Mission Statement

The mission of the WOOT! Program is to support, enhance, and ease the transition into Western for first-year students through outdoor adventure.

History

The WOOT Program was born in 2010 through the AS Outdoor Center. The first trip consisted of 10 first-year students who participated in a week of backpacking, paddling and rock climbing in the Chuckanut Mountains and Bellingham Bay. After seeing the positive impacts of the WOOT Experience, funding was provided for a 3-year pilot program and WOOT has been steadily growing ever since, serving over three-hundred incoming freshman so far.

WOOT’s Role in Student Lives

Immersion into Western’s culture by sharing experiences exploring the wilderness of our region facilitated by well trained compassionate trip leaders who are themselves members of the Western community. With a wide range of skill levels in mind WOOT experiences are designed to help incoming students acclimate to their new environments, begin building friendships, and work both as an autonomous person as well as an integral part of a team.

“This trip helped me transition for college. In the sense that I was able to set myself aside from my past life. I had a new perspective on where I came from and how different everyone’s lives were. I was humbled by it and also became more independent I feel even though I considered myself very independent before the trip.” - 2015 Survey Participant
Trips To Date

2010 - Pilot Program (1 Trip – 10 Participants - 3 Trip Leaders)

2011 – Year 2 (3 Trips – 26 Participants – 9 Trip Leaders)

2012 – Year 3 (5 Trips – 45 Participants – 15 Trip Leaders)

2013 – Year 4 (7 Trips – 63 Participants – 21 Trip Leaders)

2014 – Year 5 (7 Trips – 63 Participants – 21 Trip Leaders)

2015 – Year 6 (14 Trips – 124 Participants – 30 Trip Leaders)

2016 - Year 7 (18 Trips – 141 Participants – 30 Trip Leaders)

1 - Transitions Trip
10 Summerstart WOOT Trips
7 Fall WOOT Trips

Question
What is the impact of WOOT on college freshmen and retention?

Variables Studied

• Belongingness
• Engagement
• Social Integration
• Nurturance
• Trust (of Leaders, of Participants, Overall)
• Academic Integration
• Social Acceptance
• Academic Curiosity
• Communication
Retention Rates Associated with WOOT

Participation in the WOOT Western Outdoor Orientation Trip as an extended orientation activity has an overall positive correlation with higher retention.

More than half of the WOOT participants have academic index scores over 61 which historically corresponds to higher retention at WWU overall.

Overall, the retention rate for freshmen who participated in WOOT was 6.8% higher than the WWU freshmen retention benchmark.
Western Outdoor Orientation Trips

Program Recognition

- Outstanding scores on 2014 National Outdoor Orientation Benchmarking Survey. WOOT scored well above average on engagement and several trust variables.
- Presented at fall 2015 Outdoor Orientation Program Symposium at the Association for Experiential Education International Conference regarding continued outstanding performance.

Moving Forward

- 22 scholarships for 2016 WOOT Program
- Goal to place 1 scholarship student on each trip
- $9,900-$12,100 in scholarship funding

Total of 22 WOOT Trips offered Summer/Fall 2016
- Tentative participant registration fee $450-$550 (Not yet finalized)

"That is why WOOT is so important. It's not just about orienting us to the school, it's not just about giving us connections before we start, it's about letting us deal with whatever baggage we brought, about leaving it behind. It allows us to heal."
- 2014 Survey Participant

For a glimpse into what a WOOT experience really looks like scan the QR code.