

## OA Receives TigerWell Grant!

### Moving Forward on Our Vision

Two years ago I shared with you our vision for OA's future and we have come an incredibly long way in our journey since then. At that point, we called it 'OA 2.0', thinking about what OA could look like as we approach 50 years of this incredible program.

That vision began in 2016 with the OA Alumni Advisory Group which proposed to the University the idea of a strategic planning process for OA. Last year I told you about some of the great work that the OA Strategic Planning Committee did in 2019 identifying the areas of impact that OA can have on campus:

- **Leadership Skills**
- **Community & Team Building:**
- **Grit & Resilience**
- **Transition & Orientation**
- **Health & Well-being**
- **Sustainability & Environmental Awareness**

### TigerWell Partnership Grant

This year I am incredibly excited to report that OA has received a one-year TigerWell Partnership Grant to support health and well-being initiatives related to the outdoors. This is the next step in the visioning process we began in 2016.

The TigerWell Initiative, supported by the Elcan Family Fund for Wellness Innovation, promotes and coordinates a proactive approach to health and well-being across campus through grant-funded initiatives.

This grant builds upon OA's historical impact on campus life over the last 46 years. From 1975 to 2000, OA offered weekly outdoor trips and activities open to the entire campus throughout the academic year. We are incredibly excited to be able to renew that history through the TigerWell Partnership Grant.

Through this grant, Outdoor Action will be able to offer free trips and activities to all undergraduate and graduate students throughout one academic year to promote personal wellness, community

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### Frosh Trip Goes Virtual

Frosh Trip for the Class of 2024 took place this fall, but in a totally different way than in the past 47 years. This time it was completely virtual as both incoming students and OA Leaders were remote for the fall semester.

Like any challenging situation on the trail, this required thinking outside the box for new approaches. Caroline Stone Perkins '14, the OA Program Coordinator and I, adopted a design thinking approach to re-imagine how the team building, campfire talks, and group collaboration could happen in a virtual space over three days. With the help of six wonderful undergraduates working full time throughout the summer, we built a new online curriculum that featured getting-to-know-you activities, Leave No Trace principles and land acknowledgment, sustainability and diversity and inclusion. OA groups met on Zoom for three hours a day and students completed some activities on their own at home. Day 1 was icebreakers and games to get to know each other and each group created a Full Value Contract to help the group establish goals and norms. Day 2 was an online team building event—a virtual simulation of a Mount Everest expedition developed by the Harvard Business School. Day 3 was personal reflection, journaling, and a final debrief (in the dark) with a YouTube campfire. OA Leaders did a tremendous job helping welcome the Class of 2024 to Princeton. We are incredibly proud of how they stepped up and ran sessions for students across the globe.

building, and skill development and leadership in the outdoors.

Due to the pandemic we don't know exactly when we will be able to begin to implement the TigerWell grant. I look forward to seeing students fully engaged in the outdoors as soon as we are able.

When students come back to campus, OA will be more important than it has ever been, helping forge new relationships and reforge old ones.

OA has always used challenge as an impetus for personal growth. This year, more than any I can remember, is one more test for all of us to bring to the fore all those lessons of grit and perseverance we learned on the trail.



*Rick Curtis*

Rick Curtis '79 h04 h13  
Director, Outdoor Action

## What the TigerWell Grant Will Mean for OA

The new TigerWell grant will support weekly trips and activities designed to get people active and outside so that nature and outdoor adventure can be a regular part of their campus experience. It will also include longer multi-day trips designed to provide a greater immersion in the outdoors and facilitate group bonding and relationship building, as well as additional time for advanced skill development. The TigerWell grant will allow OA to implement key goals identified by the OA Strategic Planning Committee:

**Develop robust year-round programming** so all undergraduate and graduate students can regularly access the benefits of outdoor activities for health, wellness and personal development.

**Create new opportunities for social connectedness** through cross-class interactions. Immersive opportunities for community building like those offered by OA will be particularly important to help students develop new supportive relationships when they return to campus.

**Make outdoor activities fully accessible** to all students by subsidizing trips and activities to cover all costs and by offering accessible activities across a spectrum of experience and abilities.

**Increase access to and inclusivity** of OA trips and activities. OA recognizes that the outdoors has been a space that has historically been disproportionately white and inaccessible to many. OA will work with

## Help OA Extend This Beyond One Year!

Our TigerWell Grant is for one year and we want to continue to be able to offer outdoor programming in future years. Your support can make a huge difference.

- **Support Outdoor Programs & Activities for students throughout the academic year** (\$100,000 needed annually)
- **Create permanent funding to support the OA Climbing Program and the Climbing Wall** (\$50,000 needed annually)

partners across campus to co-create programs that support the needs of all communities.

**Develop individual skills** to foster comfort and confidence in outdoor settings. OA will offer instruction and support to provide entry points for all interested students.

## New Programs Throughout the Year

All of these OA programs will be entirely free for undergraduate and graduate students ensuring that all students are able to participate. Trips and activities will include:

**Day Trips:** outdoor activities in New Jersey and the surrounding area, including hiking trips, nature walks, trail maintenance, biking, rock climbing, canoeing and kayaking.

**Multi-day Trips:** multi-day trips will take place over Fall Break, Wintersession in January, and Spring Break, and will provide greater opportunities for expanded team building and relationship building. The greater immersion in the outdoors offers a bigger rejuvenating dose of 'Nature Rx,' and provides greater opportunities for participants to develop their skills and self-confidence.

**Wintersession Activities:** The new Wintersession in January will provide an opportunity for on-campus skill development classes on topics such as rock climbing or kayaking, backcountry navigation, and planning a backpacking trip.

**Expanding Programming at the OA Climbing Wall:** the OA Climbing Wall is our most successful on-campus activity. The grant fully funds Open Hours at the Climbing Wall to provide daily recreation, physical fitness, and skill development and increases the hours so that it will be open seven days a week. We also plan to increase the number of beginner instructional classes to create more opportunities for new people to engage in the sport.

**Outdoor Skills Development Courses:** these will include on-campus trainings and workshops in outdoor skills areas so students can plan and run their own trips (e.g. equipment, first aid, and navigation), as well as activity-specific skills (e.g. rock climbing at the OA Climbing Wall, canoeing on Lake Carnegie and kayaking in Dillon pool).

## New Collaborations with Campus Partners

In addition to open enrollment programs available to everyone, OA will also be partnering with specific groups on campus who wish to provide ac-

tivities for their members. In the development of the 2019 OA Strategic Plan, committee members met with over a dozen potential campus partners, assessed their needs, and explored opportunities for innovative partnerships. There was significant interest from the campus partners we spoke with for doing collaborative programming with Outdoor Action. The TigerWell grant will provide the resources necessary to pursue a number of these new collaborations, as well as explore additional partnership opportunities.

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# OA Leader Trainers on Growth Mindset



For almost fifty years, OA has been using the principles of values-based leadership to train Princeton students for life on campus and for their future. Here are some thoughts from OA Leader Trainers responding to the question - ***Why did you want to become a Leader Trainer?*** Visit the video link above to watch the full interviews with other Leader Trainers.

## McKenna Brownell '20

My name is McKenna. I am an ecology and evolutionary biology major from southern California. I love OA because although the memories of hiking through the woods and singing songs at the top of our lungs are fantastic and certainly will last me a lifetime, what really has impacted me is OA's emphasis on creating a culture that is driven by growth. That is a trait that carries with me as a peer, as a friend, as a sister, as a daughter and something that I know will continue to follow me for the rest of my life. I'm forever grateful for OA for helping me understand what it means to be growth-minded and intentional in all of my actions and works.

Becoming an OA Leader is a transformational learning experience for Princeton students. In this video, available on the OA YouTube site, Leader Trainers reflect on how OA has impacted their leadership.

Watch the video at: <https://bit.ly/oatrainers>

## Addie Gilson '19

I'm Addie, a Sociology major originally from Providence, Rhode Island. I joined the OA community my freshman year and led my first trip sophomore year. In becoming a Leader I learned so much about leadership and about how to work with very different people whether it be other co-leaders or a group. Those experiences were also a time where I received a lot of feedback in an environment where I felt very comfortable being myself but was also always pushed to grow. I think that OA is really unique because it is one of the only areas of my life where I have received such genuine and intentional feedback with the intent to make me a better leader.

As a Leader Trainer you are not just tasked with leading frosh on an orientation trip but actually teaching future leaders how to lead their own Frosh Trips and so you enter into much more of a teaching leadership role and you have to be a lot more removed. I'm naturally someone who likes to jump in and show people how to do things. I have a naturally directive leadership style. Because of my experience as a Leader Trainer I have been forced to learn the value of stepping back and letting people make mistakes and discover new ways of doing things because of the value of teaching and debriefing that is so emphasized as a Leader Trainer.

# Virtual Alumni Events

Pivoting to work from home and shifting OA activities and Leader Training online has been both a challenge and an opportunity. We've learned a lot about programming in Zoom and doing things online means that we can now offer virtual programs to alumni all over the world.

## OA Presents the Virtual Banff Mountain Film Festival



The first program that we are launching this winter is the Banff Mountain Film Festival. OA has brought this inspirational documentary film series to campus for over twenty-five years. For the first time the Banff Centre is offering an online screening.

They are offering two different film programs this fall from the 2020 Festival. You can purchase tickets for \$15 through their online platform on Vimeo with our personalized link, and a portion of your ticket price will support Outdoor Action.

Purchase Tickets at: <https://bit.ly/oabanff>

## Cason Crane '17 Explores Lessons from Mount Everest

In 2013 at the age of 20, Cason became the first openly-LGBT person to climb Mt. Everest and the Seven Summits - the highest mountain on each continent. He achieved this feat while raising money and awareness for The Trevor Project, a suicide prevention and crisis intervention service for LGBTQ youth. Cason spoke to this year's Frosh Trip participants and leaders about his life lessons from climbing Everest.

- Watch the video at <https://bit.ly/cason17>



## 'Dr. Jud' Brewer '96 - Hacking your Brain to Reduce Anxiety

As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, Outdoor Action and Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) hosted Dr. Jud Brewer '96 MD PhD for a webinar exploring the physiology of anxiety and how we can 'unlearn' millions of years of evolution to be more mindful and less stressed.



Jud, a former OA Leader Trainer said, "I first learned about growth mindset through OA and it changed my entire career trajectory." His TED talk from 2016 has over 15 million views. You'll really enjoy his down to earth and practical insights on how to take control of stress in these challenging times.

- Watch the video at <https://bit.ly/drjudvideo>
- See more at the OA YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/youtubeoa>

## COMING NEXT: Majka Burhardt '98: Thursday, February 18, 2021 - 8:30 PM EST

Majka Burhardt '98, a former OA Leader, professional climber, author and social entrepreneur, will share about Legado—the international conservation organization she founded to protect Sky Islands in Mozambique. Majka will share stories of dealing with climate change, discovering new species, leveraging a team of world-class rock climbers for cliff-side access to scientific research, working as a conservation entrepreneur and more.

Register for Zoom Webinar at <https://bit.ly/oamajka>