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Research Paper

Educating “The Whole Person”:

Instilling Independence, Wellness, & Community Engagement through Milwaukee’s Natural Space

As I have lived and grown on campus at Marquette University over the past couple of years, I have learned that in the college student world, time is everything. The idea that higher education should focus students on acquiring a degree and getting a job is fading away as a new culture takes over. The college experience has become so much more than sitting in class 15-18 hours a week, keeping up with homework, and studying for exams. Jonathan M. Orszag, Peter R. Orszag, and Diane M. Whitmore have found that more than 60% of students today are simultaneously working jobs while attending classes, battling absurd increases in tuition costs. Activities with clubs, on-campus events, community service requirements, social commitments, and even eating necessities all vie for their time, blocking out almost every bit of free space on their gridlocked schedules. Rebekah Nathan notes the way students’ individualism has been taking precedence over community building through these hectic and overwhelming lifestyles. Wrapped up in all these responsibilities and obligations, I have to ask: what are we doing? Why are we confining ourselves to such a small space in which we work? How can we really “be the difference” as Marquette preaches and participate in learning when so many forces are constricting us from reflecting on who we are and what we really want to do?

Smartphones, high definition televisions, music systems, laptops, and gaming consoles all command and inform our short attention spans, sucking up rare free hours in typically jam-packed days. We have to spend weekend mornings sleeping— taking advantage of short

opportunities for us to catch up on missed sleep throughout the week—and weekend nights are reserved for social events. The prevailing American culture that students are a part of today is constantly demanding our time and attention, locking us into schedules characterized by routine and stress that create the illusion that we do not have the time to take advantage of the opportunities available in our larger environment.

This research paper begins with a brief description of the abundant numbers of places students can go to learn or have fun in Milwaukee. Keeping this space in mind, I follow with a research question that I used to inform and direct this project noting where a possible discrepancy may exist between Marquette's Mission Statement's objective to educate "The Whole Person" and the way students' lives actually relate to this goal. I then chronicle my research methods in finding specific problem areas—really diving into why students seem to be containing their experiences within the on-campus community and describing that lifestyle as one disengaging students from social awareness (a crucial aspect of the Jesuit education). I conclude with a proposal and plan, offering concrete steps that Marquette can take to really improve the well-roundedness and well-being of its students.

An Incredible Resource

What advantages do we have over most colleges and universities in being surrounded by a large, densely populated metropolitan area with access to extensive public transportation?

Milwaukee, a large metropolitan area that about two million people call home is filled with an wealth of places to explore: a beautiful lakefront packed with green space and well-kept beaches, a system of bike trails reaching well into the surrounding suburbs, a clean and flourishing river enclosed by a small forest filled with wildlife and hiking trails, many neighborhoods offering cultural festivals, ethnic dining, and architecture reaching across

generations, plus a downtown bursting with unique book stores, museums, shopping malls, places to eat, historic buildings, professional sports teams, and beautiful music venues attracting tons of great shows every year. Every single day, great things are happening in the nearby communities lying outside the “Marquette Bubble,” typically going unnoticed by students whose lives revolve around a few city blocks bordering downtown Milwaukee.

Despite all these resources readily available to students in possession of complimentary bus passes, a small minority makes genuine engagement and exploration—the seeking out of new places to exercise or hang out with friends—a continual part of their lives. If Marquette really considers it a part of its mission statement to educate “The Whole Person,” these places need to be utilized in a better way. Students are missing out on an important chance to diversify their lifestyles. At such a vital time during the final years of education, it is critical that students become aware of the diverse resources and backgrounds that people are brought up in.

Formulating a Research Question and Sub-Questions

Over the past few months, I have explored the way Marquette University and its students—myself included—fit into the larger region of Milwaukee. Like most Jesuit institutions, Marquette is located in a large city offering immeasurable opportunities for learning outside the classroom. As I read Rebekah Nathan’s ethnography of college students she gathered while living and studying among them in *My Freshman Year*, I noted a particular finding of hers that seemed critical in truly understanding the college experience. Nathan noted that for most of her respondents, the majority of their real “learning” took place outside the classroom, in settings that were not strictly academic.

I came to Milwaukee from St. Louis, Missouri—a very similar place in terms of its size, social struggles, and Midwest location—but still a very different place in many other ways.

After having 18 solid months of frequent bicycle rides, cross country ski adventures, bus trips, and kayak outings, I have been opened up to the inherent value in the diverse parks and neighborhoods available to us throughout Milwaukee. These places can be very valuable resources in facilitating the valuable interpersonal and experiential learning Nathan describes. By simply going to these places, we create new awareness of what takes place in our community, driving us to learn even more. Information learned through textbooks and studying for tests and quizzes is really no more important than the things we can learn by participating and understanding the natural and cultural space in which we will interact for the rest of our lives.

After conducting multiple interviews, distributing surveys to students, observing student classrooms, and reflecting on my work with journal entries that tried to make sense of my data, I developed the following research question: **How can Marquette University make better use of Milwaukee's natural space to promote active engagement with the city, informing the mental, physical, and spiritual elements of the "Whole Person"?** Many sub-questions informed my research—answered chronologically as the paper develops—each working to develop the main question:

- 1) Do Marquette students make Milwaukee an active part of their lives?
- 2) What is preventing Marquette students from understanding the dynamics, struggles, successes, and things for them to do in communities adjacent to our on-campus community?
- 3) Do Marquette students care to make Milwaukee an active part of their lives?
- 4) How can we use the city's natural space to engage students with Milwaukee, learn about ecology, promote wellness, and bring to life an active, adventurous spirit?

Methods for Data Collection and Project Development

In conducting this project, I went through a variety of research methods to gather data, both quantitatively and qualitatively. These methods were guided through text from Ann Blakeslee and Cathy Fleischer's *Becoming a Writing Researcher*. Given that this was my first time doing a project of this nature, I was careful to follow their recommended steps to chunk the work involved and make it manageable.

I started off by writing a short narrative of my own experiences with exploring Milwaukee's natural, domestic, and industrial landscape. In doing so, I was able to recognize and begin to cognitively process some of the issues I have noticed on campus. Reflecting on my first year at this school, I analyzed the students I had gotten to know in my dormitory and in my classrooms, helping me to refine the essential questions that would guide this project.

I began formally collecting data by taking field notes on the behaviors of a professor and her students in a "Concepts in Modern Science" course that fell under the core requirements for all students in the lecture hall. A mere 5-10% of students in the room were science majors, as shown by an informal "show of hands" survey at the beginning of the semester. I felt this would be an interesting group to study because the vast majority of students were being "forced" to take this as a class they would not have chosen on their own. With my own potential long term goal of implementing a course of this nature—that is, a mandatory course for students at this university—I paid close attention to the way students listened, learned, engaged, and responded to the class. I also watched for the effectiveness of the professor to spur interest in what otherwise might not be a subject students are excited to learn about.

I also conducted an interview with David Salmon, an Urban Adventures Assistant at Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center (UEC). A frequent leader of small outdoor expeditions for

grade school and high school students in the UEC's after school and summer programs, Salmon told me about his passion for opening people up to the incredible natural space Milwaukee provides. With a wealth of experience in exploring Milwaukee's natural space and working with people from very diverse backgrounds, Salmon is very engaged with the larger social issues revolving around the city. He discussed the center's work with Milwaukee's urban youth, exposing them to the wild natural space in their own backyard, while also providing a sense of place and belonging at the UEC. The work he does aims to inspire UEC members to take an active interest in their community and environmentally make environmentally sound decisions. His interview showed what a valuable resource the UEC could be for Marquette and helped me tremendously as I shaped my research question and directed my proposals for change.

Throughout the first two months that I had been working on this project, I also maintained a Researcher's Journal, writing about my experiences and thought processes multiple times a week as I conducted my research. This journal was important in allowing me to reflect on my work and see where connections were being made, allowing me to further question where I saw problems at this specific university, and in what ways could they be improved.

After constantly shaping and re-revising the questions that needed to be answered, I went on to write and distribute an online survey through Survey Builder that attempted to find out if Marquette students really were staying on campus as widely as I had perceived. Assuming that they were reluctant to explore off campus, I asked about what kinds of things they felt were holding them back. Admittedly, several questions were overwritten or avoided really pushing respondents to make honest, revealing comments on how they viewed themselves in the city of Milwaukee. I originally had distributed it just to my friends and co-workers, assuming that every response I got would get would be helpful for my research, but learned that my survey was not

reaching a representative sample of students. Most people in the group I had sent my survey to were seeking continued engagement with the larger community, and their responses did not indicate a problem that I was fairly confident existed on a larger scale.

I redesigned my survey with shorter, clearer, and often more open-ended questions. I re-distributed it to a couple of my classes, reaching a much more representative sample of the Marquette student body. I gathered some very valuable quotes that really helped me knock down the core problems I had recognized, and used them to help formulate a plan for action.

I also led a focus group discussion with about fifteen upper-level English students where we discussed their experiences, perceptions, and personal knowledge of Milwaukee's natural resources. Once again, their input was very valuable in helping me to recognize what kinds of things were holding students back, and how I could tap into students' backgrounds and experiences when formulating my proposal.

Several resources made themselves available to me as well. I sat in on lectures, participated in discussions, and benefitted from several one-on-one conferences with my professor, Dr. Beth Godbee, who consistently guided and helped me to revise and redesign my project. Her help and prior experience were crucial to organizing my findings and sometimes simply providing me with the motivation to really do my best work on this project.

Problem Areas

Time Constraints, Convenience Factors:

For most cases at Marquette University, students do not take advantage of their placement in a large metropolitan area, failing to make the larger community of Milwaukee an active part of their lives. In the survey I distributed to a fairly representative sample of undergraduates (Fig. A, below)—18 students from 12 major areas, half male and half female,

racially 83% White 6% Black, 6% Hispanic, and 6% of two or more races—94% responded that too much demand from schoolwork and jobs holds them back from exploring the city of Milwaukee. 44% of students felt held back by the cost of off-campus activities, and 50% cited a lack of car as a primary reason for staying on campus. Nearly a third reported that the simple inconvenience of being away from a dorm room, apartment, or house kept them from exploring the city.

5. What kinds of things do you find hold you back from exploring the city of Milwaukee?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Too much demand from schoolwork/job		94.4%	17
Lack of acquaintances' ability to accompany you		22.2%	4
Not enough interesting places to explore		0.0%	0
Marquette University's location within Milwaukee		11.1%	2
Cold Weather		50.0%	9
Inconvenience of being away from dorm/apartment/house		27.8%	5
Lack of access to good bike trails/waterfront activities/hiking trails/other spaces		5.6%	1
Cost of activities (like rock climbing, kayaking, canoeing, skiing or visiting museums, eating at restaurants...)		44.4%	8
Lack of car		50.0%	9
Lack of bike		22.2%	4
Buses are too slow		22.2%	4
Buses don't reach my destinations		11.1%	2

Workout facilities loaded with treadmills, stationary bikes, elliptical trainers, weight rooms, lap pools, and basketball courts lure students with the convenience of getting their exercise on campus, especially when the weather gets cold. These clean and up-to-date facilities

are attractive to students, making it easy for them to coordinate with friends and save the time of having to travel somewhere to stay in shape. By staying on campus, they avoid spending extra money and maintain a very convenient distance from their living space.

From my own year and a half studying at this school, I also have widely observed a popular student culture—confirmed by my comments from members of my focus group—commonly gravitating toward recreational suited toward relaxation. Rather than try to capitalize on the “cultural advantages of a university located in the heart of the city” as Marquette’s Mission Statement describes, students I have observed seem much more inclined to rest, watch television shows, or play video games with their down time. Respondents in the focus group agreed, with one reporting, “a lot of kids in my wing just didn’t want to get up and go...they would rather just play video games in their room all day. They didn’t really branch out or do anything.”

Going into my freshman year, I expected most students would be thrilled with their newfound opportunities to explore Milwaukee without parental constraints holding them back anymore. I thought living in a freshman dorm would be a mind-opening experience where I would meet all sorts of people who sought out participation in a wide range of activities in a new environment. I was stunned to find that my floor’s group activity time was spent overwhelmingly in the room next to my own, trading controllers and playing Super Smash Brothers into the wee hours nearly every day of the week. As the school year came to a close, many of the guys had never set foot anywhere off campus, other than for purchasing basic necessities or attending basketball games at the nearby Bradley Center.

“With our generation, a lot of people don’t like to live anymore,” a student brutally reported during my focus group session. “People like technology, and watching TV, and

hanging out on their laptops.” Indeed, the students I lived with felt no drive to get off campus. Something was seriously wrong in the way Marquette was presenting itself and the way its students actually went about seeking the opportunities available in their daily lives.

Stereotypes about Milwaukee:

Easily set apart from the rest of the city by its patrolling Public Safety vehicles, green space, and youthful population, the Marquette campus functions as its own little world. On a typical day, students here awake and walk just a few blocks to class. If they stop for any food, it is convenient to reach as well. They will continue with attending lectures and labs on campus in buildings with close enough proximity that it takes less than ten minutes for them to walk between successive classes. Many may work a job at some point during the day, often on campus and also accessible by foot. They will commonly work on homework at the library or another academic building, eventually heading back to their dorm or close by off-campus housing. Typical Marquette students’ ordinary days are laid right in front of them. Their lifestyle does not require them to step anywhere outside the bubble.

As a result, students are not really being exposed to ways of life different from their own. For example, one response I gathered came from a student originally from Milwaukee who explained that he feels “perfectly safe and comfortable” so long as he doesn’t “go into the ghetto.” What is “the ghetto”? Where is the ghetto? Dyon Bryant, a researcher I have worked alongside and studied with this semester finds that this perceived “ghetto” is likely being racially coded, as well. I suspect this student, like many others I have talked and reflected with, is referring to off-campus city neighborhoods that seem uninviting and dangerous to him. Conditioned by the environment he has been brought up in and a blind lack of exposure to Milwaukee’s neighborhoods through his own travels or even community service experiences has

likely corrupted his view of the people who live there as dangerous or inhospitable. Were he to know specific people living in that area or if he felt some sort of personal connection to it, I suspect his presumptions would not be as negative. His response exemplifies a wide student problem I have observed in Service Learning reflections that involves assumptive stereotyping due to a lack of engagement with an area. He has not had a reason to engage the area, and therefore is largely unfamiliar with what goes on in its parameters.

Lack of Awareness, Groups to Explore With, Sponsorship from Marquette:

While students largely may seem outwardly content with this safe, simplified, and convenient way of life, several respondents reported frustration with the systemized lifestyle they had adopted at Marquette. Many of my respondents wanted to get out, but simply w

ere not aware of the places they could go.

Widespread close-mindedness toward Milwaukee and a lack of independence certainly contribute to the lack of awareness students seem to have about Milwaukee. Many survey respondents seemed very uncomfortable with the idea of doing things on their own:

Student 1: “I don’t feel comfortable being by myself. I’d like to travel off campus and do things, but only if I were with someone.”

Student 2: “I feel 100% comfortable so long as I have two other people with me.”

Student 3: “I’m nervous about it unless I’m doing it with a group.”

Student 4: “I think it would be fun if accompanied by people that knew the area”

Student 5: “I don’t know what’s available. I don’t know who to go with.”

Student 6: “I would never have ventured to [the Frank Lloyd Wright houses on Burnham Street] on my own had I not been required to go for art history class.”

Overwhelmingly, students feel the need to be with people, especially when going off-campus. These sorts of responses expose the need for sponsorship from Marquette programs that can successfully advertise and get through to participants. One student points out that beyond “the events sponsored by Marquette,” she “really [doesn’t] know what goes on around the city or how to get there.” Currently, the University hosts a small set of “Late-Night Marquette” and “Excursion” experiences that try to give students a taste of what is out there (going to places like the local Target or a Brewers game), but fail to consistently engage us with it. Even simply calling these ventures “excursions” sets them apart as trips into unfamiliar territory.

As a Student Coordinator with Marquette’s Service Learning Program, I feel it does a much better job of pushing students to get engaged with the social issues in the city, but still has

trouble getting through to students who aren't able to "have fun" at their sites. As I have heard during numerous reflection sessions presented by our Service Learning staff, participating in service has commonly been perceived as a chore for many of the students I have talked with. While traveling to their sites may expose them to what is going on in Milwaukee, oftentimes they get turned off from exploring because of experiences they found not to be enjoyable. Marquette still lacks a program that facilitates consistent, explicitly "fun" activities that place students in the community outside the Bubble.

Proposal:

Utilize the Urban Ecology Center to Encounter Nature & Make Connections with Community

Given the gigantic nature of the opportunities available to students in the city of Milwaukee, it would be ridiculous to try and introduce them to every neighborhood, every business, every art form, and every culture in the larger community. Putting students through a massive quantity of experiences would be overwhelming, and doing so would likely prevent students from building relationships with community members or really interacting with the social and hierarchical structures that exist.

After participating in several very informative discussions with David Salmon, I believe the best way we can instill an engagement with Milwaukee as well as a sense of independence and adventure into our students would be to send them into the natural parts of our environment. As I discussed earlier, this is one of the most incredible resources we have in Milwaukee. A "Gold Medal" award-winning parks system with green space all over the county, a scenic lake, and an incredible river are all right at our fingertips—with help from one of the most progressive and affordable nature and community centers in the country—the Urban Ecology Center.

As Salmon explained, the UEC offers an abundance of activities and educational programs that would be great for students. In our interview, Salmon's passion exploded as he excitedly dove into the specifics of what the UEC does for Milwaukee:

“We teach science here. We expose kids to nature, we have fun, and we learn at the same time. We give kids the opportunity to experience things they've never done before, to gain skills that they didn't know that they had...like canoeing, rock climbing...we do some fire building, sometimes we build shelters... ideally we build naturalists. We train people that are adept at identifying and understanding our natural world here in Milwaukee.

“It is our stated mission to model environmentally conscious and positive, sustainable behaviors...we really hope that other organizations—other companies that build businesses—will see that we've done it so successfully and at such an effective cost level that they're going to want to do that...and in fact, people have...

“And so, we have kind of already have been a model organization from purely that ecologically friendly perspective. Beyond that, we seek to be a model for nature centers, for environmental education centers, for stewardship, for urban revitalization...all those things are a part of our mission. We really take a very long term approach to everything...as the Native American saying goes, you think about the next seven generations...you think about how your decisions will impact them...One of the cool things we're doing is we're helping to develop the next generation of science curriculum. We're helping Milwaukee Public Schools write it.

“But how does our education work? Basically, we have educators who are trained teachers, who are basically trained in the sciences, and they use *the outdoor classrooms* in Riverside Park and Washington Park, which is the forest, and it is the park, and they use all of the tools there...whether it be the seeds of a maple tree to talk about how seeds fall, or maybe to

talk about gravity. You can use that both ways. You can use canoeing to talk about physics and momentum, and things like that. So they really incorporate a big hands-on approach to education, you know, while being engaging and informational and educational. So that's the formal way we educate people. But also, people learn just by coming here and by spending time in our animal room, by walking out in the park and seeing animals...seeing the hawks and the garter snakes running around...they kind of create the experience themselves...

“We really feel like we're doing something positive for the community, so when people do come in...maybe they are a little bit troubled. This is a place where we kind of create the culture for them, and they can come in and join us. If they have issues out in the real world, they can come here and forget about those...a lot of the kids I've worked with, you can see how...*they just feel good...they're just happy when they're here...Everyone needs a sense of place.*

Salmon recounted the story behind his favorite natural space in the city, the Milwaukee River, recognizing the Urban Ecology Center's role in restoring it back to its “wild” state. The River, Salmon believes, is an essential resource to making nature a part of everyone's lives.

“This used to be a dense, dark forest. The Native Americans lived here, fished here...their way of life was here. The Europeans came and they saw this as a great place...plentiful food, fish, and animals to trap. And after time, this became an industrial place with perfect resources to do manufacturing and a lot of those things. And so the river transitioned from this wild place that sustained life to this completely domesticated place that was *a tool of industry*. And through damming up the river for various reasons, they kind of stopped the natural flow of the river. They destroyed the ecosystem around it.

“Once we started to enter into this post-industrial age that we are now in...people started realizing that this Milwaukee River which had been neglected for so long...it became a wild place again...it coincides with the UEC. 15 years ago there was a big push to take out the North Avenue Dam because it was collecting all sorts of bad chemicals...they decided to remove the dam. Before the dam was removed, they found that there were two species of fish north of the dam...after they removed it, as it currently stands, we have over 25 species of fish in the Milwaukee River. We’ve got salmon, we’ve got trout coming up, we’ve got smallmouth bass. And there’s a project going on to reintroduce sturgeon into the Milwaukee River. We are repopulating the Great Lakes with these ancient fish that have lived here forever. That’s one of the definite ways we have impacted the community. From an ecologist’s perspective, we have restored and put such good energy back into the natural ways, and it’s allowed for the community members to be more in touch with it, and not be afraid of the river...to go out and explore it and to see this as a comfortable place.”

Not only does the UEC work to preserve and protect natural places like the Milwaukee River, but it also gives its members the tools to explore the natural space in a variety of exciting ways.

“Our equipment rental [program] is great, because it’s done exactly what we wanted, which is to get people out into the river and to other waterways and outside. You can come borrow canoes and kayaks, you can borrow tents, sleeping bags, bicycles, cross country skis, snow shoes, binoculars, plant ID guides, tree guides, bird books, any of that stuff you can come borrow from us. And so it’s really given the community an outlet, because as it currently stands, if you are a member of the center,” which costs a mere \$12/year for students, “you can borrow

all of those for free. And obviously... free...everyone loves free, and that's amazing, and it puts no barriers between the people and their natural resources.”

Milwaukee Outdoors Club & Other Future Projects:

Given the spectacular natural space a short bus ride away along the Milwaukee River and throughout the city of Milwaukee—plus an extremely low-cost community membership that can place us in this space—how can we get Marquette involved?

My plan to start the process of engaging students with the natural space is to start a student organization, perhaps titled the Milwaukee Outdoors Club, where each student can easily become a member of the UEC (Potentially paid for by club funding and dues). This group will make *at least* weekly trips into Milwaukee's natural spaces, usually involving hikes through our parks, cross country ski trips, kayak adventures, canoe outings, and even some more relaxed events at the UEC that teach students about ecology and environmental sustainability. The club could also make longer, overnight voyages once every semester (and perhaps during summer and winter breaks) to places outside Milwaukee. These would likely be camping trips in Wisconsin, Illinois, or Minnesota. If time permits, trips to other State or National Parks could be very cool, opening students to new experiences and bringing them closer to nature.

In doing so, the club could assist in educating a crucial aspect of the “Whole Person” that Marquette has failed to fulfill. David Salmon believes that health and wellness are absolutely critical to really forming a well-rounded person:

“When you say ‘whole person,’ the first thought is kind of...food. And you know, that aspect of health is something I've become very aware of with the agriculture industry. There are a lot of negatives going on, but a lot of cool things that are happening. What we do here with environmental education and all those connections we're making...we're giving the urban

person the opportunity to go back into nature, to reconnect to the systems that exist, you know, to the powers of nature that are there, whether we're watching or not. It gives us the opportunity to see beyond ourselves, and really to see the human population...the human community, but with the natural community.

“We have impacted this earth so significantly, and things have changed. It's been like that for the entirety of human existence, where we have altered and changed things. We have caused species to go extinct, we've cut down forests and so on. I think that what we do here is absolutely critical to teaching the whole person, to restore that connection to the natural world and especially to their personal natural world. It's one thing to watch *Planet Earth* and read about the Serengeti, which is beautiful, and the Amazon Rainforest. It's another thing to go out into the forest in your backyard and to go learn about the bugs and the birds and the animals and hang out there.”

The Milwaukee Outdoors Club will be successful program because it will directly combat the problem areas I found while conducting my research. Are these kind of activity possible without giving up an entire day? Is Milwaukee's natural space convenient? Yes. Bus trips or bike rides to the easily accessible Urban Ecology Center in Riverside Park take only about 20 minutes. The equipment rental process is very simple and very short. Once members get their equipment, they can immediately hop on the trails or launch boats into the Milwaukee River from Riverside Park.

Can this club exist in such a technology-driven era? Yes. Once students begin to encounter nature with free, high quality rental equipment as I did at the UEC last winter, they will not want to leave. A good friend of mine used to say that nature has a way of continuously

calling us back to revel in its beauty. When one has enjoyable experiences encountering natural places, he believes (and I agree) that they feel a push to continue to go back.

Will the club break down stereotypes about what Milwaukee is like? Yes. By simply going into this city, seeing its diverse landscape, and interacting with community members, students will become aware of what lies beyond the steel and concrete structures on display to the east of Marquette's campus. By going to the Urban Ecology Center or exploring Milwaukee's neighborhoods through their natural space, students' minds will be opened by new experience.

Will the club provide people to explore Milwaukee with under sponsorship from Marquette? Assuming that my process to get the student organization approved goes smoothly, absolutely. The Milwaukee Outdoors Club can create an on-campus community of people who may have been very interested in exploring the outdoors, but lacked a connection with other people having similar interests. And given the nature of a student organization, obviously it would be sponsored by Marquette, as well. Will it actually be an enjoyable thing students will want to do? David Salmon answers:

“[Getting out in a kayak or on a pair of skis] is the fun stuff. That's the stuff where you go out there and you're just having a blast the whole time...whether it's your first time or your thousandth time you've been on the water, you have so much fun. It's just important to be able to have those things that are free or inexpensive that have a very low impact on the environment, but have a huge impact on the person.”

As for a long-term plan, I would very much like to see college courses develop around environmental ethics and sustainability, utilizing the “outdoor classrooms” Salmon described throughout Milwaukee. They would likely start as alternatives to other science courses students

have to take, but could eventually turn into core requirements, or even new majors or minors offered through the university. Regardless, David Salmon thinks that everyone should learn about health and ecology, because it is important to everybody. Given my early research observing a classroom where students were being “forced” to take a science class, I feel like students could certainly pay attention and get something out of it, especially if these courses could be taught by thoughtful and engaging professors.

Salmon explains that “waiting until you’re retired” to start making environmentally conscious decisions doesn’t give people the opportunity to make good practices throughout their lives. “Just to go into the woods is a very calming thing, and it’s really good for your health to be outside, to have that fresh air, to be doing even basic exercise,” he says. Salmon feels very hopeful for the rising generation, seeing it as a group that “wants to make the best, most positive impact on the world...they want to make the world better. They see global warming as a serious issue. They see that we are over consuming, that we’ve lost a connection to a lot of the things we value.

“Nature is one of the things that can really connect people in a very basic way. It can give them hope, and it can give them a place. Maybe they want to replant that forest or go teach kids about nature. We talk about wanting people to be math & science. This is science. Nature is science. That’s where we learned about physics, that’s where we get physics, it’s where we get chemistry, it’s where you get biology. Nature is everything...for business purposes, for economic reasons, but it’s a spiritual thing, you know...We have so much obesity and other health problems because we have abused the system of ecology. We have abused the agriculture system. The food we are growing is so pumped full of pesticides and toxins. The animals we

raise to eat are just so depressed and angry...it would be a great class to talk about the agriculture system...the negatives, and then to go and learn about sustainable agriculture and permaculture.”

Goals & Conclusions

My hope is that my research shows the real problems preventing students from entering engagement with Milwaukee, but also displays the potential that this city can provide. By learning about the Urban Ecology Center, I hope that readers will feel inclined to visit one of Milwaukee’s (and the country’s) greatest resources for environmental education and fun. By describing Milwaukee’s natural landscape, I hope that readers will feel a push to explore it, enjoy its benefits, and protect it for future generations. Above all, I want to create excitement. Milwaukee has so much to do, and we do ourselves major disservices in the long run by refusing to engage it as college students.

Our social awareness, physical health, and spiritual well being are all vital components informing who we are as people. Implementing outdoor education at this Marquette University is an absolute obligation if we really want to claim that we are educating “Whole People.” By following my proposed plan, this University will (1) develop a campus community centered around exploring Milwaukee’s natural environment, (2) continually engage students with their larger community, (3) break down students’ negative stereotypes about Milwaukee, (4) promote a sense of adventurousness and independence in students, and (5) foster and educate missing ecological, spiritual, and wellness components of “The Whole Person”.

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