Canoe trip part of maiden voyage for new Goshen College program

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GOSHEN — Some Goshen College students are on a water adventure this week, canoeing from Wolf Lake to Lake Michigan, according to Tom Hartzell.

Hartzell works as the program assistant with the Sustainability Semester in Residence at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College, which is near Wolf Lake, he said. This is the first semester for the program, as well as the first time for the canoe trip.

“The goal of the semester is to give the students an interdisciplinary look at sustainability,” Hartzell said.

The program has seven students, including five from Goshen College, one from Bluffton University and one from Bethel College, he said. All of the students are earning 15 credit hours for the semester while living at Merry Lea.

All of the students will cap off their semesters with a “problem-solving project,” he said. Also part of the program is the canoe trip, which Hartzell himself planned.

“I set up a few meetings every day (on the trip),” he said. “We’ll be doing water quality testing, and camping each night along the trip.”

All of the students will go on the trip, along with five staff members, who will take turns leading the students.

Hartzell said the idea for the canoe trip starts in Merry Lea, where the headwaters of the south branch of the Elkhart River start.

“The idea is to see everything that is downstream of us,” he said. “We want to show that our actions can impact those downstream from us.”

They will attempt to be a Lake Michigan by Saturday, he said. While they won’t be canoeing the entire way, the students will be paddling the entire trip from South Bend to the lake.

The students stopped at Indiana University South Bend Wednesday afternoon, according to a press release from the IUSB Center for a Sustainable Future. The students participated in a discussion and water test while at IUSB, along with a shared meal, according to the release.
“The IUSB partnership is in its infancy,” Hartzell said. “There are great people at the center, and we’re so excited about what we’re doing.”