Outdoor Product Design Education at Outdoor Retailer | OPDD

Chase Anderson

“As the outdoor industry continues to grow as an economic powerhouse that drives the $887 billion outdoor recreation economy, it is important to look outside of our industry at best practices, unique ideas, innovation, and of course human resources. Many universities around the country and indeed, around the world, have implemented degree and certification programs that seek to train the next generation of outdoorists and outdoor industry leaders. These programs are crucial in creating a vital on-ramp into the outdoor industry with real life, practical training through internships, class projects, and direct access to the brands and brand leaders. This type of interaction sets up the conduit for the outdoor industry to continue to embrace fresh minds and fresh faces.”

By bringing together this panel with representatives from various academic institutions, OPDD and other programs hope to elevate the discussion and raise awareness among industry leaders of the need to support and invest in the next generation to prepare leaders of tomorrow.

Sean Michael, Director of Outdoor Product Design & Development at USU, moderated a discussion among a panel of outdoor educators about the future of workforce development for the outdoor industry at the Outdoor Retailer show in January held in Denver. Panelists included Adrian Roadman, coordinator of the OPDD program, Evelyn May, program coordinator of the Technical Apparel design program at Kwantlen Polytechnic, Ellen Schmidt-Devlin, founder and director of the Sports Product Management program at the University of Oregon, Sarah Lockwood, founder of College Outside, and Matt Kaplan, vice president of membership with the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA).

Discussion included topics such as, the future of the industry with new graduates entering the workforce, the role of industry to support and invest in university programs, and the early impact of programs focused on training future leaders to work in the outdoor/sports product industries.

Matt Kaplan, of OIA, highlighted the importance of these programs by saying,