



# Campus Challenge

## 2014 Impact Report

## **The Urgent Issue: Inactivity**

Today's young people spend 50 percent less time outdoors than the generation that preceded them — contributing to a global inactivity pandemic as well as a major gap in environmental appreciation and stewardship. The statistics are staggering. An average young person spends 8 hours in front of a screen each day and just minutes outdoors. Access to open space is increasingly limited: less than 20 percent of youth live within a half-mile of a park or trail. And, research shows, the largest decline in activity is among college-aged youth who no longer have easy access to team sports — representing an enormous outdoor activation opportunity.

## **The Solution: Outdoor Nation**

Spearheaded by college students across the country, Outdoor Nation works to engage, empower and activate a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts — resulting in a population that is both healthier and more active as related to outdoor issues, causes and decisions. Today, Outdoor Nation represents the largest and most active community of young people championing outdoor participation and recreation.

## **The Strategy: Campus Activation**

In a pilot program this fall, Outdoor Nation launched a first-of-its-kind Campus Challenge where 10 colleges competed "head-to-head" to determine which school could get the most people outside and active. Think Mother Nature Meets March Madness. The Challenge capitalized on school spirit and peer-to-peer activation to reach new audiences and reinforce a healthy lifestyle message at an age when many students are forming the habits, values and brand allegiances they will carry the rest of their lives.

Over the eight-week contest, schools leveraged the assets and infrastructure of college campuses with the ideas, energy and ingenuity of college students to engage new audiences in the outdoors. Outdoor programs and outing club members often served as lead organizers for the Challenge — planning school-wide activities, promoting individual participation and, in many cases, introducing new outdoor activities to spark initial interest. The most successful leveraged official school communication channels, developed new partnerships and created student-organized campaigns to promote outdoor recreation. Ultimately, the student body built a stronger outdoor campus community and culture.

## **The Result: Unprecedented**

The Outdoor Nation Campus Challenge inspired:

**43,000 outdoor activities**

Led by nearly **8,500 college students**

Earning a **social media reach of 3.5 million**

And that is just the beginning...

## Participant Survey

To measure impact and engagement, Outdoor Nation conducted a survey of Challenge participants as part of a rigorous evaluation process to understand and analyze results. Within a few hours, hundreds of people responded with overwhelmingly positive feedback. The message? A strong endorsement of the initiative as an effective way to increase outdoor participation, raise awareness of outdoor opportunities and engage new audiences.

On an individual basis, 79 percent increased their outdoor recreation activities as a result of the Challenge. Perhaps more important, 95 percent believe that the Challenge is effective in motivating "outdoor novices" to get outdoors and 93 percent believe their campus community is more aware of outdoor opportunities due to the Challenge. Below are additional survey findings:

95%



believe that the Challenge is effective in motivating "outdoor novices" to get outdoors.

93%



believe their campus community is more aware of outdoor opportunities due to the Challenge.

92%



will participate the Challenge next year.

84%



believe that the Challenge will drive lasting interest and participation in outdoor recreation.

82%



invited others to participate in the Challenge.

79%



increased their outdoor recreation activities as a result of the Challenge.

60%



organized others to get outdoors as a result of the Challenge.



# Champions

## School Highlights

Champions went beyond just those who won the Challenge (keep reading to find out who won!). Participating schools went to extraordinary lengths to activate their campuses and engage their communities. Below are just three examples of successful campus activation.

### James Madison University: Harrisonburg, VA

Perhaps the most creative college was James Madison University (JMU), which promoted and incentivized participation through mini-challenges, videos, blogs, social contests and diverse partnerships. Students kicked-off the Challenge by producing a video to encourage participation and holding a festival on the Shenandoah River that attracted hundreds of students. Watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncaRe4xL40>.



To inspire self-organization, JMU created the Peakbagger's Challenge, which provided prizes to those who completed eight regional hikes. In addition, student-organizers held scavenger hunts using Outdoor Nation-provided prizes to incentivize outdoor recreation.

To broaden the scope of its outreach efforts, JMU partnered with the Office of Disability Services to offer free open climb days on its high ropes course and highlight adaptive elements. This event diversified participation by offering an alternate form of outdoor recreation and educating participants about adaptive recreation. The students also worked with the Center for Multicultural Student Services to showcase Expedition Denali — the first all-African American Denali climbing attempt in 2013 — and to lead a guided hike after the presentation. The final event, in collaboration with the University Program Board, was held at its University Park where prizes were awarded for participation in the Challenge and mini-challenges.

I originally participated in the Challenge because I wanted to win some prizes, but it quickly turned into being more and more active every day.

- Ashley P.

### Spelman College: Atlanta, GA

In 2011, Outdoor Nation provided a small grant to students from Spelman and Morehouse, two prestigious Historically Black Colleges, to start SpelHouse a first-of-its-kind, joint outing club. Three years later and under the leadership of its second president, Atarah-Sheba Young, the outing club has expanded to include a third school, Clark Atlanta, and was selected to compete in the Challenge.

The Spelman Campus Challenge kick-off meeting was standing room only with nearly 50 students discussing new ideas to engage students in the outdoors. More than any other school, Spelman redefined outdoor recreation in a way that was culturally relevant to its student body and community. One of its first events was an outdoor festival on campus that featured music from Chill Vibes, poetry by Next Great American Poet, art by several local artists and entertainment by Shmoney Dance — drawing over one hundred students.



Based on this success, student organizers reached out to campus partners beyond music and art to include sustainability and garden groups and the wellness community. Throughout the Challenge, outdoor activities were fully booked and limited only by funding for transportation and gear. The visibility of the Challenge has attracted support from several faculty members, helping to strengthen and expand the renamed Spark-House Outing Club.

## The Winners

The Outdoor Nation Campus Challenge achieved overwhelming participation in its pilot year, but there was one school and a few outdoor champions that emerged as the most committed outdoor participants. Without further ado, the winners of the 2014 Campus Challenge...

### National Outdoor Champion



Big congratulations to the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (CSB/SJU) which logged the most outdoor activities — more than 16,000! — out of the ten competing schools. CSB/SJU proved that size doesn't matter. With a student body of just 3,800, a fraction of most of their competition, CSB/SJU focused on multi-tied marketing and community building.

Largely under the student leadership of Jillian Birkholz, CSB/SJU took full advantage of the early registration period by signing up hundreds before the Challenge even began. Marketing strategies included the prominent placement of the Challenge throughout the school's website; daily posts on social media platforms; posters and flyers across campus; numerous emails to students, faculty and alumni; and articles in the school newspaper.

In addition, the student-organizers developed a "Dorm Ambassador" program which trained students to be experts on outdoor campus events and resources for outdoor activity organizing. Professors even got involved by holding classes outside.

The outreach worked. More than 1,900 community members participated, making up 26 percent of the total competitors.

The newly-crowned National Outdoor Champion wins a campus-wide celebration, outdoor gear, bragging rights and more!



## Outsiders of the Year

Five competitors stood out from the other 8,000-plus participants, logging an astounding number of outdoor entries. These Outsiders of the Year truly walk the walk and will soon be sporting head-to-toe outfitting from The North Face. Here is a little bit about the winners, in their own words.



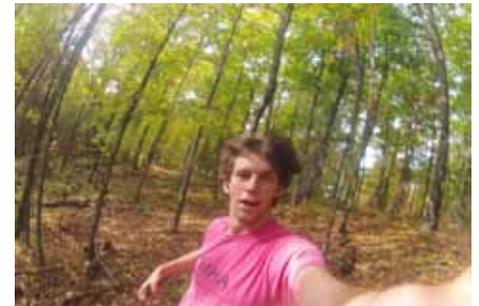
**Nathan Miller, Michigan Technological University**

"The Challenge definitely encouraged me to go outside more on rainy days when I'd normally stay inside plotting what I'd do when the weather cleared up."



**James Ablang, California State University, Long Beach**

"I participated in the Challenge because I love the outdoors, and I wanted to show that it's not hard to find time in day to do an outdoor activity. And, I love being part of competition — especially an outdoor one like this Challenge."



**Vincent McLain, Michigan Technological University**

"I certainly got outside more than I normally do. With how busy school can be, it can be difficult to spend a lot of time outside during the week. During the Challenge, I did some rearranging of my schedule in order to get my 2.5 hours of outside time a day."



**Emma Gummerson, Appalachian State University**

"Joining the Outdoor Nation Campus Challenge gave me the opportunity to hold myself accountable and allocate time to spend a precious bit of my day relaxing outside."



**Pearce Jensen, College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's**

"I went outside more as a result of the Challenge. Instead of choosing to watch a movie or something, I would explore outside. I also believe that my friends and our campus as a whole got out more during the competition as it provided a little extra push to get outside."

Being part of the Campus Challenge made me jump at any outdoor activity...

- Kurt T., Michigan Tech





# Marketing

Outdoor Nation launched a custom website, [www.onscampuschallenge.com](http://www.onscampuschallenge.com), for participants to log their outdoor activity entries, share their photos and track their progress. The site featured a leaderboard that reported on the Challenge in real-time.

To promote participation in the Challenge, Outdoor Nation also developed a branded marketing toolkit with web banners, flyers, posters and e-cards for each school to customize with their own logos and messages. A key strategy for each college was to leverage official school marketing and communication channels to promote the Challenge through websites, social media and e-blasts to students, faculty and alumni. Student organizers covered their campuses with flyers, postcards and posters and secured articles in their school newspapers. And it worked! According to the participant survey, 93 percent of students believe their campus community is more aware of outdoor opportunities due to the Challenge.

## Outdoor Nation Outreach

Outdoor Nation's dynamic online community of Campus Challenge participants was regularly informed and inspired across social media platforms. From September 27 to November 22, the reach of such efforts was an impressive 3,569,701 impressions.




# School to Student Outreach

## New Partnerships

To reach new audiences and form lasting relationships, student organizers reached out to a variety of programs and departments to generate interest and drive participation. As mentioned, James Madison University reached out to the Office of Disability Services to offer "open climb" days and partnered with the Center for Multicultural Student Services to present Expedition Denali. In addition, Michigan Tech engaged fraternities and sororities that sparked school-wide interest. Data from the participant survey shows that 95 percent believe that the Challenge is effective in motivating "outdoor novices" to get outdoors.

## Official School Channels

School communities on each campus embraced the Campus Challenge, and many of the schools featured it on official school websites. Taking ownership of the Challenge, each college found unique ways to activate its community. Through official school website and social media channels and campus e-blasts, the competition took hold on participating campuses.



Official College E-blast



Official College Website



Official Social Media Platforms

## Peer-to-Peer Activation

One of the most important factors of school success was the peer-to-peer promotion of the Challenge. Indeed, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were critical to the overwhelming success of the Campus Challenge. Participants and schools shared their activities across social media platforms, activating new members, engaging new audiences and redefining what it means to be “outdoorsy.” Over the eight-week competition, social media saw heavy use of the hashtag #outdoornation.



Stay tuned for information about the 2015 Campus Challenge. Building on the 2014 success, the 2015 Challenge will be bigger and better!

I can say for certain that I was able to encourage others to go outside with me more, for which I thank you.

-William L.

## **The Outdoor Foundation**

The Outdoor Foundation is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and growing future generations of outdoor leaders and enthusiasts. Through ground-breaking research, youth engagement and community grant-making, the Foundation works with young leaders and partners to mobilize a major cultural shift that leads all Americans to the great outdoors. In just five years, the Foundation has invested \$4 million into more than 500 not-for-profit and college programs that have connected nearly 200,000 young people to the outdoors. Importantly, 90¢ of every dollar goes directly into this critical work. Visit us at [OutdoorFoundation.org](http://OutdoorFoundation.org).

## **Outdoor Nation**

In 2010, the Foundation launched Outdoor Nation, a pioneering initiative that empowers young leaders to champion the outdoors on campuses and in communities across the United States. The successful initiative has engaged tens of thousands of youth and invested in hundreds of innovative projects spearheaded by young leaders and change-makers. Visit us at [OutdoorNation.org](http://OutdoorNation.org).

