



UP FOR THE CHALLENGE



THE CHALLENGES come with names like the Hyperbola, Wild Woozy, Tumultuous Traverse, and Pulley Polka. They may sound like dizzying carnival rides, but they're about much more than fun and games. They're part of the University's new Outdoor Challenge Course on South Campus that provides participants with an unforgettable experience focused on team building—from high above the ground. "It's a unique learning environment where the participants' true emotions come out," says Scott Catucci, associate director for outdoor education and student development in the Department of Recreation Services (DRS). "We like them to have fun, but it really is geared toward an experiential education—they're physically doing something and learning because of what they're doing."

The ropes course, operated by DRS through its Outdoor Education Program, opened last September and welcomed an estimated 556 participants from both SU organizations and external groups

OUTDOOR ROPES COURSE
takes participants beyond
their comfort zones
and builds teamwork



from the local community. Built atop one of the highest points in the city, the course offers a sweeping view of Syracuse and the surrounding area. But the main attraction is the action that takes place on three towers aligned in an L-shape with upper (35 feet) and lower (18 feet) platforms. The course also features a dual zip line and a separate element known as the Triple Leap of Faith, which involves scaling a pole and then jumping out to grab a trapeze bar. The platforms are connected by cables that allow participants—tethered in with a harness and safety lines—to venture off the platforms and tackle a series of team exercises that push them out of their comfort zones and help them learn about themselves and their colleagues. “It’s all about

teamwork,” Catucci says.

For participants, the session begins at the new Outdoor Education Center at the base of the hill. After meeting with the program’s outdoor education professionals and trained student facilitators, they hike up the hill and go through safety instructions and ground exercises. Then it’s time to grab hold of the cargo nets and climb up to the platforms. “Some of our members were very adventurous and some had never been more than a few feet off the ground,” says Harrison Otterbein ‘14, a field supervisor with SU Ambulance (SUA), one of the participating groups last fall. Otterbein called the Tumultuous Traverse “particularly nerve wracking,” noting group members had to sit on a bench together and pull

themselves along. “It wasn’t smooth,” he says. “But that was the one we started off on, so it set the tone for the rest of the course.”

SUA volunteer Mike Smith ‘12, G’13 enjoyed the opportunity to work with fellow SUA members outside of their normal environment and liked how the challenges reinforced the importance of having the ability to work together. “It was a fantastic experience,” he says.

At the end of each session, the facilitators lead discussions that help the group reflect on the activity. “We like to say that what you’re doing up there applies to real life,” Catucci says. “You’re working as a team, developing trust, respect, and responsibility, and the communication required to get things done.” —Jay Cox



Last fall, members of the SU Ambulance (SUA) tackled the new Outdoor Challenge Course on South Campus. A cargo net (top photo, facing page) serves as the main entry point to the course’s central tower, which has two levels. After ascending to a tower platform, SUA members give the Lateral Limbo challenge a try (lower right). Among the other challenges are the Tumultuous Traverse (above, left) and the Pulley Polka (above, right). The exercises are designed to teach team-building skills, helping participants learn about themselves and each other and gain self-confidence in their abilities to, literally, overcome obstacles.