Nestled in the woods behind Gage Towers sits one of Minnesota State’s best-kept secrets — the Adventure Education Program’s outdoor challenge course. The high ropes course, more than 20 years old and located more than 30 feet in the air, is the only of its kind found in South Central Minnesota.

The Adventure Education Program (AEP) is run through the Department of Educational Leadership and serves as a section of the Experiential Education Master’s program. AEP Director Sam Steiger has been with the department for two years after graduating from the master’s program himself.

“Our program, the Experiential Education Program, is the oldest in the world and also one of the most popular,” Steiger said. “People come from all over the planet to study in Mankato for this master’s program.”

Three graduate students, along with Steiger, are responsible for running the program up on the high ropes and also on the ground. Addy Hutchison, Matt Loy and Jeremy Yarbrough work with groups in a series of activities known as an adventure progression in order to prepare participants for more mentally challenging experiences on the high ropes course.

“We want people to try something new and get out of their comfort zone,” Loy explained to a group of participants.

The high ropes course at MSU is unique in that it was the first in the country to be made of steel rather than wood. The course is also one of the only ropes courses located at a university that is not affiliated with a recreation program, but is part of an educational department at a college.

Walking 30 feet above ground on only suspended planks of wood, Anne Dahlman makes a leap of faith as her next step swings underneath her feet.

MSU’s Adventure Education Program provides team building and self discovery while participants dangle from ropes 30 ft. in the air.
MSSA appoints new senator

Kristy Carpenter selected among four candidates

DANNIE HIGGINBOTHAM

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Staff Writer

The Minnesota State Student Association elected a new senator to represent off-campus students at its Wednesday meeting, filling one of two vacant seats in the senate.

Four people applied for the position, which was left open after the elected senator declined the position, and after about an hour of speeches and questions, the senate decided the best person for the position was Kristy Carpenter, a senior nursing major.

Carpenter’s platform centers around the rights of off-campus students.

“I believe that certain off-campus issues are not the university’s problem,” Carpenter said. “How far would MSU’s jurisdiction go?”

Carpenter also voiced her opinion against a flat parking fee.

“I think we need to concentrate on other resources,” Carpenter said. “I’ve been here for a while and I’ve only just realized how good the bus system is. I feel like we could improve on and get the word out about it.”

During his report, Vice President Murtaza Rajabali also reflected on the campus parking issue.

“I think we should work for less cars, not more parking,” Rajabali said.

Rajabali also mentioned there was consideration of applying for a federal grant, which would help to increase the amount of public transportation on and around campus.

“We’ve seen a 40 percent increase in use of the Stomper Express, which only runs from Thursday to Saturday,” Rajabali said. “It would be great if that could run throughout the whole week.”

Later, President Ryan Anderson discussed a new online curriculum design system, which would allow students to see all proposed changes by professors. He also discussed attending another meeting for the campus recreation proposal.

“I’m hoping this will be one of the last ones and that we will be able to break ground soon,” Anderson said.

The meeting also included a presentation by Rick Straka, Vice President of Finance and Administration, who briefly went over the university’s financial standing.

“We’re in good fiscal health,” Straka said. “We have just around seven percent of our money in reserve, with a savings last year of somewhere between 1.2 and 1.3 million.”

Straka said that it wasn’t likely that next year would bring a large tuition increase.

“There’s not much political appetite to raise tuition more than four or five percent,” Straka said.

The senate also brought up the conceal and carry issue, which would allow students with the proper gun permit to carry a gun on campus. While the MSSA previously took a stand against the idea, it mentioned that a survey would be conducted in the form of an all-student email in order to judge the opinions of the students.

Kristy Carpenter selected among four candidates

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ADVENTURE

MSU faculty and administrators took on the challenge Friday continued from 1

“We don’t do birthday parties,” Steiger said. “But instead we do teambuilding for student groups, clubs, offices, sports teams and also a lot of high school and corporate programming.”

Each group that comes to the ropes course gets a program tailored to its specific needs.

“We try to learn a lot about the group,” Steiger said. “Then we use the activities that will benefit that group for the goals they want to accomplish.”

The AEP has worked with groups of many different sizes, but typically limits each session to around 40 people.

MSU’s Leadership Institute, composed of 30 faculty, administrators, and administrative assistants, completed the high ropes course Friday. The Leadership Institute, in its third year, is an annual program that meets seven times a year and focuses on topics such as trust, getting to know oneself, ethics, communication and conflict management.

Lori Lamb, director of human resources, is in charge of coordinating the program and said it is very rewarding for university staff.

“The Leadership Institute helps people network across campus, get to know other people and learn important skills in dealing with others,” Lamb said.

The AEP worked with the faculty to promote trust, with the day’s events leading up to the challenging high ropes course.

One of the Leadership Institute’s participants, Vice President of Academic Affairs Scott Olson, said the real battle is mental.

“The difficulty is challenging yourself to say ‘You know, I think I can do this,’” he said.

After ascending 34 feet in the air to walk along a balance beam, Olson spoke of the trust such an activity requires.

“The key is to trust that you have great people here, who aren’t going to let you down,” he said. “You have to trust that the systems are going to keep you safe, and if you trust then there’s nothing to be worried about.”

The Leadership Institute used three of the nine apparatuses located in the high ropes course.

In Steiger’s opinion, the most “adrenaline-filled” activity on the course is the “Breath-Taker.” It involves participants getting hoisted by their back in the air and then dropped into a free-fall pendulum swing.

MSU Grad to Take Part in First Homecoming as Local Domino's Pizza Business Owner

As as MSU Grad, I am certainly excited about this year's Homecoming. "It's really exciting to be a part of it this year, because so much has changed. I have put my MSU business degree to good use and never thought it would bring me back to my home town and be part of my home college. After 14 years I was able to buy one of the Domino's Pizza stores that I started working in back when I was an MSU student. This is truly a Homecoming for me to remember." To celebrate the 2008 MSU Homecoming - and my own personal homecoming back to the MSU community - please take advantage of our Homecoming Special.

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