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Collegebound: history, outcomes and the future of outdoor orientation at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

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Collegebound: History, Outcomes and the Future of Outdoor Orientation



Tyler Thompson '16

Presentation

- Outdoor Orientation Programs (OOPs)
- History
 - History of OOPs
 - Collegebound
- Program Outcomes
 - Collegebound
 - Other programs
- Thesis: Environmental Goals/Outcomes
- Factors impacting the future

OOPs Defined

- Outdoor Orientation programs aide students in their transition to college through the use of adventure experiences- backpacking, canoeing, rock climbing, wilderness travel etc.
- Small groups
- Outdoor setting- skill building and community

Current Research

- *The Census of Outdoor Orientation Programs*
 - Brent Bell, University of New Hampshire
- Requirements:
 - Groups of < 15 students
 - One+ night off campus in outdoor setting
 - Adventure experience

Current Research cont.

- *The Census of Outdoor Orientation Programs*
 - Brent Bell, University of New Hampshire
- Institution Requirements:
 - Four year colleges and universities
 - Primarily residential > 25%
 - Primarily full time students > 50%
 - Accredited bachelor degree provided

**majority of programs fit this institutional profile*

Census Outcome

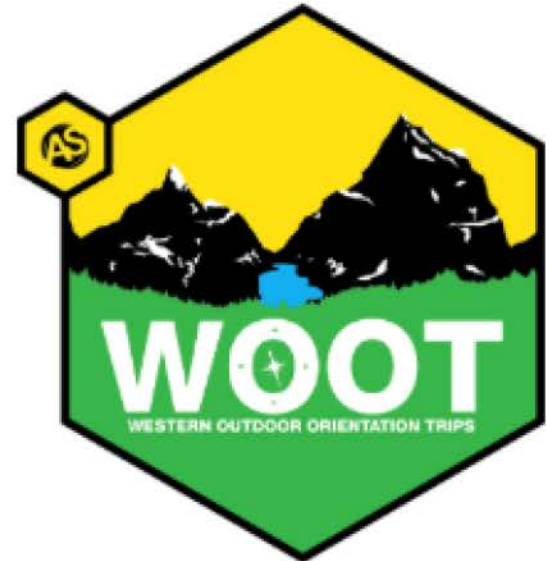
- 2006- 164 programs, > 17,000 students
- 2011- 200 programs, > 25,000 students
- Between 2000-2006 an average of ten new programs were added each year



 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



YALE'S FRESHMAN OUTDOOR ORIENTATION TRIPS



COLLEGEBOUND

TREK

Service • Wilderness

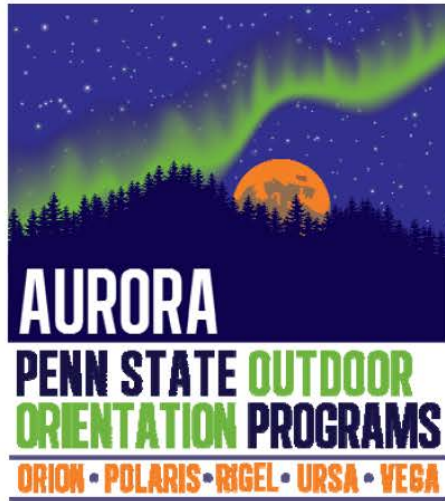
PAWS

Pre-Orientation Adventure for Wildcats
UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

SOAR

Outdoor PURSUIT!





Tufts Wilderness Orientation



History

- 1935- Dartmouth College
 - 1941- Outward Bound
 - 1965- National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)
 - 1968- Prescott College
 - 1971- Earlham College
 - 1978- Harvard
 - 1987- Collegebound
- * Note- Collegebound was NOT the 5th OOP created*

Climbing, paddling and fishing your way toward college: The Collegebound Experience



Portaging canoes is just one of the many challenges of the Collegebound experience.



The Collegebound crew. Author Dave Kirkby is third from the right.

Collegebound: Orientation in the great outdoors

By Vachel Miller
Staff Writer

Most freshmen prepare for college life by shopping for used furniture, worrying about roommates, or watching "Animal House" for a last lesson in toga tying—but who would get ready for St. John's by portaging a canoe through a swamp?

Collegebound students, of course.

Collegebound is an outdoors orientation program offered to incoming SJU students. For five days before the start of school, the Collegebound participants plunge into the wilds of the Boundary Waters and, more importantly, take their first bite into that sweet and sour way of life we call college.

The Collegebound program is innovative and growing. Although colleges everywhere have traditional orientation programs of tours and lectures, only a couple of other schools in the nation offer Collegebound's combination of information and adventure. The program was founded by the former director of the Peer Resource Program, Dr. John Irvine in 1987. Last fall, 13 new Johnnies participated. This year, 19 men made the trip. According to student leader Doug Shey, in the years ahead, "the turnout could be incredible."

Collegebound participants travel in small groups comprised of seven to ten students, two student leaders, and one faculty/staff member. Shey, senior English major and chairman of the PRP Outdoors Group, says he helps with the program because, "Outdoor stuff is my heartthrob."

Shey, fellow PRP leader Bill Laitinen, and dining service director Dave Schoenberg left SJU this fall

with nine freshmen on Monday, August 22. After conquering the Boundary Waters, they returned on Saturday, August 27, hungry to meet the challenges of college life.

Like all good adventures, Collegebound provides challenges and training in outdoor skills. The group left Collegeville in a van stuffed with back packs and canoe paddles—SJU supplied all the equipment—and headed north up the Gunflint Trail all the way into Canadian territory. They put their canoes in at Saganaga Lake. Then they started paddling. They kept paddling all week. Paddle, check the map, paddle. The days floated quietly by as the group traveled up the Granite River, through Trout Bay, and into Northern Lights Lake. Canoeing 10 miles per day through rain, wind, and whitecaps, the students realized how much they really could do. Kazimir Gazdzik, freshman government major, says the trip helped him "find out my strengths" and gave him a fresh confidence for facing college.

In the beginning Shey and Laitinen did most of the work. But as the trip progressed, they handed the responsibilities over to the students. Soon the freshmen were setting up camp, starting fires, cooking and navigating on their own. By the end of the trip, "They were rolling," Shey says. He views this acceptance of responsibility as a valuable aspect of the students' Collegebound experience.

Overall, Shey believes the main purpose of Collegebound is helping the freshmen smoothly shift from high school to college—"to feel comfortable in a new environment." Consequently, the group gathered around the campfire every evening to talk. And they talked and talked until the stars



Group leader Doug Shey explains fish anatomy to participants of the SJU Collegebound orientation program. (Photo courtesy of Sentinel Printing)

poked earholes in the Canadian sky. Typically, the freshmen might have asked about the professors' expectations, how to join a club, or the best way to snag a Bennie. Shey and Laitinen explained the everyday doings of the university; Schoenberg talked about its history and administration. For the freshmen, Collegebound is refreshing because participants can learn about St. John's and about themselves while having an adventure fit for Huck Finn. Laitinen likes it because it "gives 'em a headstart."

By the time the trip is all over, Shey hopes the students have "developed resources." He hopes they now have a better understanding of student life and, primarily, that they have fellow freshmen, two upperclassmen leaders, and a staff member to talk to once school starts. Gazdzik feels one of the best parts of the trip was the new friendships he formed. The students are not alone

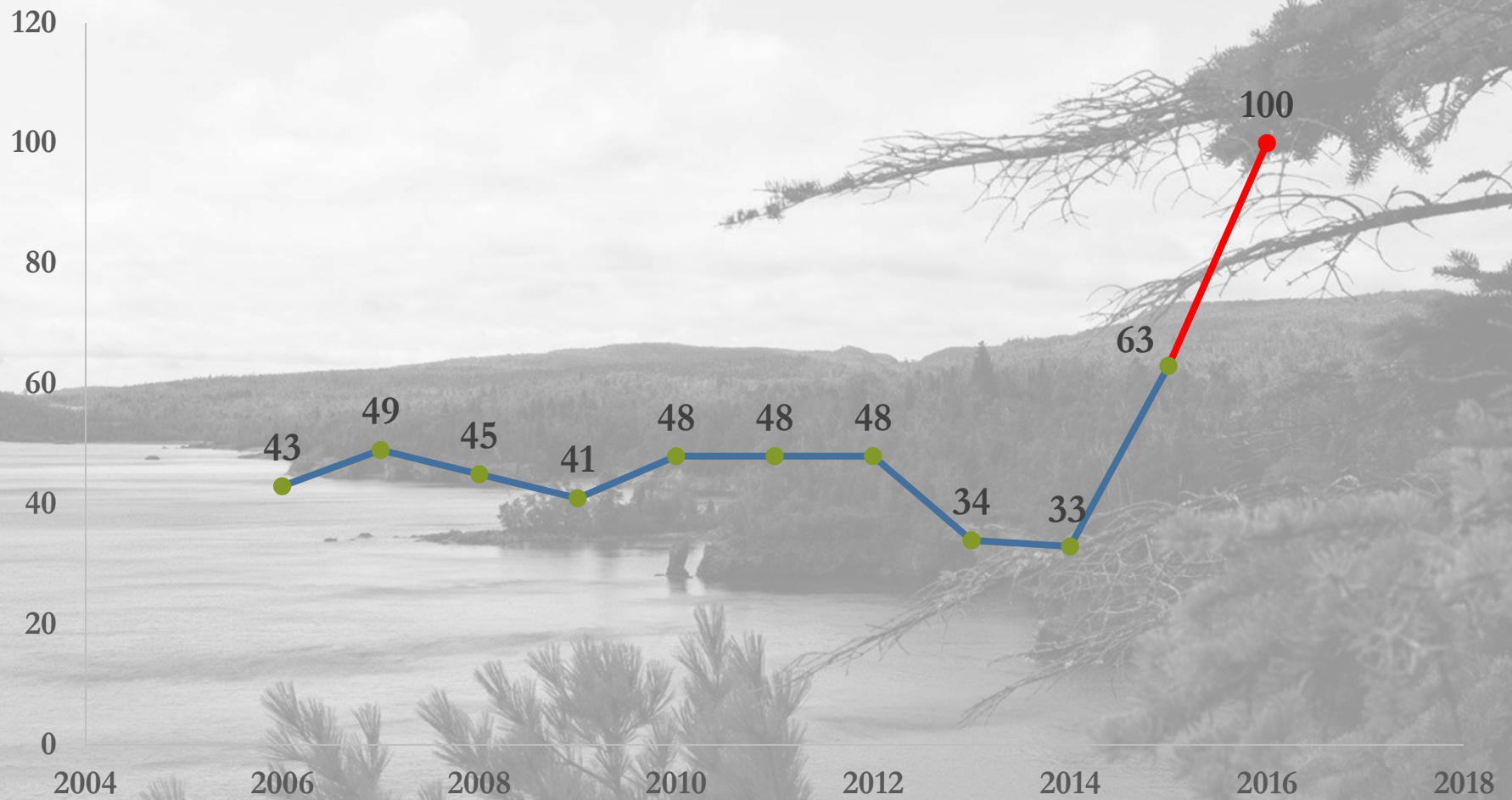
at St. John's. The group will meet together several times during the year to talk over academic and social concerns.

Even after five days of sleeping outside with long portages and wet socks, and without Mom's cooking, Gazdzik exclaims, "I loved it!" Shey feels Collegebound is both educational and enjoyable. He knows that its effects can't really be measured, but he's sure that it makes a difference for first-year students—"It's a good program; it really helps." Those lucky few Collegebound students left home as high school seniors and came back as Johnnies.

The Collegebound program is open to all new St. John's students. It costs \$195, with equipment, travel, and food costs included. Although the program involves rigorous activity, no special outdoor experience is necessary.



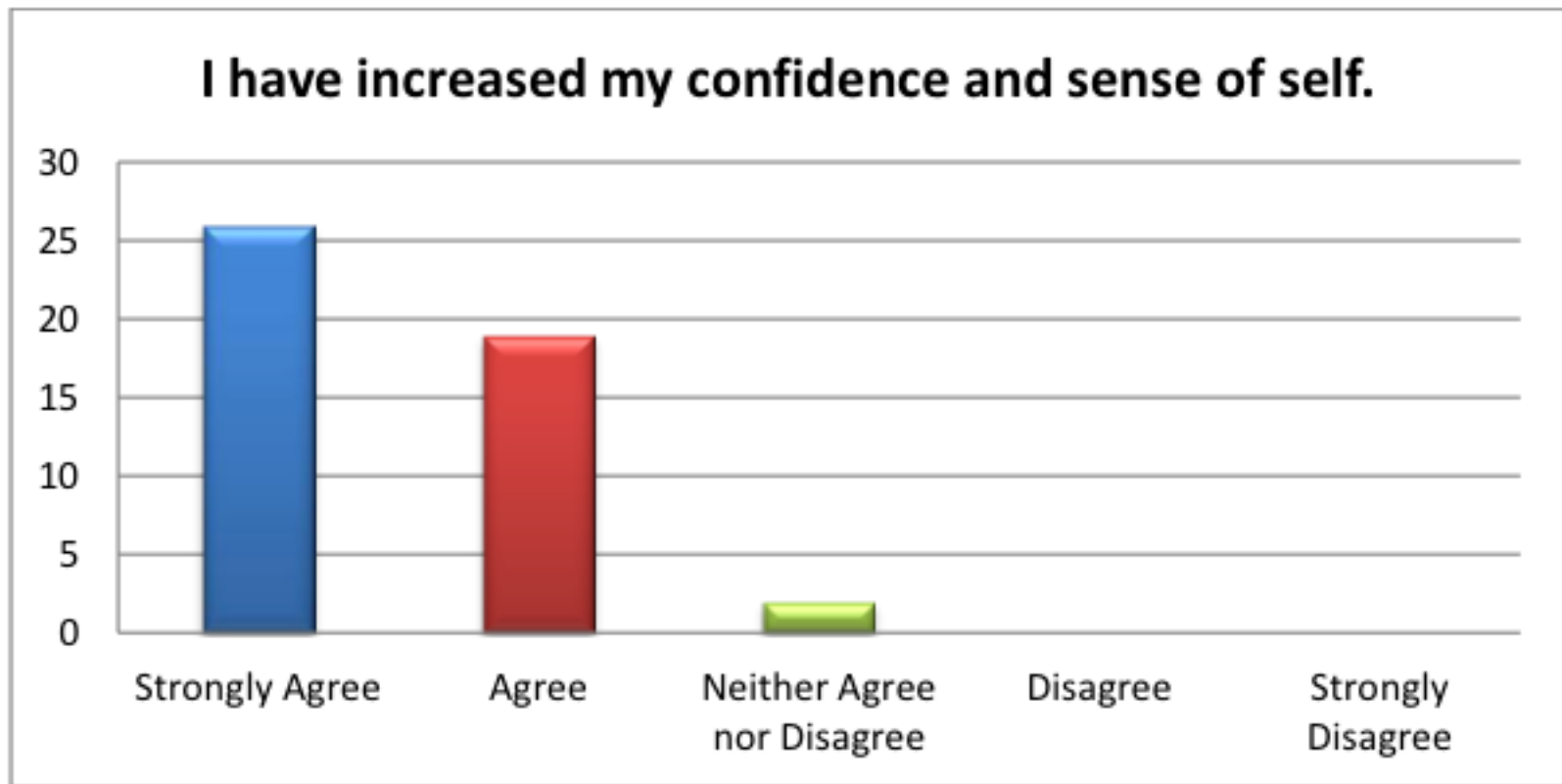
Participation 2006 - Present



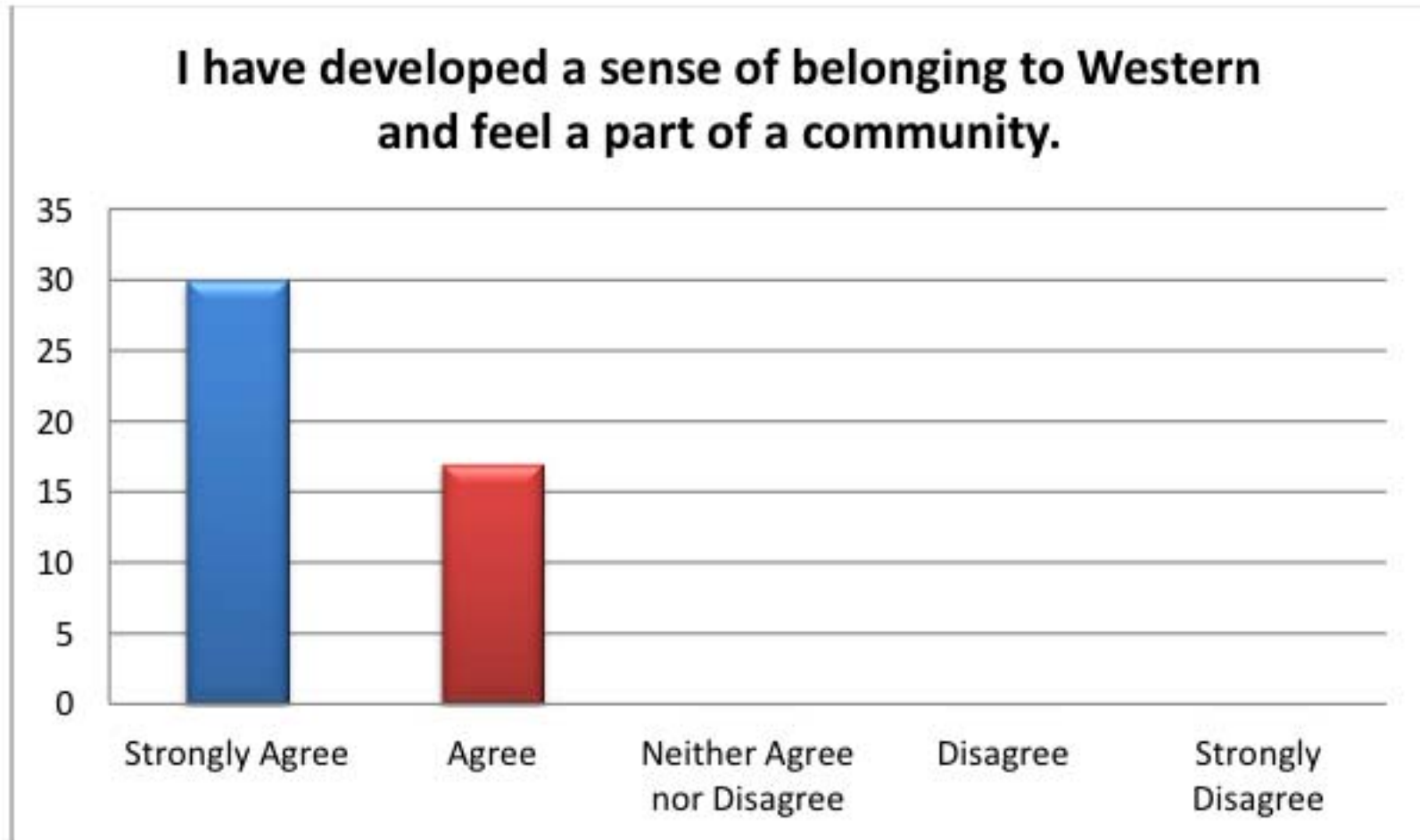
Why OOPs?

- Ease transition, personal growth/benefits, social skills
 - Ease transition
 - Neutral environment/community
 - Personal
 - Confidence, communication, teamwork, personal growth, outdoor skills
 - Social
 - Increased friendship formation, belonging

WWU Survey Results

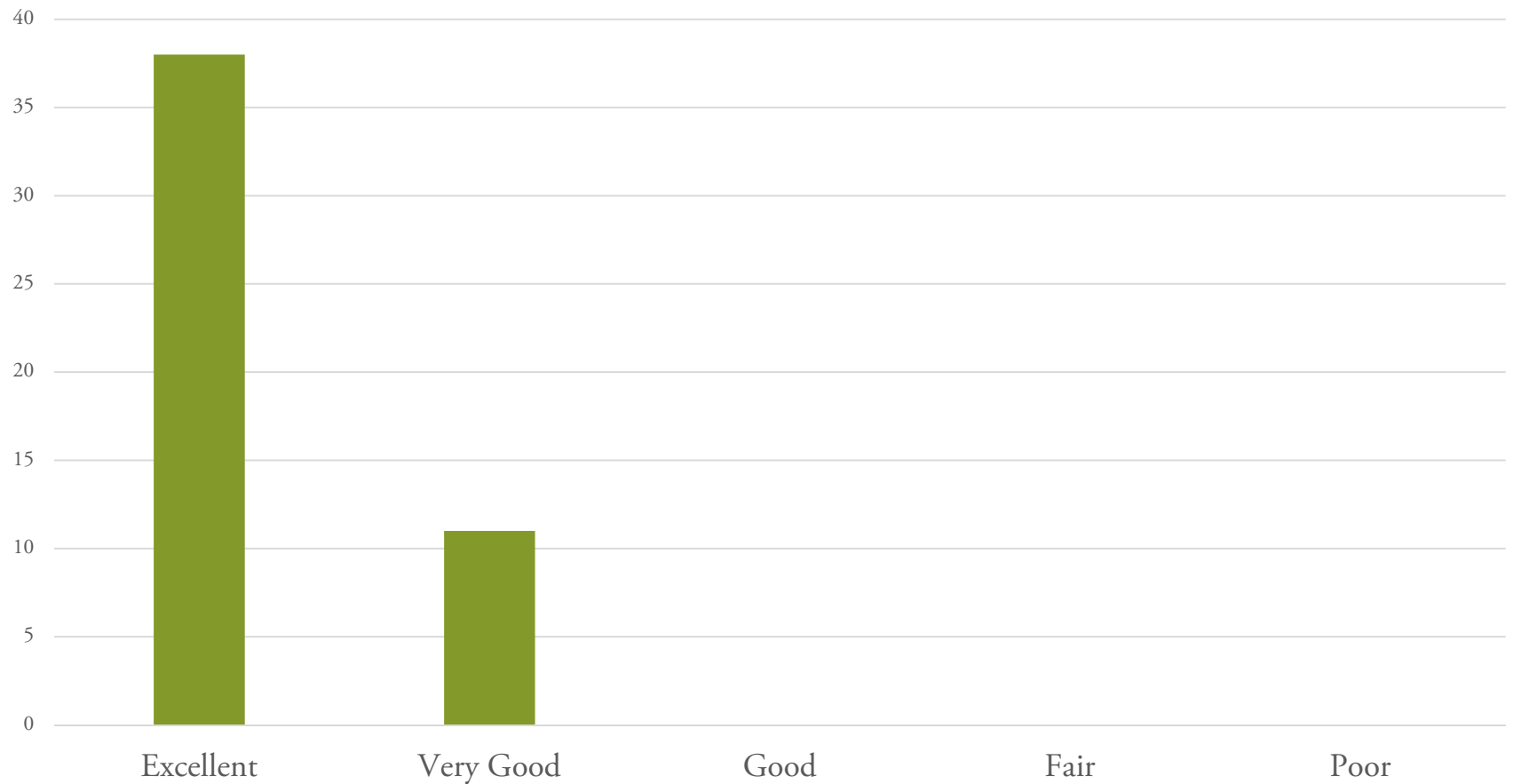


WWU Survey Results



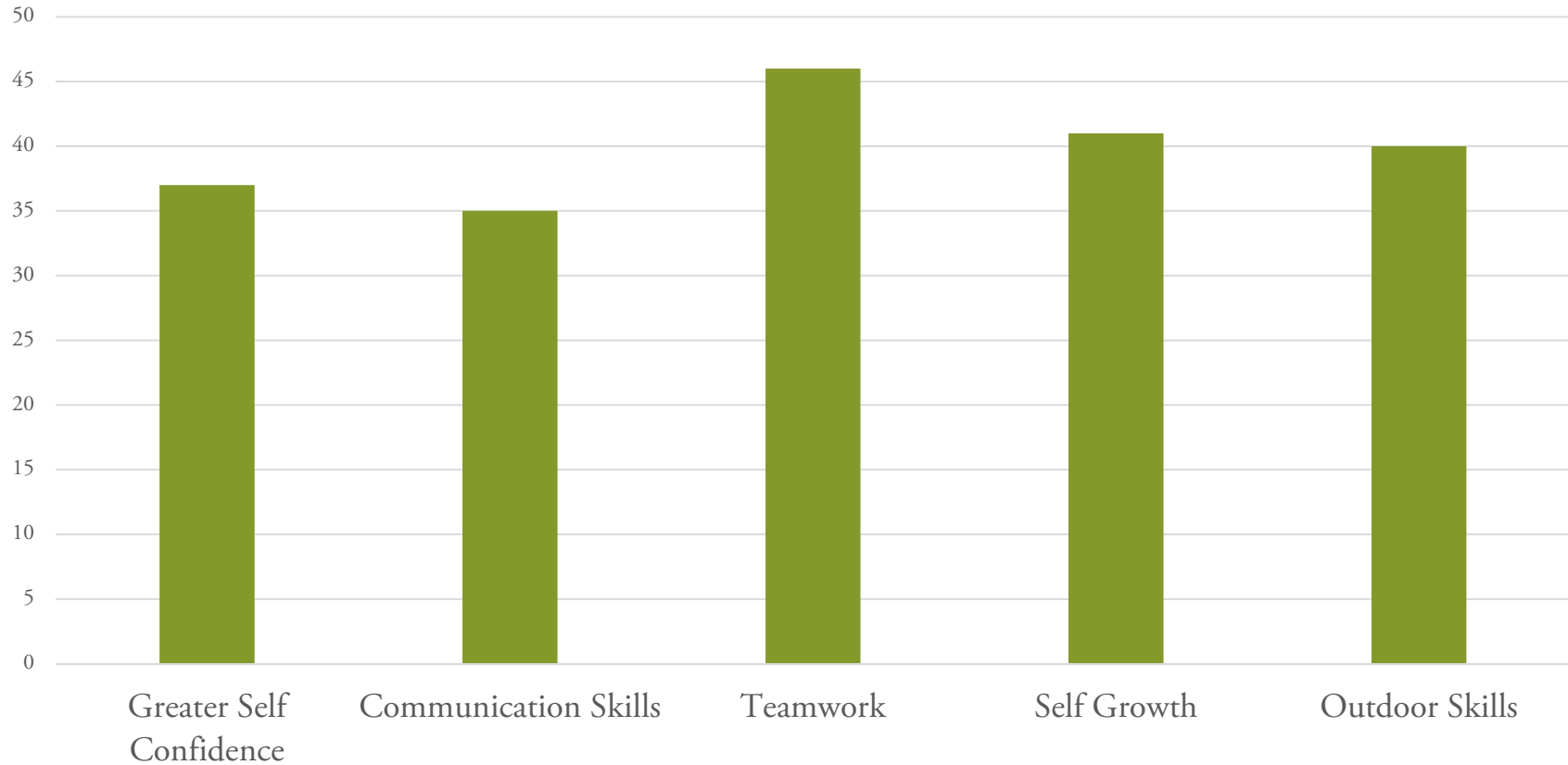
Collegebound Survey Results

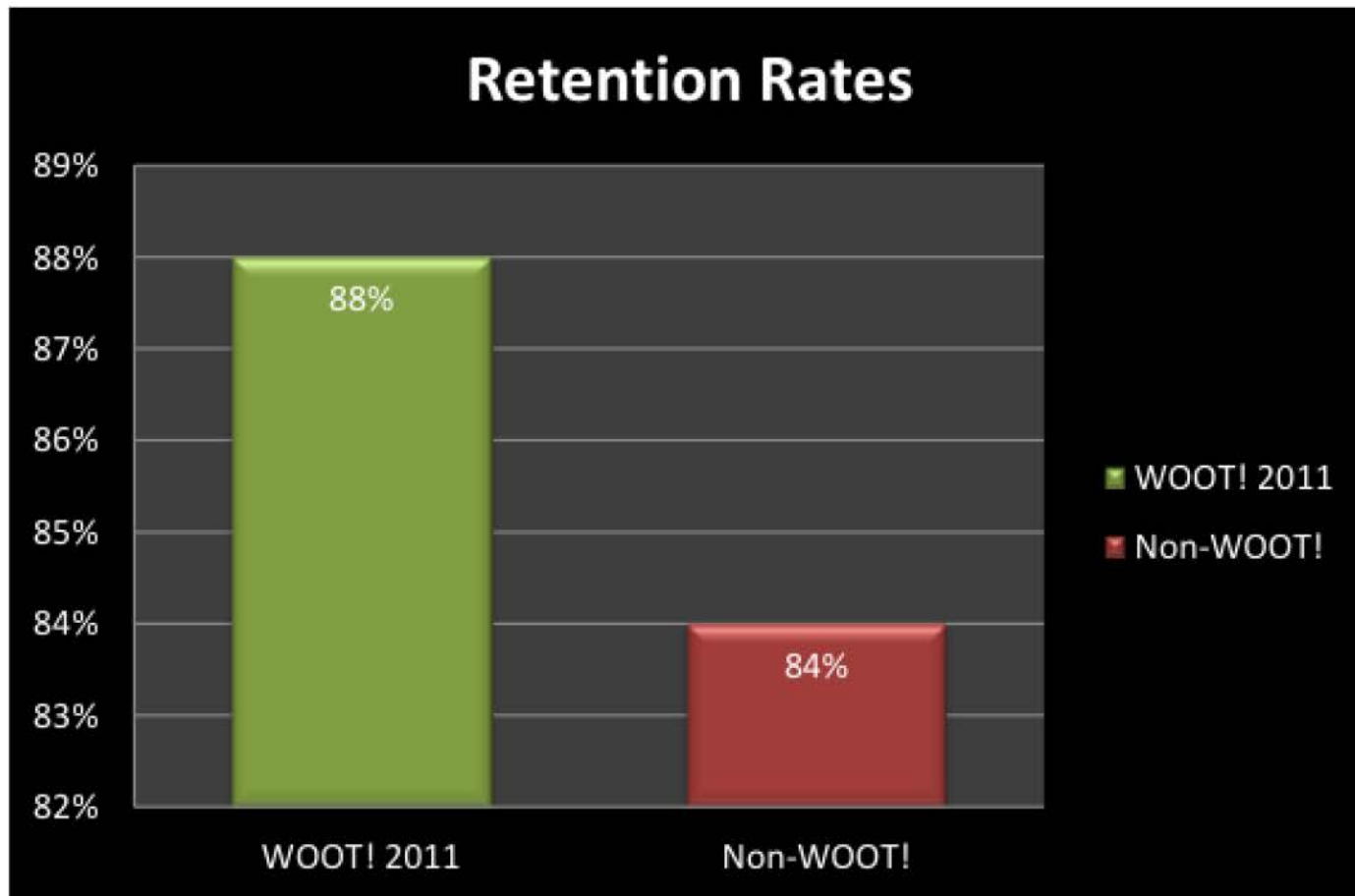
How would you rate your Experience on Collegebound?



Collegebound Survey Results

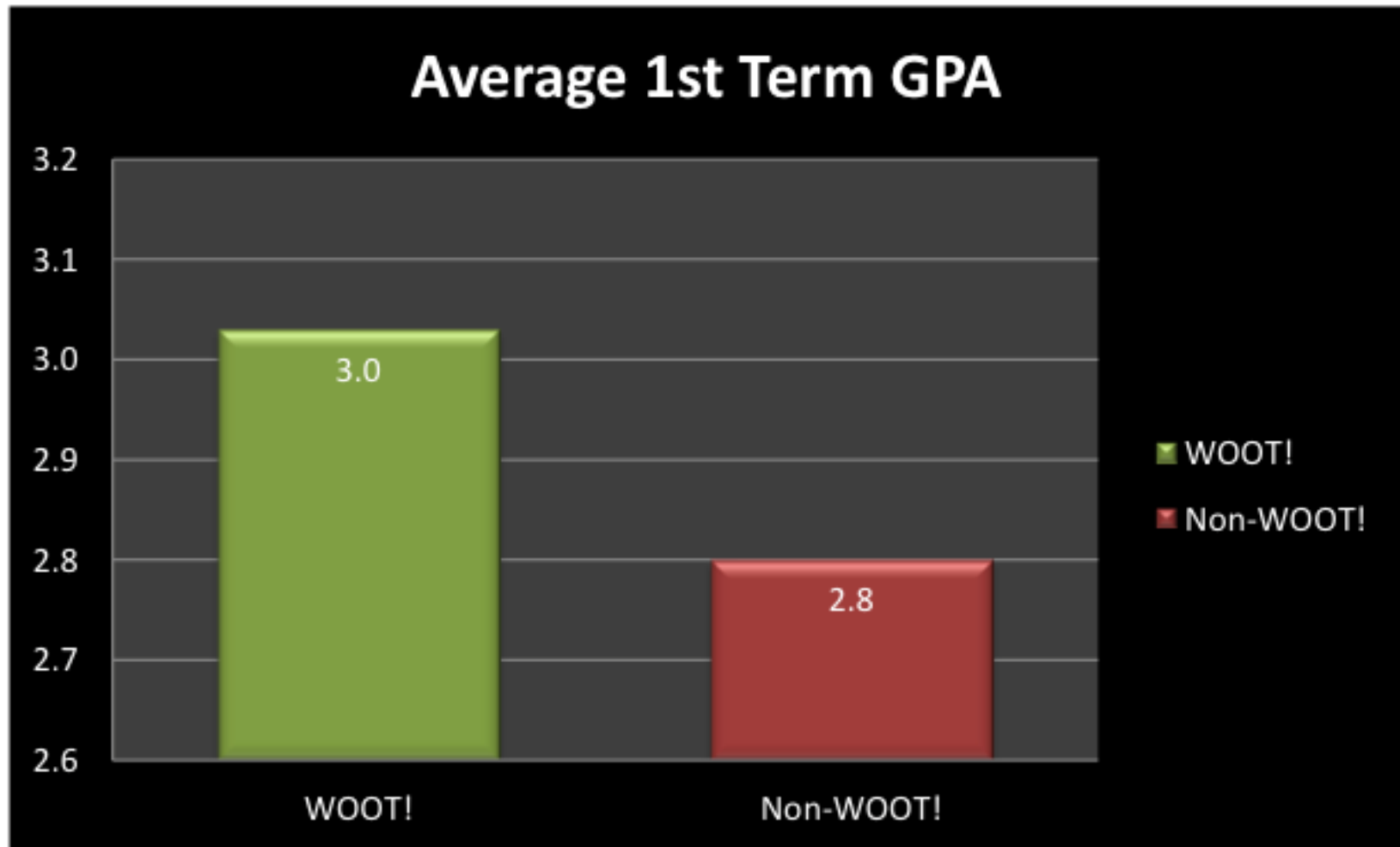
What did you learn or gain from Collegebound
(participants could select multiple answers)





88% of students who participated in WOOT! were retained from their first year to second year as compared to 84% retention rate of students who did not participate in WOOT!

Academic Performance



Retention

- This is why OOPs exist
 - Northland College
 - Hamilton College
 - Colby College
 - Princeton University

- In 2011 10% of OOPs were mandatory

Missing component of OOPs

- Goals, purpose and outcomes are clear
- Missing component regarding the environment
 - An aspect but not a priority
 - Should be an integral part of these experiences

Current goals/actions

- Leave no trace
- Environmental awareness
- Place based connections/awareness of surroundings

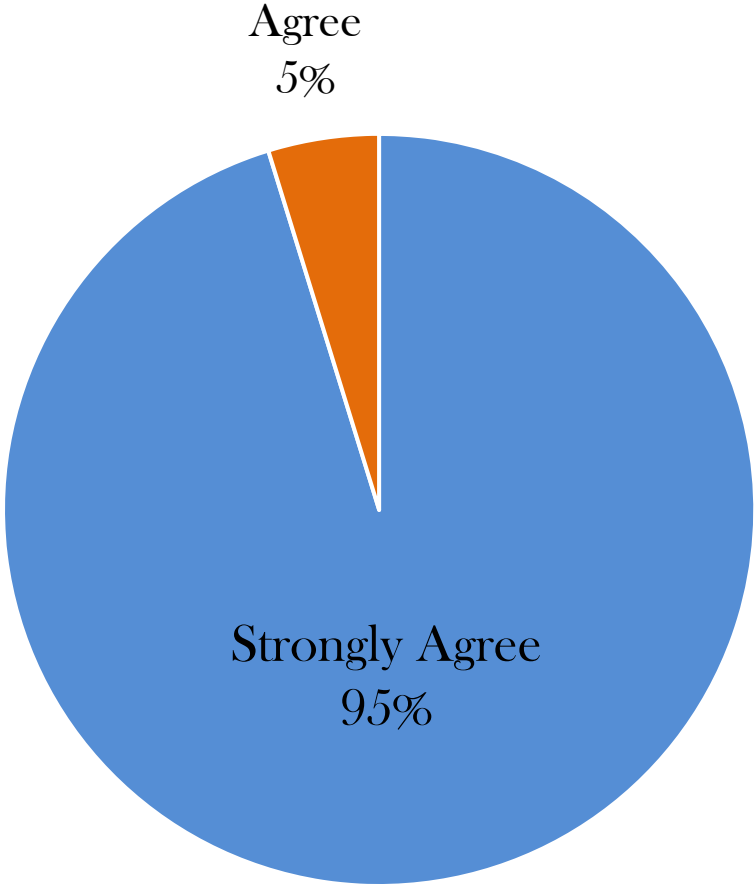
Examples

- Princeton University
 - Sustainability guide, sub goal of “teaching environmental stewardship”
- Northland College
 - Sense of place, value to preserve, conserve
 - Travel < 90 miles, local food/equipment
- Washington University
 - Commitment to environmental ethics, social and environmental justice
 - Create socially and environmentally conscious leader

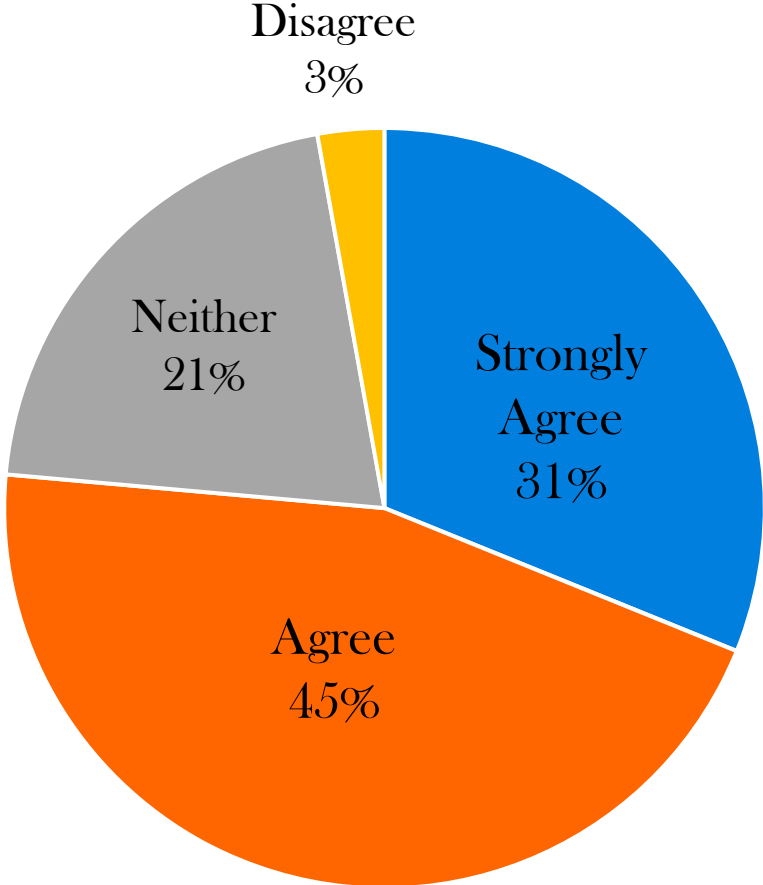
Environmental Outcomes Survey

Year	Number of Participants	Number that no longer attend	Participant retention	CSB/SJU retention	Number surveyed	Response rate
2012	48	10	79%	87%	37	51%
2013	34	3	91%	88%	31	74%
2014	33	2	94%	88%	31	48%
2015	63	0	100%	n/a	63	76%
Total	178	15	92%	88%	162	65%

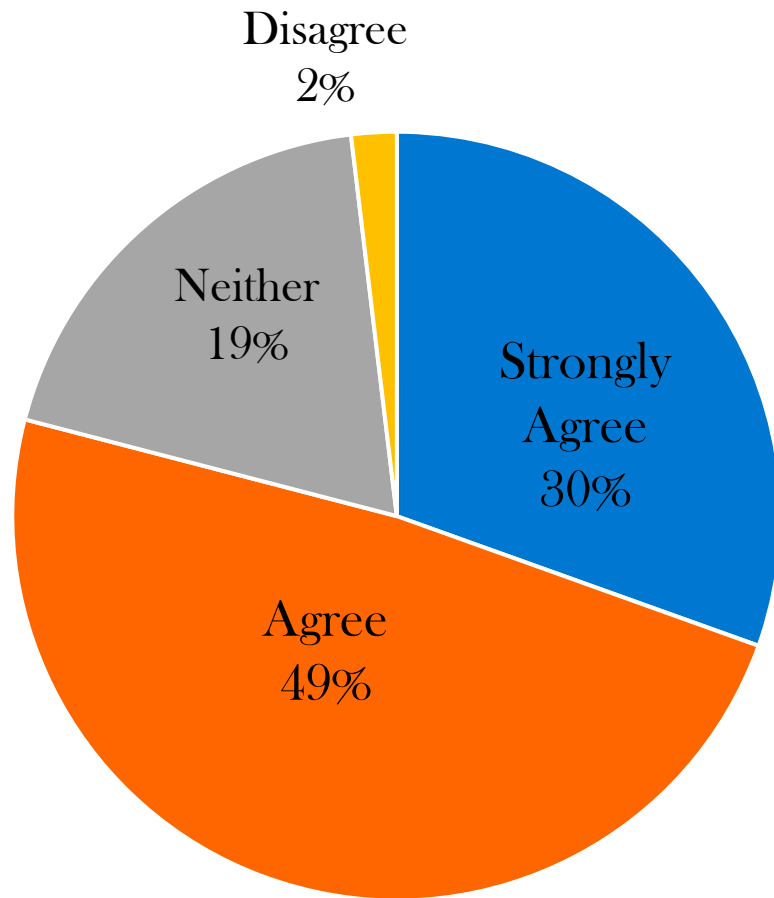
I appreciated the natural environment and wilderness setting that surrounded me during Collegebound



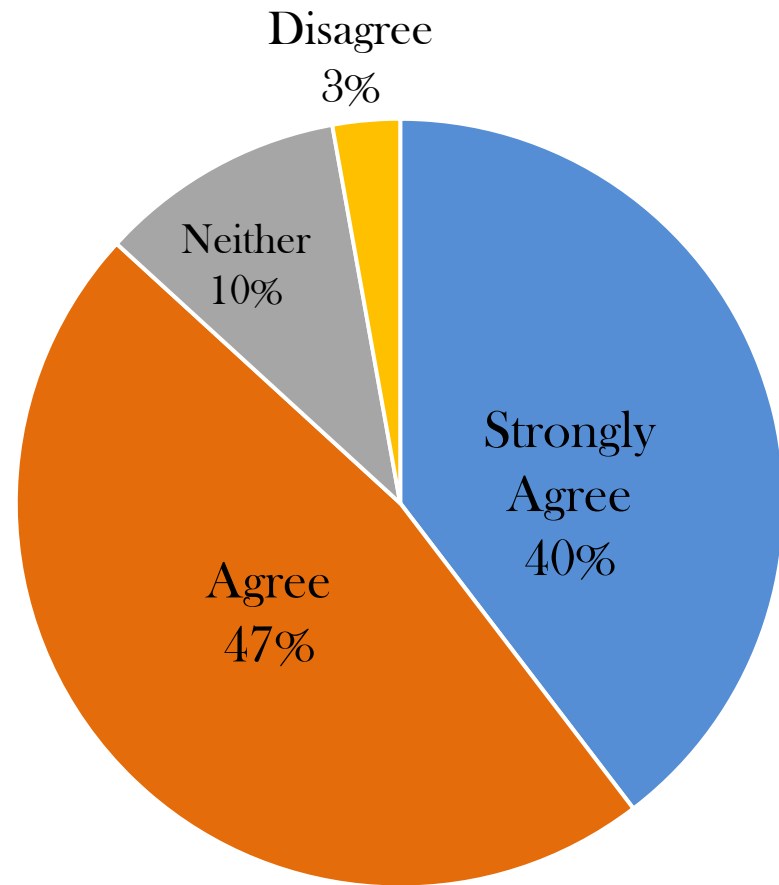
During Collegebound, I developed an outdoor/environmental ethic of my own



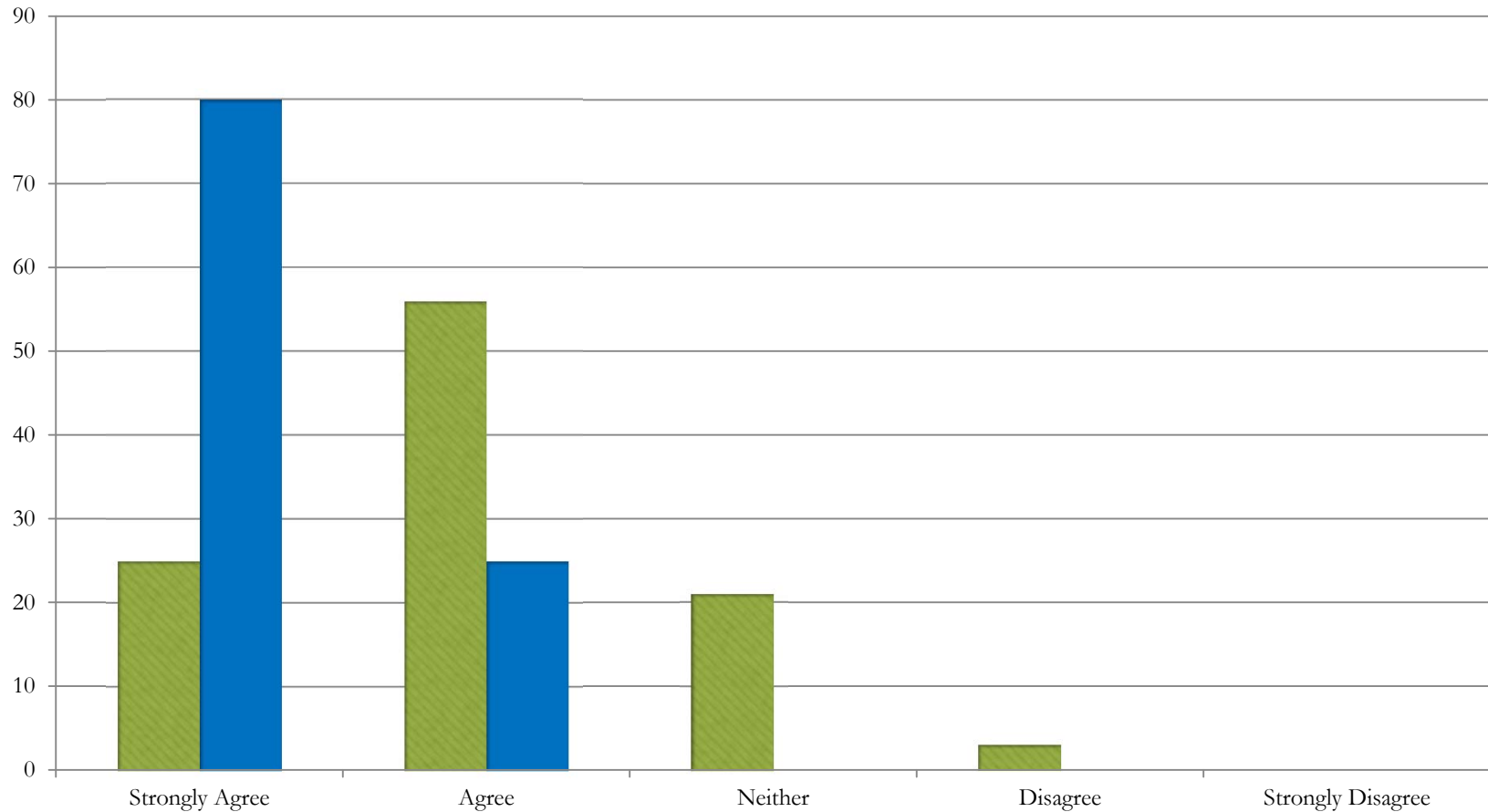
After Collegebound, I feel capable to make environmentally responsible decisions of my own



After Collegebound, I have a greater concern for the natural environment and wilderness in northeastern MN



Protection of Wilderness and the Environment



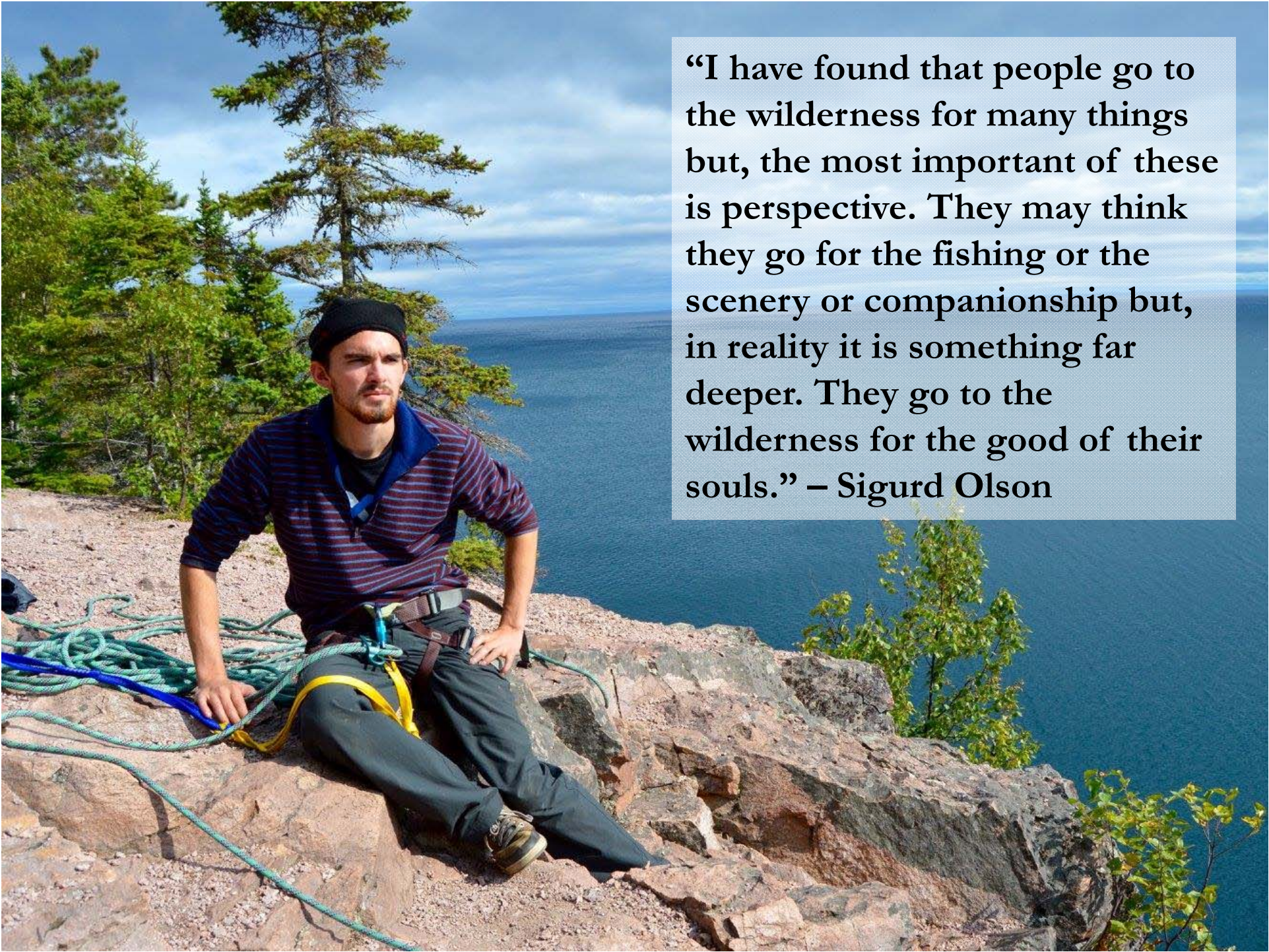
After Collegebound, I feel responsible to protect the natural environment and landscapes that surround us



It is important to protect the wilderness lands and the environment as land around us continues to be impacted by human development

Future Variables to Consider

- Retention
- Academic Success
- Institutional mission, vision, goals
- Participant Demographics
 - Diversity should align with the institution
 - First generation students
- Growth of program to an extent
 - Limited funding, staff, competition
- Community and Exclusivity
 - Limit exclusivity to the extent possible

A man with a beard and a black beanie is sitting on a rocky cliff edge. He is wearing a blue and red striped polo shirt, dark pants, and a climbing harness. He is surrounded by climbing ropes in shades of green and blue. The background features a vast, deep blue lake or sea under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. There are green trees on the left side of the cliff.

“I have found that people go to the wilderness for many things but, the most important of these is perspective. They may think they go for the fishing or the scenery or companionship but, in reality it is something far deeper. They go to the wilderness for the good of their souls.” – Sigurd Olson



Thank you

Questions?

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