Program Goal 6: Graduates are prepared to advocate for the profession.

1. Students will interpret the impact of historical, theoretical, philosophical foundations on the practice of outdoor education.
2. Students will analyze critical issues in outdoor education.
3. Students will create a personal vision for the professional.
4. Students will engage in professional practice

       The profession of Outdoor Education is difficult to define for me because the skills that I have developed can be used across many professions. This has made it challenging for me to advocate the profession. I enjoy working in this field, but articulating to others what it is that myself and my colleagues do and why it matters has been challenging. What I believe has helped me be an advocate though is applying fundamental theories in outdoor programs, working towards nationally recognized certifications such as the Wilderness First Responder certification, engaging with other professionals at the Environmental Education Alliance conference and developing a personal vision for myself in this profession.

       One of the first courses I took within the Outdoor Education Program was the Foundations course. I learned about important historical figures such as John Muir and Paul Nicolazzo and educational theories like the Experiential Learning cycle and the S.P.E.C model (Student-centered, Problem-based, Experiential, Collaborative). These figures and models established a foundation from which I developed my lessons and programs. In the rock climbing course specifically, I applied the SPEC model to my lesson plans. For my lesson on trad gear (cams in particular), I received feedback that I used the SPEC model well. I asked my peers the information that they already knew, I gave them additional information to expand their knowledge and then had them pair up to practice with the cams. I normally struggle to develop lessons that are problem-based, but I will continue to assess my group's capabilities to determine an appropriate problem for them to solve. This model has made me more effective as an instructor because students play a larger role in their education and learn by doing.

       As part of my degree, I had to work towards a Wilderness First Responder certification. Please see the artifact "Wilderness First Responder Certification." In regards to risk management, a nationally recognized certification it is not necessarily required to operate a safe program; however, certifications create consistency within the field by covering and testing off on similar criteria. I have realized how imperative this consistency is for the advancement of the field. Currently, the organizations that certify students do not have standardized curriculum across the board, though. I would classify this as a "critical issue in outdoor education." If certifications that are supposed to create consistency are instead achieving the opposite, as professionals in the field it is imperative these issues are analyzed and solutions developed. When I was taking my WFR course, I remember discussing this topic with my teacher and he agreed that the curriculum is not the same for each organization. Knowing that the industry is struggling in this area will aid in developing a plan to move forward; however, I believe I still have more to learn about critical issues within the profession. I believe there are issues specific to each job that I will be able to address. I will dedicate time to analyzing problems and potential solutions to issues with each position I have.

       In addition to this, I have had to analyze different theories of change. Please view the artifact "Personal Theories of Change" to view the paper. Having an understanding of these theories has helped me understand how to encourage change in others, which is the goal of most outdoor programs. The Program Planning course gave me an opportunity to develop my own

theory of change based on current theories. I developed my own personal view of the process of change by combining the principles from the Transtheoretical model, the Outward Bound model, and the Satir model. Learning about these theories in the classroom has provided me a solid foundation to practice from outside the classroom. Whether it is at the Georgia College Outdoor Center or a summer camp, developing and implementing programs that are impactful requires insight to the processes of how people learn and change. Indeed, successful programs do not just occur, but are the result of well thought out program designs. Learning more about the time and effort that goes into developing a program has made me realize how outdoor education impacts others. It is not just the activities of climbing, backpacking or canoeing, it is the group development, skills progression, experiential learning and reflection that makes these experiences so transformational. These skills are transferable to experiences outside the activities. With this understanding, I feel as though I can more clearly articulate what it is I do and what this profession is about.

   In order to advance a cohesive vision for the field of Outdoor Education, graduates must have a vision for their career. This vision outlines goals and outcomes that I have for myself within the next three to five years. Please see the artifact "Professional Vision" to examine this more in depth. Expressing my personal goals made me realize how attainable they are. I am prepared to lead by example in regards to sustainability and address environmental issues. I am prepared to lead others in the backcountry to inspire change and encourage environmental stewardship. I want to continue advocating for the environment and ensure that programs I work are operating sustainably and addressing critical issues such as waste management and incorporating Leave No Trace Principles. It is also imperative that I engage in professional practice. By attending the Environmental Education Alliance conference, I was able to expand my knowledge beyond just what I was learning in the classroom. I attended workshops covering environmental racism, grant applications, and how the importance of storytelling. Conferences allow for ongoing professional development and attending workshops with colleagues has provided me with new ideas to apply to programs. In the future, I hope to prepare a presentation to contribute to a conference.