

West Virginia University
The Student Assembly - Student Government Association
Assembly Resolution: AR-2025-11-03
**AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION TO GUARANTEE UNIVERSAL
ACCESS TO FIRST-YEAR ADVENTURE WV EXPERIENCES**

Short Title: First-Year Mountaineer Adventure Access Act

Author(s): Andrew O'Neal, Senator

Sponsor(s): Noi Alfgeirsson, Senator
Matthew Bellisario, Senator (Statler)
Gracey Champ, Senator
Briar Hale, Senator (Davis)
Tris Silva, Senator
Ashlynn Traylor, Senator (Davis)
Paige Tuttle, Senator (Eberly)
Elise Vuiller, Senator

Contributor(s): Coy Belknap, Adventure WV Director
Emily Chapman, Adventure WV Program
Coordinator

Committee Endorsement: Sustainability

First Reading Date: 11/12/2025

Second Reading Date: 11/19/2025

Date of Approval: 11/19/2025

Presidential Signature:



Whereas, the West Virginia University mission statement reads, “As a land-grant institution, the faculty, staff and students at West Virginia University commit to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that advances... prosperity for all by providing access

and opportunity... and leads transformation through local, state, and global engagement;¹ and,

Whereas, the West Virginia University Student Government Association (SGA) Vision Statement reads “To be a Student Government Association that serves the students, West Virginia University, and the State of West Virginia by... supporting economic development, enhancing environmental stewardship, participating in meaningful community service, fostering healthy lifestyles, and developing innovative partnerships with students, faculty, staff and other key Stakeholders,”;² and,

Whereas, the Student Government Association recognizes that Adventure WV is a nationally acclaimed program and the largest outdoor orientation program in the US, providing immersive, nature-based, and team-building experiences through trips for students, while also strengthening belonging, leadership, and appreciation for West Virginia’s natural environment;³ and,

Whereas, this legislation was developed through collaboration between the Student Government Association and Adventure WV to ensure every student has the opportunity to experience West Virginia’s outdoors during their first year; and,

Whereas, experiential outdoor education is shown to improve student retention, mental health, and campus community cohesion by connecting students to place and to one another, which is crucial, especially during a student’s first year; and,

Whereas, data on student aggregate retention rates from 2013 to 2022 shows that Adventure WV participants had a 7.36% higher aggregate retention rate than Non-Adventure WV participants;⁴ and,

Whereas, data on graduation rates from 2013 to 2022 shows that students who participate in Adventure WV are 15.2% more likely to graduate within six years when compared to Non-Adventure WV students;⁵ and,

¹ [Mission Statement](#)

² [Student Government Association Vision Statement](#)

³ [What is Adventure WV](#)

⁴ [Adventure SGA Data Overview \(slides 8\)](#)

⁵ [Adventure SGA Data Overview \(slides 9\)](#)

Whereas, based on retention and graduation data, expanding access to Adventure WV first-year trips would almost certainly offset the cost of full removal of program fees in the form of retained student tuition and commerce; and,

Whereas, access to these programs is currently limited by financial constraints, with first-year trips potentially costing up to \$95, preventing some students from participating in programs that allow them to access West Virginia's great outdoors, a defining part of the Mountaineer experience; and,⁶

Whereas, providing every freshman the opportunity for a no-cost trip with Adventure WV within the state of West Virginia would advance equity, wellness, sustainability awareness, and student success consistent with WVU's land-grant mission; and,

Whereas, West Virginia University has recently expanded recruitment efforts toward students from metropolitan areas and out-of-state regions, seeking to increase enrollment, and Adventure WV's immersive, outdoor experiences offer an authentic introduction to the landscapes and communities that make West Virginia unique; and,

Whereas, introducing new students, particularly those from out-of-state or metropolitan areas, to West Virginia's natural beauty, culture, and communities through Adventure WV trips may encourage them to stay in the state after graduation, contributing to the state's economy and reversing trends of outmigration among young professionals; and,

Whereas, providing a unique opportunity for students to experience the beauty, resilience, and heritage of Appalachia firsthand helps break down stigmas surrounding the region and fosters a greater understanding of its culture and people; and,

Whereas, Adventure WV serves as a gateway for environmental awareness and sustainability education, introducing students to Leave No Trace principles and fostering appreciation for the state's ecosystems and natural resources; and,

Whereas, the Student Government Association recognizes that expanding Adventure WV accessibility aligns with many Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 3

⁶ [Adventure WV First-Year Trip Info](#)

(Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by integrating health, learning, universal access to the outdoors, and environmental stewardship into the first-year experience; and,⁷

Whereas, increased participation in Adventure WV would enhance WVU's reputation as an innovative, student-centered, and sustainability-focused institution, helping attract future students and demonstrate a lasting commitment to environmental responsibility, sustainability, and community engagement; and,

Therefore, be it resolved by the Student Assembly of West Virginia University:

Section 1: The West Virginia University Student Government Association formally declares its complete support for Adventure WV and the expansion of adventure opportunities for students during their first year.

Section 2: SGA believes that all students at WVU should be provided the opportunity to participate in a no-cost trip with Adventure WV during their first year at the university.

Section 3: SGA urges WVU to explore and pursue the creation of a universal first-year adventure program, free-of-charge, to guarantee that every WVU freshman is offered at least one in-state Adventure WV trip sometime during their first year at the university if they choose to participate.

Section 4: SGA believes that every new Mountaineer should have the opportunity to begin their college journey by exploring the land that gives them that title, fostering connection with their fellow Mountaineers and a love of the outdoors free-of-charge.

Section 5: Upon passage and approval, this legislation shall be forwarded to:

Mandates:

Gary G. Furbee II, Vice President of Student Life
Carrie Showalter, Dean of Students
Nathan Harlan, Executive Director of Student Wellness

⁷ [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Coy Belknap, Director of Adventure WV
Emily Chapman, Adventure WV Program Coordinator
Traci Knabenshue, Director of Sustainability
Jorge Atilas, Dean of WVU Extension and Engagement
Kristi Wood-Turner, Director of Center for Community Engagement
Dr. Thanh Le, Director, Student Engagement and Leadership (Advisor)
Michael T. Benson, University President
Erin Newmeyer, Associate Vice President for Executive Initiatives
Daily Athenaeum
Colin Street, Student Body President
Rozaireo Jones, Student Body Vice President
Emma Davis, Executive Secretary
Molly Meeker, Attorney General
Shelby Davis, Historian
