

National Outdoor Leadership School



Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013

Increasing strength, depth, breadth, and balance.

Mission, Values, Context, and a Summary of Objectives

The plan that follows is the product of a broad community effort that took place over nearly one year. This plan is our long-term guide for the 2009–2013 fiscal years at NOLS. The predominant story is that we will remain committed to the school’s mission and core values, which underwent no changes in this planning process.

The mission of the National Outdoor Leadership School is to be the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serve people and the environment.

The NOLS staff, students, trustees, and alumni share a commitment to wilderness, education, leadership, safety, community, and excellence. These values define and direct who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

Our basic plan is straightforward—we will continue to focus substantially on what we have been doing, do it better, reach a broader audience, and remain a leader in our field.

While our mission states that we are both a leading *source* and *teacher* of wilderness skills and leadership, our primary emphasis has been, and will continue to be, as a teacher. We are an organization of committed educators and we are passionate about our students and the student experience. Our student outcomes are excellent, and demand for our courses exceeds what we can currently supply. Our staff and faculty are outstanding and dedicated. During the next five years we will continue to teach in and for the wilderness.

Our sense of community is strong. Our finances are in balance and our alumni are supportive. We will continue to build a better world by developing active, positive leaders who have experienced and who value wilderness.

The NOLS community takes pride in the success it has achieved in pursuing its values and fulfilling its mission, but we recognize in this plan that our horizons for educating students and for wilderness stewardship can be broader, its impact more significant, and its strengths greater. Global and local needs for leadership and environmental awareness and responsibility are compelling.

Contained in this plan are **five goals of strategic significance** that will strengthen, broaden, and deepen NOLS. These five areas are not new, but they are our focus areas for greatest change in the coming years. These interdisciplinary objectives will permeate what we do, affecting the annual plans and daily decisions of each operating department. These focus areas are:

1. **Staff Excellence**
2. **Diversity**
3. **Evidence-Based Curriculum Development**
4. **Environmental Stewardship**
5. **Philanthropic Support**

In addition to the primary focus areas above, the coming years will see considerable attention directed toward six natural focus areas that support and enhance our mission and core values. We anticipate that there will be less significant change in these areas. We will be responsible in our daily efforts to ensure our continuing excellence and improvement in all of them. These areas are:

- **Students**
- **Risk Management**
- **Access to Wilderness Classrooms**
- **Technology**
- **Expanding Brand Awareness**
- **Financial Equilibrium and Strength**

We will pursue our core activities and these goals within the context of a budget framework intended to ensure the long-term vitality and financial equilibrium of NOLS. This is a growth plan constrained by our commitment to excellence and the availability of faculty, classroom, and financial resources. NOLS recognizes that prudently managed growth can be beneficial and is consistent with its mission. By growing, NOLS can educate larger numbers of students, increase our impact, enrich faculty and staff careers, deliver operating economies of scale, add sophistication to our program, and build philanthropic support. Recognizing that external pressures may require us to adapt, the plan makes the following central operating assumptions:

- With vigilant attention to the maintenance of our quality standards, student days will grow annually by an average of 3% from the end of 2007—a nearly 20% increase by the end of 2013. Faculty, staff, course offerings, wilderness classroom access, technological tools, marketing and enrollment, and facilities will grow commensurately in sophistication and scope.
- We will manage NOLS to annually increase our net assets by 3% of total operating revenue. This is a level that, based on recent experience, will maintain NOLS' buildings and facilities and fund adequate operating reserves. Embedded in this margin target are the achievement of the strategic goals and the utilization of philanthropic revenue to fund a growing share of operations.
- Branch enhancements and new operating areas are planned along with meeting classroom needs for WMI, but no major new capital projects are funded by operations during the five years.

Setting goals, mapping routes, assigning responsibility, achieving objectives, and adapting are core NOLS skills. Through its annual budget cycles, daily execution, and trustee meetings, NOLS will map its routes toward the objectives set in this plan; define checkpoints and timelines; assign responsibilities; chart progress; and adapt. In the end, however, it is only a plan. In classic NOLS fashion, we will lead the school by relying on common sense, good judgment, our values and purpose, and commitment to stewardship.

Goals of Strategic Significance

Attention to NOLS' mission and core values—wilderness, education, safety, community, excellence, and leadership—has made the school a leader in wilderness skills, wilderness medicine, and experiential and leadership education. Continuing improvement, excellence, and leadership in these areas is a central commitment of this plan. We will refine our best practices and focus on outstanding execution. We will remain humble, avoid complacency, and welcome the responsibility of the leadership position that we have attained as an educator.

We will also accept the risks and costs of significantly increasing our attention to the following five initiatives. We shall pursue them with passion and in a manner that is consistent with our mission, values, and the long-term strength of the school. We recognize that they will often be interrelated and cross many operational boundaries within the school. As circumstances require, we may redefine them. They were selected from a broader list—strategic planning must, in part, involve deciding what not to prioritize. These goals were broadly endorsed by our community in the development of this plan; are consistent with NOLS' mission and values; and will broaden, strengthen, and deepen the school.

- 1. Staff Excellence**
- 2. Diversity**
- 3. Evidence-Based Curriculum Development**
- 4. Environmental Stewardship**
- 5. Philanthropic Support**

1. Staff Excellence

The Goal

NOLS attracts and develops excellent staff who are motivated to support and provide exceptional student experiences. To meet future needs, our focus will be both on retention and development of current staff while recruiting additional staff to meet our future needs. To achieve this, NOLS will raise faculty and staff compensation to a level that is comparable to nonprofit peers in outdoor education and closer to other nonprofit organizations of similar size and complexity. Nominal aggregate salary spending will be increased by 10% in calendar year 2008 and again in 2009; 6% in 2010; and at a rate roughly parallel to inflation in 2011 to 2013.

Additional investment will be made in recruitment; initial and continuing instructor training; communications with staff and instructors; analysis and refinement of staff travel plans; and career mentoring, development, and planning.

These compensation and spending increases will depend on the simultaneous achievement of the school's goals for annual net asset gains as a percentage of revenues (3%), the conclusion by the board of trustees and executive director team that they will be sustainable, and the continuing achievement of NOLS' other primary organizational goals.

Context

NOLS strives to attract, recruit, and retain the best intown and instructional staff in the outdoor education industry. Exceptional faculty and staff are the lifeblood of the NOLS educational experience. We have a 40-year history of benefiting from the passion and dedication of our staff to implement our mission. The school, out of necessity, also has a long

history of compensating below nonprofit market rates—relying on passion and dedication to retain and motivate our staff. We believe that NOLS has grown to a scale of operations and philanthropic support that allow us to increase our compensation spending.

Implementation

Over the term of this plan, a leading budget priority will be the achievement of this faculty and staff retention-related goal. Dedication, passion, and the quality of our mission, values, program, students, and community will, however, remain the primary motivators for our faculty and staff. Thus, the achievement of this plan in its totality is meant to strengthen those bonds and improve staff recruitment and retention.

Clear communication with faculty and staff will continue to be a priority for the term of this plan and thereafter. Through staff meetings, individual assessments, and feedback discussions, faculty and staff should understand how their work is perceived, what additional training is available, how their careers with NOLS can be expected to evolve, and what opportunities for additional work and advancement will realistically be available to them.

Recognizing that many NOLS staff will inevitably move into new careers, more attention will also be directed in each annual plan toward the development of career counseling and networking services to assist employees as they further their career at NOLS or assist them in their pursuit of different career opportunities. As staff transition away from NOLS, we will encourage ongoing relationships as volunteers, alumni supporters, and part-time instructors.

2. Diversity

The Goal

NOLS' students, faculty, and staff will come from more diverse backgrounds. It is a central objective of this plan for NOLS to broaden the scope of its focus beyond its traditional audiences.

We will enhance the strength, and breadth of appeal, of our current curriculum and programs by expanding and adapting them to address a student body, faculty, and staff from more diverse backgrounds. This effort will be additive—recognizing and maintaining the excellence and effectiveness of the program we currently offer.

We will maintain the current level of financial aid as a percentage of tuition revenue and distribute aid through a program managed to support our diversity goals.

Assuming continuing trends, and to implement our diversity efforts, we recognize that NOLS will need to further develop standards and tools for the selection of admitted students at times when the number of applicants exceeds the number of class spaces that we can offer. Our goal shall be to maximize the number of students most likely to benefit from a NOLS education.

Context

We believe that multiple perspectives and experiences are essential to learning. NOLS wishes to be an inclusive community and respects the differences that make each of us unique. We believe that our mission and values should be relevant and important to all people and that we will increase our impact by reflecting the perspectives and needs of diverse communities in our curriculum and program. By diversity, we mean differences encompassing ethnicity, race, socio-economic background, gender, sexual orientation, faith, age, and national origin.

We also believe that diversifying the markets from which NOLS draws students and faculty will reduce the volatility in applicant numbers, strengthen the school, and support our mission. Accordingly, this plan anticipates significant further growth at NOLS Pro, at WMI, and in admission of students from outside the United States.

We believe these initiatives will also increase the number of applicants to NOLS. We also anticipate that enhanced marketing by NOLS among students traditionally drawn to the school will generate additional demand. To accommodate increased demand, we expect over the term of this plan to increase student program days by nearly 20% from the start of 2008 to 2013. As detailed elsewhere, this is a rate of growth that we believe is prudent and can be achieved while maintaining our expectations for the excellence of a NOLS education.

It is likely that the demand for NOLS courses will, as it has in certain seasons of the past several years, exceed the supply. This is a dynamic familiar to leading educational institutions and now welcomed by NOLS. We recognize it will pose new challenges and promises to be an advantage we will seek to sustain. Properly managed, it should allow NOLS to admit students more likely to derive substantial benefit from our courses, to operate and grow with less risk, and, in time, to increase our philanthropic support.

Implementation

Achievement of this goal will require commitment across the school and the coordinated implementation of numerous enabling efforts. Admission and marketing, curriculum and course development, faculty and staff hiring and training, development, and finance will, for example, all need to be involved. The responsibility for the implementation of this goal will rest with every department, the executive director team, and the board of trustees.

Under the direction of the executive director team, the diversity manager will work with each major department in 2008 to implement and/or define credible diversity objectives and necessary enabling programs. These objectives will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The executive director team and admission department, in periodic consultation with the board of trustees, will regularly review, beginning in 2009, NOLS' admission criteria, marketing efforts, and admission outcomes in the context of these diversity goals and this plan taken as a whole.

Financial aid will be an integral part of our diversity plan. We believe that the inclusion in our educational programs of socio-economically less advantaged students and faculty, from urban and especially local wilderness environments, is important to fulfilling our mission. NOLS has only recently attained a scale of operations and level of philanthropic support to be able to offer significant levels of financial aid to students and for faculty training. It is a goal of this plan to sustain the current level of financial aid as a percentage of tuition revenue and to continue to develop and implement our program for the distribution of such aid among our students.

3. Evidence-Based Curriculum Development

The Goal

NOLS will improve educational outcomes and impacts for our students through focused curriculum advances in the areas of leadership and environmental studies. We will develop and implement the capacity to collect, evaluate, and use relevant objective data in the design and assessment of what and how we teach.

Context

The experiential learning process is core to the NOLS philosophy of education and this, in turn, is core to our mission. NOLS has pioneered, and today sets the standard for, the collection and use of objective data in outdoor education risk management and regularly encourages independent academic assessments of our educational outcomes. We believe that we can be more effective educators by integrating properly framed, consistently collected, objective evidence in the development and assessment of most all of our activities. We believe that such evidenced-based decision-making will strengthen and complement the spontaneous, spiritual, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of our community and give further credibility to the process of experiential education. Furthermore, we also believe that leadership and environmental education are cornerstone elements of our education and are a critical part of our brand. It's our desire to strengthen and develop our present curriculum in these areas measured by this evidence-based methodology.

Implementation

We will focus on developing the leadership outcomes of our longer courses and those with specific populations with an intention to create developmentally-appropriate program design and instructional strategies. We also acknowledge the need to develop our own staff in concert with this strategy. Concurrently, our environmental studies curriculum will be improved by integrating climate change and sustainability concepts as a core focus. This, in turn, will improve the transferability of college credit while also creating better alignment with departments and curricula in U.S. universities.

By 2013, we plan to have the discipline of evidence-based planning and assessment to be an established part of our curriculum development and delivery and for NOLS to continue to share our learning with the experiential educational community.

4. Environmental Stewardship

The Goal

Consistent with our mission, values, and strategic and operating goals, NOLS will work diligently to achieve greater sustainability in our use of natural resources. We will role model these changes to encourage our students and partners to adopt sustainable practices.

Context

In commitment to our core values of wilderness and excellence, NOLS models responsible use of natural resources. We practice and teach the principles of resource stewardship and environmental sustainability, integrating them into student experiences and throughout the global NOLS community. Our students graduate with a strong foundation in Leave No Trace principles and the tools necessary to transfer these values to their frontcountry lives. We actively engage in efforts to protect the natural character of our backcountry classrooms in support of high-quality wilderness experiences for our students.

Implementation

The achievement of this goal starts with the baseline sustainability audit delivered to the school in February 2008. NOLS will analyze the findings of the report and target goals and timelines for operating departments of the school. These plans will affect how we operate, what we teach, and our outreach efforts.

5. Philanthropic Support

The Goal

By 2013, NOLS will grow our philanthropic operating revenue as part of the operating budget by 25% (from the end of 2007). To achieve this goal we will continue to significantly grow our annual fund. In addition, by 2013, NOLS will complete a capital campaign that significantly increases the size of the school's endowment. Subject to further definition of the school's needs and the potential for fundraising in the NOLS community, we anticipate that the campaign goal will be at least \$15 million. It is also our goal for NOLS to end this campaign with a firmer foundation for future growth in philanthropic support.

Context

To pursue its mission as a nonprofit educational institution and to achieve its strategic and operating goals, NOLS must increase the level of recurring philanthropic revenue in its operating budget. The school made very substantial progress during the term of the prior strategic plan in establishing an effective development effort, endowment investment program, and community of alumni support. As a result, it enters this plan period with record philanthropic revenues and student financial aid, a renewed and expanded physical plant, funded operating reserves, and a balance sheet free of net debt.

We cultivate and foster positive long-term relationships among alumni, friends, and families to enhance support for NOLS' educational mission and to advocate for the school in every way—from marketing, to volunteerism, to networking, to commerce, to philanthropic involvement. Our graduates' continued connection to the school makes NOLS successful. Our lifelong relationship with our alumni is a two-way street: we also supply services and connections that alumni value. Personal relationships and alumni data integrity are the cornerstones of our efforts.

To meet the operating and strategic goals of this plan—especially for compensation, diversity, sustainability, and financial equilibrium—NOLS must do more. Funds released from endowment are the surest form of philanthropic support and offer NOLS the greatest latitude for accepting the risks inherent in our goals. We recognize that older secondary schools and colleges enjoy substantially greater support. We shall, therefore, also have as a goal continuing to build a community of support among NOLS' graduates and other potential donors, sufficient to fund increases beyond the term of this plan in the endowment and this target level of combined philanthropic revenue.

Implementation

By June 2009, the development committee of the board of trustees, development department, and executive director team will define a target amount for the NOLS endowment campaign, a case statement, and a campaign plan. It is our goal to initiate the quiet phase of this campaign by that time. We intend to secure 100% committed participation in the campaign among members of the NOLS board of trustees and of the advisory council. In addition, we will grow the annual fund by an average of 6% per year from the end of 2007 until 2013.

Detailed Goals and Tactics

This section contains further goals and tactics for the five primary focus areas of the plan. It also contains goals and objectives for the six other focus areas of this plan that entail less change from present practices.

The Focal Points of the Strategic Plan

Goals of Strategic Significance

1. Staff Excellence
2. Diversity
3. Evidence-Based Curriculum Development
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Philanthropic Support

Focus Areas for Support and Enhancement

6. Students
7. Risk Management
8. Access to Wilderness Classrooms
9. Technology
10. Expanding Brand Awareness
11. Financial Equilibrium and Strength

1. Staff Excellence

Further Goals and Tactics

1. Staff are valued for their contributions to outstanding student experiences and educational outcomes.
 - a. Compensation
Targeted overall increases of 10%, 10%, and 6% respectively for calendar '08-'10 (28.3% overall) provided that:
 - i. the planned increases are sustainable;
 - ii. NOLS achieves its financial goals including, without limitation, annual net asset gains of 3% or greater; and,
 - iii. NOLS continues to achieve organizational success.Budgeted increases from '11-'13 will roughly parallel inflation rates as NOLS addresses other strategic priorities. This also relies on such increases being sustainable.
 - b. Travel expenses: Review effectiveness of travel plan and make adjustments as appropriate and affordable.
 - c. Performance appraisal: All employees receive at least one comprehensive performance appraisal annually that provides growth-oriented positive and constructive feedback.
 - d. Staff advisory work groups: Staff advisory work groups (intown, field staff, and WMI instructors) inform decision-making on compensation and other issues.
 - e. Review effectiveness of faculty programs such as Annual Field Program (AFP), WMI Annual Position (WAP), Instructor Development Fund (IDF), and Recognition of Professional Experience (ROPE) and make adjustments as appropriate.
2. NOLS recruits excellent staff.
 - a. Compensation goal referenced in 1(a) above has focus, in part, on entry-level compensation for intown staff and WMI and NOLS faculty ensuring that NOLS attracts the best new staff.
 - b. Instructor Course (IC) enrollment equals at least 25% of the projected number of field staff for the year.
 - c. IC scholarships represent 50% of overall IC tuition.
 - d. Establish merit-based scholarship programs with four partnership colleges/universities. Scholarship will cover the full tuition for an IC.
 - e. Publications: Opportunities for working at NOLS as intown staff and faculty featured in various NOLS publications, e-news, and web media.
 - f. We will increase numbers of WMI/NOLS field instructor crossover staff.
 - g. Grow our WMI faculty to meet future needs.
 - h. Staffing office expands its resources to include recruitment/mentorship position.
 - i. Initiate and offer yearly New Zealand Instructor Course until sufficient local New Zealand and Australian staff needs are met.
 - j. Achieve our staff diversity goals as outlined in the diversity strategic goal.
3. NOLS develops its best staff.
 - a. Development: NOLS will offer its staff comprehensive career development from the hiring process forward, including ongoing mentoring, coaching, and a dynamic staff seminar program to both enable staff to grow and NOLS to meet staffing needs.
 - b. Opportunities/succession: Supervisors will collaborate with our best staff to identify appropriate new opportunities for staff to remain challenged and invested in the NOLS mission, to ensure a system of effective succession, and to provide rewarding career opportunities.

- c. Annual field staff meeting: We will continue to organize a WMI annual staff meeting and we will also initiate an annual field staff meeting with a strong emphasis on Annual Field Program staff attending as a means of providing continuing education for all field staff.
- d. New employee orientation: Human resources will offer new employee orientation on a seasonal basis.

2. Diversity

Further Goals and Tactics

1. Diversity in our student body is prioritized and supported by scholarships.
 - a. Scholarships will increase at a minimum as a percent of total tuition revenue for traditionally underserved communities.
 - b. Formalize our present partnerships and develop partnerships at each NOLS location.
 - b. Alumni of diverse backgrounds will serve as alumni reps.
 - c. The percent of ethnic, racial, and international catalog, NOLS Pro, and WMI students will increase 30%. (FY07 % x 1.30 = 2013 %).
 - d. Women students on catalog and NOLS Pro courses will increase to 40% by 2013.
 - e. WMI courses will aim for overall gender balance by 2013.
2. Staff Training
 - a. Develop diversity curriculum materials for the *Wilderness Education Notebook*.
 - b. Provide diversity training on the Instructor Course and at program supervisor meetings. Use these and other opportunities to educate and set clear expectations of working with a diverse audience.
 - c. Develop a train-the-trainer program for program supervisors and school directors so that they can be a training resource at our various locations.
3. Diversity is reflected in the membership of our board of trustees.
4. Diversity is reflected in our faculty.
 - a. The percent of ethnic, racial, and international faculty will increase by 20%. (FY07 % x 1.20 = 2013 %)
 - b. Women faculty will increase to 40% by 2013.
5. Diversity is reflected in our intown staff.
 - a. The percent of ethnic, racial, and international directors will increase by 40%. (FY07 % x 1.40 = 2013 %)
 - b. Women directors will equal or exceed 40% by 2013.
 - c. The percent of ethnic, racial, and international mid-level managers (Level E, D and DE or non-U.S. equivalent) will increase by 20%. (FY07 % x 1.20 = 2013 %)
 - d. Women mid-level managers will equal or exceed 40% by 2013.

3. Evidence-Based Curriculum Development

Further Goals and Tactics

1. We will develop a new objective Course Quality Survey to assess how well we accomplish our mission on all traditional NOLS courses, and to continue generating a baseline for measuring the effectiveness of new program design and instructional strategies.
2. We will adapt our leadership curriculum to the learning needs of specific populations of students, creating developmentally appropriate teaching strategies and tools.
3. We will improve the quality of our environmental studies curriculum, developing student outcomes and teaching tools to support those outcomes.
 - a. We will integrate climate change and sustainability into our core curriculum.
 - b. We will integrate ecological concepts into our semester biology curriculum.
 - c. We will improve the transferability of our environmental studies college credit by reframing it to better align with departments and curricula in U.S. universities.
4. We will make focused curriculum advances in these areas:
 - a. Semesters: We will assess what students learn on our semesters beyond what they typically learn on 30-day courses and develop a core framework for semesters. We will examine and improve what happens on a NOLS year program. We will develop pre-course online education for our semester students to augment their NOLS experience.
 - b. Adult courses: We will study what adults transfer from NOLS to their lives and diversify our adult education curriculum to adapt it to different sub-groups of adults, especially including “emerging adults” from the Millennium Generation.
 - c. Adolescent courses: We will follow up on past research on outcomes of teenage students, develop teaching tools that meet these students’ developmentally appropriate needs, and measure the effectiveness of at least one teaching method.
 - d. Transformation: We will measure how NOLS courses transform students’ views of themselves and/or their world regarding at least one environmental issue and one social issue and make specific curriculum advances based on these measurements.
5. We will research student outcomes of WMI and NOLS Professional Training programs, with the aim of ongoing program improvement.

4. Environmental Stewardship

Further Goals and Tactics

We will embody our backcountry wilderness ethic in our frontcountry operations in a way that reduces our environmental impact.

1. Conservation: We will develop new internal mechanisms to increase efficiency and reduce our consumption of natural resources as measured relative to any change in our student body.
 - a. Our February 2008 schoolwide assessment of our environmental footprint will serve as a baseline for continual improvement.
 - b. We will develop administrative systems and policies that will facilitate our ability to track key sustainability data.

- c. We will develop and achieve reductions in our carbon footprint on a student day basis.
 - d. We will target other primary goals based on our response to the sustainability audit.
2. Education: We will provide students and staff with tools to make sustainable choices.
 - a. We will develop new curriculum to enable students to transfer backcountry sustainability to their frontcountry lives.
 - b. We will develop training tools for staff that demonstrate sustainability practices for the office and home.
 3. Outreach: We will encourage sustainability practices in our partners, suppliers, and local communities.
 - a. We will provide learning opportunities for our local communities based on tangible outcomes of our internal sustainability program.
 - b. We will identify and cultivate working partnerships with equipment and product suppliers who are willing to work toward greater sustainability in their supply chains.

5. Philanthropic Support

Further Goals and Tactics

1. We will increase the number of accurate and accessible records in the NOLS database by 50% through database integration, staff management, and technical upgrades.
 - a. All WMI and non-catalog constituents will be effectively integrated into the NOLS database.
 - b. Execute a data wash and wealth research on the maximum number of relevant constituents in the database.
2. We will double the cumulative amount of alumni contacts made via electronic and hard copy mailings and event participation.
 - a. We will increase by 6% per year the number of and participation levels in our alumni events, including trips, seminars, and reunions.
 - b. We will double our electronic and hard copy alumni mailings, including *The Leader*, to reach our WMI graduates as part of NOLS' overall alumni group.
 - c. We will cultivate a former employee and instructor network to provide a group identity that motivates support for NOLS.
 - d. We will create a secure online network for alumni to update their personal data, network with other graduates, and register for events.
3. We will research, plan, and execute the largest fund-raising campaign in NOLS' history.
 - a. We will create a campaign draft plan by the end of 2008.
 - b. We will have a final campaign goal and plan adopted by June 2009.
 - b. We will secure 100% board participation during the quiet phase of the next campaign.
 - c. We will secure a minimum of two seven-figure gifts for this campaign.
4. We will grow annual philanthropic (non-campaign funding) support by an average of 6% per year.
 - a. We will increase the annual fund's donor base by 50%.
 - b. We will increase annual fund donor retention to a minimum of 65%.
 - c. WMI graduates will be included in annual fund solicitations.

6. Students

Our goal continues to be providing an excellent education for a growing student body. We intend to develop new markets, both in the U.S. and internationally, as well as new course types and locations. Growth will be targeted with an emphasis on quality.

NOLS provides high quality, transformational educational experiences for our students. We measure this success through post-course surveys and academic research conducted by educational partners. We will make this education available to every student who is willing to work to attain it by increasing our outreach efforts and scholarship support. NOLS Professional Training and WMI provide a mechanism to deliver NOLS education to a variety of new and expanding markets.

Further Goals and Tactics

1. To expand our educational impact and availability we will enroll up to 20% more student days by 2013. This could be achieved by growing at an average annual rate of 3% for catalog and WMI courses and by 10% for NOLS Professional Training.
2. With growing student demand we will adopt top-end growth targets for each season and investigate selectivity schemes to further improve our educational outcomes.
 - a. In 2008 define selectivity as it relates to NOLS and determine how we might implement. Determine if we will pursue selective admission or continue first come/first served.
 - b. Align financial aid policies with admission standards.
3. NOLS will continue its focus on U.S. markets for our students, but will seize opportunities to enter international markets.
 - a. Program expansion into Northern Europe provides an opportunity to expand into European markets.
 - i. We will develop and implement a marketing strategy to cost-effectively enter this market. Markets identified by 2010.
 - ii. Increase enrollment of European students from 26 in 2007 to 100 students by 2013.
 - b. NOLS will focus on improving domestic (U.S.) diversity. We will significantly increase the percentage of students from diverse backgrounds enrolled by 2013.
4. We will expand educational opportunities for local students (students who live near our operating schools). These programs are often subsidized to some degree.
 - a. Expand local student opportunities in Australia, New Zealand, the Yukon, and India.
 - b. Introduce offering in Brazil and Norway.
5. We will survey select populations to determine program expansion (skill and location) and identify new demographic markets.
 - a. We will scout three new international locations during the timeframe of this strategic plan. Investigations will include returning to Africa.
 - b. We will open new program locations as suitability is determined and programming is developed.
6. We will increase our educational partnerships by:
 - a. Adding ten colleges or universities to our college credit list at a rate of two per year. This will yield 100 students per year by 2013.
 - b. Gaining recognition for high school credit in the State of Wyoming.
 - c. Developing our relationship with the new WMI Australia leadership.
 - d. Further developing our relationship with Landmark Learning.

7. Risk Management

We will continue to promote the health and well-being of NOLS students and staff by managing the risks related to participation on extended wilderness education expeditions and to be the leading source and teacher of risk management practices in wilderness education. It is our goal to have no fatalities or disabling injuries.

NOLS students and staff interact with the natural environment and each other while pursuing adventurous activities in remote wilderness environments. This interaction presents hazards and associated risks, both physical and emotional, that are a vital element of a NOLS education. Our management of these risks is designed to balance the need to achieve our educational goals and prevent injury and illness while acknowledging that it is not possible to ensure absolute safety.

Risk management is emphasized by senior leadership and is a priority of all employees. We have a robust risk management program that enables our field courses to be successful. Key elements of this program include 1) the NOLS curriculum and pedagogy, which have been developed over four decades and is continually refined, 2) well-established field practices for conducting activities and managing risk exemplified by the NOLS Accepted Field Practices, a system that informs and supports field instructor judgment, enabling them to make appropriate decisions, 3) a vigorous field instructor performance assessment system that develops competency through feedback and skills training and enables the selection and hiring of field instructors that are the most appropriate for a particular position, course type, or location, 4) exceptional program support structure that provides equipment, food, transportation, and emergency response and management systems, and 5) an extensive incident collection and review process to facilitate and promote organizational learning.

Further Goals and Tactics

1. Pursuant to the Risk Reduction Agreement with United Educators Insurance Company, we will enhance NOLS climbing instructor training in rescue skills.
2. Improve communication and enhance supervisory competency by holding annual faculty meetings.
3. Continually improve the program supervisor meeting and increase and report the percent of program supervisors who participate in a meeting within the two preceding years.
4. Create a chief instructor position to provide focused attention on selected skill areas. The concept is one position held by one person for two years to focus on one area and then a different person would be hired for another two-year term to focus on a different skill area.
5. Evaluate and adopt current and emerging electronic communication technology for use during field emergencies pursuant to our established position statement.
6. Continue accreditation with the Association for Experiential Education.
7. Improve our process for writing and revising our Educator Notebook series of publications.

8. Access to Wilderness Classrooms

We will maintain and, when necessary, increase our access to wilderness classrooms in a way that enables us to meet or exceed our education goals.

We teach wilderness skills and leadership in the most inspiring and spectacular outdoor classrooms around the world. We are an exemplary permit holder on public land, and we build productive partnerships with land management agencies to help steward the future of our wilderness classrooms and our access to them. We pursue opportunities to distinguish ourselves as an educational institution providing value to public lands and the people who visit them. We actively engage with federal agencies and other permit holders to help shape federal and local policies that affect access to and recreational use of public land.

Further Goals and Tactics

We will secure access to new operating areas or additional user days in existing areas that will provide us with flexibility or, at a minimum, absolute ability to support expansion of our student days up to 20% by 2013.

1. By 2009, we will establish a process for producing an annual report that summarizes the status of our use days and facilitates more efficient use of available permitted access.
2. We will assess constraints on our existing permits and agreements, including limits on use allocation imposed by managing agencies and those resulting from degradation of the wilderness classroom. Where appropriate, we will implement solutions to alleviate those constraints.
3. When growth in student interest requires it, we will secure permits or permission to operate in new areas, which could include both public and private lands and waters.

9. Technology

We will increase our ability to strategically leverage and utilize technology to advance our mission while preserving wilderness experience and values.

Information Technology is a tool and resource that enables and supports nearly every aspect of NOLS in pursuit of our mission and promotion of our values. To that end, we appropriately apply technology to attract prospective students, to learn about and effectively communicate with all members of our community, and to facilitate excellent performance in all of our staff. We maintain networks and services around the world to keep the NOLS community connected and provide for the security and integrity of the information in our care.

Further Goals and Tactics

1. Reach, engage, and interact with NOLS constituencies using technologies they are familiar with and that fit the purpose.
 - a. Deploy an Internet portal where those wishing to interact with us on the Internet may, via a single login, request a catalog, apply for any of our public courses or programs, view and update their contact information, chat with an admission or alumni department staff

- member, manage their email list subscriptions, make a donation, or make a purchase from the online store.
- b. Further leverage interactive Internet technologies such as social networking and content sharing and distribution.
2. Improve the consistency and accuracy of our important data and provide all departments with access to the data they require.
 - a. Build support for current and developing business models in our core database.
 - b. Consolidate the storage of information about our product, people, and partners into a single authoritative database.
 - c. Develop a data governance function to define and control the data that should be gathered, the format and manner in which it is entered and stored, and to define and control access to data.
 - d. Provide an identified set of users with the ability to query the database and generate reports on data germane to their position.
 3. Leverage technology to make informed marketing decisions and to track the efficacy of marketing initiatives.
 - a. Implement 'Customer Information Management' functionality to gather, manage, and use pertinent information about our prospects, students, and alumni.
 4. Use technology to improve access to business-related information, curricula, and course materials.
 - a. Expand, update, and maintain the content on Rendezvous.
 - b. Define and implement a means for students to access course materials to which they are entitled.
 - c. Develop a process and define responsibility for reaching decisions about the technology we use in the field to access course materials and curricula.
 5. Complete disaster recovery and business continuity planning by the end of 2008.

10. Expanding Brand Awareness

We will continue to expand awareness of the NOLS brand as the authentic outdoor education leader by increasing our presence and authority in the social conversations of our time, including: fitness and obesity, ethical leadership, under-performing schools, environmental awareness, nature-deficit disorder.

The NOLS brand is education for extended, remote backcountry expeditions. It is experiential, hands-on education that focuses on outdoor skills, leadership, and the environment and we prepare our students to lead in the wilderness. Our leadership skills are transcendent and apply as well in the classroom and boardroom as they do on the top of Denali. The NOLS brand is real skills and leadership taught in and for real wilderness worldwide.

NOLS is a clean, solid and well-respected brand, but one that lacks the awareness that it deserves. NOLS is well known in the outdoor industry and in many educational circles. General awareness of the school is weak, but has increased substantially in the last few years. Some of our increased recognition has come as a result of promotional efforts, but most has come as a result of high-quality programming and the opportunities that NOLS Professional Training and our Wilderness Medicine Institute have provided in offering our product to a broader audience. These new audiences—NASA, U.S. Naval Academy, and others—have in turn lent credibility and enhanced the school's recognition.

Further Goals and Tactics

1. NOLS will further distinguish itself as a nonprofit educational institution.
 - a. We will ramp up the NOLS book program with a goal of two new NOLS books every year.
 - b. We will expand the educational content available on the NOLS website making it a resource for outdoor education professionals worldwide.
 - c. Adding ten colleges or universities to our college credit list at a rate of two per year. This will yield 100 students per year by 2013.
 - d. Gaining recognition for high school credit in the State of Wyoming.
2. NOLS will further distinguish itself as the outdoor authority.
 - a. We will aggressively pursue media opportunities to speak on skills, health, and risk issues with the goal of appearing in 20 articles per year dealing with these subjects.
 - b. We will achieve one important alliance with a major player in the outdoor industry.
3. NOLS will further position itself and outdoor activities as an important element of a healthy lifestyle appearing in at least 10 articles per year.
4. We will assume a major role in the national discussion concerning children and nature.
 - a. NOLS will be involved with media coverage concerning this topic participating in at least five articles per year.
 - b. NOLS will pursue opportunities that focus on parents and children developing an appreciation for the outdoors (among the ways to do this: course mix, National Forum on Children and Nature, Dangerous Book for Boys TV series).
5. NOLS will highlight our graduates as leaders in education, business, exploration, media, and conservation.
 - a. NOLS will launch an annual tour of NOLS graduates who will speak on leadership.
 - b. NOLS will stimulate press on NOLS graduates leading in their industries or communities leading to at least 10 articles per year.
6. NOLS will investigate and pursue a method to identify young people with high likelihood to be in future leadership roles and recruit them to NOLS courses.
7. In 2009, NOLS will do a brand awareness survey focused on measuring broad brand awareness and, more specifically, on the public understanding of NOLS in relation to our other branding priorities. In 2013, we will re-do the survey to assess the impact of our efforts.

11. Financial Equilibrium and Strength

We will continue to manage the financial resources of NOLS, in a manner that builds on the past, to support our strategic goals and to insure the continuation and expansion of our mission into the future.

Our financial resources that have been generated by operations and by support from our donors are a key responsibility and opportunity for NOLS. We invest and use our financial reserves to support our students and mission while protecting the integrity of our financial resources, including our endowment. Annual budgets in support of our operating plans will achieve an increase in net assets that is equal to or in excess of 3% of total operating revenue to be supportive of our current goals and are also structured to insure the future of the school and our mission. We operate based upon financial plans that are both prudent for today and opportunistic for tomorrow. Resources are allocated in terms of clearly articulated priorities that contribute to the advancement of our mission.

Further Goals and Tactics

1. Create and fund a capital reserve for our long-term assets equal to 15% of their replacement cost by annually designating the cash flow generated by depreciation into this reserve for the next 12 years.
2. Create an endowment for the development of staff to be partially funded by current cash reserves with an additional allocation in each of the next five years reaching a goal of \$1,000,000 designated from our operating cash.
3. Continue to increase the identified operating cash reserve goals and keep them in line with our growth and inflation.
4. Incorporate all of the designated amounts into one investment strategy that will maximize the investment returns based upon the time horizon of these designated amounts.
5. Increase the role of philanthropy beyond support of non-operating expenses by increasing the percentage of total operating revenue derived from the annual fund and endowment release by 25% by 2013.
6. By 2013, increase the endowment so that the total of invested assets and pledges is equal to total operating revenue, which will increase the percentage of predictable philanthropic funds available to our operating budget.
7. By 2009, develop a new policy for the endowment spending rule so that it will be adjusted in alignment with the current conditions and in support of the overall strategic plan.