



THE COLLABORATIVE FOR THE COMMON GOOD

AT WINGATE UNIVERSITY

THE A.L.I.E.N. PROGRAM

Adventure Leadership Immersion Experience
in Nature with Adden Howard and Dr. Nick
DeLangie

WINGATE UNIVERSITY
WINGATE, NORTH CAROLINA
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Adventure Leadership Immersion Experience in Nature (ALIEN)

Wingate University Collaborative for the Common Good Adden Howard and Dr. Nick DeLangie



Experiencing nature is the best remedy for personal growth, transformation and happiness. When paired with leadership experience, it can be a key factor in helping develop an individual's fixed mindset into a growth mindset. This philosophy is the foundation for the Adventure Leadership Immersion In Nature (ALIEN) program. This partnership with Brad Turley of Southern 8ths Farm allows Wingate University students to reconnect to the natural landscape within our Union County home as well as build more leaders for today and tomorrow.



What We've Done

Since its inception, the ALIEN program has organized 3 on-site events. The first event consisted of the Wingate Collaborative for the Common Good Leadership team, nine of whom visited the farm for an overnight retreat. Attendees included the Executive Director, 3 Coordinators, the Campus Compact HungerCorp Vista, 3 Faculty Apprentices, and ALIEN organizers Adden Howard and Nick DeLangie. The inaugural adventure consisted of activities such as archery, campground set-up, fire building, walking the trail of the southern 8ths farm, group discussions, morning yoga , and cooking (vegan chilli). Participant feedback on the event was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees reporting that they “loved learning about the history of the land during our walk. I also enjoyed getting to know the team on a more personal level.” and that they were “thinking about stepping outside of our comfort zone and how overcoming difficult things had helped us to grow, and how that might apply to what we are doing in the CCG.”



After the success of the first program event, a second event was organized specifically for CCG Cultural Leadership Interns (CLI) and their staff mentors. There were five attendees, who participated in activities tailored to their needs and growth opportunities that targeted their positions within the CCG and the greater campus community. These included a trail walk of the land, an activity run by our Vista Leader Hannah Fraser titled “How to control a situation in your favor”, Bug Identification with So8th’s owner Brad Turley, group discussions and brainstorming future projects, cooking, and sketching. Participants reported that they “really liked how we practiced having conversations with people we may not agree with. It helped me apply somewhat of a “formula” to having these conversations in order to check myself, my attitude, and kind of set aside personal biases.” and “this is honestly not that relevant to what I do, but I had no idea there were so many species of moths!” A Wayfind student mentor joining the program reported that they “liked being able to draw what we felt, or what we took away from the event. I always believed that if we do not reflect on something, it’s like it never happened.”



Preparations

When recruiting participants for our leadership adventures, we were very intentional in our selection. We focused most highly on groups that have a mentoring/leading purpose, Key Leader-groups on campus (SGA, BARC, etc.), Environmental Groups (Bio club, etc.), and Community Organization Leaders. We also want to provide a service for those looking for Required Leadership Training, such as club and org president/VP’s, Faculty chairs, or Athletic groups. We are also creating an event in March



2021 that is an Open Call to
Anyone who wants to attend and learn more about the program or
Anyone who wants to develop as a leader.

An important step when planning outdoor adventures is preparing for emergency situations. Activities in nature do not come without risk, and we felt it was important to develop emergency protocols in case of any injuries or other events. Proper communication with participants

was essential, and we made sure that Wingate and So8ths Waivers were signed by participants before the event. Emergency protocols were created, outlining what would be done in the case of an event such as an injury while on the So8ths property. We also developed an inventory list that helped us make sure that all of the items that we needed, such as camping and cooking equipment as well as first aid kits, were packed and accounted for. Before each event, organizers met to create a Program Agenda Outline, as well as confirm who would email participants pre-and post-event to make sure they had information on

how to get to the event and what to bring/wear as well as make sure that they had their waivers signed and answer any emails.



What we're Doing

During the event, we focused not only on the fun of outdoor activities, but also their potential for leadership development. We discussed articles and videos that challenged participants' perspectives on the importance of being in nature, such as "[Let nature heal climate and biodiversity crises, say campaigners](#)" and "[I Had a Gloriously Wild Childhood. That's Why I Wrote 'How to Train Your Dragon.'](#)" as well as listened to [TED Talks](#), and [identified insects](#). We also dove more specifically into leadership and discussed various literature that got us thinking about [conquering fears](#), [optimizing effectiveness](#), and [developing leadership characteristics](#).



Plans for the future

Looking towards the future, one of our main goals is to develop additional programming. We plan to focus on the outdoors to understand how plants and animals exist in harmony, and use nature's ecosystems to teach lessons on collaboration and community support. Another goal is to encourage more engaging conversation, asking ourselves how we can engage our participants more as well as think about which topics are most critical for leadership development. We hope to define takeaways for everyday life, develop and convey specific takeaways, and find ways to turn these takeaways into giveaways (notebooks, souvenirs, etc.). Our final goal is to be able to provide round table discussion with area experts (environmental, psychological, global) and bring in experts in the fields of nature, leadership, community engagement, etc. In order to achieve future success in the program, we have identified that it is important to build both sides of the bridge by interacting more with our partners. This includes inviting So8ths to Wingate and connecting So8ths learning points to campus "How can So8ths lessons impact our home turf". For specific groups coming to the ALIEN program, we would like to develop specialty events that adapt to group-specific needs/wants. This includes standardizing the program formula and increasing a la carte program activities. We also plan to recruit more ALIEN leaders who remain leaders, and who will act as facilitators on multiple ALIEN programs. Finally, we are excited to develop a proposal for a Challenge Course to be built on site at So8ths.