THE TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF AN ADVENTURE TRIP LEADER

- Follow the student experience of the Maryland Adventure Program's trip leader course, MESAUIR. Throughout the course, students engage in scheduled CLASSROOM time and four WEEKEND FIELD SESSIONS. After completing the academic course, students plan and participate in a WEEK-LONG CAPSTONE TRIP to a destination of their choice. Throughout this intense semester, students experience a wealth of personal GROWTH, increase their SELF-CONFIDENCE, build meaningful RELATIONSHIPS, and learn how to better COLLABORATE with others. We celebrate the IMPACT and TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING that occurs throughout the trip leader training program.

**EXPEDITION ONE: BACKPACKING**
**THE FOCUS**
- Technical backpacking and camping basics, backcountry cooking
- Group "forming" (Tuckman and Jensen's Stages of Group Development)
- Expedition behavioral training
- Environmental ethics (Leave No Trace)
- Awareness
- Developing personal leadership styles

**THE EXPERIENCE**
This week really improved my ability to analyze myself as a leader. I was able to realize some of my true strengths while also coming to terms with my weaknesses. I feel like I'm slowly building my confidence through adventure trip leading. I've seen what I am capable of doing, much of which I never believed I could do.

**EXPEDITION TWO: ROCK CLIMBING**
**THE FOCUS**
- Technical rock climbing basics, belaying techniques, knots, anchor systems, site management
- Outdoor Bowen's Circles of Competence
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

**THE EXPERIENCE**
Regardless of how far I climbed in the Maslow Hierarchy, I still learned more about myself and came out of the trip a better person. By taking the opportunity to push myself beyond my comfort zone, along the crux near the water and attempting to face the vertical rock faces, I saw a different side of myself that I was challenged.

**EXPEDITION THREE: KAYAKING**
**THE FOCUS**
- Technical paddling strokes, navigation on the water
- Group management on the water
- Group function
- Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

**THE EXPERIENCE**
Although we still have a lot of room to be a more highly functioning group, we made positive strides towards accomplishing this challenge. I believe this was attributed to the reflection we did at dinner because we really had a chance to be introspective on why it had been an issue, and how we could improve.

**WEEK-LONG CAPSTONE TRIP: ADIRONDACKS, NY**
**THE FOCUS**
- Application of the course
- Trip planning & logistics
- Leader of the day
- Giving & receiving feedback
- Enhancing personal leadership style

**THE EXPERIENCE**
My experience during our trip to the Adirondacks played a crucial role in developing my self-awareness and my sense of mattering within a team. The wilderness context was able to emphasize our group interactions in a way that profoundly changed how I saw myself. I realized that how you act, whether you like it or not, affects everyone else. It’s up to you to bring the attitude you wish to see in others.

**COMMERCIAL PARTNERS**

**A LEADER IS BEST WHEN PEOPLE BARELY KNOW HE EXISTS, WHEN HIS WORK IS DONE, HIS AIM FULFILLED, THEY WILL SAY: WE DID IT OURSELVES.** - LAO-TZU