STATE OF THE SCHOOL REPORT 2016
NOLS emboldens us to step forward.
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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Financial year 2016 was a very successful one for NOLS. We educated 26,025 students—a new record, and ten percent above the previous record, set last year. We set a new high for education-program days, both in classrooms and in the field. We welcomed talented and more diverse folks to our staff community. We set a record for revenues. Our annual fund exceeded its goal, our endowment reached a record high, and our endowment release, likewise, reached a record high and helped to make the magic happen at NOLS.

It was also an excellent risk-management year in our field program: our evacuation rate tied for our third lowest year in the 31 years of quality, recorded history, and we had no disabling or disfiguring injuries and no fatalities.

These successes, coupled with historical events like the unveiling of A Worthy Expedition: The History of NOLS, and our 50th anniversary celebration at the beginning of the fiscal year, led me to reflect on the trait that defined NOLS through the last 50 years: persistence.

In most stories of business, adventure, exploration, or innovation, the difference between those who succeed and those who don’t is the ability to keep going—to persist.

“In most stories of business, adventure, exploration, or innovation, the difference between those who succeed and those who don’t is the ability to keep going—to persist.”
— John Gans

Second, we are persistent because of our systems, structures, and habits. We are exceptional at logistics and systems, and they’ve served us well. Whether rations, risk management, transportation, staffing, or shipping and receiving, the systems carry us, even in the worst of times. They are at the core of our organizational self-discipline.

The third trait: our commitment to continuous organizational learning and ability to constantly adjust, adapt, and refine. From the start, we have committed to learning and innovation. We plan, but we are willing to adjust, adapt, and throw out our plans.

Fourth, the wilderness helps drive us. It is, of course, a classroom for us, but it’s also one of our core values. Wilderness gives us solace in times of difficulty, rejuvenates us, and inspires us. The wilderness feeds our purpose, but it also feeds our soul.

Finally, our persistence is fed by an all-consuming vision and mission. We are dreamers and visionaries who work here because we strive for a higher purpose. NOLS emboldens us to step forward and has trained us to be ready for anything. It has developed our grit.

Here at NOLS, we are carried by our community, by our systems, by innovation, and by the wilderness. But in our toughest moments, our purpose carries us, pushes us forward, and drives us to take that next step.

Thank you for your work and contributions in the past year.

I look forward to the coming steps we’ll take together.

John Gans

Executive Director
I was 14-years-old when I took my first NOLS course in 1972. I was hooked. I returned the next year and there I learned what it really meant to be responsible for my actions when, after a difficult day walking in the Wind Rivers, 2,000 feet up and over Washakie Pass, and then down onto the East Fork, our course leader sent me back to clean the previous night’s campsite. And I did. By myself, six miles each way, 2000 feet twice, to pick up less than a baggie full of debris.

I spent the next summers on a climbing course, a mountaineering course, and finally a summer instructor’s course, which kicked off four glorious years as a NOLS instructor.

While the next 25 years were spent raising a family with my wife, and starting and growing a handful of companies, I now realize that almost everything I know about being an effective entrepreneur I learned at NOLS.

Leading a startup company is a lot like leading a course in the backcountry: you need to be comfortable making decisions based on incomplete, inconclusive, and even contradictory information; you must communicate your decisions with clarity and confidence, even when you’re not sure of them yourself; you need to gather opinions, measure the strength of your group, and work together. NOLS started teaching me those things when I was 14. I believe there is no other place that gives a teen real responsibility to make real decisions that have real consequences.

But the world is changing: NOLS is no longer the only game in town. Now we compete with scores of programs for the same students, most of whom are shoehorning several different experiences into a summer. Our average course lengths are shorter while our student age groups are simultaneously younger and older.

Our biggest challenge, though, is that students no longer come to NOLS with a solid base of outdoor exposure, and trends suggest this will become more prevalent. I call this the “first mile problem,” and while NOLS is making great strides in addressing accessibility, it’s not something we can solve on our own. It requires us to build an ecosystem of organizations that get youth into the outdoors, helping them walk that first mile.

So, our challenge is this: how do we stay true to our past while being relevant in the future?

To be successful, we must do things that may not come naturally and that we haven’t done before; try things that may not work the first time or at all; be flexible, innovative, and courageous.

But we are NOLS, and this is exactly the type of challenge that brings out the best in us. As long as we are prepared to step forward, there’s nothing we can’t do.

Marc Randolph
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Our challenge is this: How do we stay true to our past while being relevant in the future?”

— Marc Randolph
GOOD MULTIPLIED

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE HISTORY
In February 2015, journalist, non-fiction writer, and three-time NOLS alumna Kate Dernocoeur began the daunting yearlong process of capturing the school’s history and spirit in the pages of a book. With an organization that has so many characters, stories, and perspectives, selecting the right author was essential; Dernocoeur’s connection to the school aided in capturing the school’s 51-year history and personality in the book *A Worthy Expedition: The History of NOLS*.

Dernocoeur traveled from her home in Lowell, Michigan, to NOLS headquarters in Lander, Wyoming, three times throughout the process of writing the book. It was there that she met with Ben Lester, who served as the book’s editor, project manager, and head of the editorial committee. Despite dedicating an astounding amount of time and energy to the book, both Dernocoeur and Lester credit many people for the support they received, and are clearly grateful.

In addition to searching the NOLS archives for information, Dernocoeur conducted 110 interviews, many during the school’s 50-year anniversary celebration. “I didn’t have anybody not willing to talk to me,” she said, something she attributes to the expedition behavior that NOLS teaches. “With NOLS, expedition behavior is real. Everybody sort of jumped onboard this project. It was remarkable. When I walk into NOLS headquarters there’s a certain code of getting along that makes whatever the expedition is move forward in a positive way.”

*A Worthy Expedition: The History of NOLS* begins with the story of Paul Petzoldt, from his early years growing up with his farming family in Creston, Iowa, to his founding of NOLS in a small log cabin in Sinks Canyon, Wyoming, in 1965 and finally, to his death in 1999, at the age of 91. The reader learns about Petzoldt’s “Pay Back When Able” scholarship system, which was recorded on informal handwritten notes, and habit of shopping in military surplus stores for student gear.

In addition to getting to know Petzoldt, the reader also enters the lives of a myriad of passionate and talented people who have come through NOLS over the years as both students and staff.

In this book the reader travels to the current NOLS Headquarters building in the downtown area of Lander, where global and program expansion are still happening today. Just a block away, overlooking Main Street, is the historic Noble Hotel, which continues to house students before courses. The book follows the development of NOLS as it has grown far beyond Lander, and far beyond the 30-day expeditions that were the school’s first offerings. NOLS now has many locations and partnerships throughout the world, all of which support the NOLS global audience by engaging, educating, and exposing our students to the wild.

The history of NOLS hasn’t been all fun and games, though. The organization has weathered local and global turbulence, tragedy, and internal discord. The author writes about these challenges beautifully and with thoughtful nuance. “As any organization evolves there are hard times and sad times. I made a really conscious effort to stay balanced, but not to shy away from the harder stuff,” said Dernocoeur.

This coffee table-style book will make a great gift for NOLS grads, the parents of NOLS grads, the children of NOLS grads, and anyone with wild in their spirit. To purchase *A Worthy Expedition: the History of NOLS*, please visit the NOLS store at store.nols.edu.
At NOLS, we’ve always been fortunate to be able to educate people in a way that leaves a profound and lasting impact. Outstanding student outcomes, compelling instructors, and the power of the wilderness classroom have fostered generations of NOLS loyalists who love the school and, through word of mouth, have helped us maintain enrollment on our expedition courses. However, since the late 1990s, enrollment in this core program has remained mostly flat.

On the other hand, new course opportunities through the addition of NOLS Wilderness Medicine and NOLS Custom Education fueled explosive growth in the numbers of students we educate. NOLS grew from 2,900 students in 1998 to 26,025 students in 2016. Yet after many years of offering these diverse course types, we are still talking about the integration of all elements of the organization and find ourselves struggling to fully harness the synergies that brought us all together. This challenge has kept NOLS from reaching its fullest potential.

We are much larger, our product offerings are more diverse, and NOLS is an increasingly complex organization to present to our many audiences—students, parents, alumni, and the outdoor and educational communities. In response to these challenges, in 2015 we began undertaking a school-wide project called the NOLS Branding Initiative.

Goals for the Branding Initiative

We began the branding initiative with several goals. We aimed to better communicate the value we provide students, stakeholders and the broader outdoor and educational communities; to create a brand architecture that clarifies current offerings and allows for; and
encourages growth of new products; to build on NOLS’ brand equity and prepare the organization for the next 50 years; to better communicate the NOLS experience so a global and diverse audience can understand NOLS and all stakeholders can rally passionately around our brand; and to dramatically differentiate NOLS from its competitors.

In short, we wanted to invest in our future and prepare to lead boldly in a changing world.

**Outcomes of the Branding Initiative**

The branding initiative has been a multistep process that is still in progress and has already yielded tangible outcomes, largely due to the hard work and excellent expedition behavior of individuals and teams across the school.

Through our collaboration with a professional branding firm, we developed a brand architecture and messaging strategy to guide our decision-making and prepare us to position ourselves as a cutting edge and bold wilderness organization. Day to day, we have updated our language, begun putting out products that reflect our brand color and logo, and refreshed the look of our well-loved alumni magazine, *The Leader*.

One refresh that we expect to have a large impact is the new website. More than simply reflecting new colors and a logo, updating the website also aims to ensure our relevance in today’s fast-moving world as well as better serve prospective students who are unfamiliar with NOLS. With our new web design, the unity of our various offerings will be more apparent and friendlier to approach.

In addition to these technical changes, considering our naming conventions has been a key part of the branding process. We chose to unite the school under NOLS and rename our various elements to be more intuitive to those unfamiliar with the school:

- **NOLS Expeditions**,  
- **NOLS Wilderness Medicine (formerly NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute)**,  
- **NOLS Custom Education (formerly NOLS Professional Training)**,  
- **NOLS Risk Services (formerly Risk Management Services)**.

As we got further into the branding-initiative process it became increasingly clear to those involved that embracing the name “NOLS” would be a natural outcome. “National Outdoor Leadership School” was an easy way to tell the casual observer about some parts of our school, but NOLS is so much more now than it was even ten years ago. Elements of the name simply do not encompass all of the work we do or students we serve. For instance, we are no longer “national,” operating worldwide and drawing increasingly more students from countries outside the U.S. In addition, the vast majority of our students are taught primarily indoors in wilderness medicine classrooms.

Shifting to NOLS allows us to encompass all parts of NOLS, not just our traditional field courses. We’re able to better talk about ourselves as a multifaceted, global wilderness school that supports thousands of students each year who seek to develop the skills and experience to reach their potential as leaders.

**True to Our Core and Looking Forward**

In the midst of these changes, our mission has remained the core of what we do: to be the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serve people and the environment.

Today, our students are learning on oceans and in classrooms, in rivers and in conference rooms. Our curriculum resonates as much with a student just beginning high school as it does with an astronaut, entrepreneur, or outdoor program director; and each of these students shows us new ways to view and teach leadership.

As we strive to support growth in our students and continue to grow as leaders ourselves, we work together to leverage the strengths of each part of the school so we can continue to step forward boldly into the wild, whatever that wild looks like, and help the world’s future leaders do the same.
GOOD MULTIPLIED

PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED
NOLS is the leading sponsor of the Wilderness Risk Management Conference, which was founded in 1994. This annual event offers an outstanding educational experience for those looking to manage the risks associated with recreating outdoors.

The purpose of the WRMC is, “to provide a forum to learn and share common practices in wilderness risk management, and to contribute to a culture of open dialogue among educators, leaders, administrators, students, and other members of the outdoor industry.”

The goals of the WRMC are to:

- Share practices in wilderness risk management and openly discuss learning from past experiences.
- Influence industry-wide risk management norms and increase collective competence.
- Provide a forum and networking opportunity for wilderness practitioners and today’s leaders in the field.

For the 2015 conference in Portland, Oregon, there were 477 attendees, a number that tied the record for the largest conference ever.

WRMC Steering Committee Chair Steve Smith, of co-sponsoring organization the Student Conservation Association, gave the opening keynote.

“The risks we face as outdoor programs are as complex and dynamic as they have ever been,” Smith said. “For example, climate change is affecting our programs in new ways, creating superstorms, glaciers that look different than they have in the past, flash floods, and enormous wildfires that can have devastating consequences.”

Smith’s speech also referenced current events including the economic downturn and an increasingly risk-averse society.

“These are all large scale environmental and societal factors that make the work you all do more vital than ever for the participants in your programs,” he said.

The three-day event in Portland included 72 speakers from around the world, 24 of which were new to the WRMC in 2015.

In Portland, the conference attendees chose from 58 different workshop sessions; 20 of those were new workshops in 2015. The workshops were chosen with the goal of balancing new topics with risk management fundamentals to ensure a positive learning experience for all.

The workshops fell into different tracks including:

- Emergency Planning and Crisis Response
- Field Practices
- Legal Considerations
- Poster Sessions
- Program Administration
- Staff Training and Decision Making
- Pre-Conference
- Structured Networking

Mary Gibson Scott, former superintendent of Grand Teton National Park, presented the concluding keynote address. She encouraged attendees to seek out a more diverse client base and to continue to diversify the industry as a whole.

With NOLS Risk Services leading the charge to plan this quality event, there is no doubt there will be more great conferences in the years to come. At NOLS, we value sharing our learnings to promote improved risk-management practices across the industry.

Make sure you mark your calendar for the next conference, which is November 1–3, 2017 in Portland, Maine. Contact us at wrmc@nols.edu with any questions.
Thanks to the generosity of thousands of supporters, the NOLS Fund again exceeded the goal set for the fiscal year. In fact, reaching that goal happened not just once in fiscal year 2016, but twice, because after the fund’s original goal of $1.8 million was reached, a new goal of $1.95 million was set. Gifts exceeded that number too, tallying $2,079,155 at the end of the fiscal year.

That’s 115 percent of the original goal, and 106 percent of the increased goal, reached through the gifts of 2,997 NOLS graduates, employees, friends, and families.

Seventy-six percent of all donations were given as unrestricted dollars.

While the amount donated to the NOLS Fund was about $85,000 shy of last year’s total, the average gift amount increased, from $470 in FY 15 to $488 in FY 16. That’s a gain of about four percent per gift.

Every dollar given to the NOLS Fund makes a difference. The fund supports day-to-day operations, scholarships, outreach, curriculum development, and sustainability initiatives.

Giving through PayPal, the online option, has increased too. In the four months PayPal was in operation in FY 2015, 17 donors gave $2,335; in FY 2016, more than 150 donors gave $51,776.

Thank you for your gift. It helps to empower students to see the beauty in wild places, become effective leaders, and translate lessons learned in the backcountry to their lives in the frontcountry.
NOLS’ commitment to the communities we operate in is a fundamental part of our mission. That includes Lander, Wyoming, home of NOLS World Headquarters and NOLS Rocky Mountain.

Five years ago, NOLS Rocky Mountain partnered with Lander Valley High School (LVHS) to teach a leadership curriculum that select high school seniors take back to school to mentor incoming freshmen. The annual Lander Valley Leadership Expedition (LVLE) gives senior mentors self-awareness of their actions and the potential effect on others, and the skills to give and receive feedback in a respectful manner. Since its inception, more than 60 senior mentors have mentored almost 600 freshmen.

LVLE is made possible in part by a grant from the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation, who gave $4,000 this year to help fund the expedition.

“We are pleased to support NOLS with this donation from our Foundation,” said Leslie Blythe, Rocky Mountain Power regional business manager. “As part of this community, Rocky Mountain Power is grateful for all the work NOLS does in our community and state.”

Kevin Fleming, course leader of the 2016 LVLE said, “We often say that a NOLS course should be the most fun and the hardest thing you’ve ever done. This year’s Leadership Expedition was both.”

LVHS senior Sadie Thatch described her day climbing Wind River Peak: “I realized one person simply believing in another can diminish fear and be a factor in their success. By believing in the freshmen, and expressing this to them, I can be the difference between whether they climb their own mountain or turn away.”

Rocky Mountain Power Foundation is part of the PacifiCorp Foundation, one of the largest utility-endowed foundations in the United States. It was created in 1988 by PacifiCorp, an electric utility serving 1.8 million customers in six Western states as Rocky Mountain Power (Utah, Wyoming and Idaho) and Pacific Power (Oregon, Washington and California). The foundation’s mission, through charitable investments, is to support the growth and vitality of the communities served by Pacific Power and Rocky Mountain Power. For more information, visit www.rockymountainpower.net/foundation.
At NOLS, we know the best way to achieve critical goals for a strong future is by putting a plan in place and working toward it. That’s where the NOLS endowment comes in: it supports the continuation of the school’s mission, and ensures that powerful leadership education and outdoor experiences are available to everyone who seeks them.

The future of NOLS depends on endowment contributions because those funds are invested and generate income year after year, making sure educational opportunities and vital programs remain in place for future generations of students.

The NOLS endowment also provides stability. In 1965, when NOLS was founded, there was no endowment, and stability suffered. A healthy endowment allows board and staff members to achieve current goals as well as support upcoming demands.

In fiscal year 2016, endowment investments increased by more than $3.2 million compared to fiscal year 2015, growing through a combination of new gifts, board designations, and positive investment returns.

Currently, four percent of our professionally managed endowment is released each year. In FY 16, that was more than $1.1 million to support important initiatives like our scholarship program and outreach activities.

A continued commitment to providing for the school now and in the future through the NOLS endowment creates a sound basis for continued growth.
Risks and consequence give our education relevancy and practicality. Risk is inherent in the remote locations through which we travel and our approach to risk is one of respect gained through knowledge, skill, experience, and expertise. We value critical thinking, reflection on experiences, resiliency in difficult times, and commitment to our students; and we continually enhance our systems of risk management as societal expectations change, wilderness travel techniques evolve, and technology improves and develops. Risk management is a core element of our curriculum and pedagogy.

Our risk management performance in 2016 was, in many respects, successful, however, the dynamic wilderness environment coupled with the frailties of human nature did present some interesting challenges. Following are the year’s highlights:

- There were 586 medical incidents (injuries and illnesses) reported—20 percent above average.
- There were 152 medical evacuations—9 percent below average. Twenty-eight percent of medical incidents were evacuated—also 9 percent below average. The evacuation rate of 0.86 evacuations per 1,000 program days was tied for the third lowest rate in 32 years of collecting data.
- Our most serious incidents included ten incidents of severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis), a student who developed complications related to diabetes, a serious arm fracture, two cases of appendicitis, and two cases of seizures.
- Our emergency and evacuation systems worked smoothly and effectively at all our locations worldwide. Most evacuations are logistically straightforward, but about 20 percent were more complicated and required additional assistance including the use of helicopters, power boats, and fixed wing aircraft.
- Out of all field expedition students, 8.7 percent had a reportable injury or illness, 2.5 percent were evacuated, and 1.5 percent had to leave NOLS early because of it. In total, 3 percent of field expedition students had to leave NOLS before the end of their course: 1.5 percent for medical reasons and 1.5 percent for non-medical reasons.
Of all the risks we face at NOLS while traveling through the wilderness, some of our most significant injuries have occurred in camp. In February 2016, a young woman on a Patagonia Year sea kayak section experienced a fall while helping her tent mates set up a tarp in camp. She had climbed up a three-meter-high bluff to tie off the ridgeline of the tarp when she lost her footing in the thick brush and fell to the beach below onto some large logs, each roughly one meter in diameter. She landed on her back and struck her left wrist against the logs. Her coursemates were present and immediately used their wilderness medicine training to stabilize her head and spine and call the instructors over. She was moved into a tent, administered prescription strength analgesics, and the course leader called NOLS Patagonia to request a helicopter evacuation for the next morning. They were located on a beach 100 air miles (185 km) south of NOLS Patagonia.

NOLS Patagonia staff arranged for a helicopter to depart the next morning to land on the beach at low tide (the only possible landing zone), stayed in regular communication with the course leader through the night, informed the local NOLS physician advisor who would meet the patient upon arrival at the hospital, and informed the risk management and operations directors at NOLS headquarters in Lander of the situation.

The helicopter arrived at the beach the next morning, departed with the patient at noon, and arrived at the hospital at 2:30 p.m., having been delayed due to the patient becoming air sick. She was diagnosed with an open fracture of her left forearm that required immediate surgery, and two fractured vertebrae, which were not serious. After a couple days she was discharged from the hospital and returned home to the U.S. for additional treatment, which, we were informed, was successful.
### HIGHLIGHTS | FINANCIAL

**SOUND FINANCIAL FOUNDATION**

**PROMOTES NOLS’ MISSION**

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#### NOLS Balance Sheet

**Aug. 31, 2016 and 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>$18,273,000</td>
<td>$17,801,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>8,651,000</td>
<td>6,430,000</td>
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<td>Endowment investments</td>
<td>34,484,000</td>
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<td>Receivables</td>
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<td>Pledges receivable</td>
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<td>Prepaid expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merchandise</td>
<td>1,134,000</td>
<td>1,174,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,237,000</td>
<td>1,319,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property, plant, and equipment net</td>
<td>28,401,000</td>
<td>28,965,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$93,870,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$88,587,000</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liabilities and net assets</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable</td>
<td>$5,931,000</td>
<td>$5,400,000</td>
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<td>Student deposits</td>
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<td>7,043,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total liabilities</strong></td>
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<td>12,443,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$76,144,000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$93,870,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$88,587,000</strong></td>
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</table>
As we come to the end of another fiscal year, it is with great pride that we are able to once again announce that the financial position of NOLS has never been stronger. Through the hard work of staff and the guidance of our supporters, we have been able to operate in a very fiscally responsible manner at all levels of NOLS. We know that the greatest strength of NOLS is our mission, but also that a strong financial foundation is needed to carry that mission into the future. Through a combination of a growing endowment, identified reserves and lack of long term debt, we believe that we are building that foundation.

Our endowment is an increasingly important piece of our financial foundation, providing support for our scholarships and mission. Over the last seven fiscal years, the value of the endowment has more than tripled, growing to $34,484,000. We are certainly grateful for the support from our friends in building this piece of our financial foundation. The trust placed in us by the supporters of our endowment is humbling, and the prudent management of this resource continues to be an important goal for us.

The financial resources that have been generated over these past fifty years from operations and by support from our donors are an important responsibility and opportunity for NOLS. A core organizational feature identified in our current strategic plan is to maintain our disciplined financial stewardship. One the ways in which we have achieved this by creating and funding cash reserves. These reserves have been created not only to sustain us in difficult circumstances but also to allow us to pursue opportunities to expand our reach and mission. We will continue to invest and use our financial reserves to support our students and mission while protecting the integrity of our financial resources.
Our Statement of Activities is reflective of our continued focus on meeting both our educational and financial goals. Fiscal Year 2016 was again a year with excellent operating results for NOLS. One of the highlights of the last several years has been our consistent and positive operating results. The education of our students is our primary focus and 79 percent of our operating expenses are specifically for our program areas. We are very pleased with and proud of the financial results we achieved this past year to support that focus on students and our program.

One area where there was a significant change compared to the prior year was in our investment returns. In FY 2016, we saw an investment gain of nearly 9 percent after experiencing a loss of 5 percent in the prior year. The swing from a loss to a gain certainly has a noticeably impact on our overall statement of activities.
### NOLS Statement of Activities
For the fiscal years ending Aug. 31, 2016 and 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenues and Other Support</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
<th>Total 2016</th>
<th>Total 2015</th>
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<td>Program revenues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition and fees</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>$32,337,000</td>
<td>$31,123,000</td>
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<td>Other program revenues</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>1,827,000</td>
<td>1,875,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total program revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$34,164,000</strong></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td><strong>$34,164,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$32,998,000</strong></td>
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<td>Fundraising activities</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Contributions and grants</td>
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<td>824,000</td>
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<td>Released from endowment</td>
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<td>(806,000)</td>
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<td>Net assets released from restriction for</td>
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<td>(512,000)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings and Equipment</td>
<td>78,000</td>
<td>(78,000)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total fundraising revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,963,000</strong></td>
<td>($1,079,000)</td>
<td><strong>824,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,708,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,103,000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment and other revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and investment income</td>
<td>580,000</td>
<td>549,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,129,000</td>
<td>505,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net realized and unrealized gains on investments</td>
<td>919,000</td>
<td>1,353,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,272,000</td>
<td>(2,002,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain (loss) on sale of equipment</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total investment and other revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,515,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,902,000</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>$3,417,000</strong></td>
<td>($1,444,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenue and other support</strong></td>
<td><strong>$38,642,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$823,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$824,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$40,289,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$34,657,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>$27,902,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$27,902,000</td>
<td>$26,516,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>6,508,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,508,000</td>
<td>6,755,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>895,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>895,000</td>
<td>858,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$35,305,000</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>$35,305,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$34,129,000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Change in net assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$3,337,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$823,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$824,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,984,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$528,000</strong></td>
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</table>
The last seven years have been a time of economic turmoil and unpredictability, one constant has been the continued growth of both the educational impact and financial position of NOLS. Our net assets have increased in each of the last seven years and have nearly doubled over this time. These continued positive results are indicative of the commitment of NOLS staff and supporters to insure that the NOLS mission thrives today and into the future.

Another highlight over the past seven years is the growth in scholarships that we have been able to award. Total scholarships awarded in 2016 of $1,930,000 represents an increase of nearly 50 percent compared to 2010. These scholarships have made the benefits of a NOLS education available and accessible to more students and would not be possible without the generous support of our friends.

While each of the last seven years is a collection of unique stories, NOLS has consistently seen strong operating results and support from our friends. Contributions to our mission have continued to grow through gifts to the NOLS Fund, our endowment, the International Base Camp Initiative, Campaign NOLS, and the Wyss Wilderness Medicine Campus. Gifts to these campaigns over the past seven years have reached nearly $28 million. Thanks to the support and efforts of many, we continue to build on the successes of our past and look to our future with a strong financial position.

We recognize the importance of being excellent stewards of our financial resources. Our positive financial results and strong balance sheet are due to the support and efforts of many and will help us to carry our mission into the future.
## NOLS Seven-Year Financial Highlights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td>$93,870,000</td>
<td>$88,587,000</td>
<td>$87,532,000</td>
<td>$79,100,000</td>
<td>$71,140,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total Liabilities</strong></td>
<td>$12,742,000</td>
<td>$12,443,000</td>
<td>$11,916,000</td>
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<td><strong>Net Assets</strong></td>
<td>$81,128,000</td>
<td>$76,144,000</td>
<td>$75,616,000</td>
<td>$67,426,000</td>
<td>$59,293,000</td>
<td>$53,563,000</td>
<td>$46,409,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>$34,164,000</td>
<td>$32,998,000</td>
<td>$32,182,000</td>
<td>$30,724,000</td>
<td>$29,512,000</td>
<td>$28,661,000</td>
<td>$27,009,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>2,708,000</td>
<td>3,103,000</td>
<td>3,234,000</td>
<td>5,998,000</td>
<td>4,923,000</td>
<td>5,126,000</td>
<td>2,516,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>3,401,000</td>
<td>(1,497,000)</td>
<td>5,199,000</td>
<td>2,794,000</td>
<td>978,000</td>
<td>1,833,000</td>
<td>943,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>62,000</td>
<td>(160,000)</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenues</strong></td>
<td>$40,289,000</td>
<td>$34,657,000</td>
<td>$40,682,000</td>
<td>$39,517,000</td>
<td>$35,475,000</td>
<td>$35,460,000</td>
<td>$30,498,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>$27,902,000</td>
<td>$26,516,000</td>
<td>$25,231,000</td>
<td>$25,464,000</td>
<td>$24,326,000</td>
<td>$23,313,000</td>
<td>$21,388,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>895,000</td>
<td>858,000</td>
<td>864,000</td>
<td>909,000</td>
<td>974,000</td>
<td>837,000</td>
<td>746,000</td>
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<td>Administration and Interest</td>
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<td>6,755,000</td>
<td>6,397,000</td>
<td>5,011,000</td>
<td>4,445,000</td>
<td>4,156,000</td>
<td>3,765,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td>$35,305,000</td>
<td>$34,129,000</td>
<td>$32,492,000</td>
<td>$31,384,000</td>
<td>$29,745,000</td>
<td>$28,306,000</td>
<td>$25,900,000</td>
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<td><strong>Change in net assets</strong></td>
<td>$4,984,000</td>
<td>$528,000</td>
<td>$8,190,000</td>
<td>$8,133,000</td>
<td>$5,730,000</td>
<td>$7,154,000</td>
<td>$4,598,000</td>
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<td><strong>Number of Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NOLS field courses</td>
<td>5,254</td>
<td>4,698</td>
<td>4,320</td>
<td>4,210</td>
<td>4,056</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>3,782</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOLS classroom courses</td>
<td>20,771</td>
<td>19,010</td>
<td>16,763</td>
<td>15,853</td>
<td>14,288</td>
<td>13,258</td>
<td>11,580</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total students</strong></td>
<td>26,025</td>
<td>23,708</td>
<td>21,083</td>
<td>20,063</td>
<td>18,344</td>
<td>17,147</td>
<td>15,362</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of student days</strong></td>
<td>232,123</td>
<td>224,256</td>
<td>217,559</td>
<td>208,787</td>
<td>205,155</td>
<td>202,957</td>
<td>192,667</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scholarship recipients</strong></td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholarships awarded</strong></td>
<td>$1,930,000</td>
<td>$1,761,000</td>
<td>$1,527,000</td>
<td>$1,543,000</td>
<td>$1,519,000</td>
<td>$1,462,000</td>
<td>$1,307,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ianna Breese, at 16, was a little over 5-feet-tall when she took her first NOLS course, Wilderness Natural History ’93, and she struggled to keep up with her taller, longer-limbed coursemates.

“I wasn’t always able to put my feet in their footsteps, so I learned to make my own path,” Breese recalled. She struggled, feeling inadequate, out of her element, tired and scared.

“My first inclination might have been to just give up and say ‘Nope, I’m done. I don’t want to do this anymore.’ But out in the middle of the wilderness, you have to figure out how to move forward, you have to keep moving and adapt,” she said.

While preparing for her course, Breese saw a glimpse of that NOLS attitude in the mentorship of family friend Lee Brown Pitman, who took Breese hiking in city parks around St. Paul, Minnesota.

“Lee was the only person I knew who had actually been hiking before,” Breese said. “She loaned me her frame pack, filled with phone books, so I could get an idea of what it would be like to hike, and to break in my brand-new boots.”

When her friend passed away in 2014, Breese, along with a family member, started a NOLS scholarship in Brown Pitman’s name for first-time NOLS students.

For Breese, the Lee Brown Pitman Scholarship combines two major influences: NOLS and Brown Pitman.

“I realized those outdoor times were some of my fondest memories of her,” Breese said. “Lee had a true appreciation for the natural world. She was generous with her time and took me to those wild places. There are so many benefits gained from going on a NOLS course, and I want as many people as possible to have that opportunity.”
Susan Chen always makes a plan, but is ready to change course when life throws her a twist. That’s a lesson she credits to her four NOLS courses. “The one thing in life that’s certain is change,” said Chen. “Are we going to allow it to happen to us or are we going to coexist elegantly with change?”

That was brought home to her on her Wind River Wilderness ’97 course, when she rolled her ankle while gathering water. “By the time our entire camp was awake, my ankle had swollen to the size of a baseball,” Chen remembered. She left the course. “But I knew that the next re-ration was in five days, and I was determined to get better and re-join the group then,” she said.

Two doctor visits, a few pleading discussions with NOLS staff, a resized boot, an air-cast, and two bottles of Aleve later, Chen was back in the field. “It was the best decision I made, to persevere and find a way to complete the course,” Chen recalled. “When I let go of limiting beliefs, anything is possible.”

Incorporating that attitude into her everyday life, Chen has gone to Everest base camp, the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, and has taken multi-week backcountry trips, including two NOLS alumni trips. Now, after a Wall Street career, she’s starting a company selling nutritious, affordable alternatives to gluten-free offerings sold in supermarkets. “I see the sky as my limit, and for a large part, I have NOLS to thank for that,” she said.

Chen donates to the NOLS Fund to give youth from underserved communities that same opportunity she had at 17 to learn lessons in the wilderness. “I believe it is foundational in building confidence, self reliance and leadership abilities,” she said.
Marco Johnson still remembers the lesson of his first NOLS expedition, a Rocky Mountain Outdoor Educator ‘85 course: part of being successful is being allowed to make mistakes.

“My instructors taught me good leadership was taking responsibility for my mistakes, not just my successes,” Johnson said.

“On my winter section, we were building our quinzhee,” he recalled. “We were almost done and ready to move in, but realized we made a mistake in our digging. The quinzhee collapsed.”

Instead of being mad, the group laughed it off, zipped three sleeping bags together and used the fourth as a quilt, then fell asleep beneath the stars over the Wind River Mountains.

Now NOLS’ Field Staffing Director and a 31-year full-time NOLS employee, Johnson said he’s never found a better work ethic or environment than at NOLS.

“I have had the privilege of working beside the most fantastic group of people and educators I know, and with the most amazing students,” he said. “They have given back to me much more than I believe I gave them.”

Johnson, who has donated to the NOLS Fund through a payroll deduction plan for the last five years, believes NOLS’ experiential education and real life consequences tied to decisions are invaluable lessons. He wants to make that available to anyone who wants it and donates to the NOLS Fund, in part, to support scholarships.

“I believe in the power of education, in NOLS, and the NOLS mission specifically,” he said. “I believe that my donation, no matter the size, makes a difference.”
As a college student, Brad Hirsch always loved the outdoors, but didn’t have the skills to be comfortable striking out on his own.

“I was on a defined career path, planning to go from college to medical school, but I wanted to learn a new skillset, push myself, and examine my choices,” he recalled. He said his Semester in Alaska ’01 was “the perfect choice.”

So perfect, in fact, that Hirsch deferred medical school for a year and worked for a wilderness therapy program instead. He proceeded on to medical school, prepared in a way that never would have been possible otherwise.

“NOLS taught me to lead by driving consensus and empowerment as opposed to through hierarchy and title,” Hirsch said. “It helped me to develop a positive leadership style, develop my own priorities, and learn my own limits as well as how to push myself.”

Hirsch related a specific incident from his course, climbing a mountain near Denali.

“It was a grueling climb as a part of a rope team,” he remembered. “There were numerous times when I thought I couldn’t go on, but sheer willpower kept me going. As we neared the summit, there were early signs of the potential for avalanches. The group quickly decided to turn back. The frustration of that decision was palpable, but was clearly the correct one to avoid danger.”

It took time to process that disappointment, Hirsch said, but it was one of many examples on his course where key lessons came as a natural result of events.

Hirsch, who donates to the NOLS Fund through a family foundation, makes NOLS a philanthropic priority because it is a unique, skills-oriented program that can help to develop the next generation.

“I think one of the unfortunate realities is that those most in need of experiences like NOLS are the ones with the most limited access to it,” said Hirsch. “It is among my top priorities because it checks so many key boxes for me.”