

OA: Beyond Preorientation



A Deluge of Leadership

Leadership is about rising to an unexpected challenge and gathering all of your courage, wisdom, and integrity to face difficult situations

head on and inspire the people around you to do the same. That's what OA has been doing for over thirty-seven years. In my thirty plus years as OA Director, I have never seen this so clearly as on this year's Frosh Trip.

At the start of the summer I had huge plans for how this year's trip, my 30th year as director, was going to be the best Frosh Trip ever created. With a tremendous staff of four student Frosh Trip Coordinators, we spent the entire summer planning trips down to the finest detail. And then came the rain.

Hurricane Irene hit the weekend before freshmen arrived forcing us to cancel many of the special trainings we do for leaders on Saturday and Sunday. Once the hurricane had passed I breathed a (short-lived) sigh of relief thinking, well, no other hurricane can get here before the trips are over. But massive flooding up and down the east coast dramatically changed the picture—the Green Mountains National Forest in Vermont—closed; the Catskills in New York—closed; the Delaware Water Gap—closed; Harriman State Park—closed. In just five days we had to reroute forty OA Trips to send out a Frosh Trip of over 1,000 freshmen and leaders. After a series of long days and very short nights, we did it.

Freshmen arrived on campus Saturday beaming with excitement and on a beautiful, clear Sunday morning I watched them load into buses for their Frosh Trip adventure. Then came Tropical Storm Lee—a huge storm that inundated the east coast for four days. Knowing what all of that rain was going to do to the groups, I made a big decision: bring them home. So Frosh Trip moved from the trail to hotels and back to campus for activities. Not exactly the perfect program we'd planned all summer, and yet, in spite of all the challenges, OA still spun its magic on freshmen. OA Leaders rose to the challenges they faced and used all of their training to keep their frosh safe, maintain morale and continue to bond back on campus. Far from being a disappointment, Frosh Trip 2011 was an incredible success. I've never been more proud of what Outdoor Action is, and the tremendous student leaders than this year. Read some of the stories on the next page from this year's leaders and what they learned about themselves and leadership.

More than anything, this year illustrates how important OA and the OA Leader Training Program is to Princeton. OA is not just Frosh Trip. It is Princeton's largest student leadership development program—training over 100 new student leaders every year and providing the over 300 OA leaders

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Trekking Nepal: The Annapurna Sanctuary May 5-22, 2012

As more proof that OA has expanded beyond freshmen preorientation, I am thrilled to announce our first OA Alumni Trip in many years. This trip offers a truly unique opportunity to experience one of the most beautiful places in the world, the Himalayas.

This 16-day trekking trip in the Annapurna Sanctuary in

Nepal gives active travelers the chance to explore the majesty of the Himalayas and to learn about the challenges inherent at high altitudes and the geology of this amazing landscape.

On this Nepal trek father-son team Robert "Brownie" Schoene '68 MD, physician and expert in high altitude physiology and medicine, and Blair Schoene PhD, Assistant Professor of Geosciences at Princeton, will serve as Study Leaders along with Rick Curtis '79, Director of the Outdoor Action Program.

The Annapurna Sanctuary trek is one of the classic treks in the Himalayas and a great trek for the novice or intermediate hiker. Starting in lowland villages, this non-technical hike winds through thick forests of bamboo, rhododendron and oak into higher elevations and while the trek itself attains maximum elevation of only 13,550 feet, it offers outstanding views of one of the most spectacular mountain ranges in the world and a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the Himalayan peaks and the culture of Nepal.

OA's first alumni trip to Nepal was back in 1992 and 16 of us hiked most of the Annapurna Circuit Trek. I am thrilled that 20 years later we'll be heading into the Annapurna Sanctuary, the portion of the trail I did not get a chance to complete.

Travelers should expect 4-6 hours of hiking each day carrying a 10-15 pound pack. The trails themselves are moderate but at these altitudes hiking will feel more strenuous so everyone should be in good physical shape. For those looking for additional adventure, an optional post-trek extension is offered (5/21-5/25) to Chitwan National Park in the tropical region of southern Nepal known for its elephant safaris, bird watching, and jungle walks.



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with unique opportunities to use their leadership skills in real world settings. We are Princeton’s “leadership learning laboratory.” For me, this is the most important contribution that Outdoor Action makes to the fabric of Princeton and what I mean by OA’s impact extending “beyond preorientation.”

But we can’t stop there. We have barely scratched the surface of what OA can accomplish at Princeton. We need to build a program to train and inspire even more students to engage in leadership that empowers others and integrates service to others as its core principal.

Invest in the Future of Leadership at Princeton

There is no doubt that the Outdoor Action Program has ‘come of age’ in so many different ways. My challenge to you is to help prepare the next generation of leaders at Princeton. This past year, hundreds of alumni and parents contributed over \$50,000 to support the ongoing growth of the program and I want to thank all of you for your generous support. In order to fully realize the goals and potential of OA we need to increase our annual giving to \$150,000 a year, that’s \$50 from each alumni leader and parents of current students. After thirty years of watching students develop into OA Leaders, I know that supporting OA is one of the best investments that you can make in Princeton. The impact that Leaders have on campus and the skills they (and you) learned through OA are priceless and continue far beyond Princeton. Please do your part to build a lasting leadership legacy at Princeton.

Rick Curtis '79
Director, Outdoor Action



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Blair will provide the overview of mountain formation and give all trekkers a perspective on the amazing geology that will surround them on the trek. Brownie will conduct daily medical seminars on the physiology of high altitude in wilderness medicine, covering topics such as adaptation, high altitude illnesses, extreme altitude, high altitude natives, exercise and training, hypothermia, and expedition medicine, to name a few. Travel medicine, prevention and treatment of gastro-intestinal illnesses will be covered in the optional Chitwan portion of the trip. Continuing Medical Education units (CMEs) will be offered through the Wilderness Medical Society for physicians and healthcare professionals. For additional information and to register for the trip go to www.princeton.edu/~oa/alumni/programs.



OA 92 base camp & Outdoor Adventure trip in northern NJ

Feather Foundation & David L. Klein Foundation fund OA Leave No Trace initiative

We are very excited to announce that the Feather Foundation has made a generous grant to Outdoor Action to support OA's Leave No Trace initiative over the next five years. The gift, from Edie and Jim Garrett '65, represents the ongoing mission of the Feather Foundation to support environmental learning and stewardship. The funds will be used each year to train a new group of OA Leaders as Leave No Trace Master Educators through the national Leave No Trace organization. Master Educators are certified to teach the principles of Leave No Trace camping and wilderness ethics. Having a certified group of student Master Educators will allow OA to train the entire pool of over 300 OA Leaders in the latest principles and techniques of Leave No Trace so that they can more effectively pass these skills on to their freshmen and other participants and help build a new generation of Princetonians committed to conservation and sustainability.

Jim has served on the Friends of Outdoor Action Advisory Board for twenty years and was the 2010 recipient of the Josh Miner '43 Experiential Education Award. In addition, he has served as staff on the OA Command Center during Frosh Trip for the past five years. We are extremely grateful to Edie and Jim for their ongoing support of OA over the past twenty years and for this very special gift. Additional funding to support the OA Sustainability and Leave No Trace initiative comes from the David L. Klein Foundation more information is available at www.princeton.edu/~oa/sustainability

OA has created two new Facebook Pages, one is for Alumni & Friends and will have information about upcoming OA Alumni activities: [facebook.com/outdooractionalumni](https://www.facebook.com/outdooractionalumni).

The other, for current students, will have the latest information on Frosh Trip and campus programs at [facebook.com/princetonoutdooraction](https://www.facebook.com/princetonoutdooraction).

Please help us grow our alumni and friends network by going to one or both and *Like OA*.



Students Reflect on Leadership

Kristie Schott '14, *Leader from Needham, MA*

Obviously, Frosh Trip this year didn't work out the way anyone expected. But even though getting evacuated on the second morning and spending the next two nights in a hotel was certainly not anyone's ideal, the trips were still extremely successful. In some ways, the goals of Frosh Trip were even exceeded in ways that wouldn't be possible under normal circumstances. I'm a firm believer in the idea that testing ourselves and facing challenges is the best way to discover what we're capable of—and, at the very least, we get a story worth telling later. For many incoming freshman, just being in the woods for a week is a challenge all on its own, and sending a group of them out into the woods to face this challenge together creates a unique bonding experience that makes OA and Frosh Trip so valuable. This year freshmen and leaders alike were faced with the added challenge of being soaked, but far from ruining the experience, it brought group members together faster than ever. Rather than complaining about the miserable weather, my group cracked jokes. And by the time we got under our tarp at the end of the first full day, every one of my frosh said that their "rose," or favorite part of their day, had been either the group's attitude or the way they had gotten to know each other and bond. It was day one, and we were already at a point that many groups only reach as their trip is coming to an end.

As a leader, the experience was valuable in unique ways as well. On one level, individual decision-making was more important than ever. Even so, the most powerful lesson I learned was the importance of recognizing times when the best thing to do is to simply take a step back. Of course the ability to make everything run smoothly and keep morale up have a very important place, but in the end the most beautiful part of my trip was the dynamic that grew out of the interactions my frosh had amongst themselves, independent of what my co-leader and I were doing. Sometimes the best things happen all on their own, and as leaders our most important job is to stay out of the way and let them.

Jessica Haley '14, *Leader from La Crosse, WI*

Being an OA leader for the first time this year taught me what it means to create a supportive environment, and then to allow people to grow and challenge each other within it. Many times during the course of a week that left us very wet and often unsure about what the next day would look



Frosh Group VA72 hiking the Shenandoahs

like, I was surprised at how resilient my group was and how little they complained. They encouraged each other and laughed together and pulled each other along even when things were challenging. I attribute most of this to the wonderful freshmen who were on our trip, but I also believe that it was due the



MA57 snacking outside hotel

leadership role my co-leaders and I took on was what one of them described as "building a home" where people felt safe and could learn and explore—even under adverse external circumstances. To do this I had to communicate effectively with my co-leaders and constantly gauge how our group members were interacting and how I could better facilitate them building friendships, learning skills, and having fun. Although I never stepped fully out of the role of a leader who was responsible for the wellbeing of my group, as our group cohered I was able to relate more with all the members and simply share the joys and struggles of our OA trip. In the end, I felt less like a carpenter building a house than a part of the family that began to live in the home we built during that week.

Bonnie Rogers '13, *Leader from Haverford, PA*

Frosh Trip this year might have been the best ever. Seven freshmen and three leaders as their most raw selves never stopped smiling through the entire storm, thanks to the expert planning of OA and incredible coordination of command center back in Princeton, getting everyone home safely. I would never have hoped to spend half of frosh trip on campus, but could not be more pleased with how everything went. Group bonding was at its highest and, of course, being on campus provided many more opportunities for jump-shaking booties than the narrow trails allow.

OA is so important to Princeton's community because it provides a unique bond that over 60% of students enjoy. Across every academic, cultural, and social barrier imaginable, we can all remember the time spent on the trail, going bananas, learning to "LNT," putting fears in a hat, and meeting some incredible classmates we may not have met anywhere else. This bond was only made stronger by the common experience of Frosh Trip II back on campus: 1,000 Princetonians bragging about how soaked their sleeping bags had gotten and how much they had wanted to stay on the trail anyway.

For me, OA more than anything fosters a sense community at Princeton and I am eternally grateful for all of the wonderful people I've met, places I've been, and things I've learned from OA. Please help give future Princeton students the opportunity to experience OA as I have, in good weather and hurricanes alike.

Graham Peigh '13, *Leader from Chicago, IL*

This year's Frosh Trip made one thing explicitly clear: OA Leaders are not only leaders in the backcountry, but also in

Read
about this
year's Frosh Trip
in the October issue
of the:



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the campus community at large. Although we didn't have the most typical of Frosh Trips this time around, the circumstances gave Leaders the ability to let their dynamic leadership styles shine as they quickly adapted to their new surroundings for the 'hotel' and 'campus' portions of the trip. As we spent hour after hour in our hotel in Johnstown, PA, I witnessed leaders lead in ways that, while not being typical for OA, very much embody the OA spirit. Along with playing game after game, my group in particular had a daylong 'Fears in a Hat' session, and spent the better part of seven hours doing the 'Fill My Cup' activity. After returning to campus, we gave our Frosh the option of sleeping in their own rooms, but they adamantly stated that they wanted to all sleep in the same room until OA was over. Never have I seen a group mesh so quickly. I think the adverse weather conditions provided the medium for dynamics to reach a new high, as groups of Frosh not only identified with each other in the woods, but also in everyday campus life. And all of this was with much thanks to the wonderful leader training OA leaders receive.

Mike Showak '13, *Leader from Slatington, PA*

Leadership is a quality that everyone identifies as valuable, yet the concept is actually much broader and more vague than typically thought. During my time at Princeton, I've taken leadership roles in various organizations, each of which requires entirely different skills and techniques. The experience that I had leading my frosh trip this past year required a different facet of leadership than I have ever drawn upon in the past. Leading is easy when things are going according to plan. When you get five inches of rain in a three hour lightening storm followed by another four inches the next day, however, an entirely different approach is needed. The leader needs to become the one who rallies, the one who remains confident and upbeat, and the motivator, all while remaining empathetic to the group. This past year was tough, but I think that I grew far more in just a few days than what I had in past years. To say that we didn't have fun wouldn't be true either; the best part of the whole trip for me was on the third day when we broke the news that we would be leaving the trail early, our frosh were actually upset and tried to convince us to continue on because they were having a good time. I'm leading a trip to Sierra Leone this December with Engineers Without Borders, and I can say that my experience this past year on OA has made me even more comfortable and confident in preparing for what is going to be another challenging trip. Thanks for helping support OA.



Steve Tuozzolo '12, *Leader from Sayville, NY*

Frosh trip wasn't an easy leadership experience this year. My group never got to have s'mores over a campfire, or take in a nice view at the end of the trip, or 'take control' of the duties from the leader and become self-sufficient. Our experience was marked by mishaps, some nasty weather, and a lot of waiting around. But I would lead the exact same trip in a heartbeat.

I learned more as a leader this year than I did in the last two trips combined. That's because Frosh Trip 2011 was an experience that put all of our skills to the test. This was true of many leaders this year, but there is one constant across all of us—we never gave up on the experience. If Frosh Trip 2011 teaches us anything, it's that, regardless of what happens, the culture that is fostered on Outdoor Action is one of resilience.

That's a good trait for the Freshman to be reminded of before they reach campus, and it's also an important idea for leaders to think about, too. At Princeton, and in life, things do not always turn out as planned. The trip was in many ways unexpected and riddled with problems, but as leaders we projected our determination to have an awesome trip, and it worked.

OA is invaluable for that. It teaches a collective resilience that is so important to know about on campus. Our group commiserated when things went wrong, but we always believed that, in the end, we would have an awesome trip. And we did.

Notes from the Trailhead

Share your news on the enclosed membership form.

David Irving '58 and wife, Barb, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a trip to Hawaii, where they kayaked and snorkled. They also took their 25th annual bike trip on the Virginia Creeper Trail near the Tennessee border.

Alexander Ward '75 (who created the OA logo) is living in Los Angeles and enjoying the occasional outing to the Joshua Tree desert or the wilds of Utah and New Mexico.

Jeffery Sharp '80 writes, "Wish I had done OA as a freshman. I discovered the Appalachian Trail much later with my son Dillon '14." Together they are hiking the length of the AT in stages, with plans to finish their route with New Hampshire and Maine.

Susan Glockner '85 "Scuba diving in Bora Bora, hiking/biking in Croatia, downhill skiing, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing in the US with family." Katie (16) and Will (14), are scouts currently working on their Gold and Eagle projects.

Jonathan Nuger '04 wed in 2010; the couple went on a road trip from San Francisco to Boston, stopping in Mammoth, Bryce Canyon, Yosemite, and Zion Natl. Park. "The OA spirit lives on!"

Timothy Churchill '05 is in his 4th year of medical school. He traveled to Botswana for two months this summer to work in a hospital there.

Rosalind Echols '05 hiked the John Muir Trail with fellow Princetonians, Backpacker's Field Manual in hand!

For more Notes from the Trailhead, visit:

www.princeton.edu/~oa/alumni/trails/trailhead.shtml