

Program Goal 5: Graduates are prepared to assume civic and environmental responsibilities associated with the practice of outdoor education.

1. Students will examine the role of environmental education and interpretation in outdoor education
2. Students will assess the impact of social and environmental issues on the delivery of outdoor education programs and services.
3. Students will interpret natural and cultural history for outdoor education programs.
4. Students will develop a professional environmental philosophy.\

Being an Outdoor Education major, I enjoy being outside but also use the outdoors as my classroom. I spend a significant amount of time outside interacting with the landscape and this has placed me at the frontline in addressing environmental issues and concerns. Issues such as limited water from drought, landscape erosion, and trash dumping are examples of obstacles that I have faced while in a teaching or training position in the outdoors. If I plan on using the outdoors for education, I want to preserve these wild spaces for myself and others to use. Preservation of green spaces has long term effects for our ecosystem, and I believe people need to experience the outdoors in order to fully understand this and become good stewards of their environment. I believe education about and in the environment as well as outdoor activities help foster appreciation for nature. I have seen this in my work at Lockerly Arboretum, Three Creek Ranch, and the Sustainability Office as well as in the Principles of Field Leadership and Environmental Education courses.

At Lockerly Arboretum in Milledgeville, GA, I have helped lead numerous environmental education programs with a variety of participants: sometimes groups of twenty elementary school students or ten middle school aged participants, as well as adult with disabilities. I would take participants on hikes and lead activities to teach about animals and invertebrates, plants, and respect for nature which includes Leave No Trace Principles such as staying on trail, observing but not interacting with insects, animals and plants, and avoiding littering. Similarly, at Three Creek Ranch I helped lead children ages five to eleven on excursions in Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Park. The summer camp program at Three Creek Ranch has a focus on environmental education emphasizing geology and history of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. From learning about the history of farming within the area that is now Grand Teton National Park, witnessing bison and gazelle migrating, and learning about the environmental impact of the town of Jackson Hole, I learned so much through working and teaching at Three Creek Ranch. The environmental education aspect of my work in these two examples provided experiential learning opportunities for participants by allowing them to be immersed in the environment about which they were learning. I believe it is important to include environmental education within outdoor programming because if we are using the land for our benefit, we need to take care of it. I will continue to challenge participants in the future to examine the natural world around them and take responsibility for their impact. This belief is outlined well in my "Environmental Philosophy" artifact. Developing my own personal philosophy helped me affirm my beliefs and articulate them clearly. I recognize how deeply I believe in the importance of incorporating environmental education into my professional career.

In addition to my work experience, I was able to teach my peers about local flora and fauna on the Principles of Field Leadership expedition. We spent thirteen days in the backcountry of the Big South Fork National River and Recreation area, and I wanted to bring

attention and awareness to this beautiful setting. I developed a lesson plan where I discussed common animals and trees, but in retrospect I think I could have been more specific. I believe that small details about particular species of animals or plants add depth and context to an outdoor experience that can inspire change in people. Telling a story about the land, how we have shaped it and vice versa, can connect people to their environment. This connection to the land cultivate awareness of critical environmental issues and environmental stewardship. Please see the attached artifact “Local Flora and Fauna Lesson Plan” to examine the lesson further.

Furthering my experience with environmental education, working at the Sustainability Office as the Compost Intern gave me the opportunity to increase sustainability efforts at the university. I used this position as a second practicum because I believe it is important to contribute to to your community, specifically addressing environmental issues. As the compost intern I addressed the issue of food waste on campus, and throughout the semester my partner and I would collect over one thousand pounds of food waste from the student cafeteria weekly. As part of my practicum, I lead a tour of the compost site and did extensive research of the importance of composting so I could teach others. I learned that food waste contributes to greenhouse gases when in a landfill, but composting the food does not produce harmful methane; instead, you turn waste into fertilizer for your soil! During the tour, I had the food collection bins on display along with food waste examples to show the magnitude of waste that is collected. Please view the artifact “Compost Tour” to examine the lesson plan further. I received feedback from participants that they learned a lot during the tour and wanted to figure out ways to personally compost. Inspiring others to change their habits to minimize their carbon footprint is something hope to continue to do in the future.