



UNITY  
COLLEGE  
SKY LODGE

UNITY COLLEGE: SKY LODGE  
END OF YEAR REVIEW  
GOALS & ACHIEVEMENTS  
2019-2020



**Sky Lodge, an ecotourism destination**

situated on more than 150 acres in northern Maine, was gifted to Unity College in 2018. Built in 1929 as a hunting and fishing getaway and renamed "Sky Lodge" by two former WWII airmen in the 1940s, the main lodge has been lovingly restored over the past decade to its original state. Sky Lodge provides a unique opportunity for Unity College to demonstrate sustainable ecotourism.

Through educational programming and entrepreneurship, Sky Lodge is an important element of both the Unity College curriculum and the local economy. Together we are laying the foundation for students to experience a real-world manifestation of their curriculum within a strong business environment with varied revenue streams and opportunities for learning.

Amenities include a conference center, contemporary cabins for rental, a swimming pool, an antique auto museum, a model railroad museum, and hiking trails. Outdoor activities nearby include hiking, golfing, biking, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, whitewater rafting, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.



# ENHANCE CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES

## Flagship Academic Experiences



### Snowmobile Skills

This course has become a staple for students looking to earn extra credits and prepare for wilderness excursions via snowmobile as they build skills for their career. Students enjoyed community partnerships with four area agencies in providing a multifaceted look at how snowmobiles are used in outdoor careers.



### Wildlife Conservation Capstone with Dr. Aly McKnight

Undergraduate students completed various projects at Sky Lodge, working with data that was collected earlier in the year by other students. This provided students with multiple data points and the ability to collaborate on site research.



### Wildlife Research

A graduate student is studying population density of white-tailed deer in the area of Sky Lodge, specifically investigating why the population is greater than in other areas with similar habitat and weather. This student conducted winter track surveys and collected scat samples. Additional analysis will be done to see if there are distinct changes in forest composition that correspond to density of deer in the area.

## Co-curricular Experiences



### Local Education

Forest Hills School students continued to enjoy an intergenerational community reading program and had the opportunity to hear from Unity College students who conducted community presentations on wildlife.



### Certifications and Trainings

Unity College Certifications and Training Center was scheduled to provide First Aid, CPR, and AED training to Sky Lodge employees as well as several professionals in the community for the second year in a row, however that was postponed due to COVID-19.



### Trail Restoration

With acres of woodland, we look forward to continued partnership with the Trail Crew and future development of trail access at Sky Lodge.

### TERRAIN Testbed

The fall of 2019 saw the launch of a testbed for TERRAIN at Unity College, which is designed for students to develop career-focused skills beginning on day one. TERRAIN uses Expeditionary Learning as its educational model, with innovative and integrated courses where students receive comprehensive, relevant, and outcome-based opportunities to help build or retool their knowledge and professional skills in sustainability fields.

TERRAIN brings an integrative approach to learning, allowing students to learn where they live in Living Learning Communities. Cohorts of students share academic experiences and projects in addition to social and recreational opportunities centered around a theme or real-world challenge. Of Unity College's incoming Fall 2019 Flagship class of 223, 61 students participated in the testbed.

Sky Lodge served as one of the testbed locations for TERRAIN in fall of 2019 with 60 students each visiting the property twice as one of their expeditionary learning experiences. Students worked together to conduct field research, build teamwork skills, understand and convey knowledge through composition and writing.





Photo credit: LAD Photography

## DEMONSTRATE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

■ **Adoption of the Unity College Green Cleaning Policy**, which protects the historic nature of the lodge, staff, guests, and the environment, continues to be met with a positive response. It also provides other benefits including efficiencies by reducing the quantity of supplies required leading to ease of use, lower inventories, and reduced expenses.

■ **Replaced light bulbs** across the Sky Lodge property with energy efficient LED bulbs creating a significant reduction in energy costs.

■ **Sealed unused chimneys** in guest rooms to reduce heat loss and maintain warmth, which, when combined with the **window inserts** purchased, significantly increased comfort in the lodge and reduced fossil fuel consumption.

■ **Local products are used** in hospitality and in retail to highlight regional businesses and goods, including maple syrup from Passamaquoddy Maple.

■ **Worked with bulk amenity (shampoo) dispenser maker** to revise units for increased quality after thorough testing, leading to an increase in adoption on-site and a continued reduction in waste. Additional progress has been made with refillable dispensers in public restrooms and kitchens.

■ **Locally made goat milk soap bars** received a boost with recycled paper pockets for guests to tuck remaining soap inside for travel home. This has reduced bar soap waste by 60% and serves as a souvenir.

■ **Reusable bottles** are being offered to guests for on-site use or purchase to avoid single-use plastic bottle sales.

■ **Partnerships have been developed** with other local tourism businesses to offer guests more activity options and cross-promote businesses in the Moose River Valley.

# INVESTMENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

## **Moose River Valley Center (MRVC)**

**The MRVC provides space to gather** through community partnerships and is run on a volunteer model.

**Maine Partnership for Environmental Stewardship**, hosted at Unity College and five other colleges in Maine, held a window insert building event at the MRVC that provided 130 low-cost energy saving window inserts in 2019-2020, 23 of which were purchased by Unity College to increase energy efficiency in the historic lodge at Sky Lodge.

**Expanded program offerings** to include live music monthly from Greg Carello-Bigner, Sky Lodge's Maintenance Manager, drop-in painting sessions, cardio exercise, and a new weekly cardgame.

**MRVC digital newsletter** supports communication and offers community news to all ages. This newsletter reaches 170 people and provides even more support as we all work to keep our community safe through social distancing.

**We have started to rent out MRVC** for private functions.

**Community Gardens at MRVC** provided raised beds for more comfortable gardening by community members of all ages during the 2019 growing season. It has been suspended for 2020 due to COVID-19 but we anticipate re-opening for the 2021 season.

**Access has been expanded to recreational trails** opening them to guests, community residents, and area businesses.

**Successfully earning grants and external funding** to support programs, operations, and exploration of future community services.

**Sky Lodge became a contractor** to a grant through Somerset Public Health to expand services at MRVC through the end of 2019.

**The Director of Sky Lodge participates in Community Health Access Team** helping to provide a plan for 24/7 access to care in our rural community

**Became a business member of the Border Rider Sportsman Club** helping to provide trail access throughout the region.

**Donations to local community organizations** to support fundraising events while promoting Sky Lodge.



## DEVELOP BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES



### ■ Sky Lodge Marketing efforts:

Website: <https://skylodge.unity.edu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/unitycolleges skylodge>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/skylodgemaine/>

Postcard and other collateral

Signed contract with marketing service to provide digital marketing support to increase direct booking and increase the rate of revenue

■ **Articles by Maine Travel Maven** and Meetings Today in February 2020

■ **Corporate retreats** offer a warm and relaxing atmosphere in the lodge, with multiple companies served and event bookings for the 2020-21 year.

■ **Launched the Mountain View Dining Room** in January 2020.

After Unity College received the gift of the Sky Lodge property, work began to reinvigorate life into the Mountain View Dining room. This once bustling restaurant had only been used privately for small groups for the last two decades. Now open again to the public, the dining room offers simple yet exceptional food. In the 10 weeks dining services were available to the public pre-COVID, Sky Lodge generated \$30,000 in additional revenue through this new avenue.

# ECONOMIC IMPACTS:

JULY 1, 2019 - JUNE 30, 2020

## LOCAL AREA

## STUDENT

## MAINE ECONOMY

## EMPLOYMENT

As Sky Lodge evolves and becomes more financially independent, the subsidy provided by Unity College decreases with a goal of total self sufficiency, making good on our commitment to the region as it grows.

**\$343,584**  
Earned Income

**\$596,411**  
Operating Budget

**\$252,828**  
Institutional Commitment to Sky Lodge

**We like to serve the people in our communities, and our customers are the community's customers.**

**2,200**  
Customers Served

**\$115**  
Average Spent Regionally per Visit

**\$156**  
Average Spent per Customer

**85**  
Volunteer Hours

**1,440**  
Community Center Hours

**1,074**  
People Served Through Community Programs

Our students have the chance to immerse themselves in a hands-on learning experience and create positive memories of the region.

**6**  
Classes Integrated

**165**  
Students Visited (Approx.)

**66**  
Average Length of Visit in Hours

Shopping locally is core to our values because it helps local vendors and reduces our environmental impact. We were also able to invest in capital improvements funded by grants and Unity College.

**73.7%**  
Amount Spent with Maine Vendors (over \$196K)

**9%**  
Food Sourced Locally

**\$22,423**  
Investment in Facilities and Construction

**\$5,015**  
Grants & Donations

Our employees who live in the Moose River Valley have the financial resources they need to participate in the community, both socially and economically.

**7**  
Full-Time Employees

**\$330,792**  
Annual Payroll & Benefits

## INVEST IN THE GIFT FROM THE COURI FOUNDATION



- **Continued the upgrades to emergency lighting and signage** to enhance guest safety, and backup generator power was expanded to additional buildings.
- **Septic system and kitchen at the lodge has been upgraded** to meet required health and safety codes for meals and lodging. A septic upgrade to the country house was completed this spring.
- **Expanded professional capacity to support the opening of the Mountain View Dining Room.** Efforts included professional development, hiring an experienced chef, and bringing on a sommelier to ensure the wine selections from the new wine cellar and seasonal craft cocktails made from scratch perfectly compliment the chef's weekly menu.
- **Investments in the John & Elaine Couri Welcome Center** included expanding the driveway, building a custom welcome desk for the main entry, and transitioning one of the rooms into conference space that accommodates up to 25 people.

## UPCOMING

■ **Six weddings** for the 2020-21 season

■ **Mountain View Dining Room** at Sky Lodge re-opening post-COVID-19 slated for August 2020

■ **Host to the 2021 Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Moose Lottery Drawing** in June 2021

■ **Host to the 2021 Real Maine Weddings** spring photo shoot and will be featured in Real Maine Weddings magazine.

