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Human-Powered Programming

Kevin Curry '92
Linfield College

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Human-powered programming




The kayaks push off onto the glassy, early-morning Willamette River. Overhead, an osprey circles, glancing down to search for its morning meal... or maybe to check out the flotilla. On the water, 10 Linfield students paddle gracefully downriver toward their destination at Champoeg State Park.

Linfield has long bragged about its perfect location in the Pacific Northwest. After all, it's just an hour from the coast, a couple hours from the Cascade Mountains and minutes from great hiking, kayaking and fishing opportunities.

This academic year, the school is doing more than bragging. Linfield has started an outdoor recreation program featuring overnight backpacking trips along the Three Sisters, kayaking, excursions to rock climbing gyms and day hikes throughout Oregon. It is also offering outdoor education opportunities, like wilderness first-aid training.

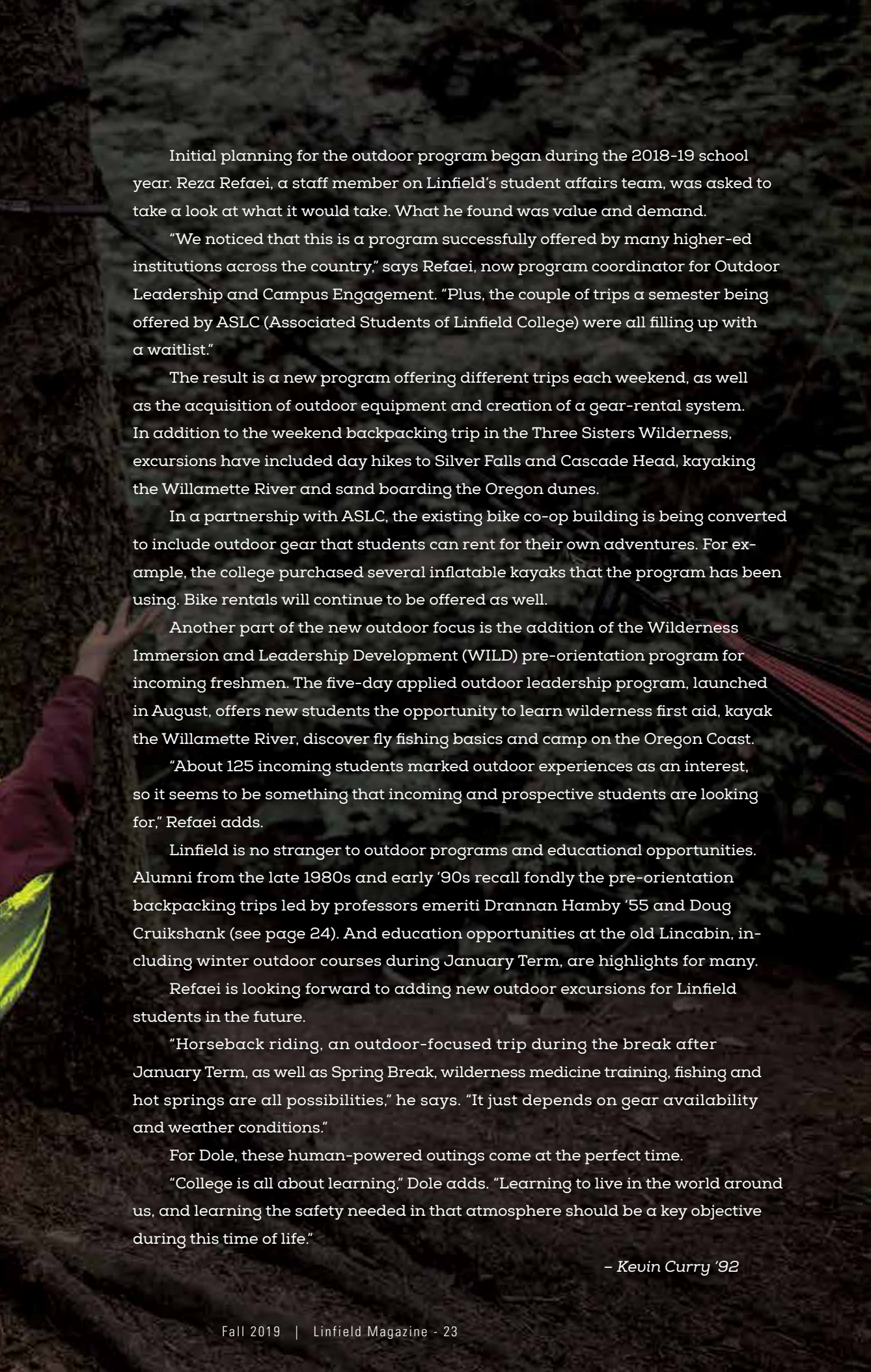
The new program has students like Cameron Dole '20 eager to explore the opportunities.

"This program will get students excited about Linfield. Other schools in the Pacific Northwest already have them. It finally puts Linfield in the mix," Dole says. The senior from Helena, Montana, loves anything outdoors and 'human-powered' and is looking forward to fishing, backpacking, rock climbing and rafting.

A photograph of two people relaxing in hammocks in a forest. The person in the foreground is in a brown hammock, laughing with their mouth open and arms raised. The person in the background is in a green and yellow hammock, smiling. The background is a dense forest with many trees and green foliage.

"About 125 incoming students marked outdoor experiences as an interest, so it seems to be something that incoming and prospective students are looking for."

— Reza Refaei, program coordinator for outdoor leadership and campus engagement



Initial planning for the outdoor program began during the 2018-19 school year. Reza Refaei, a staff member on Linfield's student affairs team, was asked to take a look at what it would take. What he found was value and demand.

"We noticed that this is a program successfully offered by many higher-ed institutions across the country," says Refaei, now program coordinator for Outdoor Leadership and Campus Engagement. "Plus, the couple of trips a semester being offered by ASLC (Associated Students of Linfield College) were all filling up with a waitlist."

The result is a new program offering different trips each weekend, as well as the acquisition of outdoor equipment and creation of a gear-rental system. In addition to the weekend backpacking trip in the Three Sisters Wilderness, excursions have included day hikes to Silver Falls and Cascade Head, kayaking the Willamette River and sand boarding the Oregon dunes.

In a partnership with ASLC, the existing bike co-op building is being converted to include outdoor gear that students can rent for their own adventures. For example, the college purchased several inflatable kayaks that the program has been using. Bike rentals will continue to be offered as well.

Another part of the new outdoor focus is the addition of the Wilderness Immersion and Leadership Development (WILD) pre-orientation program for incoming freshmen. The five-day applied outdoor leadership program, launched in August, offers new students the opportunity to learn wilderness first aid, kayak the Willamette River, discover fly fishing basics and camp on the Oregon Coast.

"About 125 incoming students marked outdoor experiences as an interest, so it seems to be something that incoming and prospective students are looking for," Refaei adds.

Linfield is no stranger to outdoor programs and educational opportunities. Alumni from the late 1980s and early '90s recall fondly the pre-orientation backpacking trips led by professors emeriti Drannan Hamby '55 and Doug Cruikshank (see page 24). And education opportunities at the old Lincabin, including winter outdoor courses during January Term, are highlights for many.

Refaei is looking forward to adding new outdoor excursions for Linfield students in the future.

"Horseback riding, an outdoor-focused trip during the break after January Term, as well as Spring Break, wilderness medicine training, fishing and hot springs are all possibilities," he says. "It just depends on gear availability and weather conditions."

For Dole, these human-powered outings come at the perfect time.

"College is all about learning," Dole adds. "Learning to live in the world around us, and learning the safety needed in that atmosphere should be a key objective during this time of life."

– Kevin Curry '92