

Program Goal 3: Graduates are prepared to manage actual and perceived risk according to industry standards and preferred practice.

1. Students will implement organizational risk management policy and procedures.
2. Students will integrate risk management concepts and strategies into program design, implementation, and evaluation.
3. Students will respond appropriately to emergencies common to outdoor programs.

During my last semester at Georgia College, I was the assistant instructor on the Outdoor Center's Spring Break climbing and caving trip. For this trip, I had to build an anchor on which the participants climbed. Having taken the climbing class, I was aware of and made sure to follow the Outdoor Education program's policies on edge safety. The policy explains that if you are within six feet of a cliff edge that you must be belayed or anchored, which protects you in the event of a fall. Because I was able to walk up to the anchor site, the first thing I had to do was build a personal tether; this provided protection so I could freely move around and build the top rope anchor in the direction of the climb. After I addressed my personal safety, I moved on to building the anchor using the LEADSTER guideline. This guideline, as mentioned in the Policy and Procedures Manual, explains the anchors should have limited extension, angles less than 90 degrees, built in the direction of the climb in use, strong, timely, and are equalized and redundant. Risk management policies were also enforced at the base of the wall and before participants climbed. We fitted everyone to a harness and showed them how to put in on correctly; we showed everyone how to correctly put a helmet on and outlined the boundaries in which it needed to be worn; we also showed them spotting techniques and went over climbing commands before anyone left the ground. It was during this program that I recognized how imperative it is to explain expectations and boundaries during an expedition. By stating clear guidelines and explaining safety concerns from the beginning, participants later explained to us how comfortable they felt trying something new because of how we managed the climbing site. I received feedback from the lead instructor of the trip that my technical climbing skills were helpful, please see the attached artifact "Spring Break Facilitator Feedback" to see the feedback I was given about my facilitation on this trip. It is helpful to receive feedback like this and during the trip because I want to know how I can improve my facilitation skills, and specifically with this trip, I want to make sure participants feel as comfortable as possible when trying an activity that has significant risk.

In addition to helping with the Outdoor Center trip, developing the Principles of Field leadership route plans required knowledge of risk management considering we had to incorporate emergency evacuation plans, plans for river crossings and address any issues that arose once in the field. I tend to be very conservative when managing risk; given most of my experience has been with young children ten and under, I received feedback on the expedition that I did not appropriately assess risk for my peers. For example, there was a time when the group was hiking along the trail and came to a ladder with three large rungs made from substantial wooden pieces; instead of assessing the ladder and ensuring it was safe to walk on, I instructed everyone to avoid it and walk around. In retrospect, I recognize that this is one of the handful of examples in which I did not correctly assess the risk and my group's capabilities. Assessing the risk and using judgment was a key focus during the entire expedition, and we were constantly referring to our field guides, specifically the SSRSR tool. This tool was developed by Paul Nicolazzo to help instructors incorporate risk management into program planning and

implementation. It guides you through examining the staff, students, resources, site and risk for the overall program, and specific situations in the field. Accurately assessing each element of this tool will help me in the future by having a clear picture of what and who with which I am dealing, and the accuracy of my judgment will continue to develop over time. Looking back, I understand that if I correctly assessed the site and students, I would have determined the ladder to be safe. This example serves as a reminder to me that our personal ideas of perceived and actual risk affect the way we communicate and operate. All of this is explained in further detail in the artifact “Principles of Field Leadership Reflection” where I examine my leadership and risk management, and create a plan to incorporate feedback about managing risk in the future.

Another example of managing risk in the field was when my partner and I had to fill out an incident report. Before the rest day in the middle of the expedition, one of our peers injured their ankle and it was on the following day that my partner and I completed the report and provided them with the care and assistance they needed. Incident reports are helpful to record the details of everything that has happened and give you something to refer back to if needed. When we were filling out the form, they explained to my partner and I that it was when they were going downhill on steps the previous day that they believed the injury occurred. We asked them about their backpack fitting, their shoes, water and food intake leading up to the event and everything was normal according to them. This incident reinforced the idea that you can do everything in your power to prevent bad things from happening, but sometimes accidents occur and you have to be prepared to manage them. We managed the risk of the injury by giving them plenty of food and fluids, and following RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation) guidelines for a sprain. This is one of the reasons why it is required to obtain your Wilderness First Aid certification before taking the Principles of Field Leadership course. Please see the attached artifact “Wilderness First Aid Certification” to view my certification card. You can do everything in your power to manage risk, but I think one of the most crucial elements in risk management is always being prepared to respond when an emergency does occur. If within our daily plans we only had preventative measures to manage risk, I do not believe we would have been leading a well-managed program.