

EXIT PAPER

Included in Comprehensive Exam

Directions: Respond to each question as honestly, accurately and completely as possible.

At the beginning of the paper include the following information in the order below:

- Amelia Richards
- Minors: Accounting and Art & Design
- ORLM Declaration: Fall 2013
- Anticipated graduation date: December 2016

Questions:

1. What do you personally hope to accomplish through your work in the Leisure Services profession?

Personally, I hope to engage people in experiences that inspire them to learn more and care about the environment, others, and themselves. I want to be an educator and environmental advocate through fostering not just access to information, but inspiration to discover, create and play. People take life too seriously, myself included, and I hope that through working in the Leisure Services Industry I can help people breathe a little easier and find joy in the world. Whether I end up with a career in parks, guiding, or higher education, my goal is to share the love of learning and connecting with our natural world with as many people as possible. Connections with nature should not just be focused on the youth. While they are an important demographic, many forget about the other 80% of the humans on this planet who need to take a step back and connect with the world a little more through time in nature, positive interactions with others, building self-efficacy, and developing life long skills through play and recreation. Inspiring others in the love of life, learning, and discovery is my goal no matter which branch of the Leisure Services Profession i end up following.

2. What do you see as your strengths as an Outdoor Recreation Leadership and Management senior?

I love learning simply for the sake of it which applies well in the academic environment. I put my full self into each project I do no matter how small, which translates to good grades, but more importantly a solid foundation and understanding of the theoretical concepts within the ORLM program. Leadership theory, group development, learning models, trip planning, and program assessment all fascinate me to no end. I love the teaching aspects and personal leadership development built into the experiential projects and assignments within the ORLM courses. My public speaking skills have improved dramatically since declaring this major and my interpersonal communication skills overall have been heightened through the many group projects and interactive class activities. While Outdoor Recreation is the fun and experimental portion of my education, I think I excel most in the Leadership and Management components.

3. What do you see as your weaknesses as an Outdoor Recreation Leadership and Management senior?

I would really like to take the time to develop my field skills further so that I am comfortable with more technical aspects of recreation such as climbing, outdoor cookery, navigation, and working with equipment (stoves, bikes, skis, etc.). While I am eager to learn, I would like to develop my proficiency in these areas before leading expeditions or guiding. Steps I am taking to improve on my technical skills include taking an elective course on Navigation next fall and increasing my own usage (thus understanding) of gear and equipment in my own free time.

4. In what areas would you most like to improve?

I am continuing to focus on improving my oral communication skills so that I can convey thoughts and information to any audience with clarity and confidence. I would love to develop my performance skills a bit more so that any presentations or even conversations I have can be more engaging and memorable.

Also, as I stated above, I am pursuing more and more opportunities to experience time in the field and working on my technical skills. These are both areas in which you can always develop more skills and wisdom to help in decision making and to support your leadership in any backcountry situation.

Through my time in the ORLM courses I have developed a great base for both communication and technical experience, however I look forward to focusing on developing these even further after graduation.

5. For each of the following academic skills listed below, complete the following:
- i. Identify your present competency level in each of the following academic skills: (Use poor, fair, good, excellent to identify level)
 - ii. Indicate whether or not your present level has improved since your beginning semester. (Use "improved" or "stayed the same")
 - iii. Indicate the academic or "real-world" experiences that have positively impacted your competency level

List of Academic Skills:

- a. Critical/analytical thinking
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Applying the theoretical foundations to experiential learning activities really forced me to analyze the situation and determine which action to take as well as reflect on my experience in a critical manner. One of the more notable experiences was the trip component of RE356 in which every single day we were analyzing situations and demonstrating critical thinking to make sound decisions and leadership choices. Each night we reflected on our (and other's) decisions to further our understanding of various theoretical concepts.
- b. Clear reasoning/understanding in each of the following:
 - 1) Logical
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Discussion and learning various models of leadership, learning and group development helped improve my logical reasoning in the sense that I can better identify patterns in real life behavior and logically anticipate the next move someone (or myself) should make.
 - 2) Mathematical
 - i) Good
 - ii) Stayed the same
 - iii) I possess a basic understanding of approximately college algebra level mathematics which have served just fine in my daily world. Most math is found in unit conversions, navigation, and budgeting. The only higher math I really encountered in ORLM courses was statistical analysis for research data in RE467.
 - 3) Scientific [identify the type of science(s)]
 - i) Good
 - ii) Stayed the same mostly
 - iii) I find myself mostly interested in the natural sciences to the point of understanding what things are and how they relate to one another and myself. Ecology, observational astronomy and natural history are the areas I can claim most knowledge in. Some I have learned through ORLM experiences such as Interpretation and Stewardship, however most of my scientific knowledge is based in grade school experiences and personal curiosity.
 - 4) Analogical (ability to discern similarities in some respects between things otherwise unlike)
 - i) Excellent

- ii) Improved
 - iii) My participation in various honors classes have given me a lot of experience in comparing pieces of literature, art and social trends to one another to determine parallels and potential influence on each other.
- 5) Metaphorical (ability to compare using a word or phrase associated with one thing to apply to another)
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Training in interpretation and pedagogy forced me to come up with creative and relatable ways of explaining resources and skills to a variety of learning styles and individual interests. My experiences in Art & Design courses also gave me experience in expressing a message in a way without explicitly writing or showing it.
- c. Creative thinking
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) I have always love to find new ways of looking at the world and have exercised my creativity through art, music, and play since a young child. Within this major, assignments often leave plenty of room for creativity in the personalization of topics and design of program. Each teaching assignment, program, game and presentation of ideas was always left to our own choosing of method and level of entertainment/engagement. RE251, RE381, and RE410 particularly gave a lot of opportunities to express creativity.
- d. Programming
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Obviously, RE362 Program Design in Leisure Services taught me a lot about the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs. I took this information though and applied it to this past summer during my internship with Ada Parks and Recreation. Each week we had to simultaneously implement one major kids day camp and plan for the next one all summer long. I was able to apply the skills I learned in class to make myself more efficient and effective during my work over the summer.
- e. Risk management
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Each ORLM course addresses risk management in some form or another, though RE251, RE356, and RE362 covered the topic with the most depth. In RE251 we explored the types of risk as well as how one handles them as an instructor. RE356 addressed the physical, psychological, social and legal risks associated with going into the field on an expedition (even if just for a night) and RE362 helped clarify the documentation and approval process when working with various types of organizations.
- f. Interpretation
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) RE381 and RE382 focused on both guided and self-guided interpretation. Both courses helped develop my skills immensely as before I was not even familiar with the term “interpretation” beyond it acting as a synonym for language translation. Through these classes though I discovered that I really enjoy interpretation as a method of learning as I firmly believe that one does not actually “learn” something until they care about it. Enthusiasm and passion are the building blocks of a good education and something which needs to be addressed in the modern western education system.

- g. Preparation of lessons
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Many ORLM classes are focused on building skills centered on teaching and conveying information. As future guides, educators, interpreters and advocates no matter which branch of the leisure industry you follow, the preparation of information meant to be passed along to others is a key skill to have. The core lower level classes (RE250, RE251 and RE261) gave me the most practice writing lesson plans and critiquing others plans. I was fortunate enough to have spaced these classes out in my time as an undergraduate. This helped immensely in keeping me refreshed, reminded and inspired to continue to be aware of how much time and energy I was actually putting into the preparation of lessons and presentations.

 - h. Presentation of lessons
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Many ORLM classes are focused on building skills centered on teaching and conveying information. As future guides, educators, interpreters and advocates no matter which branch of the leisure industry you follow, the presentation of information is a key skill to have. The core lower level classes (RE250, RE251 and RE261) gave me the most practice teaching and presenting lessons to my peers. I was fortunate enough to have spaced these classes out in my time as an undergraduate. This helped immensely in keeping me refreshed, reminded, and inspired to continue to be aware of my presentation skills and the methods in which I chose to convey information.

 - i. Planning adventure and/or outdoor experiences
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) RE356 taught me a lot about trip planning. We covered budgeting, food preparation, risk management, creating an itinerary, and gear distribution during the few months leading up to the trip component. Real life experiences include planning for day trips while working at Ada Park, prepping high school students for a long weekend rock climbing in the Red River Gorge, and my own personal outings by myself or with friends.

 - j. Leading adventure and/or outdoor experiences
 - i) Excellent
 - ii) Improved
 - iii) Leadership is built into many of the ORLM classes and I participated in the Student Leader Fellowship Program which helped develop my skills even further. As with most things though, I've learned the most through actual experiences leading and observing others lead outdoor experiences. I was leader of the day during RE356, which was an interesting experience leading my peers and being the decision maker despite an instructor being with us. I've also lead plenty of outdoor experiences (both day trips and overnights) while responsible for youth of all ages.
6. Write a response to a NMU parent's questions, "What can you do with an Outdoor Recreation Leadership and Management degree?" and "How does ORLM contribute to the Leisure Services industry and profession?"

Ahh, the age old question every ORLM major has been asked during the repetitive and inevitable interrogation of one's life plans... My response usually begins with the obvious: Park Ranger, Parks & Recreation (yes it's exactly like the TV show), guiding services (yes I could get paid to show people nature and how to do cool things in it, yes it's a lot of work), and being a camp counselor (or alpha camp counselor if you've been around long enough to become an administrator). At this point people stop guessing, but I keep talking: "One could work in the ecotourism industry, become an interpreter

(what's that? cue rant), practice wilderness therapy, save people's lives with wilderness medicine, fight wildfires, and make environmentalism less scary and more fun!" Just to name a few. To sum it up for people I answer why ORLM is important to leisure services and society: "ORLM essentially trains us to connect people with the outdoors. We help people create social, psychological and physical bonds with the natural world and this is slowly changing how we, as a society, view our world. With increasing populations, higher usage of resources and need for land, it's vital to help society grow in a sustainable way. For the natural world's sake and for our own well-being we need to start taking care of our little blue and green planet better because it's the only one we've got. People have negative associations with environmentalism after years of fear and doom being spread on the issue. The shock value is gone. People just don't like environmentalism anymore. It's our job to change that. ORLM connects the public to the natural world in a positive and emotional way. We create environmentalists through play and optimism. For the world to change people have to care; it's getting there but it's our job inspire, protect, educate and help people see how amazing our planet actually is. We're basically superheroes; saving the world one recreational experience at a time."

7. A. Using APA format, cite the literature and/or texts which you have read related to the Outdoor Recreation/Leisure Services profession that you believe have the most meaning or usefulness for you as an entry-level professional.

1) Raffan, J. (2002). *Deep Waters: Is the Adventure Worth the Risk - the Lake Timiskaming Canoeing Tragedy*. Toronto, Canada: Harper Collins.

2) Louv, R. (2005). *Last Child in the Woods*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

B. Identify why each of the items listed in (A) has meaning or usefulness.

1) *Deep Waters* was a reality check for any aspiring guide or educator. We seem to beat hypothetical Risk Management to death, but one doesn't truly understand how quickly things can go wrong until they've either experienced it or (the better option) experienced it secondhand. As people who are currently or will be responsible for people's safety in the backcountry, it's vital that we recognize every trip as a real risk to ourselves and those in our care. While no one really likes dwelling on risks associated with the backcountry it's important to prepare for the worst because even a well planned trip with experts can suffer bad luck. That's what makes the backcountry such an experience: the real risk. If there wasn't a risk the experience would not be so impactful. Mother Nature shows no mercy nor bias. She's random and we, in accepting that we're mortal, must prepare for that. Accepting this is real Risk Management. The story in those pages proves that and one really can't understand such a situation until they're exposed to it.

2) *Last Child in the Woods* affirmed all of my suspicions that modern kids need to play outside more. It's something we grew up hearing and is a common message today, yet this book helped me understand *why* play in the outdoors is so important. Building forts, catching frogs, stomping mud puddles... these experiences all encourage connections with the environment. Camping trips with the family, nature walks, and time spent in parks all create little environmentalists and adults who will continue to embrace these activities throughout their lives. Not only does outdoor play foster all of that though, playing outside teaches kids far more than they'd ever learn from sitting inside tinkering with man-made objects in a sterile environment. Kids who play outside learn about the real world. They experiment with basic physical properties and learn Newton's laws before they even learn how to add or subtract. Kids who play outside learn about pain and death through falling out of trees and discovering a fox's kill site. They have better immune systems from eating dirt and more imaginative minds from creating fairy homes and chatting with the squirrels. Kids learn about risk, about group roles, about tools, and develop an appreciation for the outdoors that never would have come about if they stayed inside and supervised. For any person who wants to work with kids or even have children of their own, this book is inspirational and answers *why* time playing outside is so important.

8. What have you learned about yourself through your experiences and courses in the ORLM program?

College has a funny way of simultaneously maturing one into a responsible adult yet sheltering a person from the “real world”. I was halfway through college by the time I started the ORLM program, but my experiences in the courses, my exposure to new ideas, and my time spent with others deepened how I went about living my life. During grade school, I kept to myself; living in my head, through the keys of my piano, and determining my self worth based on the grades I received. College came and I jumped through the exciting social hoops, threw myself into my studies, and didn’t think too hard about life. In some ways that life was preferable; no, easier. I finally forced myself to choose a major after looking at every single little informational card on the 200-odd majors offered. What did I really want to do with my life? “Play outdoors! Sounds rad. Let’s go with that so people stop judging me for being undeclared as a sophomore.” Little did I know how passionate I would become about this program. Classes began and they were novel and exciting. I bragged about playing tag and snowshoeing for class while my friends suffered through organic chem lab and lecture. As the projects intensified and I jumped up to the 300 level classes, I found myself jazzed about the higher expectations and workload while many of my classmates groaned and fantasized about climbing. This was when I realized that I was slightly out of place, being the passionate academic that I am, and started to get intimidated by the climbers and the people who have worked outside every summer since they were old enough to even apply. I doubted whether I had the technical skills to actually be a good guide or whether I was tough enough to keep up with the *true* outdoorsmen. This was a vital crossroads in Amelia’s new self. I wasn’t used to not being the best in something. I wasn’t used to having to keep up or feeling incompetent. My whole life, I just stuck with what I knew. New skills were scary and held the potential for failure. I felt like every person in the program secretly judged me for not having enough experience, for not being a climber, or never having lead an outdoor trip. (Of course I was totally wrong, but the realization of this didn’t come till after my life changing epiphany) I doubted myself and thought about quitting, majoring in business or something. Mind you, my grades were good. I was actually excelling in each new thing I tried. This was a psychological challenge. I stuck it out though and amazing things happened. I took my first step towards beating my affliction of perfectionism. ORLM taught me that life isn’t perfect. The world is full of the unexpected and challenges. It’s imperfect and that’s what makes it beautiful. While learning to help others step out of the comfort zone, I pulled back from my panic zone into a new state of being: stretch. While I’m still working on curbing the negatives of my perfectionism and channelling it into positive, hard work; my time in ORLM has shown me that my self worth doesn’t have to be determined by a grade. Of course I still try my best, but there is more to life than the percentage written on the top of your test. Experiential learning was the best thing that ever happened to me and I want to pass that on so others can increase their self efficacy, confidence and connection with the world. ORLM taught me how to be appreciate experiences for what they are, trust in others, and live a connected and meaningful life: all things that would have taken me much longer to realize had I not picked up that little informational flat 2 years ago.