

2015-2016 Assessment Final Report

Department: KU Recreation Services

Backpack KU Assessment

Introduction

Assessment Project Description

Backpack KU serves as a bridging program—connecting a small group of KU students as they transition from high school to college. Through an organized trip in the days preceding the start of the fall semester, participants are able to meet new friends, share experiences, and explore a different environment all while enjoying nature.

This project was initiated to assess student participants' perception of the learning that occurs during Backpack KU trips. In addition, this assessment will provide Outdoor Pursuits staff with insight into participants' perception of Backpack KU and possible areas of improvement.

Service/Program Student Learning Outcome(s)

Students participating in Backpack KU will be able to...

- Engage in behaviors that contribute to their overall health, fitness, and well-being. (Departmental Student Learning Outcomes #1 and #3)
- Apply acquired knowledge to new situations to solve an issue. (Departmental Student Learning Outcome #3)
- Develop interpersonal skills that allow them to form meaningful relationships with others and establish a connection with KU. (Departmental Student Learning Outcome #2)

Population/Sample: This survey was administered to all Summer 2015 Backpack KU student participants. 9 student participants completed and returned the survey.

Assessment Method(s): Paper survey administered on site during trip home from Backpack KU experience.

2015-2016 Assessment Final Report

Department: KU Recreation Services

Summary of Key Findings/Results

- Overall, participants indicated they engaged in behaviors that contributed to their health, fitness, and well-being during their Backpack KU experience ($n = 4.30$).
 - Most common behaviors: Well-Being (100.0%), Physical Strength (88.9%), and Time Management Skills (88.9%).
 - Least common behaviors: Ability to Multi-task (55.5%), Physical Fitness (77.7%), and Stress Management (77.7%).
- Participant responses indicated they encountered situations in which they applied acquired knowledge to new situations during their Backpack KU experience ($n = 4.44$).
 - 100.0% of participants agreed or strongly agreed they applied acquired knowledge to new situations to solve an issue.
- Participants' responses indicated that—more than anything—the Backpack KU experience allowed them to develop their interpersonal skills and establish a sense of belonging at KU ($n = 4.83$).
 - 100.0% of participants agreed or strongly agreed they exhibited respect for others, established a sense of belonging, communicated effectively with others, and worked cooperatively with others during their Backpack KU experience.
- In addition to questions related to the stated learning outcomes, participants were also asked if they felt every freshman should participate in the Backpack KU experience. The majority of participants felt every freshman should participate in Backpack KU—citing the opportunity to develop friendships and establish an early connection with KU.
 - 87.5% of participants felt every freshman should go through the Backpack KU experience.
 - Example comments included:
 - “Made so many awesome friends and really helped with my confidence. So much fun. Great trip!”
 - “It was a great way to connect with people without any distractions.”

2015-2016 Assessment Final Report

Department: KU Recreation Services

- “I had a great time! Great intro to college for freshmen.”
- Participants were also asked to provide input on things organizers should consider for next year’s trip. Participants’ comments primarily concerned the need for improved communication and logistical planning. Example comments included:
 - “Explaining more in depth what the trip entails.”
 - “I’m a planner. I believe that what we were doing should have been laid out for us more so we knew what to expect.”
 - “Maybe a little more email communication and a little clearer direction prior to the trip.”

Conclusions

Impact of Assessment

Outdoor pursuits will provide an in-depth trip description, along with participant expectations for the trip. This description will include an outline for each day that we were hiking on the trail. An example itinerary will include the location of our next destination, points of interest along the trail, the location of our next possible campsite, any difficult problems for the day, estimation of miles to be hiked for the day.

Outdoor pursuits will send out a monthly email reminders to participants who are attending the trip until July. Starting in mid-July, Outdoor Pursuits will send out a weekly e-mail that includes the trip destination, points of interest along the hiking trail.

While hiking, we will continue to find a balance between activities and downtime to provide students with a time to reflect on experience each day.

Lessons Learned

While use of the paper survey yielded helpful information on Backpack KU participants’ experiences, the small number of participants offers opportunities to gain more in-depth, qualitative information. For example, a post-experience focus group could have been initiated to gain further insight into participants’ experiences. Participants also could have documented aspects of their trip by responding to journal prompts. Further,



2015-2016 Assessment Final Report

Department: KU Recreation Services

participants could have documented their trip with photos—which could be used in conducting photo elicitation interviews post-trip. These—and other—alternative methods of assessment will be considered should Backpack KU continue.