

The Fuzzy Cheesecake

FOP's Annual Report and Community Newsletter



Volume 5: December MMVIII

www.harvardfop.com

GREETINGS FROM STEERING COMMITTEE 2009

Since taking the helm from SC 2008, SC 2009 has been thinking about and acting upon our visions for the year to come. We recently put on a slideshow for Freshman Parents Weekend so that our FOPpers' parents could see the beautiful views, the smiles, and the friendships that their sons and daughters experienced on FOP.

We have also spent a lot of time continuing to build our fundraising efforts, which include this mailing. We are also planning FUNdraising Day, a day during which FOPpers and leaders get together for a day of FOP fun and write letters to donors and alumni. Over the past few years we have made substantial leaps in making FOP accessible to all students by strengthening our financial aid program and expanding our collection of rental gear. We hope that our fundraising efforts will bring us even closer to these goals and to our broader visions of increased diversity and inclusion.

We have a number of other visions that will shape our work for the following year. The Harvard calendar change will mean that FOP will be starting two weeks earlier than usual, and we hope to make this transition as smooth as possible.

We also hope to increase term-time involvement for our leaders. Thus far, SC has been responsible for most of the year-round FOP activities, and we hope to set up a system whereby leaders can play a greater role. Not only will this give leaders the chance to take part in FOP during the year, but it will also allow for greater interaction between SC, the leader community, and leader trainees.

Finally, we are looking forward to expanding our in-site program this year, which we hope will diversify the sorts of experiences that FOP offers and attract a wider group of FOPpers.

As we think about our plans for the year and our goals for FOP 2009, it brings the entire FOP leader community great pleasure to receive positive feedback from FOPpers in our surveys and daily encounters. FOP trips are having reunions left and right, and watching FOP relationships become social support networks as freshmen progress through the year constantly affirms all of the work that we do.

Lastly, we would like to extend our warmest thanks to all of you, the parents and alumni of FOP. This program relies on you, whether you went on a trip, sent your child on a trip, led trips, or helped FOP through your generous donations. This program and all the great things it does could not happen without you!

Get outdoors and have a great year!

Steering Committee 2009



SC '09: Emily Orlins, Joe Tobias, Shosh Fine, Ed Traver, Hannah Trachtman, Jess Ross, George Stubbs, and Michael Blumenthal

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FROM OUR FOPPERS

Each day was a new adventure—a new chance to explore the outdoors, a new chance to learn about each other, a new chance to discover things about ourselves. Each of us came from different backgrounds and had a variety of interests.

“BY THE END OF THOSE SIX DAYS, THESE PEOPLE WERE FAR FROM STRANGERS TO ME. THEY HAD BECOME SOME OF MY DEAREST FRIENDS.”

The hours we spent on the trail were the perfect opportunities to get to know one another in more meaningful ways than I would have anticipated. And there’s just something about being cut off from luxuries and conveniences—basically everything from cell phones to shampoo, from mirrors to toilet paper—that draws individuals closer to each other. By the end of those six days, these people were far from strangers to me. They had become some of my dearest friends.

One of the greatest lessons I learned through FOP was how to let my guard down and open myself to new experiences and people. I could barely believe it when I found myself belting out silly songs in the woods or doing ridiculous dances on the shores of the lake. But it was those songs and dances that made me laugh the hardest and still make me smile when I recall them.

FOP isn’t just about the people that you get to know on the trail or having the opportunity to go hiking, but about being able to think back to the thousands of stars you saw sparkling in the peaceful night sky when you’re feeling overwhelmed and about always being able to call a fellow FOPper because you can trust they’ll be there for you no matter what. FOP didn’t just last those six days. It has and will carry on with me for the years to come.

--Vicky Koski-Karell, FOPper 2008

Waking up in the wee hours of the morning and finding eleven people spooning in sleeping bags under a tarp, taping blisters, watching others tape blisters, telling good stories on the trail, telling terrible stories on the trail, spelunking, cooking with tiny stoves, spotting two moose, coming back to campus smelly, and learning about fashion’s importance over function, were just the gravy.

I don’t pretend that we’ve been to hell and back, but from our immediate and evident dependence on one another in the woods, we built Team Excellence. We were an eclectic group and we were all mature, more or less, but we all matured to Harvard, our soon to be home. Now when our leaders call us and get angry that we haven’t asked them questions about life at Harvard or shared the nuanced details of our lives here, we cannot but laugh at the irony that they equipped us well for life here.

-- Peter McCarthy, FOPper 2008



“I HAD CONQUERED THE MOUNTAIN, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY I HAD CONQUERED THE PART OF ME THAT THOUGHT, ‘I CAN’T.’”

It was on our hardest day, climbing Mt. Mousilauke, that I realized I could finally do this. I had sweat dripping from my nose and yet I was smiling. When we stopped for our break, I had the biggest grin on my face—I’m pretty sure everyone thought I was mad. I realized that I was proud of myself for how much I had accomplished and could accomplish. I realized that I was happy to be there and that I was learning so much about myself that I don’t think I ever would have had the opportunity to learn otherwise. I am so grateful to my FOP group for being part of that experience and for having the faith that I could do it.

To be honest, it was probably one of the very few times in my life that I have justly been proud of myself. I have been proud for receiving awards and getting good grades, but in a way, some part of me thought I deserved them. I was challenging myself on this trip. And at each and every peak we reached, I was proud. To look out at the landscape and be able to see beauty for miles was flooring and absolutely humbling. I had conquered the mountain, but more importantly I had conquered the part of me that thought, “I can’t.”

--Brianne Corcoran, FOPper 2008



I will never forget that first day of hiking. We started with a 1000-ft climb and before half way I felt blisters forming, my back hurt, my hips were sore, and my legs were protesting. Worse than that, I was formulating what to say so I could turn back and give up. The next day was even worse. I found myself making excuses for water breaks and to have lunch because I was so tired and my hips were killing me.



THE BEAUTY OF FOPUBLIC

Cara Ferrentino, FOP Leader

Through FOP I've developed a comprehensive sociological theory regarding what I like to call "Public" and "FOPublic." FOPublic is the altogether comfortable setting in which we find ourselves engaging in behaviors that at another time and place would elicit reactions ranging from mild ridicule to social ostracism. FOPublic does more than accommodate the finer points of backcountry living, like outdoor tooth brushing—it warmly accepts and encourages the elements of FOP which make the program more than week-long trips in New England. As such, correct usage includes, "I would prefer to ride that pony in FOPublic."

Consider the activities which in Public would be simply unacceptable, but which in FOPublic are downright ordinary. In FOPublic, we hold hands before a full two-thirds of our meals. We pantomime climbing up Sunshine Mountain, faces all aglow. Fuzzy Cheesecake may in fact be the incarnation of FOPublic, unless you routinely tell your friends, family, and co-workers what you like about them while spoon feeding them custard-like desserts.

“...COMMUNITIES IN WHICH WE ARE COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO TAKE RISKS, SHARE EXPERIENCES, AND REVEL IN THE SILLINESS OF OUR HUMANITY.”

Enjoying each other's company in genuine FOPublic is, in my opinion, one of the most wonderful things about our program. The moments in which my co-leaders and I have witnessed how FOPublic has helped a first-year tell a joke, share a story, or demonstrate a secret talent have been some of the most rewarding for me as a leader. Fostering FOPublic is one of the most important ways we impact our participants' experiences.

I've observed that certain manifestations of FOPublic don't translate well outside of

the woods, as the Public tends to view physically interactive songs and games with a deliberate sense of ironic detachment. To me, however, the beauty of FOPublic is that even though we may never be able, or even wish, to introduce certain elements of FOP into our front country lives, we can still choose to be a part of communities in which we are comfortable enough to take risks, share experiences, and revel in the silliness of our humanity. As an alumna, I know that I'll never go on another FOP trip, but I look forward to creating and enjoying many future FOPublics.



A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Karen Cosgrove

FOP has been an amazing experience for my family because it goes so far beyond simply trekking through the outdoors, to become a lesson in peace and friendship before the difficult transition to college. My two eldest daughters, Kate '07 and Lilla '12 both participated in FOP and it is because of Kate's unbounded enthusiasm that Lilla was sure to sign up. Kate



was a FOPper her freshman year, a leader sophomore year, and was on the Steering Committee her junior and senior year. It was definitely a highlight of her college career and the friendships she has made will be lifelong. Lilla was a FOPper this fall and spent much of her summer eagerly anticipating August 31st, when she could

go and meet her FOP group.

In my opinion, the program goes above and beyond the traditional orientation experience for freshmen. In the most basic view, it provides an outdoor team building and bonding experience for a week wrought with exercise and a few challenging situations, both physically and emotionally. Through this premise, students relax with other freshmen and two upper class students and diffuse the anxiety of freshman year. Not only does it allow them to see that many Harvard students are just like them, but it shows them that they will be accepted and it provides an immediate list of people to call and have dinner with when they first arrive on campus.

“...IT GOES SO FAR BEYOND SIMPLY TREKKING THROUGH THE OUTDOORS, TO BECOME A LESSON IN PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP BEFORE THE DIFFICULT, TRANSITION TO COLLEGE.”

Having recently spent Freshman Parents Weekend on campus, I was thrilled that we ended up having dinner with four of Lilla's FOP friends and their parents! Through participating in and leading FOP, students are educated on team building strategies, interpersonal relationship management, as well as Wilderness First Aid. In my estimation, these skills are equal in importance to the book learning that goes on at this most esteemed college. FOP is a truly unique experience that makes the transition to college infinitely smoother, and given the success it has had in my family, I would recommend it to any and all new freshmen.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear FOP Family,

In 1979, our first cohort of seven FOP trips and forty-nine FOPpers entered the field, under the vision of Dean of Freshmen, Henry Moses. Last spring, we were reminded of how precious our foundations were when our very own visionary, Henry “Hank” Moses, passed away. In this mailing, we have included Victor Henningsen III’s (FOP Director, 1981-1984) words from Hank’s Memorial Service, in the hopes that all of you can share in the power of knowing that our mission today aligns so tightly to Hank’s vision from 1979: to provide not “a wilderness experience for Harvard students, but a Harvard experience that happens to occur in the wilderness.” As one of our students this fall indicated, “FOP most definitely helped ensure that I stepped onto the Yard with a feeling of belonging, of self-possession, of confidence in myself and in my ability to relate to others. I found that, in the opening days of life at a place like Harvard, knowing people and feeling comfortable with your surroundings is a real blessing.”

Today, the challenge we face is how to make a program with such promise accessible to all members of the first-year class. Because of the \$20,000 in fundraising income we received from you last year, we were able to purchase 105 sets of boots from Joe Jones Wilderness House and 330 warm clothing items. Between our purchases and some equipment rental support from EMS, we sent out no less than 74% of our FOP participants with rental gear. Furthermore, the \$30,000 of Financial Aid we offered helped bring in a FOPper population composed of 47% Harvard Financial Aid recipients, still 18% shy of the Harvard first-year demographic, but an increase from 39% in 2005, 41% in 2006, and 43% in 2007. Your continued support can help us purchase enough rental gear to fill all gear requests while continuing to increase the amount we are able to provide in Financial Aid. Our hope is to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participating in our program.

Of course, a program with as much history as ours has a number of hopes and dreams, and this year, we made progress

on a number of them. Katie Steele, the Director of Freshmen Programming, participated as a full member of a FOP Training Trip this spring, experiencing first-hand how our program operates in the field. Thanks to a great deal of support from Katie and from the Freshman Dean’s Office, the FOP Directorship position was officially adjusted from a half-time position to three-quarter time, allowing me the luxury of focusing my full energy on our program. Finally, over the course of the last eight months, FOP has undergone a successful review for its eighth year as an Association for Experiential Education accredited member, a title that FOP Steering Committees under Brent Bell’s Directorship (1999-2005) worked hard to achieve.



As we move forward in achieving our organization’s goals, it is comforting to know that generations of directors, leaders, participants, parents, and friends share in a grounded tradition of leading great orientation experiences in the New England backcountry. Thank you for all of your support in the past, in the present, and into the future.

Yours in Adventure,
Jessica L. Ross
FOP Director

REMEMBERING HENRY MOSES

*Victor Henningsen, FOP Director
1981-1984, at Memorial Service
for Henry Moses, Founder of FOP*

Hank knew that entering Harvard students shared one thing: fear – a gnawing

anxiety about themselves and their abilities combined with deep apprehension about their classmates. If they agreed on anything it was that they made each other very nervous. Hank’s empathy for the quiet desperation of Harvard first-years was extraordinary. Hank acted on those feelings. Let’s find a way to put those anxious freshmen in challenging situations – situations that have nothing to do with academics – and get them to stretch their comfort zones. That shared experience will create a bond to help them navigate first year rocks and shoals.

And so, in 1979, what is now known as the First-Year Outdoor Program was born – not, as we used to say, a wilderness experience for Harvard students, but a Harvard experience that happens to occur in the wilderness. At the time of its founding, FOP was only the second program of its kind. Today, FOP is a fixture at Harvard and similar college outdoor orientation programs are all over.

Hank loved seeing the student groups return and he listened avidly to the tales they told. One, in particular, stuck with him. A FOP staffer fell into conversation with an elderly native of the state of Maine. Discovering that the young man was a Harvard student, the Mainer paused, eyed him speculatively, and asked: “You learning anything down there, or are you just confused?” Reflecting on that moment, Hank thought not just about FOP, but about the learning enterprise it introduced. “Harvard”, he wrote, “is many different things. For me it comes down to learning how to choose, how to decide, about this, that, and every other thing under the sun. In that connection,” he continued, “what that old man said has become emblematic to me. He was wrong, of course: it wasn’t an either-or situation. We are learning something – and we are confused.”

Learning, he would say, is hard; learning is messy; learning happens when you’re uncomfortable and would rather be doing almost anything else. But we do learn and we learn most effectively when we face challenges with others who support us and whom we learn to support. And that’s when learning becomes joyful.

FOP AND THE FIRST NIGHT AT HARVARD

Dean Thomas Dingman

When the Reverend Professor Peter J. Gomes chose as the text of his sermon on move-in weekend this year “You are all children of light...” he must have known something that the rest of us did not. The night before the Yard had been plunged into darkness for a five-hour period because of a power surge and resulting electrical overload. The Harvard community — from the President and Deans who were on-site to all the staff in Physical Resources, Dining Services, Health Services, Police, Proctors and Peer Advising Fellows — mobilized immediately. The situation was much less chaotic than any would have predicted. The Class of 2012 passed its first test with flying colors.

One group, it won't surprise you, that stood out were the FOPpers, having returned the same day from the wilderness. As Rachel Hawkins '12, from Gallatin, Tennessee wrote afterwards: “They told me the Freshman Outdoor Program would help get me ready for the Harvard experience, and they were right! Thanks to FOP, last night I had, and used, waterproof boots, a rain-proof jacket, and a head lamp.” Many of the FOPpers found one another and contacted the upperclassmen and women who had led their trips. The leaders pitched in in their usual energetic and spirited way. “Those close friendships from the beginning gave me strength and confidence,” continued Rachel. Alas, another example of the magic and power of FOP. In the dark of the night on September 6, it is clear that we were all bolstered by the can-do, cheerleading attitude of this extraordinary program.

THE FDO GOES FOPING

Katie Steele

It was day one of our leader training trip and I was not sure if I was going to make it. I was sitting on the edge of a rock, part way up Mt. Hancock, gasping for air. I just couldn't catch my breath.

Lauren Schwartze '09, one of our training trip leaders, knelt down in front of me, looked me in the eye, and calmly said, “Purse your lips and try to breathe slowly and deeply in and out. It's going to be okay.”

“...SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT ARE TRULY THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF FOP.”

As Lauren helped me to catch my breath, she reassured me that this was indeed a tough first day. Hearing that from



Lauren made me feel all the more accomplished, when two hours later, the nine of us comprising training trip #5 (aka the Gorgeous Group) cheered together from the top of Hancock. It was an awesome and very unique feeling for me — one that will be hard to ever recreate.

Later that same night, after working to get the tarps up and the food hung safely in a tree, we gathered for our first group check-in on the trail. Everyone was excited and eager. Clearly, this group was totally psyched to be in the woods and learning how to lead a FOP trip. I, on the other hand, was still trying to figure out what I was doing there. Having never backpacked before, and feeling like I had barely survived day one, I was fairly terrified about what the next six days would bring. Although I know I did not say it out loud, I knew I would not have continued up Mt. Hancock if I were on my own. What I realized that first day, and during the subsequent days of our trip, is that support and encouragement are truly the defining characteristics of FOP.

The support and encouragement dem-

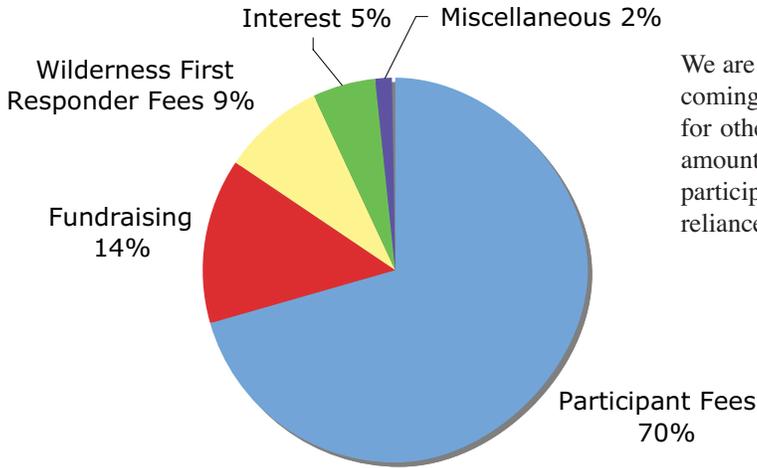
onstrated by leaders is what makes FOP an incredible community for our freshmen and for our upperclassmen. During FOP trips, leaders go to great lengths to ensure that the freshmen on their trips feel included and empowered. That support continues on campus, as freshmen turn to their FOP leaders for advice about classes, roommates, and life in the Yard.

Meanwhile, the support that leaders offer each other is equally impressive. Throughout the course of our training trip, the eight members of the Gorgeous Group taught each other new skills, worked together to make challenging decisions, offered each other critical feedback and advice on their leadership styles, celebrated each scrumptious dinner with enthusiastic “chows,” and had great laughs while telling ghost stories or making up new trail games. Whether it was offering help with a difficult knot, listening to someone else's frustration from the day, or shooing wildlife from the bivvy site, there seemed to be no end for what these guys would do for each other.

Having spent ten days with these leaders, I know them to be positive, caring and thoughtful men and women. Realizing that I was totally new to the whole experience, they each found their own personal way to help me along. A pack adjustment here, a quick check-in there, or a joke to make me laugh -- it all made an impact. I am so grateful for the experience they allowed me to have. As I said, I wouldn't and couldn't have done it without them.



FOP INCOME 2007-2008

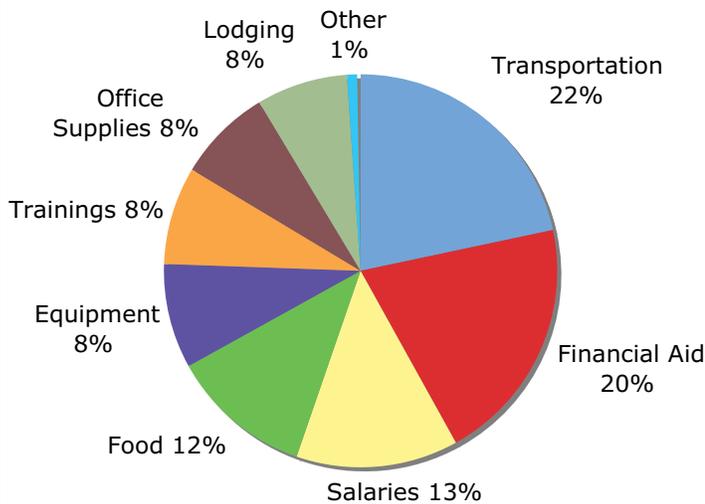


We are a tuition-driven organization. Approximately \$95 of our incoming students' participant fees go directly toward Financial Aid for other students. By joining our donor base or by increasing the amount of your donation, you can help us decrease our reliance on participation fees. Last year's donations alone helped us decrease our reliance on participation fees by 16% for the 07-08 Fiscal Year!

Fiscal Year	Total Fundraising Income	Total # of Donors
2004	\$9,885	97
2005	\$12,038	112
2006	\$14,260	81
2007	\$20,097	165

Last fall's annual mailing brought in a record number of 165 donations, providing FOP with just over \$20,000 to spend on new rental gear.

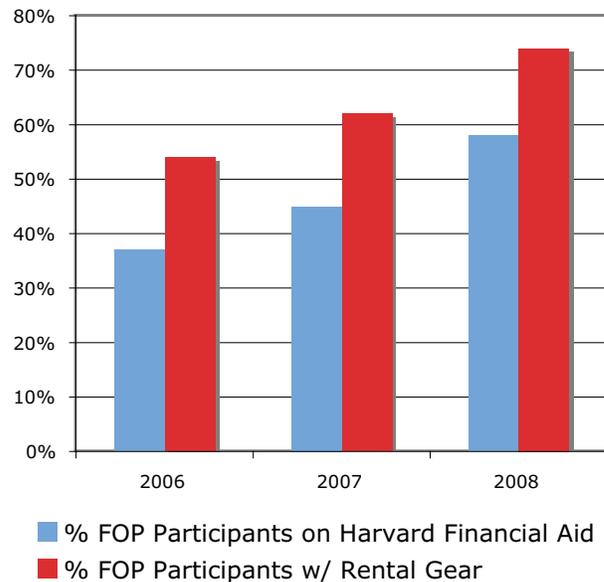
FOP EXPENSES 2007-2008



- FOP has consistently allocated 28% of our budget to Financial Aid and Equipment.
- FOP continues to spend 75% of our income directly on programming, with only 25% being devoted to administrative costs.

Over the past two years, your donations have allowed us to purchase 105 boots, 330 synthetic clothing layers, 65 backpacks, 60 sleeping pads, and 85 sets of raingear to lend to FOP first-years.

This year, FOP provided more Financial Aid than ever before. For the first time in recorded FOP history, we were able to maintain the same percentage of participants on Harvard Financial Aid before and after our aid offers.



"Thank you for the generous financial aid enabling my daughter to participate in the First-Year Outdoor Program. Twenty-nine years ago, when I was entering Harvard, such an award didn't exist (or at least I wasn't aware of it) and my family decided that FOP was beyond our financial means. Many of my classmates found the FOP an excellent introduction to Harvard and I wanted my daughter to be able to experience it. The full cost would be a stretch for our budget, but with the financial aid, it is well within our means. Thank you Harvard for making your programs more accessible." -- A parent of a FOPper on financial aid

ABOUT: FOP

THE WEEK:

3 States • 5 Nights Under the Stars • 32 Trips • 75 Leaders, 1 Director •
276 Freshmen and Transfer Students • 3168 Tortillas • Countless Memories

THE HISTORY:

FOP was developed in 1979 by the Dean to provide students with a stronger support network upon entrance to college. FOP is the oldest and largest pre-orientation program for freshmen and transfer students at Harvard. Every year, FOP sends approximately 18% of the incoming first-years on six-day backpacking, canoeing, and camping trips at the beginning of the school year. Since 1979, over 5000 students have begun their Harvard experience by living with 8-10 peers in the backcountry, under the leadership of 2-3 trained upperclassmen leaders. FOP is one of only 46 AEE-Accredited Programs in North America, such as the National Outdoor Leadership School and Outward Bound.

THE MISSION:

To provide group adventure-based experiences that promote the development of social support and self-awareness for first-year students and leadership development for members of the Harvard community.

THE VALUES:

- Compassion
- Responsibility to community
- Care and responsibility to the environment
- The equality and intrinsic worth of all people regardless of gender, age, race, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic or socio-economic background

THE RESEARCH:

1. FOP is the most successful Harvard pre-orientation program in providing social support networks to first-year students.¹
2. The first 6 weeks of college are highly significant in adjusting to college life.²
3. Students indicate that involvement in a pre-orientation program significantly improved their introductions to Harvard.³
4. College outdoor pre-orientation experiences are correlated with higher academic achievement throughout college.⁴

WHY WE FUNDRAISE:

The First-Year Outdoor Program endeavors to provide financial aid and gear to anyone who needs it in an effort to minimize and ultimately to eliminate any financial barriers that might prevent students from participating in the program. Your donation will help us reach this goal.



- 1 Bell, Brent J. (2006). "Wilderness Orientation: Exploring the Relationship Between College Preorientation Programs and Social Support." *Journal of Experiential Education*, 29(2), 145-167.
- 2 Baker, R.W., & Siryk, B. (1984). "Measuring adjustment to college." *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. 31, 179-189
- 3 Report of the Freshman Orientation Advisory Committee. (June 2005). P. 7 & Appendix C.
- 4 Gass, M.A. (1987). "The Effects of a Wilderness Orientation Program on College Students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 10(2), 30-33.

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THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS!

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"FOP was great. Only when I arrived back on campus did I realize how nervous I was about Harvard, but as we walked from gear drop off to the FDO through the yard in our smelly smelly clothes, we sang all the FOP songs and I felt incredibly better."