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Ask the Abbot

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What happened to the ropes course on campus?

Bob Rickards

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November 2021

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

What happened to the ropes course on campus?

Bob Rickards (Advancement Services, Women's Soccer)

Answer:

My dear Bob,

An excellent question, undoubtedly shared by others! Alumni from the late 1980s through the 2010s may recall this feature on the southwest corner of campus. The ropes course, as it was informally known, was part of the Outdoor Leadership Center, which was built in 1988 and originally called the Confidence Course. After a 1997 renovation, the center consisted of seven high elements, two climbing walls and a low course. Operated by what is now the department of Leadership, Student Engagement & First-Year Experience, the center served students, faculty and groups from local nonprofits and businesses. In 2013, it hosted a cohort of 40 students from Archmere Academy, the Norbertine preparatory high school in Delaware (and, I'm told, the alma mater of President Biden!), for a day of activities designed to build confidence and trust.

Although the Outdoor Leadership Center saw significant activity during its first two decades, its use had steeply declined by the mid-2010s. Between the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017, the ropes course and corresponding equipment were removed as part of an effort to make room for a large parking lot, though that project was later shelved as college leadership pivoted to other concerns. Happily, I'm pleased to



Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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report that much of the equipment was purchased and repurposed by the Door County Adventure Center, which is owned by a former St. Norbert staff member who oversaw the Outdoor Leadership Center in its early years. It warms my heart to know that people can still ascend to new heights on ropes that once inspired confidence within St. Norbert students!

Responses to “Ask the Abbot” questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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