

*Note: Downloading and reading this letter does not signify acceptance to the First-Year Trip. This letter is meant for informational purposes only, and acceptance is conveyed by regular mail.*

Summer 2005

Dear Member of the Class of 2009,

Welcome to Outdoor Adventure! We are glad that you have chosen to participate in this year's First-Year Trip. You will have a great time meeting new friends and learning about the outdoors. The First-Year Trip runs from Thursday, August 4 to Thursday, August 11. You will need to arrive on campus on Thursday, August 4 in time for check-in. Check-in will be held in the Honors House from 1:30 – 4:00 p.m. This letter should provide you with all the information you need to prepare for your trip. If you requested financial aid, you will be hearing about your request in the next few weeks.

**Activities:** Participants are divided into coed groups of seven to ten incoming honors students, and each group is lead by 2-3 student leaders trained in outdoor skills, group dynamics, and wilderness first aid. Each group will have at least one female leader. You will receive your group assignments when you arrive in Norman on August 4.

Your trip will consist of backpacking and camping. Backpacking trips are an excellent way to explore a wilderness area and to get to know the other people in your group as you hike. You will be carrying all your personal gear and a portion of the group equipment and food in a frame backpack. If you are bringing your own pack, it is important that it fits you and that it has enough room to carry your belongings, a sleeping bag, and some group equipment. The trip will be traveling in the Pecos Wilderness, New Mexico. The trips will cover an average of 7 miles per day, about 6 hours of hiking (depending on the type of terrain).

Camping along the trail is one of the most enjoyable parts of a backpacking trip. We'll teach you how to camp in a way that protects the natural environment. Everyone in the group works together. While some of the group sets up the tents, others will be preparing dinner over backpacking stoves. At the end of a full day of hiking, it's great to sit around with new friends, enjoying a hot meal and talking about the day. Outdoor Adventure provides all of the group gear such as stoves and tents.

Two of the most common questions about living on the trail have to do with bathrooms and bathing. In most of the places we camp, there are no outhouses or bathrooms. To make sure that we leave as little impact as possible, you must walk at least 200 feet from any trail, campsite, or water source before relieving yourself. We'll explain the proper methods for minimal impact. You won't have access to showers during the trip, but you'll be able to wash your face and hands every day.

**Equipment:** You can find an equipment list that details what you will need for your trip online at [http://www.ou.edu/oa/ft/oaft\\_gear.pdf](http://www.ou.edu/oa/ft/oaft_gear.pdf). If you bring what is on the list, you will

be well prepared. Words of advice: be creative, improvise, and borrow. Do not make any major investments in equipment until you are sure that you are really going to need it and that you will get use out of it after the First-Year Trip. The only item that you definitely must have is a pair of hiking boots. Hiking boots that extend over the ankle provide increased support on trails where the extra weight of the pack can turn a simple ankle twist into a serious strain, possibly compromising your ability to hike the rest of the trip. There are a number of inexpensive, lightweight hiking boots that are appropriate. Your clothing should be roomy to allow freedom of movement. Along with the equipment listed, remember that you will be carrying some group equipment and food, so don't over-pack. You should not need to bring other items. If you requested a backpack or sleeping bag from Outdoor Adventure, you will receive it at check-in on Thursday.

**Advance Preparation:** The major aspect of preparing for the trip is general physical conditioning. The First-Year Trip involves hiking for 6-8 hours each day. To enjoy the trip more fully, it is important that you be in good aerobic condition. Any regular physical activity such as walking, swimming, jogging, aerobics, or biking will be fine to prepare you for the trip. You should partake in physical activity for at least 30 minutes, 3 times per week. You should begin this program at least four weeks before the trip. This activity increases the efficiency of the cardiovascular system to allow you to hike more easily, thus allowing you to better enjoy your trip. The most important piece of equipment to prepare is what you wear on your feet. Remember that your boots are designed to protect your feet, so it is essential that the boots be well broken-in before you arrive at OU. Boots that are not properly broken in invariably lead to chafing and blisters, and nothing can ruin a hiking trip more than blisters. The additional weight of a backpack on your back also increases the potential for developing blisters. If you have new boots, you should wear them for at least 3-4 days a week before the trip with the same liner socks and wool socks you plan to wear on the trip. This will break in the boots to your feet and get your feet used to the boots.

If you are interested in learning more about backpacking and hiking before your trip, we suggest reading *The Backpacker's Field Manual*, by Rick Curtis and published by Random House. It's available at major bookstores and online at Amazon.com. It has all the information you might need about equipment, what to bring and why, hiking techniques, etc.

**Medical Forms:** If you haven't already sent in the appropriate medical forms, please do so as soon as possible. These can be found at <http://www.ou.edu/oa/ft/fythealth.pdf>, and must be mailed back to us before the trip. We are not permitted to take anyone who has not submitted the proper medical forms.

**Housing and Food:** You will *not* be able to move into your dorm room when you arrive on Thursday. For this reason, we ask that you bring only what you will need on the First-Year Trip to Norman with you on Thursday, August 4. There will be limited storage available if you must bring a small bag for after the trip. The participants on the First-Year Trip will be able to move into their dorm rooms when we return on Thursday, August 11, but there will be an additional charge for moving in before your scheduled

date. Last year the cost was approximately \$85. We must make arrangements through the University of Oklahoma's Housing and Food Services for early move in, so please inform us by e-mail [oa@ou.edu](mailto:oa@ou.edu) ASAP if you would like to move into your dorm rooms on Thursday, August 11. We recommend either shipping your belongings to arrive on this date or, if your parents live close by, having them bring your belongings to you after the trip.

Meals will be provided from Thursday, August 4 (dinner with your group) until our return on Thursday, August 11 (breakfast). After that you will be on your own. For special dietary needs or special arrival circumstances, please contact us as soon as possible at [oa@ou.edu](mailto:oa@ou.edu).

**Check-In:** Check-in for the First-Year Trip will be on the east side of the Honors House from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 4. You can find a map online at <http://honors.ou.edu/images/honmap.gif>. Please be on time! At this time, you will meet your leaders and the other members of your group. You will also receive any equipment that you requested for the trip. Following check-in, there will be an informational meeting at 4:00 p.m. at the Honors House library. Parents are welcome to attend this meeting, but they must leave after that. Trip groups eat dinner on Thursday and spend the evening packing and preparing for the trip. We will board the buses that night and arrive in Pecos Wilderness, New Mexico on Friday morning, ready to hike!

**Emergency Numbers:** During the trip, in the event of an emergency, families should call the Honors Office at (405) 325-5291. The office will then relay a message to our base camp in New Mexico, who will then contact your group. Since we will be in the wilderness, immediate contact may not be available. **Please call only in an emergency.**

We hope this letter has provided you with all the information you need to participate in the trip. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [oa@ou.edu](mailto:oa@ou.edu) or at one of the e-mail addresses listed below. Have a great summer, and we look forward to meeting you in August!

Sincerely,

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