

WCNR Diversity & Inclusion Program Partnership with Blackpackers



Who is Blackpackers?

Blackpackers are a Colorado-based nonprofit organization that aims to alleviate the financial pressures associated with outdoor education and adventure by offering free or subsidized outdoor activities to vulnerable communities. With Blackpackers, people of color and all others who are statistically underrepresented are able to enjoy outdoor experiences in multi-generational groups with little to no cost.

Blackpacker's mission of creating economic equity in outdoor recreation is two-fold: they provide gear, excursions, and education about outdoor recreation for underserved communities, and they connect participants with volunteer opportunities, internships, jobs, and post-secondary education resources to create a pipeline from outdoor recreation to outdoor industry careers.

Through these actions Blackpackers hope to address the gap in representation in outdoor recreation; The opportunity to experience the outdoors should be available to all.

What work do they do?

Blackpackers offer those who seek out their help the resources and opportunities needed to engage in outdoor recreation in Colorado. Through funding and providing all the gear and education needed for different outdoor activities such as skiing or backpacking, the underrepresented communities Blackpackers serves are able to get outdoors without worrying about the economic and knowledge constraints they may have had.

Their work is important to improving equitable access to outdoor recreation. When looking at the economic gap seen in these vulnerable groups, the difference between a survival wage and living wage is most clear when examining the ability to spend funds on efforts beyond necessities—ie outdoor recreation. In the case of Black Americans, wealth has been systematically siphoned away, leading to an even greater wealth gap than before the modern Civil Rights movement.

Blackpackers helps to bridge this gap by providing gear, funding, and transportation in their programming. Some free events that Blackpackers have held in the past include:

- Blackpackers Aquatic Program - Swim lessons for all ages free of charge
- Blackpackers at Arapahoe Basin - Provided lift pass, half-day lesson, and gear rentals
- Get Outside: Leave No Trace Takeover - Workshop about educating community on Leave No Trace Principles and protecting city trails and parks



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How does Blackpackers have ties to WCNR?

CSU was one of Blackpacker's first partnerships, providing financial support for the organization since 2019. We hope to extend and solidify this partnership, eventually partnering in education and research initiatives.

How does Blackpackers work advance DEI efforts?

For Blackpackers, their entire mission revolves around improving economic and educational equity for vulnerable/underrepresented groups in outdoor education. As Patricia Cameron, Executive Director and Founder of Blackpackers, mentioned, Blackpackers goes beyond just diversity and inclusion. She feels that too often equity isn't given enough weight in DEI conversations and initiatives. After all, it's equity in access that truly allows these communities to continue to engage in outdoor recreation through this non-profit. She sees Blackpackers as providing reparations for these communities, by supporting them and filling this gap that's historically been seen in outdoor recreation.

What opportunities are available for WCNR students to be involved?

Blackpackers invites any Warner students to engage with their organization; whether you need volunteer hours, have an idea for a project, or simply want experience working with an outdoor recreation non-profit, Blackpackers welcomes you to reach out with any ideas. Blackpackers is always looking for new outdoor recreation guides for activities like camping, backpacking, or hiking as well. Contact them through their general email info@coblackpackers.com, or reach out to Director Patricia Cameron using patricia@coblackpackers.com

If you would like more information please reach out to the WCNR Diversity & Inclusion Program [here](#)