and concerns regarding explorations. While much of the itinerary is a group adventure, students need time for solo explorations. Knowing where students will go if left alone in a big city is impossible. Using local student teaching assistants as guides and shepherds will alleviate most concerns. Collecting cell phone numbers of the students and making sure that all the students have the cell phone numbers of each other as well as the program leaders have proven helpful. City adventures are not ones in which it is a good idea to discourage electronic communication. Providing access to assistance means that everyone will worry less and sleep better. The commercial, artistic, and tourist offerings of the city are as hard to pass up as wanting to go to the canyon's edge or hike another mile down the trail. In either case, leaders must provide students with open times and must let the students go. In New York City, Broadway, Coney Island, and museums are always high on the list. Amazingly, this year one student arrived with a ticket to *Hamilton*.

Creativity and flexibility are useful guiding principles whether a program brings country mice to the city or city slickers to the wilds. The ideal is tailoring the program to the place and to its unique resources while always leaving room for change. Some parks or sites are so extensive that they could accommodate a weeklong program every year without repeating the same explorations. No matter what the itinerary, it should bend like Aesop's reed in the wind rather than break like a rigid oak. There will be times when a ferry is late, a park ranger is called to an emergency, the road is closed, a student feels ill, the subway breaks down, the rain is too heavy to take photographs, the snow becomes a blizzard, the birds have flown, the van breaks down, or the event takes up only half

of the planned morning session. Whatever the situation, program coordinators must be prepared to improvise and to help the students find excitement in the spontaneous change of plans in the mountains or the streets.

REFERENCE

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FIELD NOTES



Fire Island to Ellis Island was, for some years, the only weeklong urban PITP. It was offered twice before it very naturally under the guidance of new leaders became transformed into the latest iteration called New York City: Gateway to America. In the following Field Notes, Melissa Antinori and James P. Clarke discuss the process by which they altered the focus of a PITP in New York City and reinvented it by using some of the same components and bringing in new ones.

From Fire Island to Gateway: Evolution of an Urban Partners in the Parks

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LIU BROOKLYN

Partners in the Parks typically evokes visions of North American wilderness, images of spectacular canyons, blue-skied vistas, desert landscapes, and majestic forests. Much of the imagery is iconic, and the isolation is curiously inviting, especially for those of us not used to such open spaces devoid of human presence. The idea of an urban Partners was first conceived in 2009 by Joan Digby, who offered an enticing opportunity to bridge LIU's suburban C.W. Post Campus with its urban Brooklyn Campus via a Partners in the Parks that stretched from Fire Island to Ellis Island. Thus the partnership with the National Park Service also became a partnership between the honors programs of two highly differentiated campuses. Joan's initial thought was to somehow capture a feature of Southern New York that is often missed by its local inhabitants: the place is surrounded by water. Seashore, harbors, rivers, wetlands, and islands—a veritable cornucopia of ports, waterways, and water-bound land masses.

Another hidden feature of the region is the high number of NPS sites sprawled across the New York City metropolitan area: historic sites, monuments, recreational sites, parks, and preserves. How could these riches be brought together in a weeklong exploration that would remain true to the fundamentals of the PITP experience? John Lutz of LIU Post and the honors directors of LIU Brooklyn, James P. Clarke and Cris Gleicher, confronted an eclectic collection of NPS sites and their conviction that a PITP must include camping and hiking, group cooking, a service project, a theme to connect it all, and journaling and discussion circles to make it a reflective and cohesive experience. Instead of one place from which could spring many types of exploration, we surveyed the inverse prospect of many places with no obvious connection.

The first Fire Island to Ellis Island iteration in 2010 probably did not solve that problem; however, the group did get out on the water right away. On a beautiful June morning, we sailed Oyster Bay on the *Christeen*, the oldest oyster sloop in the U.S. and a national historic landmark. Next was a visit to Sagamore Hill, Teddy Roosevelt's home and also the site of our NPS service project, weeding out invasive plants. Our camping experience began the following day with more water—a rough ferry ride across Long Island's Great South Bay to the eastern tip of Fire Island. And then there was even more water—by noon the skies delivered sheets of rain and chilly blasts of wind. We scrapped the plan to set up tents and hiked through the rain to a house on Watch Hill (courtesy of an NPS ranger who must have felt sorry for our soggy group). Other than the crashing of ocean waves throughout the night and the family of red foxes the participants spotted the next morning, cooking on an indoor stove and trying to stay warm in a house did not offer much of a wilderness experience. The hike from Watch Hill through the many towns of Fire Island, each with its own character and history, was a curious mix of hiking long, empty stretches of sand and ducking occasionally into the thickets that line the Burma Road, a trail running the length of Fire Island that was once used during World War II by soldiers in jeeps whose charge was spotting German U-boats along the shore. We had underestimated the ardors of the hike: Watch Hill

to the historic 1857 Fire Island Lighthouse on the beach at Robert Moses State Park is 13.9 miles, and the Burma Road became the Bataan Death March—albeit with a pizza break in Cherry Grove, the first gay and lesbian resort town in the United States. Needless to say, experience led us to revise this portion of the Fire Island to Ellis Island PITP in our 2012 iteration. We ended our hike in the NPS-run town of Sailor’s Haven, near the enchanting Sunken Forest. The weather also cooperated in 2012, permitting tent camping, outdoor cooking, and bird watching. NPS provided a much-needed lesson in mosquito control.

The wilderness and camping features of an urban PITP are hard to combine coherently with the city explorations. The group leaders had no clear way to thematically connect the Long Island and Fire Island experiences to New York City’s NPS sites, with the exception of a visit to Teddy Roosevelt’s Gramercy Park home. Going from something grand (Sagamore Hill) to Teddy Roosevelt’s birthplace, though interesting, was anti-climactic. The other NPS sites on the itinerary—Liberty Island, Ellis Island, the Tenement Museum, and the African Burial Ground—all have an intrinsic relation: immigration, voluntary and involuntary. Immigration and NYC’s diversity became the theme. For good measure and contrast with the national parks system, and because we were still committed to the notion of exploring “parks,” we threw in visits to the Highline and Central Park, which are perfect examples of public/private partnerships, as well as a walk in Harlem, preceded by a discussion of a Langston Hughes piece, to round out our exploration of NYC’s diverse communities. The excursions also became all about the ethnic foods of NYC. If the 2010 and 2012 Fire Island to Ellis Island PITPs sound eclectic and a bit incoherent, that is because they were. We were experimenting, and the results were exhilarating, if not completely planned nor seamlessly integrated. Our reading materials reflected each of the “moments,” as did the journaling assignments; however, as teachers, we all felt the need for a more coherent syllabus.

New York City: Gateway to America (2016) began in 2015 as the brainchild of Rachelle Goldsmith, the honors director of Kingsborough Community College (KCC). Rachelle wanted to organize

a PITP that included Gateway National Recreation Area. Rachele recruited Joan Digby as a past master of the urban PITP, and Joan brought on board James P. Clarke and Melissa Antinori from LIU Brooklyn. Along with Janine Palludan of KCC, this group constructed a PITP expedition wholly within the confines of New York City that also included a camping experience. The novelty of this last feature—whenever someone uttered “camping in New York City”—never ceased to delight us. It sounded magical and impossible, yet Gateway National Recreation Area, a 26,607-acre park adjacent to Jamaica Bay, offers a bit of the wild in the heart of Brooklyn. Although the project had a messy beginning, things began to come together once the group embraced the theme of immigration, which lent coherence to the selection of readings and sites to visit, the journaling, and the discussion circles. The very first assignment was for the participants to bring a vignette of their family’s own immigration story to be shared around the campfire on the first night camping in Gateway. That first circle set the tone for the entire week. It was soon discovered that most, if not all, of the participants had chosen this particular PITP not only for the allure of New York City but because of an interest in immigration.

Focusing on immigration, of course, did not preclude exploring the natural beauty of Gateway. The group camped at Floyd Bennett Field’s Ecology Village, a bit of reclaimed Brooklyn wilderness adjacent to runways once used by famed aviators such as Wiley Post and Amelia Earhart and by the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. As with any wilderness PITP, we slept in tents and cooked on wood stoves—and fended off wildlife in the form of a feral cat (with the exception of Joan Digby who fed, encouraged, and photographed it).^{*} We kayaked in the bay, engaged in a bird and wildflower hike, and visited the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, where we also learned about the threat of climate change (the refuge was damaged during Hurricane Sandy in 2012), and how the NPS adapts to the changing landscapes of the parks. Our NPS service project, by some pre-established harmony, had both an ecological and an immigrant connection: we cleaned up a beach on Jamaica Bay where Hindu immigrants practice rituals

^{*}Joan is probably the only honors director in the country whose budget once included a line item for feeding, spaying, and neutering feral cats.

that were once upon a time conducted on the Ganges. Unfortunately many of the ritual objects—plastic figurines, pottery, bits of sari, flags, candles, and incense—are not biodegradable and further pollute the already distressed environment of the bay. A group within the Hindu community is working closely with the NPS to promote ecological awareness and the use of biodegradables.

After our move to the relative comfort of the LIU dorms, we continued our explorations of immigration through such NPS sites as Castle Clinton, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and the African Burial Ground. Through superb talks by NPS staff and readings selected by the project faculty, we learned about the myths and realities surrounding immigration through the early twentieth century: that surnames were probably not changed at Ellis Island but on ship manifests; that the ability to work was the primary criterion for admission to the U.S.; that New York City was—and remains—a city segregated by race and ethnicity.

Our week also included an investigation of immigration today, both in New York City in particular and in the U.S. in general, a topic that was much on students' minds and that formed the basis of a fantastic discussion in Bowling Green Park, where we talked about firsthand experiences of current immigration procedures, deportation, the stigmas attached to English as a second language learners, and cultural assimilation. Readings gave students an introduction



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Participants help with cleanup on the Brooklyn beach at Jamaica Bay as part of the Gateway PITP 2016.



A Hindu statue is found during the Brooklyn beach cleanup.

to the history, culture, and politics of the New York neighborhoods we visited—such as Manhattan’s Chinatown and Jackson Heights in Queens, where garden apartments were once seen as an antidote to crowded tenement living and where today there is a vibrant Indian community—and to the phenomenon of gentrification, which threatens not only to displace current residents but to homogenize neighborhoods.

One of the prerequisites for the trip was the willingness to try new foods, and as part of our exploration of modern-day New York City, we feasted on knishes at Yonah Schimmel in the Lower East Side and traditional Chinese cuisine in Manhattan’s Chinatown, sent the students in small groups to explore what culinary delights they could find in Jackson Heights, Queens, and introduced them to Nathan’s hotdogs in Coney Island and Russian pastries in Brighton Beach. The students returned with enthusiastic reports (and great pictures) of the foods they had tried and with intentions to revisit those neighborhoods the next time they were in the city. They all commented that they appreciated seeing the “real” New York, which most tourists are unaware of and do not ever see. In short, we did our own version of “backcountry” in the outer boroughs.

Gateway revealed the potential to take an existing program and reshape it with new leaders, new rangers, and new sites in order to allow it to evolve and grow. A huge part of the success of this latest iteration must be credited to the National Park Service personnel who functioned splendidly as educators, cultural interpreters, naturalists, and guides. Overall the week’s focus on immigration in the sites, readings, and discussions; the combination of NPS sites and New York City neighborhoods; the connections participants made between history and present-day issues; and the balance of structured and free time all made for a great experience for the students, all twelve of whom will undoubtedly be good ambassadors to their honors college classmates for future PITP programs. And while it took the faculty a bit of time to recover from the week and to process what they learned, we feel certain that we will offer a version of this urban PITP again in the future.

CHAPTER 5

Expanding Horizons Closer to Home

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One of the most significant trends in both higher education and honors education during the last few decades has been an emphasis on study abroad. (For an extended discussion of honors study abroad, see *Preparing Tomorrow's Global Leaders*.) According to the *Open Doors Data* of the Institute of International Education of Students (IIES), the number of U.S. students studying abroad increased from 191,231 in 2003/04 to 304,467 in 2013/14. The IIES *Open Doors Data* also revealed that the majority of study abroad experiences are defined as short term: of the students who studied abroad in 2013/14, 67% engaged in short-term experiences from one week to eight weeks; 35% joined mid-length programs of one semester; while only 5% studied abroad for a full year. The National Collegiate Honors Council's signature programs City as Text™ and Honors Semesters offer short- and mid-term explorations. (For

further discussion of these topics, see the following NCHC monographs: *Place as Text*, *Shatter the Glassy Stare*, and *Writing on Your Feet*.) From the intensive afternoon explorations of the host city during the national conferences to the lengthier Honors Semesters at home and abroad, the NCHC offers similar opportunities to students as traditional study abroad programs. NCHC's Partners in the Parks program is very much a sister program to study abroad and *City as Text* in its ability to transform the lives of students. R. M. Paige et al. revealed in "Study Abroad for Global Engagement" that short-term study abroad experiences have many of the same lasting effects as the semester and yearlong programs on the degree of civic commitment and volunteerism, both global and domestic. Regardless then of length of program, according to IIES research, participants in study abroad identify the following ten values of their experiences:

1. The opportunity to see the world;
2. Expansion of education;
3. Exposure to new cultures;
4. Language acquisition;
5. Aid in career opportunities;
6. Opportunity to discover new interests;
7. Development of lifelong friendships;
8. Opportunity for personal development;
9. Favorable impact on graduate school admission;
10. Accumulation of life experience. (IIES)

Throughout the ten years of Partners in the Parks programs, faculty and staff participants on Partners in the Parks trips have observed many of these same transformative changes in student growth and sensibility that are typically identified with study abroad. For students coming from rural areas, the canyons of New York might be as exotic as the Grand Canyon would be to a Bostonian. Students can benefit immensely from traveling to a different

part of one's own vast and diverse nation and immersing oneself in a completely different landscape. The stories the national park historic sites tell of America's past can be as foreign to U.S. students as the battlefields of Europe or the medieval streets of Italy and no less strange and unfamiliar. The Missouri National Recreation River PITP, for example, introduces participants to the culture and history of the Lakota and Ponca peoples of the region and includes tribal members among the rangers and faculty as students follow in the footsteps of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. PITP brings students from different regions of the U.S. together in unfamiliar landscapes, and the weeklong experiences in a national park can dispel as many preconceptions the students hold of not only the places they visit and the people they come in contact with but also of each other and where they come from as traveling and studying in a foreign country do. One distinct advantage that Partners in the Parks projects have over study abroad programs as an opportunity to engage in intensive experiential learning is the sheer cost benefit; finding a program more economical, better subsidized, and more successful for honors students than the PITP programs would be difficult.

Partners in the Parks projects have pedagogical objectives that do not focus solely on one subject but seek, instead, to offer an interdisciplinary exposure to the complexity of a place. The faculty drawn to organize and participate in PITP projects bring with them not only a depth of knowledge of their subject, but like the honors students themselves an inherent curiosity about the world around them and a passion for the national parks. Of course, teaching in the field requires instructors who are prepared to be innovative and agile in their delivery. Often the faculty and staff are as diverse in their training and interests as the students. Just as the National Park Service seeks to hire passionate people from all fields of study, faculty who organize PITP programs come from every field of the humanities, social sciences, fine arts, and the natural sciences, and PITP programs are for students from all majors and programs. Because the honors students, faculty, and rangers collectively represent an interdisciplinary enthusiasm for learning, some of the

best interactions occur during the informal teaching that takes place around the campsite as biology majors explain the local flora to English majors, philosophy majors add their ethical insights to ecological issues, or history majors stand alongside geology majors mutually informing each other's sense of the significance of a particular rock formation.

Students and faculty alike often discover new academic interests that they would not normally have space for in their programs of study at their home institutions. Rigid academic programs often do not let students step outside their designated majors because of prerequisite and requisite courses; PITP not only offers students a broader educational landscape to explore but experiences that can enrich a chosen field of study. Students from the strong medical science program at Quinnipiac University, for example, came to understand the healing power of wilderness as have many other students who have been moved to see the landscape of the parks beyond resource and ecosystem management. Caroline Smith, a nursing student entering her senior year at Northeastern University, commented:



Paddlers rendezvous on the Buffalo River with co-director Doug Corbitt.

One might think I wouldn't have much experience in wilderness. In fact, I have been very lucky to grow up visiting many national parks and other wilderness areas. Despite my experience in the outdoors, I found that my concept of 'wilderness' evolved quite a bit throughout my time in Olympic. I learned so much from our group leaders, other students on the trip, our partners, and from the park itself.

Caroline found that her time in Olympic reinforced her commitment "to the natural world, despite my indoor career choice" and felt "very lucky to have the honors program by my side throughout my time at Northeastern, and to have opportunities like Partners in the Parks to push me to explore different horizons with passionate and exciting people."

Integrating the students participating in the PITP project into the workings of the National Park Service and its role in managing park resources is at the core of the PITP educational experience. PITP students do not just tour the park; they discover the environmental and cultural tensions at work in any natural or manmade ecosystem. For this reason, the hands-on learning that takes place during the structured sessions is provided by expert members of the NPS staff as much as by faculty. Rangers with advanced degrees in astronomy, anthropology, geology, climatology, fisheries management, and fire ecology present detailed introductions to the challenges of doing research and effecting policy changes to protect key resources. These interactions are not lectures but field excursions in which students are using precision instruments to test and measure resources within the national parks. Students and faculty come away not only with new knowledge about how data are collected but also with a more complex understanding of the cost/benefit challenges involved in advocating change. Knowing what needs to be done is not enough; how one persuades taxpayers that this project or that improvement is not just desirable but necessary and how budget limitations guide the setting of park priorities are often topics of discussion.

By going behind the scenes and making connections with the park rangers, students learn about possibilities for teaching

assistantships and professional careers in the National Park Service. Every NPS professional who has worked with PITP has encouraged students of all majors, from accounting and business to history, recreation, and zoology, to consider a career in the NPS. Opportunities are clearly not limited to the sciences. The students are exposed to a wide range of topics during the programs and are often surprised by the multi-faceted nature of the jobs of the park rangers. Indeed, some students discover the potential for new career paths for their majors within that diversity. Jordan Cooper, an alum of Black Canyon and Western State Colorado University, reflected back on her PITP experience:

What I enjoyed about PITP was how diverse everything was. We learned about everything from the early presence of Ute Indians to invasive species both on land and in the water to photography. . . . It certainly piqued my interest for what historians do in the national parks.



PHOTO BY RACHELLE GOLDSMITH

Larry Calhoun, New York Harbor Coordinator, talks with the PITP group at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge about the complexity of managing multiple and various sites. He encouraged students to consider a career in the NPS.

The park rangers are enthusiastic supporters of PITP students and openly respond to student questions about their personal and professional journeys. Many park rangers began in what they thought of as temporary and seasonal jobs during college and became so enamored of the parks, their work with the public, and the opportunities to work across the nation that they have spent their professional lives in the park. Their passion for the parks and the NPS mission is clear for all the students to see, and the rangers encourage our students to seriously consider careers with NPS. As one ranger so aptly shouted from the top of a ridge while helping PITP students record petroglyphs in Grand Canyon Parashant: “I love my job!”

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FIELD NOTES



In our next Field Notes section, Joan Digby and her PITP colleagues share one of the more exotic PITP experiences and locations: off the mainland and in the water.

Immersion in Nature—Quite Literally: U.S. Virgin Islands

JOAN DIGBY

LIU Post

WITH

KATHLEEN NOLAN AND KRISTY BIOLSI

ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE

The Partners in the Parks project at the Virgin Islands National Park was unique because it was the first PITP offering not on mainland America. The attendees find themselves immersed in an island culture with a distinctly international flavor. It is also the only offering that takes place much of the time offshore; students are swimming and snorkeling for several hours a day. The participants are housed at the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) at Lameshur Bay on St. John, an island that is 56% U.S. national park. The research station is remote and inaccessible except by prearranged van transport. The group lived and worked together throughout the week. Onsite is an environmental specialist as well as volunteers with various areas of expertise who give presentations on fauna and flora; island geography; the importance of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, including dry and wet tropical forests; coral reefs and mangroves; and local history. The history of VIERS

includes the 1969 training of aquanauts in an underwater capsule in Great Lameshur Bay: the Tektite Project. The park's museum has documented NASA's training with models and photographs.

In 2013, for the second summer iteration of PITP Virgin Islands National Park, a promising and diverse cohort of students assembled for this adventure. In 2012, the thirteen students included just one male. The 2013 trip enrolled sixteen students: four males and twelve females. The diversity of the group was a National Park Service dream cohort; students included one Haitian, one Arab, one Hispanic, and two non-traditional women (ages 25–30). We had three leaders: Dr. Kathleen Nolan, Chair of Biology and Health Sciences at St. Francis College; Dr. Kristy Biolsi, Associate Professor of Psychology at St. Francis College, with a specialization in marine mammal cognition focused on seals and sea lions; and Dr. Joan Digby, Professor of English, LIU Post, offering components in photography and fiction writing designed to practice skills in observation.

Those skills were essential because the theme the faculty leaders chose for the 2013 PITP program was "Observation." I set up the theme with a PowerPoint workshop on photographing nature, allowing students to approach the week ahead with a focused idea about using a camera to think about structure and detail. Since one of the VIERS volunteers, Chandra Williams, was an art teacher, we were serendipitously able to arrange a drawing class that proved to be extremely useful in conceptualizing proportion, distance, values, and relationships among the species that were observed. Several students were actually enrolled in a St. Francis College course for credit; they had done some class work and visited the New York Aquarium prior to leaving for PITP. Because the St. Francis students already had some training in fish and invertebrate identification, they, along with the faculty and personnel at VIERS, could assist the other PITP participants in species identification.

Although most days were programmed for a balance of snorkeling, hiking, and marine biology education, snorkeling and swimming are the core activities of this PITP adventure. Considering and accommodating the level and experience of participants as

swimmers are essential. On both the 2012 and 2013 trips, we were fortunate to have certified lifeguards among the group who could look out for those of us—myself included—who were less proficient and less confident in the water. Water safety is an essential element of this PITP, which means that students must observe and be alert to the whereabouts of people snorkeling in their vicinity, making certain that everyone is visible and safe at all times. This caution seems to intensify the bonding among students as well as with faculty and with the VIERS volunteer staff, who are also regarded as protectors.

During the snorkeling trips, students were assigned a buddy as a safety precaution, but these pairs were often teamed with other groups to assist with pointing out species that swam by as well as those stationary (sessile) species such as sponges, corals, different types of sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and the exotic feather duster (Christmas tree) worms. Many species hide by day and are active by night—as those who dared the night snorkel discovered. Nolan and Biolsi guided the night snorkel; the students who took part observed spiny lobsters, nudibranchs, octopi, and redfish. The great diversity of fish, coral, and sponges at first overwhelmed the group. So many seemed transparent, so many had yellow stripes or shades of blue that we had trouble isolating and observing any one very carefully. With training and with Nolan and Biolsi leading the snorkel groups, we became attuned to differences in eye shape and head and tail configuration, which enabled us to begin to recognize the fish around us. This effort was aided by Nolan's illustrated lecture on fish species; she used the well-equipped library at VIERS and its projection and computer equipment to hold lectures in a classroom space. Websites, charts, and reef guidebooks engaged the group in listing all the species they could identify by both common and Latin names. Students even constructed a "wish list" of the species they hoped to see on the next snorkel. Over the course of the week, that wish list filled in as the group observed sting rays and eagle rays, sea cucumbers, starfish, barracudas, angelfish, grunts, snappers, groupers, and parrot fish. Stephanie, who was particularly interested in sea turtles, found both the green and the hawksbill. Jack located



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Dr. Kathleen Nolan surfaces with a horse conch for the students to observe at the Virgin Islands PITP.



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Students are intently working during their fish identification class at VIERS.

his octopus, and all felt exhilarated as they became more proficient at hovering and staying with a fish or marine animal in order to identify and note its behaviors, which was a variation on an exercise devised by Biolsi for her studies of sea lions.

Because the group visited different locations, the participants were able to think about comparative environments. They snorkeled in Little Lameshur and Great Lameshur Bay, Reef Bay, Salt Bay, Princess Bay, Hurricane Hole, Tektite, Booby Rock, and Cinnamon Bay. Although many of the same species inhabit these places, great differences exist between the shallow and deep environments with respect to the rock formations, coral, grasses, mangroves, and caves. As students gained confidence, they were able to snorkel in deeper waters, which they did from the Sadie See, a dive boat hired for one afternoon.

As the week progressed, students became attached to particular species. At that point, we did a creative storytelling project in which the students wrote narratives from the perspective of their chosen species and its encounter with humans. They were clever and amusing vignettes. A graduate student engaged in research on blood parasites in fish happened to be in the classroom during these animated presentations, and he even took part by playing the role of the protagonist species as the student told her tale. Here is the tale of a sea cucumber I told to kick off this exercise:

Humans can be so insulting. Donkey Dung they call me, as if those pathetic scraps of excrement can be compared to my magnificent physique. At least they could have called me Donkey You-Know-What. But no, they had to fling insults in my face. I've seen those scruffy donkeys come to the very edge of my habitat and leave their mean deposits, but they have never called me names. Among my friends I'm known as Hercules' Club, and if I ever get the chance for revenge, those insulting humans will feel my wrath. Why, I'll spill my guts and beat them with the mighty power of my erupting truncheon.

This storytelling circle brought on much laughter. On other occasions we used the PITP circle gatherings to share reflections on what we saw and noted. In one of these sessions, the faculty asked students about other national parks they had visited and other PITP programs they had attended. Many of them had considerable experience in both. Interestingly, one of the comparisons that emerged was between St. John and Acadia. People live within the boundaries of both parks and so borders are invisible and not at all observable in both. Indeed, St. John has no formal entry, and no NPS official attempts to collect a park fee.

The group did notice that even without any obvious regulations at all, visitors to this park do not leave trash on trails or beaches, although the beaches have some debris that washes ashore from boats. Most of the tourists we met were interested in eco-tourism; in fact, Biolsi gave a presentation on this subject that focused the students on observing people who came with that intent. One of the places where the participants snorkeled featured an eco-hotel, and on the beach they met people who had come to snorkel and educate their children about marine animals. After a father showed



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Students investigate a sea cucumber they found while snorkeling.

his son a living conch, the seven-year-old child came over to show it to me and asked whether I could take it back out to the place where it was found. I gladly did.

While all of the beaches where the group snorkeled were extremely clean and free of trash, this situation was in stark contrast to the visible garbage dumps and car graveyards all over the island, where, as the van driver confirmed, there are no real zoning laws. Elegant homes and shacks were side by side, and new housing is so expensive that many people live on boats moored in the bays, particularly in Coral Bay. Reflections on comparative environments extended both to sea and land.

Not surprisingly, since VIERS is a remote biology research station, the housing is rudimentary, and quarters are close. In 2013, the twelve women shared two bunkhouses; the four men shared another cottage; and the three faculty members also shared a cabin. The facility also housed scientists studying termites, fish parasites, sharks, the effects of sedimentation on coral reefs, and energy conservation. Their presence enhanced the sense for the students that their own engagement was part of a collaborative enterprise. In the relaxed atmosphere of the isolated research station, the students interacted with the researchers and learned firsthand about their studies, including important connections between development and its impact on island ecosystems. Ever conscious of these connections, VIERS operates as a sustainable environment. The toilet rules are clear, and showers are limited to three minutes per person per day. Water use is posted in the dining hall, with signage encouraging groups to bring their usage down as low as possible. Thus the consciousness of water—including rainwater collection and the ethics of conservation—added a further dimension to reflections on the old philosopher Thales' belief that "all things are water."

Understanding the delicate island environment, or reading it properly, required an awareness of botany. Along trails around VIERS as well as on our hikes to Rams Head and Reef Bay, the students learned to distinguish among native and invasive species; tasted tamarind pods (particularly sought by the deer that visited camp regularly to feed); and saw gigantic kapok trees, red peeling

turpentine trees (tourist trees), various cacti and epiphytes, and tyre palms (the only native palm) among others. The group also focused on adaptations that help plants survive, such as spines, reflective white leaves, and a bitter taste.

In truth, plants played a significant role in the history of the Virgin Islands, as students learned on the Reef Bay hike and the hike to Annenberg. Both areas were sugar cane plantations intimately connected to the economy of slavery. At Annenberg two park rangers met with the group to tour the sugar plantation and rum factory. Nolan used the visits to these NPS locations as an occasion to discuss the history of St. John as a slave colony under Danish, British, and French rule. (The U.S. purchased the islands in 1919.) Colonial cultures remain extremely visible in the mixed ethnicity and culture of the island people. One prominent clan still active on St. John is the Penns, descendants of William Penn, who fathered two sons by a slave woman and had to purchase his children in order to secure their freedom. One of his descendants now works for the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. Unfortunately, we were not able to meet her.

One evening, native herbalist Ital, who is also a percussionist and craftsman selling carved and painted objects made from local seeds, pods, calabash, and coconuts, presented a talk on “bush” remedies, which included an impassioned speech imploring the students to become future protectors of the environment. Although he mingled education with music and dance, when he tested the students on how many of the plants they could remember from their observations, it was quite rewarding to see how concentrated they were and how well they did on this impromptu quiz—earning mangos for all as a reward.

On a more serious academic note, the students taking Nolan’s class also had a research project, and near the end of the week they reported their findings on the spiny lobster, the grouper, and the invasive lion fish, as well as on the history of the U.S. Virgin Islands, the U.S. National Park Service, and ecotourism. Indeed, the mingling of credit and non-credit participants worked in a seamless fashion.

As ever with PITP immersion adventures, saying goodbye was difficult. To this end, Nolan always plans a “Three Kings” gift-giving ceremony. Three Kings Day is a holiday that is celebrated in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Since we had four male students in 2013, we called it “Four Kings.” At the beginning of the week, students pick the name of someone in the group out of a hat. The task throughout the week is to find or make three gifts from nature (using plants, rocks, shells, etc.) to present to the chosen person at the ceremony. As the students get to know and observe each other, they make gifts specific to personality or interest. Although this exchange is undertaken in great fun, the feelings that students have for each other and for the leaders emerge in a touching way that is a sweet prelude to the inevitable parting.

OUR FINAL OBSERVATIONS

PITP U.S. Virgin Islands offers a serious, extensive engagement in the old game “I Spy with My Little Eye.” It trains students quickly to see more and to see more deeply everything around them in a habitat. The expedition is an “Island and Sea as Texts” experience that transfers knowledge from field guides to immersion in self-educating observation. Students learn a great deal about how to learn and how to confirm the veracity of knowledge from secondary sources by firsthand observation.

The balance of science and the arts worked well in providing space for students who came from many different majors. Some have kept in touch through social networking. During the trip itself, the social networking was the old-fashioned variety. In a place where the only phone reception was *one* spot next to a sprouting coconut tree, face-to-face conversation and communication entirely replaced electronic devices, which caused little anxiety among the students except for several participants who were going off to Spain or Kenya for a fall study abroad semester. PITP is, of course, excellent preparation for further travel and adventures because it cultivates personal responsibility and the ability to share space.

On the next iteration of this trip, studying more of the land animals would be interesting: deer (imported by the Danes for hunting),

hermit crabs, frogs, and feral donkeys, as well as the numerous bird species (hummingbirds, thrushes, warblers, boobies, frigate birds, terns, and gulls). Having more information in advance about the swimming ability of students taking this trip would help the leaders in pairing snorkel partners. For the sake of safety—and *this applies to all PITP adventures*—students should be provided with preliminary information about species to avoid. On this trip participants needed to be concerned about the spiny sea urchin, lionfish, jellyfish, and barracuda. Although the group had no problems and did observe all of them, the faculty leaders will in the future prepare a pictorial safety sheet of species to avoid. Immersion in nature is best undertaken with clearly spelled out rules and safety precautions explicitly designed for particular sites and adventures.

PHOTO BY MATT NICKERSON



Grand Canyon-Parashant.

PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY



Montezuma Castle National Monument at Camp Verde, visited during a mini-PITP at the Phoenix convention, 2011.

PHOTO BY MATT NICKERSON



Grand Canyon-Parashant.

PHOTO BY CHLOÉ MARCULIS



Sequoia hike.

PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY



Vista with *Thor's Hammer*, Bryce Canyon National Park.

PHOTO BY NATASHA INFANTE



Taking out invasive Japanese Knotweed on Peddocks Island.

PHOTO BY BILL ATWILL



Black Bear, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

PHOTO BY MATT NICKERSON



Cedar Breaks National Park at sunset.

PHOTO BY CHLOÉ MARGULIS



Sunset at Sequoia National Park.



Pietro, student guide on the New York City Gateway trip, standing in front of a Coney Island mural that surprises and delights the group.



PHOTO BY BILL ATWILL

Rafting the Nantahala, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

PHOTO BY MATT NICKERSON



Recently discovered cave at Grand Canyon-Parashant.

PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY



View from Ram's Head, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands.

PHOTO BY CHLOÉ MARGULIS



Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i.

PHOTO BY CHLOÉ MARGULIS



Walking a lava trail, Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i.



PHOTO BY LAURA HARRINGTON

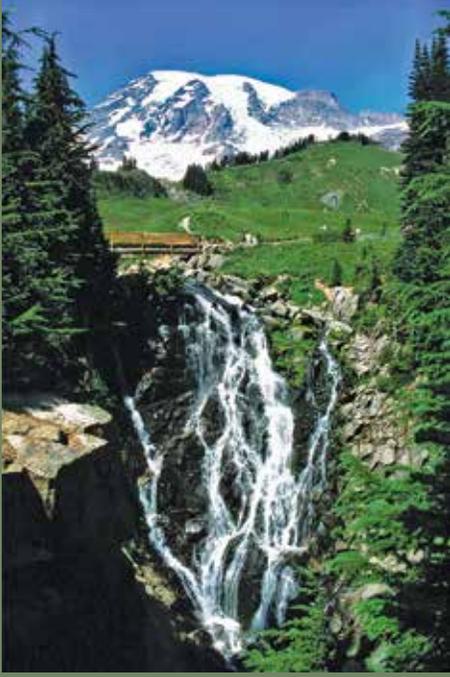
Students engage in a fireside conversation with poet, historian, and author Tim McNulty at Olympic National Park.



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Students prepare for the Rainforest Hike at St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands.

PHOTO BY LAURA HARRINGTON



A waterfall at Mount Rainier beckons.

PHOTO BY ALLISON WALLACE



Mountain vista at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

PHOTO BY ALLISON WALLACE



Students go Stone Age on the Buffalo National River.



Kelsey Springwater and Meredith Grubbs canoe on the Buffalo National River.



A cluster of Sequoias tower above PITP participants at Sequoia National Park.

CHAPTER 6

Partnerships and Process: A Step-by-Step Guide to Initiating a PITP Program

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If we have learned anything over the last ten years, it is that the success of Partners in the Parks is reflected in its name: Partners. This program could not have achieved the success it has built without establishing and nurturing partnerships with a wide range of constituencies. From PITP's earliest conception to the now over 80 PITP programs that have stretched across the length and breadth of this country, partnerships and good planning are what have built the PITP community. The pilot program for Partners in the Parks occurred in Bryce Canyon during May of 2007. The group that gathered for that first experience essentially served as a scouting

party for the model that has been evolving during these last ten years. A great deal has been learned, much of which has been condensed into the approximately 18 month start to finish PITP planning timetable in the Best Practices Manual. (See Appendix C.) One of the most critical lessons was that for every location, timing and accessibility must be considered first.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

While sudden quirks of nature, like an unexpected spring snow in Bryce or an encounter with a bear or family of otters, may become a part, even a highlight, of the experience, the main decision about timing involves a broader consideration of seasons. Since many of the western parks are open only during summer months, Partners in the Parks generally schedules programs in that region either at the end of the spring semester (May) or the end of the summer (August). This timing is important not only in consideration of student summer jobs, but also because the parks become crowded mid-summer and rangers are unable to give special attention to PITP groups when tourism is at a peak. The same early-spring or late-summer blocks of time also work well for parks on the eastern seaboard. The Everglades and other parks open during the winter are available for mid-year (January) or spring break programs.

Choosing a national park or national monument close to the host institution yields the benefit that faculty and students familiar with the park enthusiastically support the plan. Some may already be doing research onsite or be regular campers in the places chosen. Especially if the host campus is near a small, less-visited National Park Service site, the choice of that special place will add a significant dimension to PITP. The National Park Service is keen to promote less-known sites under its jurisdiction in order to encourage tourism and generate enthusiasm for these places. Anyone scouting a site should be thinking about its unique aspects and at the same time be looking for local artists, poets, geologists, botanists, musicians, and philosophers with imaginative ideas

that they can bring to the program. The weeklong agenda is made most exciting by diverse workshops and presentations. Leaders should also start thinking about specific themes or issues for their programs during this initial stage. Viewing a park from many perspectives and academic disciplines enriches the experience of being there, of camping, hiking, and learning. Creative students think in many media; getting them to use their creativity to grasp national park sites as special places is the ultimate goal of PITP's experiential-learning model. This goal is critical no matter what the choice of park.

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING SUPPORT

Although the preliminary paperwork for PITP excursions is extensive, the NCHC Partners in the Parks Committee and NCHC website offer a great deal of help. NCHC hosts the official PITP website, processes student registration and scholarship applications, serves as liaisons with the NPS, collects fees, and sets up program accounts for payment. Members of the PITP Committee can also



Faculty and staff prepare for a service project during their retreat at Rocky Mountain National Park.

provide a wealth of knowledge and experience. All of its members are happy to make themselves available for advice and guidance. The committee also highly recommends that faculty considering developing a PITP program actually participate in one first. Faculty who attend a full-week PITP or faculty retreat often gain the confidence and knowledge to begin the process of developing a new Partners program.

Program leaders should encourage colleagues and students to become part of the collaborative adventure. Apart from their day jobs, people might also be willing to transport students, carry supplies, cook meals, or tell stories. Obviously, the university officers of the host institution must be in the loop. University administrators might offer financial or personnel support, such as graduate assistants to shepherd the participants, or in-kind support, such as the use of university vans or dormitory space for arriving and departing students. We have even had a provost join us as a white water rafting instructor. Most important is that the officers become vested in PITP as a way of publicizing their commitment to experiential education. Early in the planning stage, they should know that a project is being formulated that has the potential for national recognition and honors recruitment publicity. Institutional support for the project should be in writing before the proposal and dates have been presented to or approved by the PITP Committee.

BUILDING AND SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

Following institutional approval, the first step is presenting the initial proposal to the PITP Committee for review. Submissions to the PITP Committee for this review should include the documentation indicating institutional support and the PITP program proposal.

The formal program proposal should include the following:

- NPS park site(s) and dates;
- Proposed registration fee and group size;
- Names and credentials of at least two project leaders;

- Ideas for educational, recreational, and stewardship goals/opportunities in the park(s) that should be keyed to the unique character of the park;
- Ideas for service projects in the park;
- Ideas for faculty workshops and presentations;
- Ideas for park ranger involvement and programming;
- Proposed itinerary.

Although many of these components will be refined and altered during the course of discussions with the park staff, at this point, the proposer should not make those contacts. If the proposal is approved, the PITP Committee will send the proposal to the NPS Key Official, who is the contact point for PITP and the person who will open discussions with the park superintendent and facilitate introductions on behalf of those planning to lead the excursion. After a decade of working with the National Park Service, Partners in the Parks has developed an excellent rapport with many superintendents, who have welcomed us, been generous with their attention, and have been highly receptive to our plans. Once the PITP Committee has given the green light, the proposer of the program may initiate contact with the park superintendent. In due time, meeting onsite with an administrator of the park and giving her or him some idea about the level of intellectual interest that students and faculty will bring to the program and the potential for engaging in a service activity that will fulfill a park mission will be important. What will become clear to the administrator is that PITP is not a tourist group and that the participants want to learn in depth and give back something by doing volunteer work. Then doors—even canyons—will open. Following this process is especially important if groups want to return to a location in subsequent years. Like the faculty and students who become passionate supporters for PITP, park rangers can also become advocates for the program. The Black Canyon and Curecanti rangers were sorely disappointed when PITP took a year off from offering the program. When we returned the following year, the rangers made us swear

we would not take a break again because PITP was the highlight of their summer.

WORKING WITH NPS PERSONNEL AT THE PARK SITE

Before the start of any program, project leaders should plan to have two or three onsite meetings with NPS staff to refine the on-the-ground needs, including parking and campsite location; the focus of explorations and projects undertaken within the park; and the involvement of park rangers. Getting to know those who will be working with the group as speakers, guides, and service-learning coordinators is extremely important. Once an agreement on dates and site is finalized, the faculty leaders and student TAs should visit the site to begin mapping the trip; they should travel there off-season when rangers have significant free time to be helpful. Bringing rangers and organizing faculty and TAs together will give everyone a good idea of expectations and personalities and establish a smooth working relationship. This scouting party should shoot photographs of the park for advertising that will attract students to the project. The park rangers will likely recommend the most photogenic landscape views.

National Park Service rangers are essential to PITP. They are passionate about their parks, and they are the ones who can arrange to take groups into the backcountry and to provide access to the curatorial archives that tourists never see. Working with rangers and exploring behind the scenes are exciting and memorable elements of these experiential adventures. Students on the Missouri River trip, for example, had the opportunity to learn about medicinal plants. On the mini-PITP at Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve, the group learned the history of pirate smugglers on the river from a ranger historian. During the 2012 Freedom Trail excursion in Boston, the ranger revealed much more nuanced reflections about the American revolutionary heroes than on a traditional tour and shared humorous anecdotes about visitors' perceptions about the American Revolution. At Sequoia National Park students were privileged to be joined by Nate Stephenson, a highly respected forest ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey.



PITP participants learn about medicinal plants as they perform volunteer work in the garden on the Missouri National Recreation River trip.



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Mini-PITP participants converse with an NPS ranger while on an historic walk through Boston at the 2012 NCHC national convention.

SETTING THE ITINERARY

Once the broad outline of the program falls into place and the faculty and park rangers have committed to the project, the coordinators can block out the actual itinerary: meals, travel to various park sites, park ranger talks, faculty workshops, hikes, river/harbor/lake adventures, volunteer work, recreation, project work, and downtime. Because a week is a long time for people to be in close quarters virtually 24 hours a day, including a variety of activities is essential. The Acadia, New York City, and Virgin Islands itineraries are divided into three daily group learning experiences—morning, afternoon, and evening—that are separated by breaks and recreation. Bryce combined group experiences with solo opportunities that enabled people to explore on their own for designated blocks of time. The New York City program adopted this strategy by organizing travel to sites around the city into shorter blocks of time suitable to the urban location. Since every national park offers so many options and exciting places to see, the tendency is to overschedule. Among the most consistent student comments at the end of a program is that the downtime to write and reflect is insufficient. Providing open time for the students to reflect and work on their projects is imperative.

Although some changes in the itinerary will occur onsite, a final schedule should be sent electronically, along with the required readings, weeks in advance of the rendezvous date so that the students have a clear idea of what to expect during each day of the program. Going into the unknown produces some anxiety, so having the program and schedule spelled out like a syllabus that identifies readings, program goals and themes, and learning objectives will allay both student and parent concerns about the nature of the trip. Printed copies should be distributed as well when the group first gathers because everyone will refer to them throughout the trip. Having a printed itinerary and syllabus does not mean that leaders are absolutely bound to it, but they will provide structure and focus for the program.

This material can also be used to introduce students to the rangers and faculty who will be joining them throughout the week.

Brief biographies of rangers and faculty, with their backgrounds and areas of expertise, will help students anticipate workshops from presenters who are distinguished professionals in their fields. Since PITP seminars are part of a program that is thoroughly integrated with recreation and exploration, introducing the academic components in a way that will encourage the students to become fully engaged in these sessions is important. Introductory biographies of the presenters establish a serious and respectful tone. That students understand the rangers and experts are taking time out of their work schedules to meet with the PITP group is also crucial. While interaction with visitors might be part of an interpretive ranger's job description, more often than not, the rangers the students will be meeting and working with do not count group presentations as part of their daily work priorities. Being on time, prepared, and in the right place for the scheduled sessions is critical to maintaining positive working partnerships for future PITP programs.

COMMUNICATION AND DIVISION OF LABOR

In some cases, cross-institutional coordination shapes the program. The Fire Island to Ellis Island PITP included two host campuses and the two honors colleges of Long Island University (LIU); the 2016 iteration, "New York City: Gateway to America," was led by Kingsborough Community College with additional coordinators from LIU. Developing clear leadership roles and open communication are crucial when multiple host institutions are involved. In this case, the Kingsborough Community College people did all of the site scouting and negotiated the arrangements with the many NPS rangers who presented programs and worked with the group. They visited Gateway, met key people, and explained the philosophy of PITP. On the first day of the trip, they made certain that the students completed all of the necessary forms as soon as they arrived at the campsite. They also produced an evaluation survey for students to complete at the end of the week. Meanwhile, the coordinators from LIU Brooklyn put together a collection of readings that helped the students focus on the theme of immigration. In this case the clear division of labor facilitated the necessary paperwork.

DEVELOPING A BUDGET

Having locked in dates and location, project coordinators can begin to construct a preliminary budget. (See Appendix D.) Ideally, there will be nearly a full year to negotiate details. The budget should include every conceivable cost from student pickup at airports to impromptu urges, such as the irresistible wild blueberry ice cream treat that the program sprang for on a warm summer afternoon in Acadia National Park. Every PITP program is entirely funded by participant fees unless a host college or university can be persuaded to sponsor some component of the journey. Since knowing a year in advance exactly how many students will apply or attend is impossible, fourteen is recommended as the reasonable base number of participants. Calculating the cost per participant provides a clear idea of the number of students necessary to cover all expenses, including unexpected incidentals, and the break-even point. These figures will determine if twelve will allow the program to go forward, or, alternatively, sixteen would be necessary in order to succeed. The maximum cohort, in any case, should be twenty since it would be impossible to run a deeply personal journey or move students around with a larger cohort. Ultimately the ideal number is site specific, depending on campground accommodations, transportation, and the number of leaders. Working with a spreadsheet will facilitate the process.

Anyone who begins with the premise that camping is cheap will be in for a big surprise. The costs for transportation to and within the park, camping gear rental, and the quantity of food that college students consume in a week are all considerable. Planners should also consider having at least two faculty and two vehicles for the program. A Teaching Assistant or Intern is also highly recommended and can help with logistics and emergencies.

The parameter of a weeklong PITP program must fall within the \$500–\$700 range/per student for all land arrangements: transport, camping gear, food, park entrance fees, museum or special event fees, salaries, wages, honoraria, and donations to the park. The budget should include a cushion for incidentals like a bottle of Advil, sunscreen, or boat ride that presents itself as a great last-minute

option. Unexpected expenses and opportunities will always arise. Pointing this situation out to the host institution when requesting financial support is a good idea.

For the pilot program at Bryce Canyon, hired vans were the most costly single item in the budget. The program needed three and had to rent them for a week. On the other hand, LIU has provided university vans for all the New York programs at no cost, which is an enormous savings. The university, pleased to support cooperation between the honors colleges at the Post and Brooklyn campuses, has also underwritten some museum costs and restaurant meals. These contributions from the university enriched the program. Institutional support may be available and graciously given.

The National Park Service has also been generous with PITP. It has in some cases waived park fees or opened museum doors on days they are usually closed to the public. (See Appendix E for a Sample Letter and Application for Fee Waiver.) In the case of Ellis Island, the early morning staff boat transported the group free of charge, which was an exceptional courtesy for which we are most grateful to Park Ranger Katherine Craine, the island's Education Specialist and most ebullient and enthusiastic guide.

While such generosity is welcome, calculating the full cost of running the program is best. Then it will be a relief later if something is gifted or proves to be free. The essential categories are these:

- Transportation for pickup and delivery of students from arrival at airports or bus and train stations to and throughout the days in the park.
- Food, food, food—enough for three meals a day, trail mix and snacks in-between, and S'mores when the embers die down.
- A basic equipment list is available under Student Resources on the NCHC PITP website (partnersintheparks.org).
- Salaries, wages, and honoraria for facilitators, trip leaders, seminar leaders, and student teaching assistants. Samples of suggested wages in each category are listed in the PITP Best Practices Manual. (See Appendix C.) These are variable.

Some program leaders are not entitled to wages if the program takes place during their regular school term. Some faculty decline honoraria or payment, preferring to join the expedition as a mini-getaway

- Gifts to the park. NPS rangers and interpreters work for the United States government and are not entitled to fees. They are, on the other hand, most appreciative of donations to the park because they help them pursue important projects. They also love photographs of themselves in action. One can never say “thank you” enough to these kind, generous, and knowledgeable people.

Project leaders should construct a daily budget based on the in-progress program as it develops while still allowing for some cushion. Tapping a university or honors account for advance payments that need to be made will also prove useful. Registration fees are administered through NCHC, so reimbursement to the host institution will be made once invoices and bills have been submitted at the end of the trip; of course reducing reimbursement to a single payment will simplify the process. After constructing a preliminary budget, leaders should discuss the mechanics of payments with the staff at NCHC, who can also review the budget. The NCHC staff and PITP Committee can be helpful in identifying potential costs or categories that may have been omitted. A sample proposal and budget are provided in Appendix D.

SPREADING THE WORD

As soon as the project has been approved by the PITP Committee and the park and dates are confirmed, advertising the new PITP expedition will become a high priority. The PITP Committee will post the program description and other essential information, including fees, suggested clothing and equipment, proposed itinerary, and photos on the PITP website. The NCHC website will be an effective publicity tool, but program coordinators are encouraged to employ a wide variety of advertising methods. Over the years, such methods have included announcements in the NCHC e-newsletter

and in regional and state honors newsletters, workshops and presentations at honors conferences, listserv announcements with posters attached, and color brochures. Group leaders are also encouraged to use social networking to advertise their programs. This strategy will reach as broad an honors student population as possible. The more diverse the group, the more exciting the conversations that will take place during the adventure. Students and faculty often set up social networking sites to facilitate pre-program communication and to share photos and materials after the program.

Promoting diversity of ethnicity is of particular interest to the National Park Service. Its data reveal little ethnic diversity in the population of current park visitors, which makes NPS especially eager to expand its outreach to ethnic minorities. That NCHC typically brings an ethnically diverse contingent of students and faculty and staff on PITP adventures has assisted in building the relationship with NPS. Scholarships to encourage students from ethnic minorities would be a welcome outreach. Where these are made available, they, along with other stipend or scholarship opportunities for students, should be advertised.

When students see a flyer or go to the NCHC PITP website and then express an interest in a program, project leaders should communicate directly with them via email. Encouraging them to register, to invite a friend to register, or to ask their honors director about financial support will establish a connection and give them a personal sense of the program. A coordinator's enthusiasm and direct contact can be strong factors in helping students decide to join in the adventure. Answering questions will alleviate anxiety and frame expectations in a positive light.

FEES AND FORMS

Currently students are able to register and pay their fees using forms posted online by NCHC, which will process these payments and facilitate record keeping. Host institutions that prefer to register students can collect fees locally. In either case, NCHC remains a locus of helpful administrative support for PITP. The link to student forms, including registration, travel stipend and scholarship

applications, and assessment survey can be found at partnersintheparks.org.

Required forms for all PITP participants include the Program Application form; the Host Institution and PITP Waiver of Liability form; NCHC Waiver, Release and Indemnification Agreement; and the Program Comportment Agreement. NCHC has facilitated the step-by-step process of organizing the Partners in the Parks program by posting a checklist, along with the Project Proposal Form, Project Budget Form, Student Evaluation, Project Recap, PITP Reimbursement Guidelines, and Expense Reimbursement Form. These guidelines can be found at partnersintheparks.org. Program leaders' host institutions may have additional forms participants must complete as well.

Before entering any of the parks, all PITP participants, like members of other groups, must sign Comportment Agreements to abide by park regulations and engage in activities with a conscious view to safety and appropriate decorum.

Another important document is the Photo Release Form, which also can be found at partnersintheparks.org. Everyone on the adventure will be taking photographs throughout the journey. PITP as well as NCHC and all the student home institutions may wish to use photos for future publicity, articles, and website and other postings. The National Park Service may also be interested in some of the photographs taken on the trip. If corporate sponsors are involved, they, too, might wish to use photographs in their own advertising. Procuring signed photo releases from all the participating students and faculty prior to the start of the trip will alleviate any concerns about permissions and copyrights. And, of course, one never knows when, where, and why the best photos will be snapped.

IDENTIFYING STUDENT NEEDS

Once the students submit their registrations, the group leader should communicate regularly with interested and registered students, responding to any special needs or concerns. Amid the information gathered through registration are important details

about the physical condition of the students. This includes stamina—such as the ability to swim a distance in deep water or walk or hike for several miles or hours—and specific health issues—such as breathing, joint or back problems, hearing or eyesight issues, low or high blood sugar, food allergies, special diets, or a history of seizures. Reading this information carefully is critical because of the accommodations that must be made for people with special needs. The same form requests that students with Red Cross, Life Saving, or First Responder training identify themselves; these students can provide help or back-up support if necessary. Knowing the levels of capability among the participants will facilitate constructing a program offering alternative activities that satisfy everyone, such as hikes of different lengths and difficulty. Of course, nothing is perfect. Someone afraid of the dark or of heights might be too embarrassed to put that fear down on an application; an unfit student in denial might be unable to self-report. PITP program leaders have had experiences with both and have worked around them. Sometimes just providing a helping or calming hand can be sufficient. Most Partners leaders have a tale of providing support to unsteady or nervous students. Joan Digby remembers crawling out on a ledge at Bryce Canyon to take the hand of a girl paralyzed in her tracks, and Heather Thiessen-Reily provided physical and verbal support to a nervous camper on a steep North Rim wilderness trail of the Black Canyon. These instances are relatively minor, but sometimes the situation can be much more serious; a student may be physically unable to complete a hike or task, might get injured, or become suddenly ill. The data from the forms help but cannot supplant the vigilance by students, faculty, and rangers and their concern for their PITP partners.

One should never underestimate the nervousness, stress, and fear students may be experiencing as they face their first PITP adventure. Anxiety attacks are increasingly common among students, and honors students are high-performing individuals whose expectations for themselves are often the toughest. Virginia Tech student Rose Peterson, for example, shared that before her 2014 Grand Canyon Parashant PITP, she had never traveled alone.

Rose was nervous about hearing “education is not a vacation” and worried she would be confronting more school-related stress when she arrived onsite. Sometimes the challenges PITP throws at students can seem overwhelming: Sarah Pomerence (an international student working on sustainability issues at LIU Post) thought she was going to quit the Everglades program after her first night because of mosquito bites! She survived under a mosquito net, only to wake up to face shoe-sucking mud and a ranger telling her about alligators, pythons, and other reptiles as the group slogged through the swamp. But Sarah, like the majority of students who experience PITP, persevered; she came to consider the week some of the most exciting, interesting, and challenging days in her life. Rose faced down her nerves and found traveling alone makes one more willing to reach out and talk to someone one does not know, and she found she could just be herself. From anxiety and nervousness to independence and self-reflection, students like Sarah and Rose “embraced hands-on learning sparked by curiosity for their surroundings.” Rose reflected upon her experience of looking for broken pottery shards at a Paiute Indian archaeological site: “If I wasn’t told where to look for the pottery, I would have never known it was there. This moment got me really thinking about what else in my life I had just been walking over because I didn’t take a moment to look down.”

When planning such programs, coordinators tend to be concerned about the students needing accommodations or those who, worst-case scenario, do not reveal serious health issues. But leaders should also be aware of the challenges students on the other end of the spectrum can pose to a successful Partners program. The students (and even faculty) on the other end of the spectrum are those with extensive or perceived extensive outdoor experiences. Some of these students can be a great asset to a PITP program because they have first aid and wilderness first aid certifications. And an experienced camp cook is always appreciated. But these students can pose a risk to the success of PITP if they are cocky and over-confident in their skills or lack patience for those in the group with less experience or suffering from anxiety. Such students need to be handled as carefully as any other individual because over-confidence in the

wilderness can be just as dangerous as lack of experience or medical issues.

As with any student travel program, risk management is a legitimate concern. All program leaders should pay due care and attention to the insurance requirements section in the PITP Best Practices Manual (See Appendix C as well as partnersintheparks.org):

Institutions that have participants in this program must provide proof of liability insurance coverage in the form of a Certificate of Insurance. . . . The completed document must be sent by mail to the PITP Project Leader at least two weeks prior to the event. . . . [E]very participant must also complete and sign the PITP Waiver of Liability and the NCHC Waiver, Release, and Indemnification Agreement. . . . The host institution and NCHC will not be responsible for medical, health, or accident-related expenses that are not liability related.

The key to developing a successful PITP program is clear communication among all parties involved in program creation and delivery. Planning a PITP program is very much like planning a wedding or large family event; many things can be arranged early in the process, but then there are also those last-minute particulars that can really only happen right before the event. Well-organized early planning, regular communication with all of the partners, and a good schedule go a long way in ensuring program success. Park rangers have busy schedules and often serve multiple roles in the park so one should be prepared for possible schedule and personnel changes on the park's end at any time up to and during the PITP program. A good sense of humor and some flexibility to modify plans or to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity can improve even the best-organized program. Leaders should also be resilient enough to know when to let something go when it is just not working. And finally, remember that within NCHC and PITP is a community of people committed to the success of all PITP programs: the stakeholders are always ready and willing to provide the support needed to pull it all together.



FIELD NOTES



In the Field Notes below, Alison Mills Willis, Laura Harrington, and Brook Kelly describe the process of building and maintaining a Partners in the Parks program. They emphasize the importance of developing supportive partnerships on and off campus to sustain established programs (Olympic National Park) and to create new programs (Mt. Rainier National Park).

Partnerships in the Park: Building a Community in Olympic National Park

**ALISON MILLS WILLIS, LAURA HARRINGTON,
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The University of Washington Honors Program has hosted a Partners in the Park program in Olympic National Park for three consecutive years, beginning in the summer of 2011. Our goals with these programs are relatively simple, but certainly not small: we seek to introduce students to this extraordinary place and have them experience it firsthand. We want them to begin to engage with the complexity of how such a place is managed and protected. We want to expose them to the depth and diversity of what society has to learn from a national park. We want them to see the many ways that people interact with and take meaning from it. And we want them to discover their own reasons why such places matter, both for themselves as individuals and for society at large. What we have found in the years that we have been preparing for and leading this

program is that reaching these goals is possible only by working with extraordinary partners in a collaboration that has, each summer, become a remarkable journey to explore the intersections of interdisciplinary and experiential education.

We learned quickly that developing the right partnerships both with the national parks and within our own university is crucial to the success of our program; however, navigating the range of available contacts at both places can, at times, seem overwhelming. At the University of Washington, the research by an enormous number of faculty and students often interfaces with the living laboratories of our regional national parks in some way. The staff of Olympic National Park is also large and diverse; they have varied areas of deep expertise, busy schedules, and frequent requests for educational interactions. For us, the catalyst was finding our first central contact at Olympic National Park, Dr. Jerry Freilich, the Park Research Coordinator.

Alison first met Dr. Freilich by chance while she was taking students on a one-day field trip for a university course. In that brief encounter, she immediately observed his enthusiasm for educational programming in the parks and called him first when it came time to build the Partners in the Parks program. We advise future program coordinators to trust their instinct when developing new partnerships because the best contact will not necessarily be identified solely by title or position. The best person is the one who is most passionate about the project and the most willing to become part of it.

That serendipitous connection to Dr. Freilich set the wheels in motion for what has become a rich and longstanding educational partnership. In our initial discussions, he quickly understood the mission of our program, was enthusiastic about what we were attempting, and helped us navigate toward other appropriate and interested partners. His understanding of his colleagues' personalities and expertise—both in educational content and interpersonal navigation—helped us streamline the process of partner selection and ensure that we were working with people who were not only experts in their field, but who also knew how to share that expertise with a diverse group of students. He himself notes:

It is the interpersonal group dynamics that are the high point of this program. . . . It's easy to call the park and say that you want an expert to speak to the group on glaciers (say). But how do you call up and say, "We want to have our group spend time with one of your staff who is both expert and also great with people?" It's a harder task for someone on the OUTSIDE! That is the basic challenge and it is also the real core nugget of success.



Students enjoy a waterfall at Mount Rainier National Park.

Dr. Freilich's guidance in building a balanced and complex network of partners, as well as his own participation at multiple points in our program, has been essential to its success.

Dr. Freilich also assisted in our 2014 expansion into Mount Rainier National Park, another icon of our region, helping us to build a network at Mt. Rainier by calling multiple contacts on our behalf and explaining the PITP program from his perspective. This introduction made it easy to follow up with the experts there, and instead of spending a great deal of time explaining the basics of Partners in the Park, we were able to dive into how best to tell this new park's story using the expertise made available to us.

In working with Dr. Freilich to build our program at Olympic National Park, we quickly realized that finding the best partners for the program depended entirely on what story we wanted to tell. Each park holds endless fascination and has many tales, but we had to determine what our priorities were for showing students Olympic National Park in just a few short days. As we considered our options, it became clear that we wanted to cover the diversity of the major ecosystems in Olympic National Park. Thus we begin our week on the wild and rugged Pacific Coast, move through the temperate rainforests and massive river ecosystems, and end in the high alpine environment where students can quite literally look back over the vast Olympic wilderness through which they have traversed and see firsthand how it all fits together. While one could easily spend the week exploring only one of these areas, we have always found that a narrative about diversity told through movement across the park is a powerful one, particularly for students new to the Pacific Northwest, many of whom have never seen the Pacific Ocean, imagined a temperate rainforest, or looked out over 1,370 square miles of protected wilderness.

We knew also that as we traveled, we needed to take the time to look closely in each place to see things through the lens of someone with deep expertise in what we are exploring. We intentionally introduce students to a variety of partners, each of whom interacts with and draws inspiration from the park in different ways. With such diversity of voices, however, there must be a tie that unites their

contributions. Speaking from their own expertise, but collectively pointing to the themes and tensions in the National Park Service mission to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations,” our partners inevitably lead the students to complex questions and discussions about wilderness, land use, park management, conservation, preservation, science, recreation, art, and so much more. Each expert has much to say about topics that the mission evokes, and hearing the diverse perspectives from these inspired professionals helps students understand how enormous and complex the work of any given park really is.

Meeting with our partners in different locations at different times for varied durations has also been key to running a successful and stimulating program. We wander over tide pools just after sunrise with a park natural resource scientist and take tree core samples with a UW climate scientist deep in the Hoh Rainforest. We stargaze high above the tree line with the parks’ Research Coordinator and wade through the sediment of drained lake beds with UW and tribal biologists as the mighty Elwha River begins its long recovery. We hike with a park archaeologist by sites of cultural discovery thousands of years old and hear poetry, which was inspired by a life spent exploring the Olympic wilderness, read by campfire light. Throughout these adventures, finding a range of partners from diverse academic and personal backgrounds who have each found a life and career working with these important places models a passion and dedication that our students have found inspiring and liberating. For young people in the midst of choosing majors and thinking about life after college, hearing from our partners has often helped them see that people doing what they love can indeed lead to future employment and that there is more than one path to a job that inspires. As students’ own favorite places and moments in the park take shape, they learn from one another’s experiences and observations as well as from the exciting encounters with our partners in Olympic National Park. We have found that in the end, these students leave Olympic National Park thinking deeply about

the place of national parks in our society and caring greatly—in their own unique ways—for this particular place.

CHAPTER 7

Gearing Up

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Once a PITP program has been approved, contacts made, and details solidified, coordinators need to turn their attention from structuring the program to organizing the participants. PITP programs are quite varied, and students will not necessarily have all the gear they need. To keep the cost of a program affordable, leaders should provide guidance and support for participants when possible: no one should have to buy fancy new camping equipment for a one-week adventure. While people might assume urban students mark their status with designer clothes, even rural and woods-y students may seek status with the brand of their clothes and gear. Program leaders should emphasize to all the students that substance beats style every time and that a brand on a jacket or bag does not matter when the bearer has not showered for days. The

foundational equipment list can be found under Student Resources on the NCHC PITP webpage at partnersintheparks.org.

Students do not always pack light. Those with experience camping may already have the good sense to abide by the list of clothing and equipment posted on the PITP website; nevertheless, they may benefit from a reminder that designer logo items and color coordination of trendy T-shirts are less important than comfort, warmth, and protection from the elements. The number of changes of clothes students can pack into a weeklong trip is amazing. In spite of the suggested clothing list, which fits on a third of a page, they stuff towels, cosmetics and hair dryers, soaps and shampoos, flip-flops and bathing suits, jackets and jeans, and laptops and iPods into gigantic rolling suitcases.

WHAT TO WEAR?

- Hat(s) (brimmed for sun protection, wool/fleece for cool weather)
- Shirts (T-shirts and some long sleeved for cooler weather and sun protection)
- Jackets (windbreaker/rain jacket and fleece/wool jacket)
- Pants (loose fitting and light colored—Nylon/polyester fabrics are best; jeans are not recommended for hiking.)
- Long underwear (polypropylene recommended)
- Boots/shoes—2 pair (Sturdy footwear is highly recommended; lightweight boots are great.)
- Socks (lightweight inner socks with thicker, preferably wool or wool-blend outer socks)
- Shorts (option for warmer weather)
- Bathing suit (option for programs that include water sites)

Depending on the program site, scarves, gloves, sunglasses, or an umbrella and foul weather gear may also be essential items to add to the clothing list. Emphasizing what students should bring and

what they should leave home is critical—with sensible extras in case of rain, rips, or other unforeseeable events. For example, extra hats are good. Hats have been known to fly over canyon rims in a strong wind.

This list seems simple enough, but leaders should be prepared for colorful pajamas, favorite pillows, and stuffed animals. Coordinators should also expect some stupid shoes, not enough socks, and even underwear issues. Coordinators should remind students to select their toiletries wisely and to make sure that they remember access to plumbed facilities will be limited.

The expedition will offer absolutely *no occasion for dressing up*; the trip leader should advise students to leave their club clothes home. There will be *no* time for laundry, so spelling out and repeating the important items to bring may be one of the most helpful communications to prepare students for the trip.

WHAT TO PACK IT IN?

Everyone who packs for this trip must be made conscious and respectful of limited space. Because each student must bring a daypack as well as a larger bag or suitcase, keeping luggage to a reasonable, even minimal size, is a great help. Vans taking the group to the park will need to carry all the food—and sometimes water—for a week. Tents, sleeping bags, camp stoves, and other gear also have to be carted by van into the campground. The more luggage, the more everyone becomes a sardine in the mobile tin. Indeed, packing the vans is an art in itself; often faculty members who join the caravan in their own cars may need to bring along some of the goods.

Most PITP leaders have a moment when they look at the pile of student luggage on the ground and the luggage racks on the top of the vans and wonder how it all will fit. For many, flashbacks to the game Tetris occur involuntarily. Being specific when communicating packing requirements to students is crucial. Coordinators should offer detailed instructions about what kind of luggage and size are preferable and should encourage the students to borrow instead of purchase equipment. Participants should be instructed to bring no

suitcase, backpack, or duffle bag so heavy that the student cannot manage it alone. No bag should be so big that it will make traveling by crowded van and sharing space in a small tent uncomfortable for others. Not surprisingly, PITP trips offer no valet service. In fact, students should anticipate fewer conveniences than when they travel with family or friends in other situations. (See Chapter 8, Group Soup and Creature Discomforts.) Rope-stringed daypacks might be easy and convenient for running around campus, but they are not comfortable when hiking. Leaders should anticipate and be prepared for the student who arrives with an oversized wheeled suitcase.

SLEEPING SOUNDLY

Whoever leads the excursion should seek a rental service (some universities have them onsite) with a variety of options for tents as well as sleeping bags and pads. Many PITP programs direct students to camping rental outlets or encourage participants to borrow what they do not have, including tents, sleeping bags, and pads. Some programs provide tents of various sizes. Students who have their own tents and sleeping bags will almost certainly be more comfortable in them than in rented equipment. This maxim was clearly the case for a seven-foot Eagle Scout who came on the pilot PITP adventure. Sharing a tent would have been impossible for him. On the other hand, if a student's tent is large enough for house guests, the owner may be willing to share it with one or two other students. Most students enjoy group tent living, but the program should accommodate people who prefer, for whatever reason, to camp alone in a single tent. Knowing how many tents a group has or will require is important because NPS camping sites often have limits, and leaders will need to book the appropriate number of sites.

Beyond the basics, campers, it turns out, have quite an individual sense of comfort and style. Two of the faculty participants in Acadia brought a string of colorful night lanterns and inflatable mattresses, making their tents five-star accommodations in a fashionable neighborhood. Other experienced campers knew to bring inflatable mattress pads and pillows to ensure a good night's sleep

cushioned from the hard ground. Novices soon figured out how to position clothing and towels. Such variations are part of the adventure.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FOR DAILY LIVING

Here is a list of the essential equipment that everyone will need:

- Water bottles
- Plate, cup, bowl, eating utensils
- Flashlight
- Bandanas
- Toilet paper/tissues
- Plastic baggies
- Insect repellent, lip balm, sunscreen
- Notebook, pens/pencils
- Knapsack or day pack
- Camera and binoculars (somewhat optional)
- Batteries to power whatever needs powering (Electric outlets may be rare. Hair dryers and laptops should remain at home.)
- THE PACKET OF DOWNLOADED READINGS (There is no room for “I left my book at home” on this journey. Students are advised to bring the readings as hard copies since there may not be power for cell phones or tablets.)
- Required medications (Students who take regular medications should bring enough for at least a week. In all probability, getting to a pharmacy once the group reaches the park will be difficult if not impossible. Recently a student decided two days into the trip that a prescription needed to be filled; this is where traveling with a TA (or additional faculty member) proved crucial so the other students were not

inconvenienced as the needs of the one were addressed. The sensible strategy is encouraging students to pack twice the medications needed for a week and stow half of each supply in different bags or keep half in reserve with a team leader. Having a bag lost or stolen is not unknown. A student who misses the flight home will be glad to have extra medications in a handbag or backpack.

While each student may not need to bring the following items, someone, presumably the group leaders, should be responsible for packing them:

- First Aid Kit(s)
- Matches, lighter, or other fire-starter tool
- Easy fire-starter material
- Compass
- Extra flashlights and batteries
- Disposable digital cameras
- Pocketknife
- Map and/or GPS unit (also useful for finding the students!)

THE ROUNDUP AND CREATING COMMUNITY

Students laden with everything described above converge on a PITP adventure from all across the country. Directions for how and where to meet the group should be posted on the website describing the program. Some may drive or be driven to the meeting place. Others will take a bus, train, or plane, arriving throughout the course of a day. It happens a little like Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. First there is one, then another, and another until the space fills up with students and their gear. Like the seagulls, they do not communicate with each other immediately as they land. All seem a bit nervous and unsure, eyes peering everywhere, until they see the first wave, the first greeting, the first acknowledgment that they have come to the right place. Cell phones, admittedly, do make

rounding students up at these first meetings a much easier process than it would have been two decades ago. Obviously, the students should have the cell phone numbers of the leaders, and the leaders should have the students' phone numbers before the travel period begins. Leaders can share the group's numbers with the students as well before the trip in order to facilitate meetings in airports, coordinate hotel plans, and set up social media communication.

Many participants flying in for the New York programs get to know each other well as the PITP van circles the airport, waiting for late arrivals. Black Canyon participants connect on the Mountain Goat bus, which brings them from Denver up and over the Continental Divide and then down into Gunnison. The rendezvous for Acadia, Black Canyon, Bryce, and Zion involve coming into town or campus a day prior to departure for the park. At those sites, the coordinators assist the participants in making their own arrangements for shared, low-cost hotel rooms for that one night. This layover is a great time for a final hot shower since the opportunity (little do they know) might not present itself again for several days. If arriving participants can be rounded up, that first evening also offers a good opportunity for a mini-town as text experience or for breaking bread together: perhaps a pizza party in an honors lounge or dinner at an inexpensive local restaurant.

The night before the PITP group departed for Acadia, students and faculty members shared a meal at a local restaurant. "Shared" is the operative word. Each person ordered something different and made offerings to the others. Such occasions build community, a sense of family, and trust: "See, it's delicious. Try it." Since groups will be cooking and sharing food over the next week, acknowledging what is delicious and that participants are willing to try new dishes makes for a good starting point. Being willing to try something is an essential component to PITP.

Food is also the great leveler. Sharing dinner around a large table on that first evening is a good way to put faculty and students perfectly at ease with each other in a non-stratified community. Students and faculty may relate to each other formally or informally at different institutions. First names are common in art schools but

not in business colleges. In the PITP setting, the group is by nature informal, so first names are totally appropriate. In many situations, moreover, the professors are learning while the students—experienced campers and majors in ecology, marine biology, and geology—are often the teachers.

Establishing such a community also means transcending identification by academic class. The students range from rising sophomores to graduate students. On their home campuses, they might feel vastly separated from one another, but passing platters around the dinner table shifts attention to the shared experience of the new society that will come together during the excursion. King Arthur made his table round for good reason.

Bringing the group together in a warm, hospitable atmosphere also alleviates other concerns. Some participants may be experiencing their first flight or trip away from family, their first camping adventure, or their first time mingling with honors students from other universities. Everyone who has arrived has stepped into The Great Unknown. Leaders should be especially cognizant of those who appear naturally shy or anxious. Since the whole adventure will last only a week, this first coming together is an essential step in team building.

Student teaching assistants or assistants who work in their honors program office can be really helpful in talking about the upcoming adventure, showing students the campus and honors digs, and generally playing host. “Where do you go to school? What year are you in? What’s your major? Did you ever go on one of these before? What music is on your iPod?” The conversation will start to flow before too long. Card games and Scrabble naturally emerge on those first evenings. Cell phones and PDAs, which would soon prove useless in a canyon, are circulated as electronic photo albums of friends and family.

That first night can also be an opportunity for a presentation or planning session. Briefly going over the program schedule, introducing assignments, or sharing personal stories can create an informed and heightened expectation for the week. Presentations can also provide practical advice for students. When asked

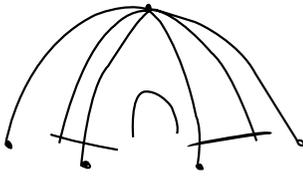
if students have camped before, many will say yes. What constitutes camping, however, can be extremely varied, from car camping where Mom and Dad do all the work to noisy weekend campouts to intense backcountry experience. Many students will say that they have camping experience, so spending a bit of time finding out student experiences and comfort levels and sharing expectations for the week is crucial. These sessions will go a long way to ease leaders' frustrations about having to remind folks about always keeping those pit toilet lids down and why putting garbage and food away promptly is important.

New PITP leaders, who may themselves be inexperienced in outdoor adventures, usually consult members of the PITP Committee or gather a team with prior experience. There is no one formula for shaping the first night gathering. Some people use traditional "ice breakers," show a film, have a guest speaker, or construct pre-program activities. Discussions about photographing nature have more than once been a useful introduction to the journey. Thinking about seeing nature through a photographer's eye takes some time. Fewer and fewer students come on these programs with serious SLR equipment, point-and-shoot cameras, or anything other than a cell phone and perhaps a selfie stick. Leaders might specifically include a few tips on cell phone photography. Basic tips on photographing in the environment they will experience can help them start to focus on the trip. Whether the first evening is spent purely at dinner or includes a presentation or activity, the important thing is to eat, enjoy, and get to know one another. Ending early is advisable so that everyone gets a good night's sleep.

READY, SET, AND WE'RE OFF!

In the morning when the group gathers with packed bags at the designated meeting place for departure, all of the necessary paperwork submitted weeks ago (medical, liability, and photography forms) should be reviewed one last time for completeness. At this point, any missing forms can be filled out and signed. The program leader should collect and safely stow these documents in a glove compartment so that they are readily available in an emergency.

When the vans were packed for the drive to Acadia, PITP leader Kathleen King called all the eager participants around and gathered them into the first magnetic circle. She explained that every day the group would form a circle, quiet our thoughts, come into the moment, and reflect on our experiences together. Then she distributed copies of the schedule: “You need to use it. I don’t wake you, or tell you when it’s dinner time or when the vans are pulling out. You are on your own from now on.” Then she gave the participants a number, and they counted off around the ring for the first time. This exercise was used throughout the week’s travels to make certain no one was left behind. Keeping ducks in a row allows the experience to begin and the leader to lead the way!



FIELD NOTES



In the following Field Notes, PITP leader and PITP Committee Co-Chair Kathleen King reflects on organizing the Everglades winter PITP. From setting assignments to first evening's lodgings, from organizing service projects to renting canoes, all PITP leaders and participants must be prepared for unique park environments. This preparation sometimes requires more than the standard PITP packing list. While many parks require students to BE BEAR AWARE, the Everglades demands a unique mental readiness on the part of its participants: REDDY. King not only keeps her ducks in a row, she names them.

Everglades 2013/2014: Slogging through the Slough and Other Favorite Experiences

KATHLEEN KING
HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

*Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.*

*Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.*

—Walt Whitman, “Song of the Open Road”

Everglades was the first Partners in the Parks (PITP) program to be offered during the winter break. The park is considered uninhabitable during the summer, thus the winter selection. Registrations came in through the fall preceding the project. Ultimately nine students and two alumni of other Partners in the Parks projects participated.

The Everglades is considered by many a wild and untamed swampland. I often refer to it as “Jurassic Park.” This description certainly attracts some students to the Everglades. There have also been one or two students who have cancelled at the last minute for, what I believe to be, the very same reason.

READY OR NOT: REDDY TRAINING

<<http://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/reddy.shtml>>



An interview I listened to on National Public Radio led me to the Department of Wildlife, Ecology and Conservation for the REDDY Training website, which prepares people to identify invasive species of reptiles and provides a way to report discoveries to advance the management of invasive reptiles in the park. In retrospect, the recommendation that this training be completed before the trip may have deterred a number of students from attending. To both unsettle and empower students, I recommend they take the online course on Reptile Early Detection. This course, developed through the Johnson Lab at the University of Florida, prepares citizens to effectively identify non-native (oftentimes invasive) reptiles such as pythons, poison frogs, and lizards. The training also includes ways of properly reporting these creatures. Although we did not have a single sighting of an invasive reptile, students reported that they believed that we would be surrounded by pythons and poison frogs during our stay. The students who arrived ready for camping in the swamp while surrounded by pythons are indeed honors students who are willing to take risks.

HOSTEL 101

In order to promote PITP programs, announcements are made during state, regional, and national honors conferences. I was making one such announcement at my first Southern Regional Honors Council Conference when Tom Jones, Associate Leader of University Honors and Professor of Biology at Gardner-Webb University, suggested that our students stay a night in the Everglades City Hostel. Many honors students have not had a previous hostel experience. I took Dr. Jones's advice and booked our space immediately. (The hostel was at capacity during the time we were there.) The Everglades Hostel would serve as our landing site the night prior to entering the park. Participants were expected to do a number of things to prepare for our winter break adventure. Planning their travel and packing are always fundamental aspects to any PITP project. Students are expected to get to the landing site on their own. Many students fly to the destination. Some students drive. Finding a place where cars can be parked away from the camping destination is important because campsites have limited parking, and an important part of the teambuilding that occurs often happens as the group transitions into the park in groups via vans. Two times were set for airport pick up, and anyone who was driving in was asked to be at the Hostel by 8:00 p.m. on December 26, 2013.

All nine students shared a room and one bathroom that first night. Some arrived after others had already gone to sleep. What could have been an awkward way to house students ultimately became a fabulous icebreaker. What we discovered through our visit to the hostel was fundamental to the week's experience. Students readily bonded with one another the following morning at breakfast and during our first session on the Sociology of Food. In no time at all, the group found similarities in fears, expectations, and goals for the week. When we all met to "make all-you-can-eat pancakes," students were already deciding that hotels would become a thing of the past.

MOSQUITO BAIT

Often obstacles faced through the week become the things that are later identified as the pivotal moments of change. It might be a torrential downpour in the middle of the night and the revelation that a number of tents are not waterproof. This happened. And the teambuilding that ensues is always heartwarming. In the Everglades, however, the most consequential transformations occurred when we were under siege by the hordes of mosquitoes that would rain down upon us with very little warning. Fortunately, mosquito head nets were purchased and distributed as “party favors” the first evening at sundown. In no time at all, we ALL recognized the value of always having one’s net regardless of time or place in the park. (Many photos, of course, include us wearing hats with nets as our headgear.)

A good operating principle for PITP is *always be flexible*. If time runs short, coordinators should know what needs to be cut. If time allows, they should always be prepared to add activities. The hike to Bear Lake was one such occasion where we found some extra time. Students learn the first day to pack food for the day, have all gear and water ready, and carry it wherever they go, especially since they may not know exactly where they will be throughout the day. The hike to Bear Lake, on day two, was an important lesson in that regard. We jumped in the vans to take us to the trailhead for a hike of several miles. After driving deep into the jungle, we exited the vans only to find clouds of mosquitoes swarming around us. All but one among us had their nets. One student, with a sheer look of panic, revealed that she had neglected to bring her net. We all learned at that moment that being prepared is key but, more importantly, that we were there to support one another. That second lesson came when a student selflessly gave his net to the anguished student.

CANOEING AND LEARNING

Experiential learning was operating in high gear when the group spent the day paddling Florida Bay in rented canoes. Teamwork was

critical because each boat had two to three occupants, and some of the students had never paddled before. The guide for the day was Mike Brennan, Storm Water Manager for Palm Coast, Florida. Two faculty members from Hillsborough Community College joined the exploration: Dr. Margaret Hopson Fernandez, a biology professor, and Peter Germroth, a professor of ecology. We paddled through mangrove hammocks and around the bay, discussing the marsh grass, the fish, the birds, and the ecosystem. We even experienced the exhilarating but dangerous thrill of paddling to beat a thunderstorm and surviving.

SLOUGH SLOG AND OUR SENSE OF WILDERNESS

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines "wilderness" as "a tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings." Led by an NPS staff member, the students were instructed to explore their sense of wilderness as they traveled through a slough and a cypress dome, which are often home to poisonous snakes and alligators. The discussion as we progressed through the slough was about how different individuals perceive and define wilderness. Although we



Slough slogging in Everglades National Park with Ranger Sabrina Diaz.

were banked by the main road that runs through the length of the park and cars could clearly be heard passing, the students were struck by how close and accessible “wilderness” might actually be for any given individual. We stood in an area passersby never consider entering—a marsh with sawgrass as tall as any one of us and thigh-high water. The thought of unseen creatures below the surface often causes us to build barriers and prevents access to exploration. Yet this experience was, without a doubt, a favorite among all the students and faculty. The participants joked about returning to these locations throughout the remainder of the week.

COMMENCEMENT: NEW YEAR’S EVE IN THE PARK

Historically, on the last evening of a PITP program, the students present what they have gained from the week. All of the participants take personal time during the day to reflect about the week and prepare for the evening’s gathering. Even as a veteran administrator



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

An aninga dries its wings in the Everglades.

and educator in the PITP programs, I never know what my final presentation to the group will be until that last afternoon. These presentations are quite personal as the students summarize the week's experience and provide a sense of closure before they go their separate ways. The student presentations are always a treat, and I am continually astounded by their creativity and their newly acquired affinity for one another. Most importantly, each presentation offers a new understanding of the transformations that have occurred during the weeklong experience in a national park.

From songs, drawings, touching descriptions, handwritten notes, or the recitation of poetry, participants share in the final evening what they have decided individually, or in small groups, were the pivotal moments of the week. Walt Whitman's poem, which opens this chapter, was hand copied by a student fifteen times and given to each individual as his gift from the week. The presentations are as diverse as the students who participate in Partners in the Parks. Always there is laughter, and it never fails that there are tears as the presentations reveal the personal changes that have taken place during the week.

Reflecting on the week in the Everglades, I think about how the students came to understand more about themselves as they discovered the amazing nature that surrounded them. They were changed by the environment and by the camaraderie, exploration, and learning that occurred during our PITP adventure in the Everglades.

During my final night presentation, I gifted the students my personal reflections on who they were and what they had become over the week in this extraordinary place:

- Jasmine: A cymbidium orchid, lovely blooming, to be treasured.
- Jamal: A great blue heron; swift, graceful, calm and patient.
- Cady: Sawgrass, which is a surprise; prickly, but sharp in her thoughts, abundant in her spirit.

- Nicole: Mahogany hammock; her stature is calm and solid but reflective, giving comfort and solace much as the hammock gives comforting, cooling shade.
- Nikki: Anhinga Trail; easily approached, full of insight, and ready for exploration.
- Jackson: (one of our alums—who received a heart rock along with the students in my original PITP in Acadia) received a heart rock for our continued connection and friendship over the years.
- Sarah: The cypress tree . . . mysterious, strong, and an ageless, old soul.
- Chase: (She loves birds of all kinds) A bird, of course, but more specifically, a Roseate Spoonbill; graceful, independent, but is seen in flocks as well.
- Brianna: A Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow because of her keen artistic eye and because she often stops in unlikely places.
- Tiffany: A Bromeliad; because of her sense of adventure and risk. Her positive nature means she can grow and flourish anywhere as long as she is content . . . which doesn't take much.
- Ryan: The limestone for us all; he is sturdy, with a foundation, whose surface is ever changing because of various nutrients that come from the seasons, much as experiences fertilize who we are.
- Angela (our resident counselor): Dolphin; she swims with direction but is gently guiding, just in the way we observed the dolphins as they swim by during our breakfast in the morning.
- Dustin (our resident faculty from HCC): Pa He Okie overlook; he is observant, welcoming, and always insightful.
- Bill (our visiting faculty from University of North Carolina Wilmington and co-chair of the NCHC PITP Committee)

without whom the week would not have been possible: he is the essence of the Everglades; complex, a diverse level of interests and experiences and, through literature, helps us to “navigate the mangroves in our minds.”

THE POWER OF PLACE

All subjects covered in the Everglades project are typically considered “classroom” experiences for college students. Honors education lends itself to classroom learning through discussion and research; however, when students and faculty are standing in the middle of a slough, learning about the flora and fauna of the area while considering their own sense of wilderness (or safety, for that matter), learning takes on a dimension that cannot be duplicated in the sterile confines of cement walls and artificial air. When the day is long, the work is hard, and it is time to eat, *Partners in the Parks* demonstrates the importance of learning how to cook to satisfy hunger. When night is coming and the mosquitoes are minutes away from swarming, being prepared for the evening is important. Camaraderie and teambuilding come from true hardship and discomfort. And the pride of accomplishment, in the end, cannot be matched or duplicated any other way.

CHAPTER 8

Group Soup and Creature Discomforts

JOAN DIGBY
LIU POST

HEATHER THIESSEN-REILY
WESTERN STATE COLORADO UNIVERSITY

Food, in the end, in our own tradition, is something holy. It's not about nutrients and calories. It's about sharing. It's about honesty. It's about identity.

—Louise Fresco, Professor of Sustainable Development,
University of Amsterdam

While many of the topics in this field guide could be expanded, the topics of food and creature comforts could fill volumes. No other topics or experiences are talked about more, worried about more, complained about more, and celebrated more. From the funny to the frustrating, students and leaders have endless anecdotes reflecting Kathleen King's cogent observation: "Food is pivotal in the transformation that takes place among the students."

She might well have added the corollary, “so are the problems surrounding amenities deprivation and the disposal of waste.”

Of all the grouping and regrouping on a Partners expedition, food group machinations are perhaps the most interesting and sometimes the most creative and competitive. Students are expected to cook with the ingredients that are provided and do what they can to make the food last the length of the program. For many this obligation will seem daunting; some students may not only be learning to cook for the first time but also how to ration and compromise on top of learning how to use a camp stove. Students will arrive at the park site with a wide range of experience preparing meals; some are chefs while others are clueless. On a PITP adventure, everyone plans meals, everyone cooks, and everyone does the dishes. The look of horror on the faces of some students when they realize that they must cook and clean up if they want to eat is priceless. And they quickly figure out that putting a pot of water on for coffee first thing in the morning is crucial for starting the day in a civilized way and experiencing the gratitude of one’s cook mates.

Organizing food stores is one of the most challenging tasks for program leaders. Not only is site a factor (dry-wet, hot-cold, running water or none), but the needs and allergies of every individual in the group must be factored into the pre-trip planning. While much can be done well in advance of the trip, the reality is that the most crucial elements, like shopping for perishable foods, come together in the days just prior to meeting the students and taking off for the park.

The National Outdoor Leadership School publishes an extremely useful book entitled *The NOLS Cookery*. Whether campers are using the original 1988 version or the 2015 6th edition by Claudia Pearson, this is an excellent resource for camp cooking. Early chapters discuss ration planning and required food poundage per person based on numerous factors including group size, duration of journey, exertion level, weather, altitude, and means of transport for packing food into the wilderness. The text also considers details like cooking equipment, fuel, and environmental concerns. With novices in mind, the text describes basic foods and offers a glossary

of cooking terminology as a prelude to providing a fine assortment of recipes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks along with some excellent suggestions for the use of herbs and spices. Since the book is just over a hundred pages, it is worth packing and sharing among food groups as a source for helpful culinary ideas.

Recipes aside for the moment, PITP program coordinators approach food organization in myriad ways, but they all generally begin with the formation of cooking groups. While some programs allow students to self-select cooking groups, some direction is recommended but always with flexibility. The Everglades PITP asked experienced cooks to step forward in order to evenly divide experienced and non-experienced students. This strategy, however, tended to put too much pressure on the experienced participants and not enough pressure on the students who considered themselves inexperienced. So a random selection of cooking groups is recommended after determining herbivores, omnivores, and carnivores and grouping them accordingly. But the program leaders should not expect the groups to remain as initially organized. Dedicated carnivores have been known to poach and beg from vegetarian food groups with regularity. Shifting food alliances are fairly common on Partners excursions. Acadia PITP used flex groups because people decided that they wanted to cook a particular meal together. Black Canyon has experimented with flex and set groups and found that what works often depends on the nature of the students themselves. And while some students may prefer cleaning up to cooking, by the end of the week everyone will have done both at least once. Coordinators should also be on the lookout for those students who have a tendency to disappear when cooking or cleanup time comes around. In such cases, the coordinators should not be afraid to recast the groups and assign cooking a meal or cleaning up after one to these folk.

Whatever the approach to cooking groups, food must be organized and meals must be planned. As the days wear on, dinner plans are discussed at length, and the creative planning that occurs during these conversations can whet the taste buds or raise the eyebrows. The Bryce Canyon groups packed their own boxes of

food, which had to last for the duration of the trip. Other programs organize food supplies in communal boxes and coolers based on meal or ingredients. All groups, however, have to devise menus for the number of days of camping. One common strategy is assigning chefs for each of the breakfasts and dinners. Lunches are often more casual because students make their own sandwiches and choose snacks to pack for lunch on the day trips away from camp.

Clearly, with only a few coolers and limited access to ice, all fresh food has to be cooked and eaten first. While some coordinators purchase perishables the day before or morning of the start to the programs, some programs task the students with perishable purchasing before the excursions. The Everglades student cooking groups were given funds to purchase their own “freshies” at a famous fruit stand outside the Everglades before entering the park.

Although shopping for a PITP adventure includes purchases from all the USDA food groups, accounting for particular tastes and aversions that will naturally surface is difficult. Having enough fresh or dried/canned vegetables and fruit for the vegetarians and vegans in the group is important. Not surprisingly, an increasing number of students and faculty have dietary needs that must be accommodated. Whether they stem from allergies, medical situations, or ethical or religious roots, special dietary requirements can lead to meals that are enjoyed by the entire group.

The shared meal elevates eating from a mechanical process of fueling the body to a ritual of family and community, from the mere animal biology to an act of culture.

—Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto*

Of course, not everyone will be happy about the food situation at every meal. One student had a temper tantrum when another student took a piece of cheese from a stack of slices with her fingers. More common are students simply afraid to try something unfamiliar. Enticing students to try new foods is an art that best begins with some familiar ingredients and a sweet flavor. One night at Bryce Canyon, trip leaders Matt Nickerson and Todd Petersen



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Students grill salmon the first night out at Gateway National Recreation Area.



Meanwhile, vegetarian students make quesidillas that same evening on a neighboring grill.

made Thai chicken using canned chicken, peanut butter soy sauce, and their private stash of hot pepper. Almost everyone likes peanut butter (except those with an allergy), so people were quite interested in tasting the dish. During an evening campfire in the Black Canyon, Heather Thiessen-Reily invented “S’moreos” by opening up an Oreo and putting a roasted marshmallow inside. Soon students were putting roasted marshmallows in-between every kind of cookie available. This explosion of campfire creativity led to greater experimentation at mealtimes.

Some students genuinely have never had any experience cooking. They stare at dry rice, pasta, even potatoes, carrots, and onions without having the faintest idea how to turn them into soft, edible food. Their pleas for help are sad commentaries on American foodways. Many students have grown up in households where no one cooks, where fast food and microwaveable entrees are the norm. One suspects that almost all trips have included several phony foodies, students who had never cooked and who tried to evade that responsibility by poaching. Cooking groups quickly grow wise to such scavengers and send them packing posthaste to their own food groups, where they are eventually compelled to cook an evening meal.

Students and faculty who do cook find it difficult not to take over and do the job. Of course, faculty should restrain themselves, letting the students who know how to cook encourage and help those who do not have any experience. Not surprisingly, students with Scouting experience are often natural leaders as cooks; they know how to put together a camp stove, light a fire, and cook in foil. They are also good teachers of these survival skills. Over the course of a week, a great deal of culinary education occurs around the camp kitchens. The basics of dicing, frying, and boiling register, and if the program leaders pack a variety of dried herbs and spices, moving taste buds beyond salt and pepper becomes possible. On the Zion trip, for example, the group leader packed a bottle of pesto to see what students would make of it. Fortunately, Angela Calise, (a student from LIU Post) who comes from an Italian family, knew exactly how to transform pesto into an aromatic pasta dish that she

taught her group to make and enjoy. Making a group soup enables the entire cook group to offer suggestions about what ingredients to throw into the pot. With a little creativity, students will recycle leftovers, adding spices that result in dishes with some complexity, flavor, and nutritional value. And these concoctions certainly beat pasta topped with ketchup! Cooking becomes an activity in which everyone can learn something.

When people are not exactly feeling under the weather but are aching and tired from the sheer intensity of the trip, comfort food greatly offsets discomforts of every kind. Peanut butter and jelly, macaroni and cheese, mashed potatoes, trail mix, marshmallows, and brownies are staples that keep campers happy. When the stores of cheese, cereal, and chocolate run low, students' emotions run high. At that point, food groups will barter or exchange supplies and fabricate exotic meals based on whatever is left in the boxes. At times stale-bagel French toast can really hit the spot. Creature discomforts foster team building, resourcefulness, and creativity. Although everyone is ready to return home by the end of the journey, they do so with greater cognizance and appreciation of all the quotidian comforts and amenities they took for granted. And they can cook!

Like other Americans, the students who participate in PITP are accustomed to living with amenities beyond the most basic creature comforts: clean drinking water, an extraordinary variety of food and beverages, a daily shower, a flush toilet, changes of clean clothes, a comfortable bed, a certain amount of privacy, multiple



PHOTO BY MATT NICKERSON

Students prepare dinner in Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument.

transportation options, television and movies on demand, a computer, a cell phone, and gadgets galore. Taking these away cuts to the essence of the Partners in the Parks experience.

“Camping: The art of getting closer to nature while getting further away from the nearest cold beverage, hot shower and flush toilet.”

—Author Unknown

Paring down to the minimal makes people squirm and think. Among the learning experiences of PITP, the subtraction of conveniences people take for granted provokes some of the most serious reflections on self and community. The absence of communication technologies, for example, is particularly disturbing to students; they use their cell phones as perpetual lifelines. They talk to family and friends, text and twitter, check out sports results, watch TV, listen to music, shop, and game around the clock. When that lifeline is cut, even for just a week, they feel isolated, alone, sometimes even deprived, worried, or depressed. Without cell towers and within canyon walls, cell phones have no reception at all. The phone is dead. That parents and friends will have to wait for communiqués is often the first lesson on a PITP adventure. The moment a bar or two shows up on a phone, students will jump to reconnect to the outside world, and group leaders should feel no guilt in telling them to power the phones down. Without electronic communication students have no alternative but engaging in face-to-face conversations with the people right there walking alongside them. Thus conversations become lively when cell phones have no juice. In a national park all sort of gadgets that require electricity or charged batteries to operate, such as electric shavers, hair dryers, cameras, or computers, typically become extraneous. In bathrooms at group campsites, electric outlets are at a premium. All night long, while people sleep in their tents, camera batteries are charging for the next day’s photography. On overnight hikes or in remote areas without electric outlets, no such luxury exists.

Talk of bathrooms makes one long for showers. For the first day or two of an expedition, waiting to have a shower does not seem

like a serious deprivation. But after dust and mud, saltwater and charcoal, peanut butter, and dirty dish water accumulate like a new layer of skin, the prospect of a shower becomes first a dream and then an obsession. Some campers and guides like to go the whole week, letting beards and hairy legs grow with pride to show that they can take it. Others walk the long road to public showers, willing to rise even an hour earlier than daybreak to bathe before the first morning activity. That no one has access to showers until the last night of the Black Canyon PITP program means students are willing to jump in the ice cold water of the Gunnison River mid-week. Personal hygiene is a matter of some importance for people tenting together in close quarters. As dirty laundry fills backpacks and less than immaculate bodies stuff themselves into sleeping bags, tolerance becomes an issue worth special consideration. The PITP daily circle discussions can provide a venue and opportunity to vent and resolve interpersonal problems that may emerge from hygiene or other issues.

It always rains on tents. Rainstorms will travel thousands of miles, against prevailing winds for the opportunity to rain on a tent.

—Dave Barry, Humorist

Sleeping in a tent requires patience and relaxation, and these skills are not instinctive. Many campers spend night after night, lying on the ground, thinking about the soft bed that waits at home. The veteran campers are asleep, having made peace some time ago with tents and sleeping bags. They are enjoying themselves. For novices the experience may be uncomfortable. Warnings like “stay away from the tent walls in case there is condensation in the night,” or “close the zipper to keep the bugs out” and “food and toiletries in tents bring bears . . . and mice” will send shivers of concern that make falling asleep on the hard, cold ground even less possible. Restless campers lie in the dark, perfectly quiet and miserable so as not to awaken anyone or invite animal curiosity. Every once in a while there is the soft zipper sound of a tent opening and someone with a flashlight, stealing out to go to the bathroom.

A cold or rainy night exacerbates the lack of creature comforts. Still, discomfort cements friendships, creates verve, and steels determination. In 2010 both the Cape Hatteras trip and the Fire Island trips met with walls of rain. On Fire Island, Park Ranger Paula Valentine generously moved the group into staff housing since it was clear that tenting would be impossible. The weather, however, did not prevent the two seasoned leaders from attempting to sleep outside. But when their tents collapsed under the torrential downpour, they graciously returned to the shelter and took over in the kitchen, grilling burgers that almost had the taste of an open fire. The next morning, the stalwart leaders and undaunted students, all dressed in ponchos and foul weather gear, hit the trail to traverse the seven mile planned hike. Once back at campus, the students pitched tents outside the dorm and spent the night catching up on the full camping experience. Of course showers and toilets stood nearby, which is not the case on backwoods trips that rely on the ritual of Leave No Trace. During the 2014 Black Canyon trip, the campers experienced a massive midnight thunderstorm that left them all huddled and afraid in their tents as lightening crashed above the canyon. There were no trips to nature's outhouse that night.



Students finish pitching their tents at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Experienced campers know all about the Leave No Trace regimen. Novice campers on the pilot Bryce trip recoiled in horror when its full meaning became clear. The packing list included toilet paper and baggies, but few novices put together the two items; these two items allow campers to abide by park regulations for toilet use in the wilderness. In fact, the survivor training team composed of a ranger and trip coordinators for this expedition had to do some actual toilet training, showing some students how to dig cat holes to bury their waste before zipping the used toilet paper into the plastic bag so that they could carry it out of the woods and dispose of it properly at the campground. This adaptation is not easy for shy and squeamish students, but eventually everyone got used to it.

Leave No Trace constitutes a set of principles for insuring ethical behavior in park settings that promotes responsibility to the landscape. It includes walking only on marked trails to avoid damaging vegetation or disturbing the wilderness. It prohibits the removal of any rocks or archaeological fragments found along the trails. It provides clear instructions about what sticks if any may be used for kindling campfires, which may be made only in pits provided and must be fully extinguished at the end of use. The philosophy of Leave No Trace balances preservation of wilderness with responsible use by people who are committed to leaving the most minimal footprint of human activity possible.

Watching students informed by that philosophy approach other campers who violate this code is fascinating. One evening in Maine, new arrivals at the next campground began to gather wood to build a fire; however, the gathering of kindling is not permitted at that site. A party of PITP students went over to explain the regulation. Their advice was heeded, and the campers started their fire with the newspaper and charcoal they had packed. In general, people who use the parks appear to be conscious of their value and willingly abide by regulations when educated. There is much to be learned about a civil society in the context of such encounters. In its broadest context, Leave No Trace is an attitude that can apply to personal decorum in virtually every habitat, including college campuses. Ideally after the experience of putting out fires, cleaning

up after meals, throwing garbage and trash only in proper bins, and taking no relics out of nature, people may transfer these consciously ethical practices into lifelong habits. (For more information about the details of outdoor ethics, with a full list of responsible camping practices, go to <<http://www.lnt.org>>.)

Leave No Trace instills within its practitioners the values of wilderness ethics within the parks. Students learn to lessen their impact on the environment and as a result come to preserve the park and its resources. The other way PITP students serve the parks they visit is through volunteerism. The structure of a PITP adventure includes significant time devoted to service that supports park needs. Often the work is difficult or dirty—certainly outside the creature comfort zone. This might include picking up trash, digging culverts, or working in muddy swamps.

Engaging in a volunteer project encourages participants to understand that the national parks are spaces that belong to everyone, and therefore everyone must care for them. Since most visitors arrive in large tour busses to observe the landscape from scenic



PHOTO BY JOAN DIGBY

Palmetto cleanup on Old Barataria Trail, Jean laFitte National Historical Park and Preserve, Mini-PITP during the New Orleans Conference, 2013.

lookouts, this sense of stewardship is highly unlikely to register with them. Living in a park for the duration of a week, however, practicing Leave No Trace and helping rangers with projects for the benefit of the park invest participants with a strong sense of both ownership and pride. Getting one's hands dirty, whether shoveling gravel and leveling a path or learning to dig neat trenches and sift earth in search of pot shards, has many benefits. Detailed program planning enables park officials to devise a service project that allows students to contribute meaningful work. Students were amazed to discover, for example, that Zion National Park had no survey of its fire hydrants. Park Rangers mobilized students with a GPS unit into a team that mapped the hydrants, producing a record that might turn out to be a literal lifesaver. Imagining any student involved in this project not paying more attention to fire hydrants and fire safety as a matter of habit from this time forward would be hard.

Every engagement in volunteer work is necessarily designed to be site specific. The benefit to the park is paramount although it might not be so immediately fulfilled as the benefit to the students and faculty. The PITP participants roll up their sleeves and put in a good morning or afternoon of concentrated labor that they comprehend as service in aid of the park's future. Honors students do well at getting their hands dirty and can even become competitive in a good-natured way when completing their assigned tasks. They pull weeds, shovel grit, or push wheelbarrows, and they rarely complain about their tasks. On the contrary, they thoroughly enjoy the physical exercise and find the volunteer component among the most satisfying and memorable experiences of PITP. Since its inception, the Black Canyon PITP program has been fighting invasive plant species along the East Portal Road down into the canyon. While each batch of new students may not see the difference, the program leader certainly has and is providing the park with years of photo documentation of the service project.

On occasion, students may opt out of one volunteer project or another. Someone with severe plant allergies might not want to risk pulling invasive weeds. Someone with lower back pain should not be shoveling gravel or pushing a wheelbarrow. Headaches, menstrual

cramps, muscle pulls, or the common cold may all be unexpected encumbrances during a PITP program. As long as participants feel comfortable about expressing their own creature discomforts or health issues, accommodating them should be easy. Rest, remedies, and relaxation are sometimes in order. Often a student can take up a less strenuous part of the project and still feel engaged in the activity. Keeping group dynamics positive while accommodating special needs is essential. The sort of students who engage in PITP are generally empathetic and supportive. They typically help weaker students walk the last mile or swim back to shore. They are encouraged to be partners especially if the experience is framed with the idea of mutual achievement and protection in mind. This is reinforced every time members count off and make certain all are on board.

The greater the loyalty of a group toward the group, the greater is the motivation among the members to achieve the goals of the group, and the greater the probability that the group will achieve its goals.

—Rensis Likert, Psychologist

Typically, honors classes are small seminars with a maximum of fifteen to twenty students. When they are sitting in a classroom, they generally constitute a pretty stable and manageable group, but taking a group of students on the road, putting them in tents, floating them down a river, or organizing them for hikes of varying levels of difficulty changes this single group into isotopes of an unstable element. At least these isotopes rarely cause explosions. Still, groups on the road are quite often shifting and realigning, although this is not always the case. Over the course of a week, tents might change inhabitants, friendships form and dissolve, chefs defect from cook groups, and romance may bloom, so it is fairly common for coordinators to find themselves playing “Who’s on first.” The dynamics of grouping and regrouping are among the most interesting aspects of interpersonal relations in PITP. Educational psychologist Bruce Wayne Tuckman’s classic four-stages are to a greater or lesser degree realized as the journey progresses: forming, norming, storming, and performing.

At the PITP circle that opens an adventure, everyone would seem to be in this together as a unified band; that, after all, is the goal of bonding over dinner the first evening. But even in the van ride to the park, sub-groups form. One might be composed of students from a single institution; another might be listeners to NPR, guitarists, marine biologists, or any such self-selection. The program leaders, who are likely to be the van drivers, are for this stage of the journey flies on a wall, getting glimpses in the rearview mirror of subsets in formation. Where possible, during the van ride, people should be moved around so that students and faculty can continue the mixing that occurred at dinner. For example, students from the same institution should sit with those from other schools or regions. Passing around snacks will arouse the ones who are sleeping and promote conversations.

By the time the vans arrive at the park, some people may already have made a tentative choice of tent mates. Again, it is best to separate students from the same institution. The actual groupings will depend on the size of tents. Most important is that students appear to be content with the arrangements at the outset. Their attitude may change during the course of the week, but starting out happy is fairly typical and always a good idea. The groups should choose their own tent site and cooperate in the building of their house and the houses of their neighbors. The more hands-on the students are, the more vested everyone will be in the space and appointments. Small bag and big bag, perfumed and unscented, neat and sloppy, all have to negotiate during the setting up of the tent city. Amazingly, although all the tents may look relatively alike, the décor can turn out to be different in the extreme. Camp chairs may appear at the doorway of one, laundry lines between poles of another. Hats and hammocks, lights and other luxuries will surface as the different tent groups establish their style.

On no occasion was style more dramatic and visible than in the 2009 Acadia PITP trip. One of the faculty participants, architect Rob Sherman from the University of Maine at Augusta, arrived with a canoe on top of his car. In order to avert the tent floods of the previous year, he came prepared with multicolor tarps, cables, and

poles to erect a camp based on what he calls “tarpitecture.” Within an hour of the group’s arrival, he and his graduate student, Juste Gatari from Rwanda, began to teach everyone about tension. Before long, every tent was protected by beautiful canopies of winged tarps that were the envy of the campground.

The teaching happened naturally and with an electricity that made everyone grab cameras to photograph the abstract sculptures that were created. Sherman’s “tarpitecture” had so inspired the students that when he gave his presentation on tension and bridge construction, everyone was motivated, pencil in hand, to draw creative bridge designs for a project he actually intends to build. His wonderful session serves as a reminder that any subject proposed by a creative professor might become an inspiring PITP session. There is no left field in the woods! P. S. The tarps warded off the rain. It was a beautiful week of warm summer weather.

Another consideration when setting up a campsite is the physical distance between student and faculty tents. The site itself can never be so big as to create any significant distance, but creating some impression of privacy and separation is important. Just as students living in dorms would not wish to be supervised by faculty, so at a campsite having faculty intrude on late-night conversations, card games, or after-hours walks to an overlook by the sea would be awkward. Students need space, and in the percolation of group dynamics, they need space where they can reflect on personal concerns, frustrations, tiffs, homesickness, or disappointments. All these happen over the course of a program, and some result in tent shifting among residents. Unless asked to intervene, coordinators should just let it happen. Student teaching assistants may be better situated to resolve conflicts than faculty. Privacy and peer mentoring might be the solution. Once the groups realign, things will be calmer as soon as someone wakes to brew the morning’s first pot of coffee.

Such occasions serve as good reminders that PITP adventures create an environment in which leadership can shift at any moment. Some of the most thrilling events in the course of a program happen spontaneously when a student unexpectedly takes the lead. A

knowledgeable birdwatcher could point out a nuthatch; a geography major could pull out a map to lead the way out of the woods; a kayaker could teach a helpful maneuver; a gregarious storyteller could amplify the morning's adventure. The dynamics of shifting



"Tarpitecture," Acadia, Maine, 2008.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA MCINTYRE

David Fox, park ranger and storyteller extraordinaire, transported us back to the contentious presidential campaign of 1796 between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams at the historic site where Jefferson Rock overlooks the Shenandoah river.

leadership will energize the whole group in surges of excitement and discovery.

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Chloé Margulis reflects upon the life-changing impact of her Sequoia Partners in the Parks experience and how Partners in the Parks experiences pulled her outside of herself to a place of greater appreciation of the world around her.

On Top of the World: Backpacking in the Sierra Nevada Mountains

CHLOÉ MARGULIS
LIU Post

Just imagine falling asleep at night watching the stars shift into constellations across a purple, midnight sky speckled with the Milky Way. There are no distractions: no technology, no cellular service, just the person in the sleeping bag beside you on the rocks, huddling close to conserve body heat when the temperature drops to near 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

This scenario was something I experienced when I backpacked with a group of strangers in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Sequoia National Park, California. By the end of our week backpacking together, we created relationships because of the shared feelings and emotions emerging from solitude, survival, exhaustion, excitement, hunger, pain, and happiness.

Preparing for the trip proved difficult, especially since the month before I was studying in England. I was expected to leave for California three days after returning, but I had fallen sick and did not have the strength to eat or get out of bed. I had many doubts about how I would survive backpacking for a week. Regardless, I

packed a suitcase with my backpack, sleeping bag and pad, clothes, tent, survival supplies, and other necessities. Before arriving at the destination for the trip, I spent a few days in Santa Barbara, where I was determined to get back into shape for the trip. I spent my days running: six miles one day, eight miles the next, and six the day after. I am used to running since I am on track and field and cross country teams, but after I had been so sick, my lungs were lacking their usual capacity. This circumstance made me even more nervous because I was at sea level in Santa Barbara and would be backpacking 12,000 feet above sea level in the Sierra Nevadas. Many signs were telling me I should not be going on this trip.

The morning I met up with the group, my parents' rental car was broken into. Everything of value that my parents brought had been stolen. The windows were shattered, and the car did not start. Fortunately, a trip leader picked me up, but I had a feeling this dilemma was yet another bad sign. These signs reinforced my early premonitions. I had been dreading going on this trip ever since I signed up. It was one of the few activities my parents ever forced me to do. I did not want to go because I was concerned about not having the usual conveniences for a week, of having to carry my own house and food on my shoulders, of having to dig holes in the mountains so I could go to the bathroom. But this trip turned out to be a life-changing experience for me. I was enlightened by so many aspects of the adventure, and I learned to take nothing for granted and to appreciate everything I am given and everything I can achieve. I learned to respect others and to help them before myself.

For example, the first couple of nights I was very into serving and satisfying myself. I wanted to make sure I got enough food and was comfortable. By the last morning, however, I was the one sitting in the center of the circle, handing out the flavored oatmeal packets that every person preferred. I got whatever was left over, and that did not faze me, even if I did not like the flavor. When I had picked up the leftovers for myself, one girl from Florida asked me, "Chloé, are you sure you got the flavor you wanted?" I shrugged in response and with a big smile said, "Don't worry about me—I am happy that I have food."

Our diet in the backcountry was limited. We feasted on two oatmeal packs every morning, granola bars and peanut butter crackers for lunch, and dehydrated backpacking food reconstituted with water for dinner. We did not complain because we were hungry and tired, and by the end of a long, arduous day, any nutrition was delicious.

I started the trip carrying a 40-pound pack, clean, frowning, and doubtful. I ended the trip losing three pounds in body weight, with greasy hair that had not been washed in seven days, but smiling, hungry, and covered in dirt, sweat, and blood. It took me a full day of scrubbing to remove all the dirt and blood from under my fingernails and buried in the lifelines in my palms and fingertips. But I did not care. I had accomplished something. At first, I had yearned to escape, but by the end of the trip, I did not want to leave. I was ready to return to the backcountry for several more days of sleeping under the stars, eating wild berries, and swimming in alpine lakes.

Although the Leave No Trace toilet training was one of the most foreign and initially horrifying things I have ever experienced, we were fortunate to have a pit toilet at one of the lakes we backpacked to. The toilet was amazing because of its impeccable view of Monarch Lake and Sawtooth Pass. It has an actual toilet seat and three walls of crumbling wooden planks. Of course, there was no privacy: people at the lake would wave to whoever was sitting on the toilet. We learned to respect each other, and, honestly, sharing our space with each other did not bother anyone. We changed in front of each other, talked about our bowel movements, had pee and poop partners, and everything imaginable in-between.

Most of the time backpacking was actually spent bushwhacking. There was an easy path up the mountain, but following an easy trail from there was far from being on our agenda. We spent hours each day, inching our way over the mountain toward a new destination. On the first day's journey to Monarch Lake, in just one mile, we climbed over 1,000 feet in elevation. There were times when we trekked through thorny brambles, emerging with legs scratched and bloodied. One girl from North Carolina slipped and gashed

the side of her leg open. Despite all the pain, blood loss, and scarring, she picked herself up and kept marching onward at the front of the group. She was determined to make it to the top of Sawtooth Pass, and for that we applauded her. She pushed through the pain and looked toward the rewarding feeling of accomplishing this feat. Seeing her suffer through her pain to reach the summit made me realize just how silly my complaints and laziness were.

Each evening before sunset, two students would make dinner with the trip leaders. It became customary for all of us to volunteer our time and to sacrifice comfort to help the team, whether it was cleaning dishes, preparing food, skipping a second serving for someone else, going down to the lake to fill our water purifiers, or filling everyone else's bottles with purified water before filling one's own.

Every night after dinner, we would form a circle to discuss environmental issues, a reflection on the day, and anything else that came to mind. On our first evening, we hiked up a mountainside to watch the sunset over Sequoia; there we held our first circle on the



Students follow the trail uphill at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

rocks still warm from the sun's rays. We hiked down in the pitch black, with nothing more than headlamps to guide us safely over the rocky precipice and away from bears or mountain lions. When we camped at Columbine and Monarch Lakes, we would bring our sleeping bags out to the rocky shoreline and huddle together to converse. It was customary to make hot cocoa while talking and watching the stars. At first, we went ballistic from seeing one shooting star, but by the end of our trip, we had become used to stargazing and seeing 10+ shooting stars an evening. Our last night coincided with the height of the meteor shower: that was the night we ditched our tents and slept under the stars in 32°F. It was magical.

Each morning, we would take down our tents and pack our backpacks. We never spent more than one night at the same campsite. Our hands would be numb and turning purple in the freezing 6:00 a.m. mountain air, but we did what we had to do to get an early start up the mountain. When we would arrive at a destination, which was always a lake, we would seek the flattest, most-protected spot from the wind to set up our tents. We came across a few other backpackers during our journey, but since most of them came



PHOTO BY JOHNNY MACLEAN

Backpackers arrive at Columbine Lake, Sequoia National Park.

seeking solitude, the one or two who happened to be camping at the lake at the same time as we did would pitch their tents on the opposite side of the lake.

One morning, when we were camping at Columbine Lake, one of our trip leaders, Johnny, walked around to every tent and whispered, “Sunrise hike. It’s going to be a beautiful day.” Those quiet, soothing words were enough to rouse me from my warm cocoon at 5:00 a.m. to embark on a hike and watch the sunrise over Mother Nature’s work. It was absolutely breathtaking, watching the sun’s rays spread light over seven valleys, then over a forest fire that had been raging for two weeks, then over a canyon called Lost Canyon with a picturesque silver river down the center, then over Columbine Lake, and finally over the sharp, tooth-like peaks of Sawtooth Pass. I felt as if I had been reborn by being a witness to something so beautiful and natural, yet so surreal. It gave me some hope for a future in which Mother Nature is not completely destroyed by humankind and the desire to achieve greatness through economic gain, no matter the repercussions.

During the trip, we climbed a little over 12,000 feet above sea level: that would be one straight mile up. That is a ridiculous amount of elevation, and to think I had climbed all of that on my own while lugging 40 pounds on my back makes me feel accomplished and proud of myself. I learned many things I would not have learned other than by being forced out of my comfort zone. I learned basic survival skills as well as about prescribed burning and environmental issues that threaten the existence of nature and our national parks. I also learned to enjoy the beauty of complete solitude. There were times we were instructed to find a place we could call our own, where our only distraction would be the sound of the wind on the lake. We also completed a service project to collect micro trash in campgrounds and around the lakes where we camped. Even doing something as simple as this task was rewarding, individually but also for the environment.

I grew up in a family that would visit a different national park every year. Whenever we visited, we never went to the touristy attractions—we would choose trails and hike the backcountry of

the park, where we rarely encountered two other people the whole day on the trail. I still remember the last time I was at Arches in Utah; we hiked 15 miles one day in the desert without seeing any other hikers. So if I had been used to doing this all my life, why was I so reluctant to go on this excursion? The answer is pretty simple. I always had the comfort of my family; a warm, delicious dinner at the end of the day; and an actual bed to sleep in at night. This backpacking trip was completely self-sustaining: I had to establish my own shelter, food, and bathroom. If I needed help, it came from strangers, and I had to instill all my trust in this group of people I had never met before. This trip was about more than just being out of my comfort zone, it put me on a whole different spectrum.

Backpacking in the Sierra Nevadas taught me to appreciate the land, to appreciate people, and to appreciate and love the most natural and simple things in life. And for these reasons and others I cannot possibly begin to explain in words, I do not regret embarking on this once-in-a-lifetime adventure. I would recommend that everyone, even non-honors students, seek unique wilderness experiences like this one.

CHAPTER 9

Preparing, Experiencing, and Assessing Learning

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As the earlier chapters of this monograph have clearly demonstrated, Partners in the Parks programs combine both careful planning and spontaneous opportunity, neatly constructed nuts and bolts and the unexpected wrench in plans. The purpose and locations of the programs mean leaders must consider interpersonal factors and experiential elements the traditional classroom does not elicit. These are the most interesting, surprising, amusing, emotional, and challenging aspects of PITP. While reflecting on all these elements, PITP leaders must develop effective and creative means to assess student learning as well as their own learning and pedagogy. Over the years, PITP leaders have developed their own libraries of tales, experiences, and assignments. They have created

and modified schedules, syllabi, and readings to facilitate student learning while recognizing that students are motivated by a wide variety of reasons for choosing a park and program. As a result, PITP leaders are happy to share from their archives.

Few people would argue that life experiences do not add to their knowledge or understanding of the world; however, there is an ongoing debate about how to assess such experiences and even greater debate about whether an experience in itself is worthy of academic credit. The last decade has witnessed a greater acceptance in higher education of experience-based epistemology. Although educators acknowledge the value of such experiences, they still have questions about what students are actually learning. Clearly, spending a week at one of America's most awe-inspiring natural wonders has intrinsic value, and PITP programs have indeed challenged students' perceptions and led to personal transformation. It is impossible to look out over cliffs, see an eagle in flight, or watch a fox with her kits without wanting to share the moment. People take photographs, call each other to the water's edge, or simply converse as they walk along the trails. They also tell stories, write in their journals, and ask and answer important questions that interest everyone in the group. But these are still often highly individualized and informal experiences, and they can present challenges in determining whether they can be assessed and measured within existing assessment models of academia. To meet those challenges, PITP programs are all founded on a clearly stated set of general program goals and learning outcomes that can facilitate effective mechanisms for assessing student learning.

SETTING GOALS AND ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Program leaders should keep in mind the general PITP program goals and outcomes when constructing the week's experiences. Sharing the general goals and outcomes with park staff to facilitate good communication and collaboration is crucial. One should also be aware that park resources and available staffing may impact goals and outcomes. Program specific goals and outcomes are, of course,

welcome and often expand upon the overarching PITP goals. Having students know the goals of the week is helpful, and they can be incorporated into a syllabus or an introduction to the program itinerary.

General PITP Goals:

1. Introduce students to the national parks.
2. Teach the Leave No Trace philosophy of being in nature.
3. Teach students how to camp, cook, and work in groups. (Since students in each program come from a number of different honors programs and colleges, states, regions, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds, learning to work together has multiple implications beyond the immediate experience of camping and will necessitate resolving the interpersonal conflicts that necessarily arise in such situations.)
4. Foster an interest in the flora, fauna, geology, history, and geography of the area.
5. Encourage students to expand their abilities at reflective writing, oral storytelling, and photography.
6. Create an association between the park experience and civic engagement through volunteer work in the park that will provide immediate support for the long-term goal of protecting America's natural environments.
7. Create a positive experience that students will take home to their honors programs and colleges and share as presentations on campus or at their regional honors organizations to encourage other students to participate in future Partners in the Parks programs.

General PITP Outcomes:

1. Students gain an appreciation of the national park and with that a desire to visit others in the national park system or continue to make camping, hiking, and exploring natural

- places part of their lives, utilizing the Leave No Trace philosophy in all their natural explorations.
2. Students encourage their honors colleagues to participate in a PITP program.
 3. Students encourage family and friends to vacation in the national parks.
 4. Students continue to develop their interest in the fauna, flora, geology, history, and geography of the places that they visit in years to come.
 5. Students continue to develop their skills in group dynamics and their creativity in writing, drawing, photography, and storytelling.
 6. Students become politically aware of national parks issues, engage in preservation organizations, and use their voting power to take a stand on these issues as informed citizens.

The expectation is that all PITP programs build the aforementioned goals into their programming and create opportunities for students to achieve the stated outcomes. Program leaders are also encouraged to develop program-specific goals and outcomes for student learning as well. The national park system is so diverse it allows for the development of unique programming within each PITP expedition. While PITP programs can be unique in their program-specific goals and outcomes, in other instances commonalities of programming do appear.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC GOALS

Each PITP is unique and intimately connected to the environment where it occurs, and as such, learning outcomes and assessment mechanisms should reflect that uniqueness. Through the years, however, some common themes have arisen: Leave No Trace, wilderness, and water have emerged as key components of numerous PITP programs. These themes and others can be used to assess critical thinking. We have seen how students have applied

critical-thinking skills to make connections between the information in their assigned readings and what they learn in the parks and then take the next step to rethink and reconsider their own behaviors in home environments. As Kathleen King remarked about the Everglades program, “A theme throughout the week was water everywhere, and perhaps not a drop to drink. Saltwater intrusion can be a very real problem along the coast.” Mike Brennan, Storm Water Manager from Palm Coast, Florida, and Master Mariner, spent the week with the group and held a session on storm water management, relating the marriage of water management to a delicate ecosystem and societal influences. King observed:

Students were able to relate the session to their own neighborhoods and towns while also making the connection to the complex water management necessary in a state that is primarily saturated with water. Students learned firsthand when, towards the end of the week, our heavy use of water in the local bathrooms contaminated the drinking water with saltwater . . . in the limestone below. Students quickly learned that, although we were surrounded by water in swamps, creeks, and the bay, our strategic use of it was necessary in order for it to remain potable—a lesson not often learned among those with “unlimited” city water at their fingertips.

The Black Canyon program identifies “Watering the West,” better known as “Whiskey’s for Drinkin’ and Water’s for Fightin’” as a main theme for its weeklong program. Most students who participate in the Black Canyon program come from places where water is abundant and where water laws are profoundly different from those governing the American West. The Black Canyon National Park, the Gunnison River and its system of dams, the Diversion Tunnel, the Blue Mesa Reservoir, and the Curecanti National Recreation Area tell the tale of water in the West. Students hike and camp above the water and beside the water, and they learn on the water and in the water. The students hear about the nineteenth-century Torrence and Fellows expedition through the canyon, the construction of

the diversion tunnel to make the surrounding high-altitude desert bloom, the damming and regulating of the river, and the creation of the reservoirs. They met with Ranger Ken Stahlnecker to learn about water resource and climate change issues in the West and in the national park, enjoyed a guided boat tour on the river through the canyon, learned how to test for an invasive mussel species from the park's marine biologist, explored the reservoir via park boats, and toured the inside of one of the dams constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation. Historical pieces dating back to the 1950s and the work of Donald Worster and Michael Tennesen as well as more contemporary readings about the attempts by humans to shape the surrounding environment through the harnessing, control, and redirection of water supplemented these experiences. A highlight of the week's sessions is always Ranger Curt Treichel's history of Colorado water. In 2015 students also met and talked with Michael Dale, Natural Resources Manager for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, who explained how it took a court case for the Gunnison River to gain a legal right to its water. Students are expected to pull together knowledge from the week's range of water experiences and readings to participate fully in Treichel and Dale's final water presentation developing questions about the future of not only water resources in the Black Canyon and Curecanti but in the American West and indeed in their home communities.

Many of the PITP themes resonate with students long after they return home. Rose Peterson, from Virginia Tech, who participated in the 2014 Grand Canyon-Parashant program, came to a profound realization that led to a behavioral change common to many students who experience the West and its water issues for the first time. After her trip, Rose reflected:

All my life I have grown up around water and in a place that gets rain frequently. I took long showers without giving it a moment's thought. Going to the Arizona desert was the first time I was conscious about water and how invaluable it is. . . . It was the first time I experienced limitations to water usage.

Upon her return home, she has made an effort to shorten her showers, stating:

Just because I am surrounded by water doesn't give me the right to waste clean, drinkable water for a 30-minute shower. It really made me think that in order to sustain the earth's population, all people in both arid areas and areas with plentiful water need to work towards conserving the earth's limited water.

Such behavioral changes and adjustments are evidence of not only critical thinking but of applying knowledge gleaned and absorbed from the reading materials, discussions, and experiences of the week.

INDIVIDUAL GOALS

Some students will arrive with clear goals and reasons for choosing the program they did while others will have few expectations. A good number, whatever their original expectations, will find the experience transformative, meeting goals they had not fully anticipated. Not only students but also trip leaders have their own reasons for wanting to experience a particular park. Bryce Canyon National Park was not an accidental choice for the inaugural program. Joan Digby had visited there as a child and remembered it being the most impressive of all the national parks she had seen. She also had a mission in returning to Bryce: she remembered taking a horseback trip into the canyon with her father, and she wanted to repeat that trip to honor his memory. Matt Nickerson and Todd Petersen, who had taken on the administrative responsibility for PITP, happily accommodated Joan's wish to begin with Bryce. Early one morning, Joan undertook a nostalgic journey and came upon the exact place where someone had taken a photo of her and her father fifty years earlier. The trail guide obliged by taking her photo in front of the same red rock. Joan returned to the campsite, composed a poem about her two experiences, and shared it with the students. Revealed in this story is the entire cycle of experiential

education: individual knowledge, experience, processing, analysis, communication, shared knowledge. PITP adventures create opportunities for participants to share experiences and engage with each other and to look within as Joan notes:

Everyone comes with a personal narrative, a memory, a hope, a possibility for finding something deep inside the experience. Leaving enough space, enough down time and individual time for every participant to find what is really important about the journey is a critical element for leaders to consider when planning a PITP program.

Just as with traditional in-class or out-of-class reading, writing, and critical-thinking assessments, PITP programs must schedule time for students to process the various presentations and activities. Time for reflection is necessary if learning outcomes include providing an opportunity for valuable assessment on the part of the program coordinators and the participants themselves.

ASSESSING OUTCOMES

Readings

Organizing and preparing a PITP program requires considerable paperwork. But of all the paperwork connected to PITP, the program readings are what coordinators and faculty colleagues most enjoy hunting and gathering. Program readings are also the building blocks for assessment, supporting program goals and measuring learning outcomes. Activities and discussions should create opportunities for students to initially make direct connections with the assigned readings. After a hike, a discussion of Henry David Thoreau's essay "On Walking" can be a good starting point for conversation, or after an encounter with wildlife, talking about Sarah Orne Jewett's "The White Heron" can promote introspection that will link the student's interpretation of the text with his or her own experience of wildlife before all the students share their experiences and analyses with each other.

Early in the week the connections students make between the readings and their experiences might lean towards the obvious or most accessible, but as participants' experiences in the parks deepen, so too should the readings, creating opportunities for them to make connections that are more philosophical and complex. Discussions of the importance of the national parks could move from exploring Roderick Nash's proclamation that the national parks are America's best idea to Lynn Ross-Bryant's contemplation in "Sacred Sites: Nature and Nation in the U.S. National Parks" to the more discomfiting historical issues Mark David Spence raises in "Dispossessing the Wilderness" and the impact of the creation of national parks on indigenous peoples. Program leaders also might consider returning to early readings later in the week for a deeper analysis of issues raised, allowing students to reflect on whether their interpretations of the readings have changed in light of their new experiences and additional NPS presentations.

Encouraging the teaching faculty to choose texts that are wide-ranging to generate lively discussions and multi-disciplinary points of view is essential. Some selections may be about the park or the history of the area, but works by regional poets, fiction writers, anthropologists, philosophers, and artists generate exciting reflections and can introduce students to new fields of study as well as ways to understand and analyze experience. While some students might feel a bit nervous about discussing a poem or others may feel overwhelmed by statistical analysis, such readings encourage students to understand the park and its elements from a wide variety of perspectives. Coordinators may identify some basic questions for each reading to facilitate discussion or present a discussion topic for students to explore around the campfire or scenic outlook. But as students' knowledge of the park expands, coordinators should assess the progress of student learning as reflected in their ability to interact not only with the park through experience but also through the intellectual and academic ideas that are presented in the readings.

No matter what readings or supplemental materials leaders choose for their own program, having students and faculty receive

the complete collection as electronic attachments at least a month before the program is important so that they have a chance to read the pieces in advance or at least in transit to the meeting point. Whenever possible, sharing the syllabus, full schedule, and reading material ahead of time with the rangers is also highly recommended. Leaders should also bring several sets of the readings with them for referencing during the trip. The readings provide both depth and commonality to park explorations. Intellectuals blazing during heated discussions are a great joy on a cold night around a campfire.

Readings that reflect changing attitudes over time toward issues provide opportunities to explore how our own attitudes towards the parks and issues connected to them change. The theme of “Whose Story Is It Anyway?” also informed the Black Canyon discussions concerning the issues involved with preservation and conservation efforts within the park and beyond as old sites are reinterpreted and new sites are designated within the park system. This question has taken on greater importance in recent years as the National Park Service is increasing its diversity outreach, programming, and hiring. Discussions with rangers at Black Canyon and around the evening campfires raised questions about these initiatives, and students thoughtfully moved from a historical contemplation of the question to a contemporary consideration. Students’ responses and analyses clearly developed over the course of the week, and such discussions were useful in appraising student learning over the course of the program.

Circles

Almost all of the PITP programs make use of group meetings called “circles.” These are daily gatherings of all the PITP participants that provide the opportunity to communicate feelings or ideas. These sessions can occur at the campsite or at any place along the trail that is conducive to an intimate, quiet time. Often leaders will prepare the group by mentioning a specific topic for that day’s circle: what people will remember about today, what people photographed that day and why, what readings were relevant to the day’s experiences, or what preoccupied them during the day. To

some degree the events and presentations of the day often influence the theme of these circles. Circle exercises have multiple assessment uses ranging from assessing student learning and processing to evaluating program efficacy and identifying group dynamics. While not specifically designed for formal assessment and evaluation, circles can result in some of the most thoughtful moments of the week. These exercises provide students an opportunity to share not only their personal reflections but to raise questions or issues that they may have been contemplating throughout the day. They are effective opportunities to connect the day's experiential learning with academics and can communicate a great deal to program leaders about what is working and whether or not the program is meeting student expectations as well as learning outcomes.

Everyone should know the time and place of these circles and arrive as scheduled. On more than one occasion, some students have walked away or avoided participation in group circles. Bringing loners into these gatherings is important to maintain the shared dynamics of the adventure. At least once during the week, leaders should ask if anything is bothering people or if they have changes to



Participants gather into a circle at Sequoia National Park.

suggest. In effect, the circles can provide an opportunity for sharing excitement or discussing issues that might result in some modification of the program. PITP students will often share how they were pushed out of their physical comfort zones. Circles can create a supportive outlet for participants and leaders to share experiences, and the confidence that the exercise builds can also create a space for students to reflect upon how the readings and seminars may have pushed them out of their intellectual comfort zones.

JOURNALING AND VISUAL REPRESENTATION

As the student essays in this book demonstrate, PITP students are in a state of almost constant reflection and contemplation. Program leaders should encourage participants to record their experiences, reactions, and ideas throughout the week. The format of journaling can range widely between students from different fields of study. Science majors will record differently and in different formats than English majors or outdoor recreation majors. Having students read aloud from their journals provides a tangible measurement of their ability to document and write about their experiences and what they have learned. During the weeklong program, leaders should encourage participants to expand on and develop what they have to say. Leaders should also be willing to share from their journals if they have time to write during the week. By comparing entries from the beginning and the end of the program, participants and leaders can determine how their journaling has evolved during this time period. The journal may also be a record submitted to honors programs or colleges granting credit for PITP. The same kind of analysis can, of course, be applied to drawings or photography.

Some programs with a strong focus on visual arts ask students to present a selection of their work at the midpoint in the program and then select a final grouping for the summary presentation. Assessing significant changes in students' ability to photograph or draw from nature is possible. During the week they may become more adept at composition or observing detail or capturing color and light. Students particularly interested in flora, fauna, or geology may reflect these interests in their visual work. A weeklong haiku

competition, for example, can inspire student creativity and humor. Assessment of any PITP program should take into account student writing and art.

Most honors students are adept presenters so challenging them with non-traditional assignments during the week might be beneficial. One of the Black Canyon assignments, which is used as part



Students work on their projects at the art workshop on the Missouri River trip.

of the students' final presentations, consists of map-making. Students are instructed to make their own maps of the week: the only guidance is that the maps should reflect the student's experience and should not look like a typical roadmap. Although the process has generated considerable consternation and nervousness, along with the refrain "I cannot draw," the student maps not only illustrate their deep reflection and thought processes but are often the best souvenirs for each student. One pre-med student's map was a human brain divided into its component parts with the experiences from the week assigned to whichever part of the brain "lit up" when she was experiencing them. Another's was a storybook map of the little bear cub the participants spotted; the map had the cub following along with the group through the week's experiences. Another map coded comfort and discomfort zones. Smells, which included pine trees, moss, campfires, and of course pit toilets, were identified in another student's map. These maps are not just about the student's week of experiences; they are experiences cast into memory.

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

From the outset of the journey, students should be made aware that the last evening of the trip will be devoted to reflective presentations. Letting students know early in the week or even weeks before they arrive that they will be expected to make a presentation and should spend some time considering what they would like to do is important. Some students are natural storytellers. Others are shy but manage to take part in a group presentation of one kind or another. Students can select ideas, topics, and even a few sentences from assigned readings to build a final presentation. These presentations might be group efforts—such as a skit or enactment of a happening along the way; they might be selections of photography, poems, or journal readings. Faculty should encourage students to free their imaginative spirit to do something creative. Some groups simply gather in a final reflective circle to share their most treasured memories of the week. No matter what the format is, these presentations are an important component of personal evaluation and appraisal that can function as a form of learning assessment.

Final presentations also allow the possibility of integrating some of the more unscripted and unforeseen events of the program into the academic regimen, facilitating assessment of how the students and faculty are processing those events into defined program goals and outcomes.

Johnny MacLean and Brian White, who organized the Sequoia PITP program, have observed that when designing assessments of typical classroom courses, professors typically have the luxury of knowing the content of the vast majority of discussions. Valuable assessments can be tailored ahead of time to reflect pre-defined learning objectives. In experiential education settings such as the Sequoia PITP adventure, assessment design must consider unpredictable events (“Honors”). For the participants of the Sequoia program, a search and recovery mission above Monarch Lakes in 2013 was a perfect example of this kind of assessment challenge, and one that has been matched by other PITP occurrences, such as the beached whale at the Outer Banks National Seashore and the newly discovered cave at Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. These unforeseen events underscore the importance of trip leaders remaining flexible to take advantage of unanticipated experiences. Despite the challenges, MacLean and White attempted to measure academic rigor in an experiential education setting where learning objectives are difficult to predict by designing and testing an assessment in which they required students to present an honors thesis proposal during the final circle (“Honors”). MacLean and White required the students’ proposals to integrate lessons they learned during the week with their academic major, and they were to include how such a proposal could be applied to their lives, campuses, or communities. Students were then assessed on their ability to apply what they experienced (“Honors”).

MacLean and White highlighted four students’ proposed projects in their findings: Kara D. proposed a backpacking program in the Appalachian Mountains to raise awareness about water quality and hydrology issues surrounding mountain-top removal mining processes. Emily B. developed a proposal to tie her journal writings and her poetry together as a creative memoir to record her travels in natural places, hoping to inspire conservation and preservation. Tim

H. began his long-term plan to bring high school students into the wilderness to teach them the core curriculum in a PITP-style program. Finally, Aimee D. was implementing a plan to build a nature trail around her campus that will emphasize healthy lifestyles and native vegetation (“Assessing” 106). MacLean and White concluded that the results of their experiment showed that an assessment built around the students’ ability to design a project that combined their experiences with their interests provided a framework for measuring personal learning and encouraging experiences. This form of assessment also allows for the unpredictable turn of events that can redefine the focus of a trip.

That everyone presents or at least takes part in a presentation is incredibly important. If at all possible, coordinators should invite the park staff. They are extremely interested in what visitors gain from being in the parks, and because students often devise some extremely original modes of expressing the meaning of these experiences, rangers and other staff members enjoy the evening as well as the final opportunity to visit with the group. Park rangers who have presented their own programs during the week eagerly join the group to learn what the students have taken away from the park. The presentations clearly demarcate the impending conclusion of an adventure. In some ways they are summary statements intended as a prelude to the farewell. Thus they can convey a range of emotions and evocations or reveal a nostalgic tone, even a tinge of sadness. Recognizing that the final presentations are the essential capstone that brings closure to the week is most important. They should—in whatever form—remain the journey’s end.

SURVEYS

Another helpful if not more traditional assessment mechanism PITP programs employ are end-of-program or post-program surveys. Early in the week, in addition to explaining the various assignments and presentations students may be required to complete, the program leaders should let the students and other participants know that they will be asked to complete written evaluations at the end of the program.

All PITP program coordinators should encourage participants to fill out the official online evaluation survey at the PITP section of the NCHC website. Not only does this survey help determine if the general PITP program goals and learning objectives have been met, over time these survey results provide data that will form the basis for modifying and improving the program. Faculty and staff as well as students should participate in the survey and other evaluations.

In addition to the standard questionnaire, program leaders often conduct a survey of their own that is keyed to specific aspects of their program, such as workshop presenters. Participants generally fill out the forms during the last day before the group breaks camp or disperses to airports, cars, or reunions with family members. Each program is welcome to develop a template addressing the events and activities it provided. The evaluation form should present for rating, according to some clear scale, the major elements of the program: transportation, meeting arrangements, hotel accommodations if applicable, camping or other housing arrangements, outdoor activities, readings, workshops, lectures, recreation, food and meal arrangements, leadership, and safety. Students, faculty, and staff should also have an opportunity to discuss the impact the program had on them and any other personal issues in a narrative. Learning whether the program met the goals of students, faculty, and staff is important. Ultimately the program leaders would like to know what works well, what does not, what should be changed, and whether students would recommend the program to others. The program leaders should advise students that they are also welcome to convey any statements that they wish to keep private directly to the program leaders through letters or email. Indeed leaders may want to initiate contact with participants if they wish to discuss further some of the observations revealed by the survey or if they would like feedback about the ways they are contemplating reshaping elements of the program.

The results of these evaluations are utilized in two other contexts. Since PITP leaders work closely with the park superintendent and staff in preparing for the program, sharing the results of the survey with them following the program is a good idea. This

feedback will help everyone agree on aspects of the program that should remain in place and others that should be altered in future collaborations.

FINAL REPORTS

PITP programs are themselves assessed by the NCHC PITP Committee each year. Upon completion of each program, program leaders must submit a final program report that includes final budget numbers to the committee. The committee is able to compare the initial program proposal with the final report to assess the overall delivery. Renewal of the program or approval of a new program by a leader of an older program can be influenced by these reports. If any questions or concerns about a program arise, the committee is able to work with the program leader to make appropriate modifications for the future. PITP leaders also have an opportunity to share the program evaluation, as well as photographs and narratives from the program, with the PITP Committee at the annual conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council. The committee meeting brings together not only leaders of programs that took place during the previous year, but also colleagues coming forward with proposals for future programs.

The NCHC annual conference has also afforded many PITP program leaders the opportunity to make formal presentations about their programs. Over the years presentations about PITP adventures have evolved from promotional approaches to faculty members discussing programs as examples of experiential learning with assessment models and results. Faculty making these conference presentations are also finding publishing opportunities, especially in NCHC journals, where they can share their findings beyond the conference attendees.

FOR-CREDIT PITP MODELS

The majority of PITP programs are not credit bearing, but a few institutions, such as St. Francis College, make offering credit a possibility. Some honors programs, like the University of Washington,

require students to develop a learning plan or project for their week. The University of Washington Honors Program has a formal online process that enables the PITP coordinator to supervise the students' project and to provide final assessment of the students' participation during the week and of the students' final report on their project. Other honors programs require participating students to do a presentation about their experience to their home honors program, most often as a requirement for receiving financial aid to attend PITP. The Black Canyon of the Gunnison PITP program has students register through Western State Colorado University's Extended Studies program, which automatically enrolls them in three honors credits through Western's Honors Program. Students can then request a WSCU transcript with their credits if they wish to transfer them back to their home institutions and programs. This transfer of credits is only done if students request it; if the students do not want to use the credits or receive a transcript, they do not have to do so.

While it is easy to advocate experience for education's sake and to believe that not everything a student does needs to earn credit, the leader of the Black Canyon PITP wanted to develop a program that could be offered for academic credit. The benefits of the credit-bearing program include allowing students to use financial aid, in effect, encouraging the widening of program participation in the spirit of the democratic ideology that has been so central, according to Nash, in the development of the national parks system from its beginning (726). Working with the WSCU Extended Studies office, the program coordinators arranged for the course to be taken for academic credit. The other benefit of working through Extended Studies was that the in-state/out-of-state issue of college tuition was avoided. Registration could still be restricted to honors students, but they could come from around the country and would earn three upper-division academic credits for only \$550–\$600. In reality, few internal structural barriers emerged for setting up PITP for academic credit because WSCU has been supportive of the program and understands its functions as part of a national program and association. An unexpected challenge arose, however, when

the PITP program moved from SUU to the NCHC in 2014. NCHC now handles registration for all the PITP programs except the Black Canyon program, which remains unique as the only credit-bearing program. Students register through WSCU's Extended Studies office directly and not through NCHC although the NCHC office can and does direct students to WSCU, and WSCU pays a nominal per student fee to support PITP promotion and website maintenance.

PROMOTING THE GOOD

Students are not the only ones who produce paperwork at the end of the program; PITP leaders produce reports, articles, and reminiscences. Most universities take pride in having honors students participate and like to post articles about them on their website, in marketing efforts, and in communications to alumni. These pieces are much appreciated because they can be enhanced with the photographs taken by the students. Leaders should keep a journal or log during the year-and-a-half process of preparing for a PITP program. This will be extremely useful in organizing ideas and help immensely when a program is offered again. Moreover, because program coordinators are completely absorbed during the trip, they are unlikely to find time to jot down more than the barest scraps of notes because they are flipping pancakes, driving to trail heads, or locating the next ranger. For coordinators who produce a report at the end of the adventure, preliminary notes will jog the memory of how everything came together. By that time, they should also have some reflective writing from the students to fill in the blanks and keep the adventure alive with all the voices and personalities that made it rich.

Students participate in PITP programs for a wide variety of reasons. Some are interested in earning credit, but many just want the experience. Whatever their motivation, PITP programs provide them with opportunities to learn and grow not just experientially and socially but intellectually as well. The type of student-learning assessment implemented in Partners in the Parks reflects trends in experiential learning but also illustrates unique approaches. Just as the program leaders of Partners in the Parks are creating new

tools for assessing learning, they are also seeking to offer innovative ways that allow participants to assess their own learning and make them feel a deeper connection to the national parks and their future engagement with them.

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FIELD NOTES



In the Field Notes that follow, University of Washington Honors Program student Anjelica Harlow shares how her PITP experience connected with her field of study at her home institution and how the unexpected can yield the greatest rewards.

Partners in the Parks: An Adventure in the Black Canyon Comes Home

ANJELICA HARLOW
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During August of 2013, I went on an adventure. I wanted to go on an adventure not because I was a seasoned traveler and had stayed static for too long, but instead because I had, in fact, hardly ever traveled and was beginning to feel too comfortable. The onset of what I like to call “IfIdontleavenowIneverwill-osis” in addition to my increasing fear of failure and non-decreasing list of honors requirements pushed me to alleviate at least one of my problems. Lucky for me, Partners in the Parks enabled me to knock off the first and third issue while allowing me to forget about my anxieties concerning the second. So, I sent an application, received a confirmation, booked a plane ticket to Denver, bought a bus ticket to travel from Denver to Gunnison, and was on my way. I felt like a true adult! Little did I know, there was so much more in store for me to learn.

My initial destination was Gunnison, Colorado, approximately 1,500 miles from Seattle. Gunnison is a small town with truly blue

skies, very green grass, and a host of incredibly outdoorsy people. Black Canyon of the Gunnison, a massive national park, was my final destination. I became increasingly more nervous as my departure date grew closer, partly because I had never done what I was about to do, and my only prior experience in Colorado was a turbulent landing and long layover at the Denver International Airport. At this point in time, my only conception of the state was of a sunny, treeless western Washington. I knew no one who lived there and little about where I was going. The important thing was that I was taking this journey all on my own. So, to prepare for the worst, I started my journey with virtually no expectations.

As it turned out, my lack of forethought regarding the journey allowed me to experience things without the filter of expectations to alter my perception of the experience. I did not expect to be able to find my departure gate as easily as I did, have my plane take off on time, or even locate the right bus at the Greyhound station in Denver: these were all added bonuses. When I originally registered for Partners in the Parks, I did not know how the experience would tie in with my classes back home, or even that it would. It did in a grand way! But, perhaps, some of the best things I learned were things I did not know were knowable. For example: I did not know what it would feel like to stand at Exclamation Point on the edge of the North Rim of the canyon and peer out beyond the blue and look down between the great divide. I did not know the benefits to learning about the Ute people, or the Colorado River and her dams, or the species invading her land because I have never needed to know those things. And I definitely did not know how I would respond to seeing herds of cows in the middle of a barren nowhere, standing on near vertical hills and channeling their inner-stubbornness billy goat while dotting the land like Seurat does canvas. And in fact, I still do not quite know how to respond except when I think back to the cows, I laugh to myself.

It is impossible for me to go into depth about my experience at Gunnison without plummeting onto wild tangents or irrationally jumping from one subject to another. There was too much I experienced, so much I learned. But what may have been one of the

biggest benefits about partaking in the program came as a surprise to me nearly three months later in one of my interaction design classes. My major is interaction design, which is the development of people-oriented systems and interfaces. Interaction designers typically work on systems so that users do not feel overwhelmed by the technology, environment, or settings. Projects may range from features on bus stations to digital applications to airplane cockpits.

For my final project I worked with a team to develop an application to assist stakeholders in Seattle's Discovery Park with some type of activity. The prompt was sufficiently broad to allow teams to go in multiple directions. Some teams focused on way-finding, and other teams worked on more social aspects. After much research, debate, and development, my team decided to focus on the education side of Discovery Park. Currently, Discovery Park has amazing programs that cater to children K-12. Their most successful programs appeal to children from 4-10 years of age and involve an in-depth, hands-on approach. Children who enrolled in a Discovery Park course with a small group of their peers experience a unique educational opportunity by working closely with highly trained personnel. The problem my team discovered was that these programs were in such high demand that parents had difficulty enrolling their child in any of the courses. To accommodate the large number of children who would not have the opportunity to experience the richness of Discovery Park in one of the structured programs, my group developed an application that would run on a tablet provided by the park. This application would utilize technologies such as geo-location, geo-tagging, and object recognition. Children and their families would use this tablet to enhance their park outing by allowing them to freely explore and learn about the flora, fauna, and history of the park.

My Gunnison experience became useful to this project when the group was creating the infrastructure for this tablet system. I had learned that parks within the National Park Service facilitate learning environments for children by providing park-specific activity books and physical reward badges. This system is called Junior Rangers and works similarly to how Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are

required to complete a range of activities to earn badges based on their accomplishing these tasks. My team incorporated this reward structure into our design because while on my trip I saw so many children of varying ages actively participating in Junior Rangers. And I must admit that one of my standout moments during my stay came when a park ranger gave me my own badge; it is hanging up on my bulletin board right now. Intrigued by my badge, I grabbed not one, but two different Junior Rangers activity booklets and completed most of the activities.

This activity and reward system was crucial to the development of this project and became the foundation of the application. The way our tablet system operates is that a naturalist working for the Seattle parks designates the type of badge children can earn by finding specific locations, objects, animals, or plants. Children access assignments on their tablet. Using the tablet, they then look for and learn about those specific things or freely explore what interests them while still using the tablet as a resource. When children locate everything within an assignment, they earn the badge. The theory behind this system is that it could be instituted at all Seattle parks, just as the National Park Service offers Junior Rangers at all of its locations. This program would encourage children around the Seattle area to explore their local parks.

My stay in Gunnison was exciting and adventurous. Learning things I knew nothing about enriched me academically, and the experience altered my sense of self. I did things I never thought I would do (like sleep, probably a bit too comfortably, in a Greyhound Bus Station). I did things I never wanted to do (like pay for transportation to the bus station I could have gotten for free). And I did things with more grace than I thought I could (like not showering for a whole week). Partners in the Parks was truly a life-changing adventure and one that I will always remember.



PHOTO BY JOHNNY MACLEAN

Sequoia National Park—where much is afoot.

PARTNERS IN THE PARKS

Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks

Second Edition

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Partners in the Parks Projects to Date

PITP Programs

Acadia NP	Kathleen King, Univ. of Maine-Augusta/ Hillsborough Community Coll. (2008, 2009, 2016); Bill Atwill, Univ. of North Carolina Wilmington (2012, 2016)
Appalachian Trail/ Harpers Ferry National Historic Park	Christina McIntyre, Virginia Tech; Mark Peach, Southern Adventist Univ. (2016)
Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP/ Curecanti National Recreation Area	Heather Thiessen-Reily, Western State Colorado Univ. (2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015)
Boston Historic Park	Kathleen Nolan, St. Francis Coll. (2016)
Bryce Canyon NP	Matt Nickerson and Todd Petersen, Southern Utah Univ. (2008, 2009, 2012)
Buffalo National River	Allison Wallace, Univ. of Central Arkansas (2013, 2014, 2015)
Cape Hatteras National Seashore	Bill Atwill, Univ. of North Carolina Wilmington (2010)
Cedar Breaks National Monument	Matt Nickerson and Todd Petersen, Southern Utah Univ. (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015); Jayci Bash and Jason Kaiser, Southern Utah Univ. (2016)
Denali NP and Preserve	Channon Price, Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks (2010)
Everglades NP	Kathleen King, Hillsborough Community Coll. (2013, 2015)

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Fire Island to Ellis Island	Joan Digby and John Lutz, LIU Post (2010); Cris Gleicher and James Clarke, LIU Brooklyn (2008, 2010, 2012)
Glacier NP	Brian White, Graceland Univ., and Johnny MacLean, Southern Utah Univ. (2014)
Glen Canyon NRA	Matt Nickerson, Southern Utah Univ. (2015)
Grand Canyon NP/ Parashant NM	Matt Nickerson and Todd Petersen, Southern Utah Univ. (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015); Jayci Bash, Southern Utah Univ. (2015)
Great Basin NP	Matt Nickerson and Johnny MacLean, Southern Utah Univ. (2011); Briget Eastep, Southern Utah Univ. (2013, 2014); Jayci Bash and Jason Kaiser, Southern Utah Univ. (2015)
Great Smoky Mountains NP	Bill Atwill, Univ. of North Carolina Wilmington; Christina McIntyre, Virginia Tech (2011, 2015)
Hawai'i Volcanos NP	Vernadette Gonzalez, Univ. of Hawai'i at Mānoa (2016)
Joshua Tree NP	Matt Nickerson, hosted by Arizona Univ. (2009)
Mammoth Cave NP	David Kime, Northern Kentucky Univ. (2016)
Missouri National Recreational River	Gwen Jensen and Deborah Whitt, Wayne State Coll. (2015, 2016)
Mount Rainier NP	Alison Willis, Brook Kelly, and Laura Harrington, Univ. of Washington (2014, 2015)
New York City: Gateway to America	Rachelle Goldsmith, Kingsborough Community Coll.; James Clarke and Melissa Antinori, LIU Brooklyn (2016)

Olympic NP	Alison Willis, Brook Kelly, and Laura Harrington, Univ. of Washington (2011, 2012, 2013, 2016)
Sequoia/ King's Canyon NP	Johnny MacLean and Brian White, Southern Utah Univ. (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015)
Virgin Islands NP	Kathleen Nolan and Kristy Biolsi, St. Francis Coll., and Joan Digby, LIU Post (2012, 2013); Kathleen Nolan and Kristy Biolsi, St. Francis Coll. (2017)
Zion NP	Joy Ochs, Mt. Mercy Univ. (2008, 2009, 2010); Matt Nickerson, Southern Utah Univ. (2011); Jayci Bash and Jason Kaiser, Southern Utah Univ. (2016)

PITP Institutes

NCHC Borders Institute, Saguaro/ Organ Pipe NP	Matt Nickerson, Southern Utah Univ. (2008)
Rocky Mountain NP Leaders Retreat	Kathleen King, Hillsborough Community Coll.; Bill Atwill, Univ. of North Carolina Wilmington (2015)
Acadia NP Leaders Retreat	Kathleen King, Hillsborough Community Coll.; Bill Atwill, Univ. of North Carolina Wilmington (2016)

Mini-PITP Excursions at NCHC Annual Conferences

- San Antonio Missions (2008)
- Washington, D.C., National Mall (2009)
- Phoenix, Montezuma Castle National Monument (2011)
- Boston Historic Park (2012)
- New Orleans, Jean Laffite NHS and The Old Mint NHS (2013)
- Denver, Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (2014)
- Chicago, Pullman Porters Museum (2015)
- Seattle, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (2016)

APPENDIX B

PITP Service-Learning Projects

One of the most rewarding and important elements of Partners in the Parks is the chance for the students to give back to the parks through a meaningful service project. Program leaders are strongly encouraged to consult with their contact ranger to build a service component into the time spent in the park. This is not just some superficial gesture: it should be carefully integrated into the needs and ongoing design of the park. The park staff should determine the project, and leaders should coordinate the project carefully to dovetail with other program activities.

In the Everglades, park staff wisely and efficiently set up archiving work for the students. After 36 hours in hot, wet, buggy environs, the students as well as faculty were glad to dry out indoors. The students' archiving work was cataloging pertinent historic articles for park staff to access. The dutiful work by the students was slowed only by their own interest in reading the articles themselves.

Trail maintenance and plant species mitigation in all of the national parks are constant obligations that depend on volunteer help to augment the dedicated efforts of the park personnel. The Sequoia National Park service project involved transplanting native plants in the garden of the Foothills Visitor Center. Students were given time to reflect on the important vegetation in the park and the importance of caring for these lands. As honors students work alongside each other and the park rangers constructing trails or eradicating invasive plant species, they learn about the access to scenic and environmentally sensitive areas of the park and of the challenge to balance preservation of those areas against the access the trails provide. They learn about the persistence of invasive plant species and the difficulties of resource allocation decisions within the parks.

For the last six years, the service project of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison PITP was deadheading several exotic plant species along the East Portal Road beginning near the park entrance and winding down into the canyon. Ranger Danguole Bockus and her Veg Crew instruct students on how to deadhead and what to deadhead, and then students are set loose along the road with bright orange vests, leather gloves, huge garbage bags, and deadly looking garden shears. Every year, the students are told to do as much as they feel like; any amount of help is appreciated. Being

typical honors students, groups inevitably develop a playful competition, and some of the more obsessive-compulsive tendencies of the students emerge as they attack the mullein and thistle.

Of course, service projects can be highly integrated into the PITP curriculum. John Rodman's "Restoring Nature; Natives and Exotics" from Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka's *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics and the Environment* has proven an effective reading for invasive species mitigation projects. Around the campfire the students seized on the article's introduction when Rodman observes:

The control, removal, and sometimes eradication of exotic species of plants and animals is the negative moment in the dialectic of ecological restoration, in complement to the positive moment of planting, reintroduction, and so on. But what does it mean to be an exotic, as distinct from a native, and why is this important? (139)

Having spent the albeit enjoyable afternoon participating in the "negative moment of the ecological restoration dialectic," the students were intrigued with the challenge of determining how one designates an exotic and establishing the moment when being an exotic becomes a problem. The conversation moved from exotic and native plant species to the human dimension, which brought the group to discussing the experiences of First Nations Peoples within the national parks. The inclusion of the Rodman article and the ensuing discussion met all three criteria of a successful service-learning project according to the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993: the project not only met the needs of the community, in this case the national park, and helped foster civic responsibility on the part of the students; it also integrated an afternoon of deadheading exotics into the academic curriculum.

Cultivating the future stewardship of the national parks is one of the long-range goals of PITP. Tending the land, so to speak, even during a short period of time, puts that goal into focus. Two very different service projects at Acadia are excellent examples. In the first, under the guidance of art professor and photographer Robert Rainey, the group installed a University of Maine student photograph exhibition along a park trail. Each double-sided panel had a black and white photograph on one side and a color image on the other. Students and faculty working together chose the sequence of the photographs; they considered how they would look to people walking down the trail from both directions. Then the

group drove rods into place and hung the show. Almost immediately, a woman with two children came down the path and stopped to look at the photographs one by one. The pride that the students had in seeing the public enjoy the outcome of their aesthetic decisions made several of them remark that they had never thought about an art exhibit from the perspective of a curator. This idea will undoubtedly interest them in art in public spaces and even museum exhibitions in the future. On the second occasion, they were all busy helping Friends of Acadia complete a section of a trail. Along came a man with a pair of binoculars. In an offhand way one of the group said to him, “Wouldn’t you like to help us build a trail?” To the group’s amazement, he put the binoculars down and began shoveling gravel. Then he said, “I have come to Acadia every summer for the last twenty-five years, and every summer I work as a volunteer in the park. I was feeling guilty that I am only on a short vacation this time, but now you gave me a chance to do some work, and I feel better about my visit.” He shoveled for at least an hour and then bid farewell. This incident was a wonderful public lesson for everyone about moral responsibility and how it can improve the decisions that people make every day. Transforming experiences are often serendipitous, like the people walking through the art exhibit or the man, who was an honors program graduate by the way, suspending his birding to help build a trail.

Service projects can take many forms because the parks have many needs and insufficient resources. Whatever their form, the service projects make students aware of the community that exists within a park and what sustains that community. Through their service they become a part of the system that serves as their host.

Sample Service Projects in the Parks

Acadia National Park	Friends of Acadia trail maintenance of park carriage roads; art installation project
Appalachian Trail	Invasive plant species mitigation; “Trail Magic”
Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park	Invasive plant species mitigation

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Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area	Invasive plant species mitigation
Bryce Canyon National Park	Prairie dog count
Buffalo National River	Shoreline trash collection
Cape Hattaras National Seashore	Preservation of maritime artifacts
Cedar Breaks National Park	Winter visitor greeting
Denali National Park	Animal survey statistic collection
Everglades National Park	Archived research documents
Fire Island to Ellis Island	Invasive plant mitigation
Gateway National Recreation Area	Beach cleanup
Glacier National Park	Citizen Science project monitoring mountain goats and bighorn sheep in wilderness
Glen Canyon National Recreation Area	Graffiti removal
Grand Canyon National Park	Petroglyph documentation; invasive plant species mitigation
Great Smoky Mountains National Park	Trail maintenance
Hawai'i Volcanos National Park	Beach cleanup; invasive plant species mitigation
Mammoth Cave National Park	Citizen Science New Discovery Cultural Artifact Inventory, water flow data collection
Missouri National River	Invasive plant species mitigation, storm cleanup, butterfly count, and garden cleanup
Sequoia National Park	Transplanting native plants at Foothills Visitor Center
Zion National Park	Mapping fire hydrant locations

References

National and Community Service Trust Act. Public Law 103–82 [H.R. 2010] (1993). 7. Web. 7 June 2016. <<http://www.nationalservice.gov>>.

Rodman, John. “Restoring Nature; Natives and Exotics.” *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics and the Environment*. Eds. Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. 139–53.

APPENDIX C

Partners in the Parks Best Practices Manual

OVERVIEW

Centennial Challenge: Launched on August 25, 2006, the National Park Service Centennial Initiative is a ten-year effort to prepare the national parks for another century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment by the agency's 100th anniversary in 2016. Congressional appropriations in support of Centennial Challenge projects are combined with matching funds 1:1 in cooperative efforts with corporate, educational, and other partners committed to advancing NPS values into the next century. In 2008, Partners in the Parks (PITP) was one of only 110 projects selected in the first round of the Centennial Challenge.

PITP began as a collaboration between Southern Utah University (SUU) and Cedar Breaks National Monument in cooperation with the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). In 2014, sole administration of the program was transferred to the NCHC. The PITP program leaders continue to organize, support, and facilitate academic adventures throughout the country in support of the five NPS Centennial Initiative values: Education, Professional Excellence, Stewardship, Environmental Leadership, and Recreational Experience. Projects are hosted by collegiate honors programs in cooperation with one or more regional parks to offer students weeklong, in-depth experiential-learning opportunities. Students interact with park rangers and university faculty in both instructional and recreational seminars for park experiences that go well beyond the standard tourist fare.

Although mindful of the overall goals of the Initiative, PITP projects are designed to provide specific and meaningful experiences in the areas of Education, Stewardship, and Recreation.

NOTE: For simplicity within Appendix C, all NPS sites will be referred to as "parks" regardless of their official designation. All NPS sites are appropriate venues for PITP projects.

DEVELOPING NEW PITP PROJECTS

Program and Projects: The Partners in the Parks program is a coordinated series of projects in which sponsoring universities are linked with neighboring NPS sites. Proximity is crucial to a successful project because

a fair amount of planning and development with NPS partners is involved. Plan for at least 2–3 meetings with NPS staff to develop the focus of your project, to involve park staff, and to plan for your on-the-ground needs.

Partnering with a Park: The NCHC Partners in the Park Committee has the responsibility of reviewing proposals and recommending projects to be sponsored each year. The committee will make recommendations to the PITP Committee co-chairs, who will coordinate with the NPS Key Official. Serious candidates should submit their proposal 12–18 months in advance. A template for proposals is available on the PITP website.

The co-chairs will contact the program organizers to let them know if their proposal has been selected to move forward. A representative from the PITP Committee will work with the coordinators and the NPS Key Official assigned to PITP to create an outline of the project's goals and the key talking points.

The NPS Key Official will then contact the park superintendent on behalf of the candidate. This introduction will happen at the highest levels of administration, and submitting to this process insures that the staff and administration at the proposed NPS site understand that this project is part of a nationwide program and that the leaders are functioning with the approval and support of the NPS national office.

After this initial introduction, the NPS site will usually begin preparations on its end to assist with the project, and an administrator at the park will be assigned to serve as the official liaison and contact person. These steps will set the stage for the first meeting with the park personnel.

Contact Time Line

1. Honors program administrators or faculty members contact the Partners in the Parks Committee with an idea for a future project.
2. With approval, the hosting institution prepares an executive summary of the project with goals, objectives, suggested time, and reasons for choosing the proposed park sites, including unique resources and possible seminar topics.
3. Paul Roelandt, the NPS Key Official, will make the initial introductions to the park personnel.
4. Paul Roelandt and the PITP Committee organize a telephone or video conference call so that all the stakeholders can meet and discuss the

possibility of hosting a PITP Project. The group will include the NPS Key Official, a PITP Committee representative, the project coordinators/leaders, other university representatives, and park officials.

5. The program coordinators and the liaison from the park will begin to develop seminar topics, a project schedule, and plans for sharing responsibilities.
6. As many stakeholders as possible will hold a face-to-face meeting.
7. The project leaders will maintain contact with the park liaison about all developments.

Experiential Education:

Field Seminars—In planning project seminars, the coordinators should keep in mind these important elements: (1) unique park resources, (2) the skills and expertise of park staff, (3) the knowledge and expertise of faculty, and (4) the required travel to and from seminar sites.

Park Resources—Every NPS site was selected because of valuable and unique resources deemed worthy of preservation as a national treasure; thus projects should always be designed with these resources in mind. Every PITP project should offer experiences that could not happen elsewhere. Even general training sessions, such as Leave No Trace, can be tailored to take advantage of specific local traits.

Ranger Seminars—Because PITP projects are carried out across the country, the PITP Committee and NCHC are developing a special relationship with the parks and the great individuals who administer and protect them. Rangers are passionate about what they do, and their love of the land and their place in the park is infectious. Initial planning sessions should include discussions with the park liaison about the specific skills, interests, and expertise of the staff. Usually the rangers who want to participate are the ones who are the most outgoing and the best at speaking to and working with groups. The park liaison can be trusted to work with leaders to create seminars that take advantage of park strengths.

Because rangers are generally busy people with many responsibilities, creating clear expectations and schedules for ranger-led seminars is imperative. Expeditions should be arranged so that students will be on time and prepared for all seminars and activities. Arrangements should be made in advance so that the PITP coordinators can contact the park liaison or rangers if problems with keeping to the itinerary emerge. If

students will be late or cannot make a scheduled seminar, the coordinators must notify the park ranger or the park liaison. Experience has shown that ranger seminars are among the most powerful, meaningful, and enjoyable experiences that students can have. Everyone involved in this expedition should be courteous and active participants in seminars and discussions. Program leaders should encourage students to ask questions when appropriate. In their day-to-day work, rangers rarely have the opportunity to fully share their extensive knowledge of the park and the particular resources in their charge. Feedback from past projects confirms that rangers love teaching and talking with honors students.

Thanking rangers for their time is important, but the PITP Committee also suggests that project coordinators write letters of appreciation to the rangers, their supervisor, the park liaison, and the park superintendent. Beyond common courtesy, these letters are significant because each PITP project is part of a nationwide enterprise and reflects on the PITP program as a whole. Its long-term viability depends upon maintaining a friendly, professional, and appreciative relationship with every park involved with a project and with the NPS as a whole.

Faculty Seminars—Whenever possible, honors faculty should be involved with the PITP project. One of the key elements that differentiates PITP from other outdoor programs is the level and rigor of the instruction provided. PITP is a cooperative effort between national parks and university honors programs; the contributions made by faculty are a critical part of the dynamic. Academic adventure is the hallmark of PITP enterprises. Faculty can participate as seminar leaders or trip guides or both.

When inviting or choosing faculty to participate, coordinators should not limit their search to those in the natural or physical sciences. PITP experiences should be interdisciplinary, so seminar leaders should represent a variety of departments and interests. Understanding park sites through a variety of perspectives is an excellent way to approach both the educational and stewardship goals.

PITP's policy is to compensate faculty seminar leaders. The PITP Committee recommends providing travel reimbursement, a per diem, and a modest honorarium. The project coordinators should always thank faculty members for their participation in letters of appreciation that are copied, where appropriate, to their dean or department head.

Recreational Seminars—In order to meet fully the goals of PITP, participants must experience the recreational side of the national park site. This component is vital to all PITP programs, but it may take different forms depending on the park. In outdoor/wilderness settings, this will entail a backcountry experience led by qualified trip guides. National parks limit the size of groups allowed into the backcountry, and safe outdoor practice requires that two qualified leaders travel with every group. Thus bringing in additional leaders for the recreational seminars is usually necessary. Co-leaders can also serve as trip guides if they possess the requisite experience and expertise.

Trip guides need to be chosen with care and should be closely allied with the university or National Park Service whenever possible. Honors faculty or other university faculty or staff are also ideal candidates if they possess the necessary skills and training. Trip guides should be familiar with the area, have the requisite outdoor skills, and have appropriate first-aid training. Generally, NPS personnel are too busy to participate in these extended activities, but they should be invited. An overnight backpacking trip with a backcountry ranger is a fabulous experience and one that the PITP Committee wants to foster when possible.

Travel: Geographical distances are an important factor when considering or planning a project. For most projects travel is the single-biggest expenditure in the overall budget and will often be the most expensive part of the students' participation. Three travel components are key: (1) distance from the park to the hosting institution, (2) distance from the closest airport to the host institution, and (3) distances to be traveled within and without the park during the project for seminars, service projects, and recreational experiences. Travel both to the park and within the park during the expedition must be as efficient as possible.

Because transportation can be the most costly part of any project, public transportation should be used when possible. Locating seminars within easy access can reduce costs and the time spent journeying from one activity to another. Careful planning will allow the group to move as efficiently as possible.

Proposing a Project: The endeavor of choosing a park partner and developing a project is exciting. As with any large, complex project, an organized approach is necessary. The initial investigation into developing a PITP proposal should include contacting the NCHC Partners in the

Parks Committee for input, direction, and advice. Before formulating a formal proposal, the project coordinator must make some preliminary decisions: they include identifying a possible park partner, assigning supervisory roles, reviewing campus resources, and creating an Executive Summary. (See Appendix D for a Sample Program Proposal.)

Research National Park Sites—The NPS oversees over 300 sites around the country. Some of the smaller, less-known areas are remarkable venues that should not be overlooked. If no NPS sites are near the campus, partnering with another NCHC honors program that neighbors an NPS site is an option. The project coordinators should learn as much as possible about the park, but they must not approach the park administration about the project plans during this preliminary phase. Contact must be initiated by the PITP Committee.

Because this effort is a cooperative one, coordinators must get to know the park and its people well, probably visiting the park several times during the planning process. Again, since traveling to the park can be time consuming and expensive, working with a park near the host campus is prudent. Also, faculty seminar leaders may be reluctant to travel long distances to participate. A major goal of the PITP program is to assist hosting institutions with developing a lasting relationship with the park as a result of their project. This relationship will be stronger and more valuable if the park is within striking distance of the campus.

Leadership—The hosting institution is in charge of organizing the leadership for a PITP project. Every PITP project requires two dedicated leaders to oversee the overall experience. Some programs may require two or more coordinators, one of whom must be from the hosting institution. One of the coordinators from the host institution must be designated as the Project Leader and have ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the project. The expectation is that the coordinators will cooperate on all phases of developing, budgeting, scheduling, managing, and evaluating the project. Project coordinators should fully participate in all activities throughout the duration of the weeklong experience. Project coordinators/leaders are usually honors program administrators or faculty. A pair with different but complementary skills and expertise relating to the project is ideal. Gender balance is encouraged but not required. Finding passionate, energetic, and dedicated program coordinators and leaders is an important part of the initial proposal process.

Campus Resources—Although firm commitments or decisions are not required at this stage, the coordinators should match park resources and project goals with campus resources, including investigating whether relationships already exist between the campus and local or regional NPS entities. The PITP effort should include the following resources and programs:

- accounting;
- administration (Provost's/Chancellor's Office);
- colleges/departments/faculty already working with NPS;
- faculty seminar leaders;
- honors program;
- motor pool;
- outdoor recreation center and/or rental.

As part of the preparation for constructing a proposal, the coordinators should make initial contact with the campus people and programs that will be needed to work effectively.

Executive Summary—After completing the appropriate preliminary work and carefully reviewing the basic park and university resources, the leaders should craft an initial outline of the project objectives and goals. The objectives and goals should focus on the unique resources of the park and the three principle facets of a PITP academic adventure: Education, Stewardship, and Recreation. These values, of course, reflect core elements of the Centennial Challenge Initiative. The project coordinators should create an Executive Summary of 1 or 2 pages about the project. This summary should include the following information:

- name of proposed NPS site(s);
- name of partnering institution and honors program;
- proposed dates, group size, and registration fee for the project;
- educational, recreational, and stewardship goals or opportunities;*
- ideas for both ranger and faculty seminars;*
- ideas for service projects;*

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- names and credentials of at least two project coordinators, one being the project leader.

*These details may be developed later in cooperation with the Park Liaison.

A formal proposal for hosting a PITP project is submitted by sending the Executive Summary with a cover letter to the NCHC Partners in the Parks Committee. If the project is accepted, the Partners in the Parks Committee and their colleagues within the NPS will make initial introductions and assist in presenting the preliminary proposal to the park. Again, following this procedure is important so that the park is assured that this initiative is an official Centennial Challenge project under the direction of the National Park Service.

Risk Management: PITP is an academic adventure program, but participants attend these projects as representatives of their respective institutions. Institutions that have participants in this program must provide proof of liability insurance coverage in the form of a Certificate of Insurance. The Certificate of Insurance is produced by the institution's insurance provider upon request by the insured entity. The Certificate will include the amount of liability insurance coverage provided and a description of what the coverage is for. Example: Student, John Doe's participation in the academic adventure program at Denali National Park, August 7–15, 2010, under the auspices of University of Alaska, Fairbanks. The Certificate must name the National Collegiate Honors Council as additionally insured. The completed document must be sent by mail to the PITP project coordinator at least two weeks prior to the event. The project coordinator should forward a copy to the NCHC Program Coordinator. File copies of all Certificates of Insurance should be kept to ensure that all participants have the appropriate coverage. Copies of insurance information should also be taken on the trip. Having this type of insurance is the responsibility of the participant. Therefore, every participant must also complete and sign the PITP Waiver of Liability and the NCHC Waiver, Release, and Indemnification Agreement. (Both are available on the PITP website partnersintheparks.org.) Among other information, this document asks for the participant's health insurance carrier and policy number. The host institution and NCHC will not be responsible for medical, health, or accident-related expenses that are not liability related.

Budgeting: Funding for PITP projects comes primarily from registration fees paid by the participants; seeking outside funding from the university, corporations, foundations, and other sources is encouraged. NCHC's relationship with NPS can be a significant factor when seeking additional financial support.

Formulating a detailed, reasonable budget is critical. Registration fees will be based on the budget, and initial estimations should be made based on fourteen participants. The budget should be adequate but not lavish; inflating costs or cutting corners when estimating costs is counterproductive. Here are the major areas of expense that should be accounted for in the budget:

Wages/Salaries

Organizing coordinator(s)/leader(s)

On-the-ground leader(s)

Trip leaders

Seminar leaders

Student teaching assistants

Travel

On-the-ground leader(s) to/from the park (planning as well as for program)

Participants to/from the park

Seminar leaders to/from the park

Participants to/from seminars within the park

Food

Meals

Snacks

Housing

Hotels

Dormitories

Camping fees

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Equipment

Van rentals

Tents

Sleeping bags

Cooking equipment

Sample Salary & Wages

Organizing leader(s)	\$500
On-the-ground leader(s)	\$200/day
Trip leaders	\$100/day + travel
Seminar leaders	\$100 + travel
Student teaching assistant(s)	\$200

Registration Fees

NCHC provides a secure online credit card payment option for registration fees.

Website: The official PITP website (partnersintheparks.org) is hosted by the NCHC Partners in the Parks Committee. Projects are posted to the website as soon as all arrangements with the park are confirmed and all other basic information regarding the project is available. The initial posting should include dates, registration fee, hosting institution, contact person, basic overview and tentative schedule, explanation of accommodations, equipment list, and travel tips. The project's web pages should also include 5–10 copyright-free photographs of the park. The leaders should keep their websites up to date and alert the NCHC office whenever changes need to be made.

The website also includes an online registration system with a credit card payment option. Leaders should review the basic registration form and contact the Partners in the Park Committee if the project requires additional information not included there.

Project Timeline: This timeline provides a general chronology for developing and implementing a Partners in the Parks project. The details and intricacies of any specific project may require deviation from this outline,

but every Project Leader must develop and follow a schedule in order for the project to proceed efficiently.

18 Months—

- Research possible NPS sites.
- Identify unique resources.
- Match park resources with campus expertise.
- Choose a park(s).
- Identify project co-leaders.
- Review basic project support needs with appropriate campus departments.
- Identify at least two options for tentative dates.
- Draft a 1–2 page Executive Summary.
- Review with campus stakeholders.

12 Months—

- Submit final Executive Summary to the Partners in the Parks Committee.

—Continue if project is selected for implementation.—

12 Months—

Campus:

- Alert all relevant administrators and departments of the pending project.
- Obtain any approvals that are necessary, such as time off or overload contracts.
- Make sure the project is on the campus master calendar.
- Make any necessary reservations for housing or vehicles.
- Work with the PITP Committee to further develop the Executive Summary, which the PITP Committee will submit to the NPS Key Official.

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Park:

- Request the Key Official introduce the project overview to park administration and lay the foundation for the park-university partnership.
- Identify a park liaison as the main contact point for project development. The park administrator at the program site and the Key Official will be helpful in making these arrangements.
- Make initial contact and introductions with the park liaison.
- Discuss deadlines for reserving park facilities, such as campsites, amphitheaters, or classroom space.
- Begin submission process for all park forms, including reservations for campsites and other facilities.

9 Months—

Campus:

- Develop a basic schedule and finalize dates.
- Develop a basic budget and set the registration fee.
- Discuss accounting policies and procedures with appropriate campus entities.
- Send basic project information to the PITP Committee.
- Review the website for accuracy and changes. (See **Website** section above.)
- Work with NCHC, the PITP Committee, and campus experts to market the project.
- Put the website and marketing efforts in place before the NCHC national conference preceding the project.
- Adjust the timeline accordingly.

Park:

- Hold a face-to-face meeting with park personnel, including the Park Liaison.
- Work with them to identify possible onsite activities, recreational experiences, and seminar topics.

- Assign initial responsibility for these topics to either park or university personnel.
- Be mindful of deadlines and work with the Park Liaison to meet them.
- Reserve desired park facilities and apply for backcountry permits and entrance fee waivers.

6 Months—

Campus:

- Identify tentative faculty seminar leaders and trip guides.
- Continue marketing efforts.
- Confirm travel plans and availability of vehicles.
- Complete preliminary budget.

Park:

- Finalize schedule, including seminar topics, park activities, and main recreational experience.

3 Months—

Campus:

- Continue marketing efforts and update website as needed.
- Communicate directly with participants as they register.
- Finalize seminar topics, faculty seminar leaders, and trip guides.
- Select the required and suggested reading list.
- Provide the PITP Committee with digital copies of any readings that are to be distributed through the website. (Readings may also be distributed directly from the host institution.)
- Develop a more detailed budget.
- Identify any developmental costs that will need to be paid before all the registration fees are collected and alert the PITP Committee.
- Monitor registrations and alert the PITP Committee if required numbers are not being met. (The decision to cancel a project will be made

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by the Project Coordinator in consultation with the PITP Committee and must be made at least six weeks prior to the starting date.)

Park:

- Finalize ranger seminar topics and leaders.
- Keep the Park Liaison apprised of the plans and any ongoing developments.
- Confirm park permits and reservations.

1 Month—

Campus:

- Maintain communication with registered participants.
- Contact any registrants who have not paid the registration fee and confirm their commitment and subsequent payment.
- Collect and log in all necessary forms from students participating in the program.
- Distribute required and suggested readings to the participants.

Park:

- Send the project schedule to the Park Liaison for final arrangement and review.

1 Week—

Campus:

- Confirm attendance, travel plans, and arrival time for all participants.
- Send the final project schedule to all of the faculty seminar leaders and trip guides.

Park:

- Send the final project schedule to the Park Liaison and confirm all park commitments.

Accounting: Southern Utah University was the primary partner in the Centennial Initiative Challenge award throughout the duration of the grant and was designated as the fiscal agent for managing the funds through a Colorado Plateau Cooperative Ecosystem Unit (CPCESU)

contract. During this period, all registration fees were paid to SUU; hosting institutions were then reimbursed for project expenses. In most cases, this arrangement entailed host institutions carrying much of the cost during the development and implementation phases of the project since reimbursement was generally made at the close of the project when all expenditures had been made and all the receipts had been gathered. NCHC is now the administrative locus of PITP, and the basic budget process and arrangements are continuing under the auspices of NCHC. They are especially useful to institutions that do not have the capability of receiving credit card payment for PITP registration fees. Some host institutions are, however, experimenting with direct registration and payment and setting up a local bank account in order to pay program bills as they are generated. NCHC has been extremely flexible in working with host institutions to accommodate various alternative modes of handling registration and payments.

Reporting—The project leader must account for every expenditure. The final Project Budget Report should include a breakdown of all final expenditures organized according to the original working budget with the original proposed costs. Every expenditure in the report must be accompanied by a corresponding receipt. The Project Budget Report will be included in the PITP final report to NPS and may be shared with other appropriate government officials and legislatures. The quality of the report will directly affect future government funding of this valuable NCHC program. (See Appendix D for a Sample Program Proposal and a Project Budget Report.)

Reimbursement—In addition to the Project Budget Report, the hosting institution must also submit a Project Invoice. This form lists only the total expenditures for the project. The Project Invoice need not itemize the expenses nor include the receipts. The Project Invoice should be submitted on institutional letterhead and must include the name, address, and Federal Tax Exemption Number of the hosting institution. The invoice should include the following statement followed by the total expenditure to be reimbursed: “Costs incurred planning, developing, and implementing the [year] Partners in the Parks project at [name of park].”

*****All required forms for Partners in the Parks and the list of required equipment for a PITP adventure can be found at partnersintheparks.org.**

APPENDIX D

Sample Program Proposal and Project Budget Report

Included in Appendix D are Kathleen A. Nolan's proposal and budget for the Boston PITP Program and Christina McIntyre's Project Budget Report for the Appalachian Trail/Harpers Ferry National Historic Park PITP. Nolan's proposal illustrates how a program can integrate natural, political, and social history in a modern context of the ever-changing environment of one of America's most vibrant cities. McIntyre's budget is provided to offer an idea of program costs, but it should be noted that the program leaders waived their stipends and that the program benefitted from donated transportation.

D1: SAMPLE PROGRAM PROPOSAL

**National Collegiate Honors Council
Partners in the Parks Proposal for Boston, MA
August 7–13, 2016**

Kathleen A. Nolan, St. Francis College, Brooklyn, NY 11201

In this 2016 PITP excursion, students will be immersed in the natural history of the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Site and the history of our country in the Boston National Historical Park, the African American Heritage Site, and the Charlestown Navy Yard. Students will camp in the Boston Harbor site in tents and travel by ferry and water taxi to Boston and surrounding areas. How fitting that our honors students would be able to partake in this very historical experience on the Centennial of the National Park Service!

As a former resident of Boston (I attended Northeastern University from 1974–1979) and a frequent visitor (at least once a year), I have witnessed radical changes in the Boston waterfront, while being comforted that many historical sites have remained the same. The Boston Harbor, in which I participated in several trips to the Boston Harbor Islands as well as a whale-watching trip, has been extensively cleansed of pollution. Much building has taken place (and is continuing to take place) at breakneck speed since the Big Dig has expanded the area suitable for development because of the landfill.

This excursion will expose the students to a rapidly changing place while allowing them to learn about natural history and American historical

APPENDIX D

sites that are urgent to preserve. The backdrop of the national parks and the insight of the U.S. National Park Rangers will help to make this experience memorable to the students. From kayaking to participating in invasive plant removal to learning about the history of the American Revolution, African American heritage, and the immortalization of our shipping industry through the Charlestown shipyards, our students will be very active and interactive for a week.

Through this program, the students should gain an appreciation of our natural history and American history and want to explore further, in the future, aspects we may have had only a chance to touch upon. As citizens, they should gain tools to help them look at their own worlds through lenses they use and develop to observe Boston. Several readings also explore race, both historically and in the present. As the diversity of national park attendees is low, these readings suggest ways to reverse this trend.

Logistics

We will stay on Peddocks Island for six nights in four-person tents. I will provide a cooler with our barbecue materials. We are allowed to bring charcoal and lighter fluid. Staples will include dry food (pasta, sauce), portable foods such as cereal bars, and the old standbys, peanut butter and jelly. On our trips to Boston, we can replenish food supplies by stopping at Haymarket Square before boarding our ferry to the campsite.

Costs

Tent sites are \$28/night for four.

Ferries to and from the Boston Harbor Islands are \$17 each way—or \$140 for a package of 10 rides. Water taxis are more expensive—\$300 per trip. So, assuming a total of 15 per taxi, that rounds out to around \$20/person. Some of the facilities require admission of approximately \$5; others are free. The aquarium is expensive and weighs in around \$30. The dinner in Boston will have to be paid for by the students.

Camping for six nights: \$60.

Ferries for six days, including water taxis—average of \$20/ride each way—12 trips or \$240.

Food—\$50 X 6 days—\$300.

Admission to aquarium—\$30.

Admission to other parks—\$25.

Total: = \$655 (round up to \$700).

Tentative Itinerary:

- Day 1. Sun. Arrival. Meet at Long Wharf for 3 PM Ferry to Peddocks Island. Set up tents. Get-to-Know-You Barbecue.
3 PM Ferry to Peddocks Island
Evening: Circle about importance of natural parks to you.
- Day 2. Mon. Water taxi to Spectacle Island. Sea kayaking program. Explore natural history. Water taxi back to Peddocks. Clear invasive plants with a National Park Ranger.
8:30 AM Water taxi to Spectacle Island
Evening: Circle to discuss readings about history of Boston Harbor Islands, a Natural Recreation Site. What is the difference between wilderness areas and parks?
- Day 3. Tues. Tour of Faneuil Hall by a National Park Ranger. Walk the Freedom Trail to visit Old State House, Old North Church, and Old South Meeting House.
8:30 AM Water taxi to Boston National Historic Park
3 PM Ferry back to Peddocks. Beachcomber ecology.
Evening: Circle to discuss readings about American Revolution. What types of revolutions do we have today? What would you fight for?
- Day 4. Wed. Black Heritage Freedom Trail. African American Museum. Ranger walk and talk.
8:30 AM Water taxi to Boston
3 PM Ferry back to Peddocks. Discussion of race and American History. Compare and contrast various “freedoms.”
Evening: Write in journals

APPENDIX D

- Day 5. Thurs. Subway to Adams House in Quincy—
8:30 AM Water Ranger-led tour.
taxi to Boston 3 PM Ferry back to Peddocks.

Evening: How did Abigail, John, and other Adams
interact? What was their life like?
- Day 6. Fri. Bunker Museum/Bunker Monument, Charlestown
9:30 AM Ferry Navy Yard. PM USS Constitution—Ranger-led tour.
to Boston/
water shuttle to New England Aquarium in PM. Discussion of Boston
Charlestown and Cambridge sites for natural history explorations.

Dinner in Boston. Water taxi back to Peddocks at
9 PM.
- Day 7. Sat. Break camp and depart.

9:30 AM Ferry
to Boston

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D2: SAMPLE PROJECT BUDGET REPORT**FINAL BUDGET REPORT****2016 Partners in the Parks****Appalachian Trail / Harpers Ferry National Historic Park**

Total Participants	12	
Trip Cost / Participant	\$550.00	
Total Income		\$6,600.00
Less Admin Fee		(600.00)
Total Working Income		<u>\$6,000.00</u>
TRANSPORTATION		
Auto Rental	\$1,100.00	
Tolls / Parking	3.00	
Fuel	800.00	
Subtotal		\$1,903.00
LODGING		
Hotel (Friday night for leaders)	\$ 260.00	
Campground (KOA & Hostel camping)	800.00	
Subtotal		\$1,060.00
FOOD, SUPPLIES, & EQUIPMENT		
Meals	\$ 300.00	
Groceries	500.00	
Camping Supplies	100.00	
Miscellaneous (sunscreen, first aid, etc.)	212.00	
Subtotal		\$1,112.00
ACTIVITIES		
Rafting	\$ 650.00	
Photos and mailing (gifts for NPS staff)	200.00	
Subtotal		\$ 850.00
STIPENDS		
Visiting Faculty—further travel & 2 days	\$ 400.00	
Visiting Faculty—local & 1 day	200.00	
Subtotal		\$ 600.00
OTHER		
T-shirts	\$ 325.00	
LNT books / signed / mailed	150.00	
Subtotal		\$ 475.00
Total Amount Spent		<u>(\$6,000.00)</u>
TRIP TOTAL		<u>\$ 0.00</u>

APPENDIX E

Sample Letter and Application for Academic Fee Waiver

E1: SAMPLE REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC WAIVER OF PARK FEE

Attn: Supervisory V.U.A.

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

We are looking forward to visiting and studying in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and the Curecanti National Recreation Area, August 9–15, 2015. The weeklong seminar is part of the Partners in the Parks program, a nationwide 2016 Centennial Initiative Project sponsored by Western State Colorado University and the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC).

Major teaching/learning objectives for the program include:

1. recognizing a citizen's stewardship of the resources protected by national parks and other federal/state resource agencies;
2. understanding the complex human and natural systems at work in and around our national parks;
3. studying the parks unique geological, biological, historical, and environmental resources; and
4. extending outdoor experiential education into a university, academic setting.

The Black Canyon program will be led by Western State Colorado University faculty and will be attended by collegiate honors students from across the country. Academic credit will be awarded by Western State Colorado University and will be earned through participation in the project. Because students will be coming from a variety of colleges and universities, they may also earn credit as determined by each student's home campus.

WSC faculty will be working closely with Black Canyon/Curecanti rangers and staff in an interdisciplinary educational program that will include experiential-learning opportunities in geology, ecology, and cultural heritage/history and the design, operation, and purpose of our national parks. We have included the Chief of Resource Stewardship and Science, Mr. Ken Stahlnecker, in our planning and appreciate his assistance and expertise in designing the program activities and curriculum. Mr. Stahlnecker

APPENDIX E

can provide more details concerning Black Canyon National Park participation. In light of the above, we request an academic fee waiver for our visit to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

Sincerely,
Dr. Heather Thiessen-Reily
Western State Colorado University

E2: SAMPLE APPLICATION FOR ACADEMIC FEE WAIVER

(Note: Applications are site specific.)



**APPLICATION FOR
ACADEMIC FEE WAIVER**



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Zion National Park
Springdale, UT 84767

Submit this application and all required documentation at least three weeks prior to your arrival.

(See Fee Waiver Guidelines for detailed information on required documentation.)

Mail or fax application to: Zion Fee Management Office
Attn: Fee Clerk
Springdale, UT 84767
Fax 435-772-0281

Name of Institution _____

Address _____

Official in charge of group/Instructor _____

Arrival Date _____

Departure Date _____

Number of Students _____

Number of Faculty/Chaperones _____

Number of Vehicles _____

Type of Vehicles _____

Class/Course Title _____

Specific Park Area(s) to be visited _____

I understand that the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA) of 1965, as amended by P.L. 99-951 in 1986, allows exemption from entrance fees, for academic credit, as outlined in 36 CFR, Chapter 1, part 72, Section

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71.13. I hereby certify that the above detailed trip meets requirements outlined in the National Park Service Regulations (NPS-22).

Signature of Official Sponsoring Group _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

National Park Service Approval

Signature of Park Service Official _____

Title _____

Date _____

This approved fee waiver must be in your possession when arriving at Zion National Park. Each vehicle needs to have a copy of the approved waiver; otherwise normal entrance fees will be charged. Groups arriving without an approved fee waiver will be charged the non-private fee of \$12.00 per person. Refunds will not be granted.

- Fee waivers do not include camping fees.
- Travel into Zion Canyon is by shuttle bus only April through October.
- All vehicles at or above 136" high (11'4") and/or 94" wide (7'10") require an escort for passage through the Zion Mt. Carmel tunnel. The fee for this service is \$15.00. The following vehicles are prohibited from passing through the park: Vehicles over 157" tall (13'1") and combined vehicles over 50' long.

APPENDIX F

Key to Animal Tracks in the Field Notes

Field Notes to Chapter 1	Black Bear	7
Field Notes to Chapter 2	Beaver	25
Field Notes to Chapter 3	Pronghorn Antelope	39
Field Notes to Chapter 3	Grizzly Bear	51
Field Notes to Chapter 4	Guess!	65
Field Notes to Chapter 5	Duck	79
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Field Notes to Chapter 7	Frog	123
Field Notes to Chapter 8	Eagle	151
Field Notes to Chapter 9	Coyote	181

ABOUT THE NCHC MONOGRAPH SERIES

The Publications Board of the National Collegiate Honors Council typically publishes two to three monographs a year. The subject matter and style range widely: from handbooks on nuts-and-bolts practices and discussions of honors pedagogy to anthologies on diverse topics addressing honors education and issues relevant to higher education.

The Publications Board encourages people with expertise interested in writing such a monograph to submit a prospectus. Prospective authors or editors of an anthology should submit a proposal discussing the purpose or scope of the manuscript; a prospectus that includes a chapter by chapter summary; a brief writing sample, preferably a draft of the introduction or an early chapter; and a *curriculum vitae*. All monograph proposals will be reviewed by the NCHC Publications Board.

Direct all proposals, manuscripts, and inquiries about submitting a proposal to the General Editor of the Monograph Series:

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NCHC Monographs & Journals

Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005, 98pp). This monograph includes an overview of assessment and evaluation practices and strategies. It explores the process for conducting self-studies and discusses the differences between using consultants and external reviewers. It provides a guide to conducting external reviews along with information about how to become an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor. A dozen appendices provide examples of “best practices.”

Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (Fourth Edition, 2006, 80pp). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs.

Fundraising for Honor\$: A Handbook by Larry R. Andrews (2009, 160pp). Offers information and advice on raising money for honors, beginning with easy first steps and progressing to more sophisticated and ambitious fundraising activities.

A Handbook for Honors Administrators by Ada Long (1995, 117pp). Everything an honors administrator needs to know, including a description of some models of honors administration.

A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

The Honors College Phenomenon edited by Peter C. Sederberg (2008, 172pp). This monograph examines the growth of honors colleges since 1990: historical and descriptive characterizations of the trend, alternative models that include determining whether becoming a college is appropriate, and stories of creation and recreation. Leaders whose institutions are contemplating or taking this step as well as those directing established colleges should find these essays valuable.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003, 182pp). Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (Third Edition, 2011, 80pp). Practical and comprehensive advice on creating and managing honors programs with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 4,000 students.

The Honors Thesis: A Handbook for Honors Directors, Deans, and Faculty Advisors by Mark Anderson, Karen Lyons, and Norman Weiner (2014, 176pp). To all those who design, administer, and implement an honors thesis program, this handbook offers a range of options, models, best practices, and philosophies that illustrate how to evaluate an honors thesis program, solve pressing problems, select effective requirements and procedures, or introduce a new honors thesis program.

Housing Honors edited by Linda Frost, Lisa W. Kay, and Rachael Poe (2015, 352pp). This collection of essays addresses the issues of where honors lives and how honors space influences educators and students. This volume includes the results of a survey of over 400 institutions; essays on the acquisition, construction, renovation, development, and even the loss of honors space; a forum offering a range of perspectives on residential space for honors students; and a section featuring student perspectives.

If Honors Students Were People: Holistic Honors Education by Samuel Schuman (2013, 256pp). What if honors students were people? What if they were not disembodied intellects but whole persons with physical bodies and questing spirits? Of course . . . they are. This monograph examines the spiritual yearnings of college students and the relationship between exercise and learning.

Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.

NCHC Monographs & Journals

The Other Culture: Science and Mathematics Education in Honors edited by Ellen B. Buckner and Keith Garbutt (2012, 296pp). A collection of essays about teaching science and math in an honors context: topics include science in society, strategies for science and non-science majors, the threat of pseudoscience, chemistry, interdisciplinary science, scientific literacy, philosophy of science, thesis development, calculus, and statistics.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks by Joan Digby with reflective essays on theory and practice by student and faculty participants and National Park Service personnel (First Edition, 2010, 272pp). This monograph explores an experiential-learning program that fosters immersion in and stewardship of the national parks. The topics include program designs, group dynamics, philosophical and political issues, photography, wilderness exploration, and assessment.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks edited by Heather Thiessen-Reilly and Joan Digby (Second Edition, 2016, 268pp). This collection of recent photographs and essays by students, faculty, and National Park Service rangers reflects upon PITP experiential-learning projects in new NPS locations, offers significant refinements in programming and curriculum for revisited projects, and provides strategies and tools for assessing PITP adventures.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

Preparing Tomorrow's Global Leaders: Honors International Education edited by Mary Kay Mulvaney and Kim Klein (2013, 400pp). A valuable resource for initiating or expanding honors study abroad programs, these essays examine theoretical issues, curricular and faculty development, assessment, funding, and security. The monograph also provides models of successful programs that incorporate high-impact educational practices, including City as Text™ pedagogy, service learning, and undergraduate research.

Setting the Table for Diversity edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan D. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latina/o, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Writing on Your Feet: Reflective Practices in City as Text™ edited by Ada Long (2014, 160pp). A sequel to the NCHC monographs *Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning* and *Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education*, this volume explores the role of reflective writing in the process of active learning while also paying homage to the City as Text™ approach to experiential education that has been pioneered by Bernice Braid and sponsored by NCHC during the past four decades.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

Honors in Practice (HIP) is an annual journal that accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts practices by featuring practical and descriptive essays on topics such as successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other topics of interest to honors administrators, faculty, and students.

NCHC Publications Order Form

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from *Partners in the Parks*—

“As this second edition of *Partners in the Parks* attests, PITP has evolved. . . . This monograph is addressed to all those people who might wish to propose, lead, or participate in a PITP adventure at any of the more than 400 National Park Service parks, forests, rivers, seashores, museums, monuments, recreation areas, and historic sites around the country waiting to be explored. While the immediate audience for this model is obviously undergraduate honors students, faculty, honors administrators, and program leaders, many elements of PITP might be adapted by other groups of all age levels with an interest in developing experiential programs in the national parks. Park rangers and other NPS professionals will also find in this monograph a sense of how much their work is appreciated and how great an educational impact their NPS programs can make.”

—*Heather Thiessen-Reily*