

The Fuzzy Cheesecake

FOP's Annual Report & Community Newsletter



www.harvardfop.com

"You cannot stay on the summit forever,
you have to come down again. So why
bother in the first place? Just this: What
is above knows what is below, but what is
below does not know what is above."

-René Daumal 'Mount Analogue

ABOUT FOP

THE WEEK:

3 States • 5 Nights Under the Stars • 43 Trips
87 Leaders • 431 First-Years
4368 Tortillas • Countless Memories

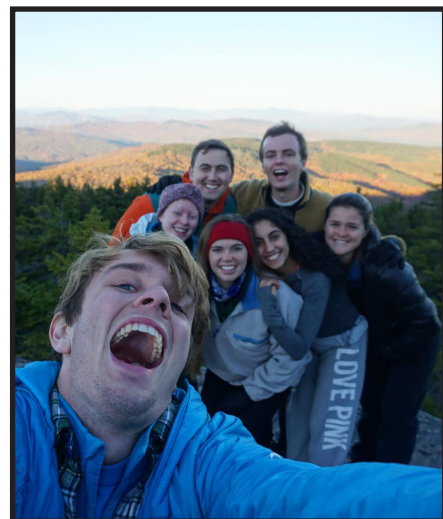
THE MISSION

*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.*

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GREETINGS FROM STEERING COMMITTEE 2017



FOP STEERING COMMITTEE '17:
BENJI CASHIN, AMIE GARCIA, LIZZIE KEELEY,
LAYLA KOUSARI, QUINN MULHOLLAND,
GABI SÉJOURNÉ, AND COZ TEPLITZ

FROM SC '17

Welcome to the *Fuzzy Cheesecake*, FOP's annual newsletter! Every year, the Steering Committee sets out its goals for the coming year, and we wanted to use this newsletter as an opportunity to let you know about ours. We all decided to be part of this wonderful organization, and to take on this exciting opportunity to shape the direction of the organization, because we love FOP deeply and believe in the magic that it provides for first-years and leaders alike. But we acknowledge that there are many ways FOP could improve as an organization. In this spirit, we decided that one of our main goals for the program this year would be improving inclusion and accessibility along a number of different axes.

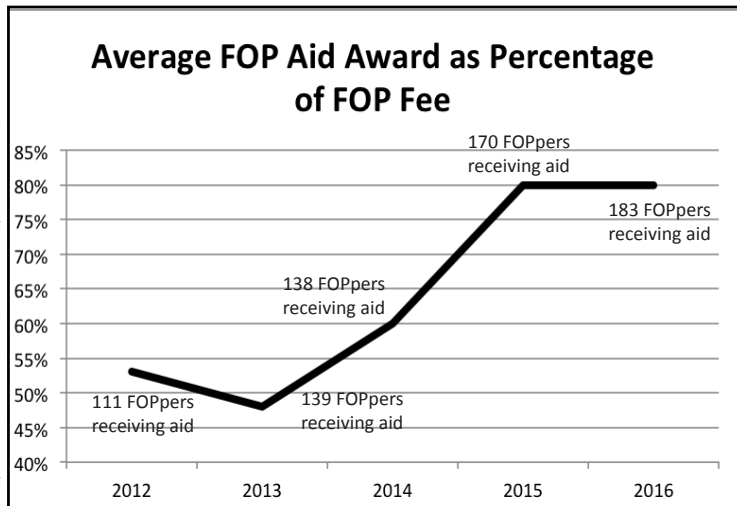
We are so grateful for the work that previous SCs have already done to advance this goal. This includes the fact that this past year, for the second year in a row, we were able to match the percentage of financial aid offered by the College. This feat means that FOP can be financially accessible to all incoming students, regardless of their economic background. There is still work to be done, however, to make sure that incoming first-years, especially first-generation students and students from the highest financial aid tiers, are aware of the availability of financial aid and that the price tag of FOP isn't a barrier for them.

But in addition to economic accessibility, there are many other areas in which we have to improve. We realize that the wilderness is not always a welcoming place for everyone, and to counteract this, we are trying to redefine what the "outdoor" part of FOP means, including expanding the types of trips we offer. This past year, we pioneered the cabin trip, a site-based trip which brought 20 first-years to the Harvard Forest and provides a more accessible exposure to the outdoors without sacrificing community formation and self-reflection.

We also acknowledge that, just as it is important to have a diverse class of FOPpers, it is also important to have a diverse class of leaders that is willing to talk about and wrestle with issues of identity and inclusion. To that end, we have launched several initiatives to reach past the "FOP bubble" in soliciting applications from potential FOP leaders—both short term initiatives, like go-

ing to freshman entryway study breaks to talk about becoming a FOP leader, and long term ones, like hosting events with other organizations on campus to talk about the way that issues of diversity and inclusion manifest themselves in the context of both the outdoors and college.

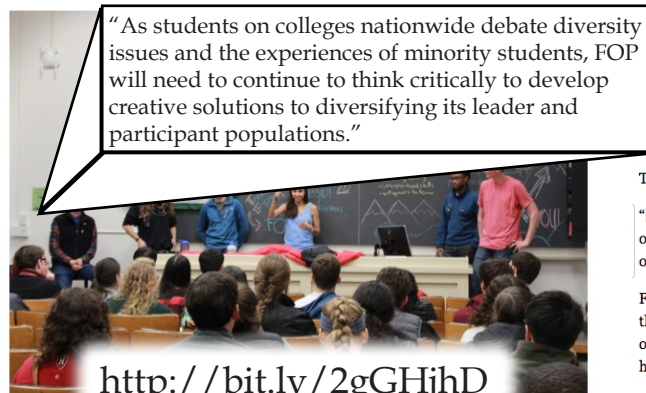
There are many other ways FOP can be more accessible and inclusive—this was just a summary of a few of the ways we are trying to advance this goal. We all sincerely believe in the power of FOP to be a truly magical, transformative experience for incoming first-years and leaders alike, but if it isn't that experience for everybody, then it is our imperative to address that.



NEWS CLIPS

FOP's Struggle With Diversity

Leaders of Harvard's outdoor pre-orientation program look to increase its diversity
By BRANDON J. DIXON, CRIMSON STAFF WRITER December 11, 2015



"As students on colleges nationwide debate diversity issues and the experiences of minority students, FOP will need to continue to think critically to develop creative solutions to diversifying its leader and participant populations."

<http://bit.ly/2gGHjhd>

On Dec. 1, members of the Steering Committee held a meeting for all students interested in leading FOP next semester. From left to right: Jacob C. Barton '17, Elizabeth A. Huber '17, William H. Bloxham '17, Layla Joudeh '17, Cameron C. Clarke '17, Charlie A. Gibson '18. BRIDGET R. IRVINE

UPDATED: December 13, 2015, at 4:02 p.m.

Every August, roughly 400 incoming freshmen line up on Widener Library's 100-year-old

To Diversify Membership, FOP Pilots New Program

By DEREK G. XIAO, CRIMSON STAFF WRITER September 7, 2016

Harvard's First Year Outdoor Program piloted a less intensive week-long trip this summer intended to encourage

more minority students to participate in the popular freshman orientation program—part of a larger effort to address ongoing issues with the program's diversity.

The pilot cost the program less than the traditional trip. "[It] was designed to be less intensive, less 'hardcore,'" Teplitz said. "For most of the program, we were moving from place to place each day and that, we were worried, we're putting people off."

FOP has faced criticism for a lack of socioeconomic and racial diversity among its participants, given the cost of the program, though it does offer need-based financial aid. This year, according to The Crimson's annual survey of the freshman class, 67 percent of freshman respondents that participated in the program said their parents have a combined annual

total of \$63,000 was given out in financial aid, up from the \$57,250 distributed last year. The average aid award was \$338, or about 80 percent of the program fee.

Teplitz said the pilot targeted freshmen who were not as interested in a fully immersive outdoors experience; historically, according to the National Park Service, many of such people have been minorities.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Coz Teplitz

2016 has been a year of substantive change for FOP. This spring, we were honored to receive a generous gift from Karen Gordon Mills '75, MBA '77 and her husband, Barry Mills, parents of former FOP leader and Steering Committee member George Mills '15. Part of their gift establishes the First-Year Outdoor Program Access and Opportunity Scholarship Fund, an endowed fund that will provide financial assistance for students wishing to participate in FOP. An endowed fund has long been part of our strategy toward removing financial barriers to participation in FOP, and we are delighted that FOPpers will soon benefit from this new fund. In addition, their gift will support other FOP programming, including our new programs designed to make FOP more welcoming to a broader variety of students. "Our goal is for any student to have the opportunity to participate," says Barry. "Flattening the opportunity curve at Harvard is really important." I couldn't agree more, and I'm excited to see what our new financial resiliency will allow us to do.

As I just mentioned, we also piloted new programming this year. In an attempt to provide a FOP option for students not interested in a traditional backpacking or canoeing experience, we teamed up with the Harvard Forest to offer a trip on their property. The students slept in the dorm-style accommodations available at the Forest. During the day, they learned about the central Massachusetts landscape from a variety of perspectives. Prof. Don Pfister's mushroom foraging trip was immensely popular. Other activities included

a day with noted historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich exploring the colonial history of the Forest, a service project at the nearby Farm School, a day hike of Mt. Monadnock, and more. The trip was a big success and has reinforced my belief that the magic of FOP requires just three components: (a) a small group in (b) a new setting that (c) experiences shared challenge. We are working on finding other, new avenues we can deliver these elements in ways that welcome more



students into the FOP family. We are still working, so please send us ideas if you have any!

These initiatives - along with the continued success of our traditional trips - have led to continued growth for FOP. This August, we welcomed 431 first-years, a 10% increase over our record from last year. Our program has long had the goal of being open to as many students as possible, and we seem to be making real progress toward that goal. As the Steering Committee mentions in their letter, such growth also carries an obligation to provide positive experiences for as many people in our community as possible, especially for the newcomers. I'm proud that we've tried to look open-eyed at our own successes and failures in that respect. We certainly have a long way to go. However, the Steering Committee and I are committed to working as hard as we can to help our program keep moving forward - to

move as close as possible to the "magical" program we all hope to be.

STORIES FROM OUR FOP LEADERS:

My FOP trip this year LOVED talking about poop. From long-distance phone calls to five-star ratings, we filled our days of hiking by swapping proper squatting techniques and brainstorming affectionate names for our trowel. Towards the end of our week together, I remember

pulling aside one of my FOPpers who was feeling particularly anxious about meeting new people in college. When I asked him what he thought he would take away from the trip, he responded by summing up FOP and its friendship-making magic better than I ever could: "Being in the woods just breaks down so many barriers to entry! When you can talk about poop so openly, what can't you talk about?"

— Minnie Jang '18

On the last day of FOP 44's trip this year, we stayed at a beautiful camping ground near Sunapee, New Hampshire. Our FOPpers were pretty tired, so we were lucky to only spend about an hour hiking and then use the rest of the day for a picnic lunch, letters to self, and a relaxing camp set-up and dinner. We decided (at the urging of our FOPpers) to make use of the campground's fire pit, and so for about an hour our foppers ran around collecting dry wood while my co-leader Matt and I worked on dinner. (For awhile the fire seemed like it wasn't going to happen, but our [fairly incompetent] FOPpers got really committed to the process and somehow got it going. We're still confused about how that happened.) I stopped paying close attention to what they were doing until our quietest FOPper asked me for the Swiss Army knife—turns out, she was trying to turn some p-cord and one of the pieces of wood for the fire into a crossbow. I let Matt know she seemed to be developing a plan to kill us all in our sleep, and we decided to let her keep working at it. Against all odds, she was successful. (Harnessing the power of fire AND basic weaponry? OUR FOPpers, some of the most blister-prone



people I had ever encountered??) I'm lucky to have a great souvenir from our trip, in the form of a minute-long video on my phone of Matt making pasta while our FOPpers sing "Frozen" songs in a circle, the quietest one of them in the background shooting sticks at trees. I definitely wanted our FOPpers to get some independence and college survival skills out of the trip—I guess I just didn't realize exactly what forms those would take.

—Maeva O'Brien '18

STAYING EXCELLENT

Thomas Dingman, Dean of Freshmen

Brands come and go (you only have to think of Kodak and Oldsmobile to know that). Harvard, in contrast, has done yeoman work to stay at or near the top of colleges and universities across the world for years and years. It has maintained that position, most think, by constant self-scrutiny and a willingness to adapt to changing times.

FOP, in my mind, has shown the same thoughtful review of its philosophy and practices, and been prepared to make adjustments. Just this year it added a cabin-based trip in the Harvard Forest in order to enhance its appeal and reach out to incoming students wanting to engage with ecological research and encounter a bit less rigor. Early indications are that the add-on was a huge success. I have heard from a number of students grateful for the experience. One in particular, Michael Scherr, wrote to me:

The cabin-based trip, and the close community it helped to create, gave me some of my closest friends at Harvard and was the single most positive experience in my transition to college. As someone with little experience hiking, it was a great relief to find out that, with the exception of a few very manageable day-long hikes, our activities consisted of mostly small, group-oriented games. Being in a new social environment can be daunting and the relaxed nature of the cabin trip contributed positively to my social confidence. Rather than being preoccupied with the physical challenges of a hike, I was able to focus solely on getting to know the twenty-two other students I was with, three of whom were our upperclassman leaders who provided unique insight and advice on being a student at Harvard.

The new option also had the benefit of getting students and faculty together outside of the classroom. This is currently a top goal of the College Dean's Office. Students need to see faculty as real human beings from whom they can learn not just the content of a course but how to conduct one's life. And faculty, when given the opportunity, seem consistently to draw motivation from their interactions with students. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, 300th Anniversary Professor, said of her experience in the Forest offering: "For me, spending the day at the Harvard Forest with incoming students was a perfect way to end the summer and begin a new year of teaching. Their enthusiasm was a tonic!"

Congrats to FOP for not being complacent and for considering new ways to achieve their time-tested goals. The innovation for 2020 will clearly help to keep FOP the preeminent program that it is.

MORE FROM OUR FOPPERS:

"I had such an amazing experience and really enjoyed getting to know everyone on my trip. Making such great friends, and having the opportunity to discuss life and our upcoming journey to start college was so reassuring. In discussing my fears, and even aspirations, I felt so much more comfortable and prepared to start my college experience."

"My group experienced a level of bonding that I don't think could be replicated under any other condition."

"My favorite part of FOP was that it was simply a time to focus on myself. Before going to college, you're focused on friends, family, and the stress of going to school. Once you get to Harvard, you're caught up in the Opening Days Craziess. FOP was a nice opportunity to just focus on myself for a little bit."

"The connections that developed throughout the trip were some of the realest, most genuine interactions I've ever had with people. The setting of the outdoors and the lack of awareness for the restraints of time and technology, were only strengthening the intensity of each moment experienced."

"The people on my trip stand out most. It was amazing to share an experience with such a diverse, passionate, and collaborative group of people."

"It was everything I could of asked for and more. From my FOP leaders, to my fellow FOPpers, to the people we met on the trail, to the peaks we climbed during the day, to the activities we had at night, to the creative dinners we ate with all of us huddled around the food."

"I'm glad I had the time to consciously appreciate nature and have an adventure before classes started."

"It gave me a group of people in my incoming class that I was already very close to, so I was never alone in my first few weeks here while I was still in the friend-making process."





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Thank you to all of our donors!

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