During its formative years, the OSU Outdoor Program emerged as a meeting place for the Mountain Club and operated as part of Memorial Union Programs. It provided limited resources and equipment to club members. Events and activities were offered within the OSU Experimental College that introduced students to new experiences.

Oregon State University’s continued growth, and the ever-increasing interest in outdoor pursuits led to a succession of change. Challenged to meet the evolving needs of OSU students, the Outdoor Recreation Center (ORC) was created in 1971. It was designed as a learning and resource area, where students could participate in outdoor activities and become informed of the outdoors.

Soon after, the operation of the ORC transitioned to the Department of Recreational Sports. In the subsequent decades, the ORC became a thriving and important portal for students to pursue outdoor recreation and adventure. In 1989, construction of OSU’s first indoor climbing center was completed under Reser Stadium. Then, in 1993, on the west edge of campus, the OSU Challenge Course was built at the end of Jefferson Way.

As interest continued to grow, so did the program’s reach on campus. In 1997, a freshman outdoor orientation program known as Footsteps was introduced. In the first year, there were 191 participants and 40 faculty and peer leaders, with a total of 17 trips in a two day period.

In 2004, the ORC moved out of the Quonset Hut, and into Dixon Recreation Center. The Dixon Climbing Center also opened at the same time. With the ALI programs receiving continual demands for additional space, instruction and terrain their needs were met when the McAlexander Fieldhouse Climbing Center and Classroom opened in 2011.