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ORGANIZING AN OUTWARD BOUND FIELD TRIP

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the development of an experiential learning course designed to build confidence and leadership skills in business students. A course was tailor made through a contract with the Outward Bound organization. Ten undergraduate students and 1 Department of Management faculty member experienced a 5-day expedition in the Boundary Waters Canoeing area of upper Minnesota in August, ~990. Students responded extremely well and plans are being made for a second trip in 1991.

INTRODUCTION

A program has been cooperatively developed by the Management Department in the College of Business and the Minnesota-based Voyager Outward Bound School to further develop our business students. Some issues are reported below which arose during the course of the programs' development at WIU.

Administrative Issues--WIU and Outward Bound

Questions emerged concerning items such as overnight lodging on the road, course credit, trip costs, moving into residence halls early, storing student belongings, insurance, grading, transportation, and travel dates. In dealing with these issues, we learned that you have to appreciate different perspectives. You have to be aware of the political system in which you operate and work carefully with your contacts. It is also important to allow ample time to get ready and solve problems. It takes considerable time for a group to gel. We also learned that it can be difficult to raise money to enable more students to participate. The money problem proved to be the most difficult one to resolve.

Curricular and Pedagogical Issues

Students were curious about: What we were going to ask them to do; could this credit be used for elective purposes in their major fields of study? The Chair of each department in the College of Business was consulted about whether MGT 498 would work in their departments' majors? A set of readings was assigned prior to the student's departure to give them some idea of what to expect. They were asked to write a paper before leaving which described their expectations for the trip. During their expedition, they were asked to keep a journal of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The intent of the journal was to serve as the basis for a post-expedition paper to be written upon their return. The purpose of the paper was to help students organize and assimilate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the expedition. Students were also given a battery of standard psychological instruments prior to their departure and upon their return. Self-control was measured with Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control instrument. Leadership was measured with Fleishman's (1953) Leadership Opinion Questionnaire. The self-concept was measured with Berger's (1952) Self-Acceptance Scale and with Ghiselli's (1971) Self-Descriptive Index. Earlier research has suggested that these are relevant

dimensions (Marsh & Richards, 1986; Priest, 1984; Marsh, Richards, & Barnes, 1986). We reasoned that the dimensions of tolerance for ambiguity and machiavellianism would also be relevant. Tolerance for ambiguity was measured with Budner's (1962) Intolerance of Ambiguity Scale. Machiavellianism was measured with Christie's (1973) Machiavellianism Scale.

Student Preparation

By late Spring/early Summer, most of the earlier issues had been pretty much resolved. At this point, we found ourselves monitoring to see that activities were proceeding. For example, students had to register for class and Outward Bound, make a down payment, undergo a physical, get into good physical condition, and make sure they had the right types of clothing. The readings were to be read, questionnaires were to be filled out, and the pre-expedition paper was to be written. This final preparation phase went smoothly.

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