Colgate University Outdoor Education

Staff Training Overview

Staff Training is a nine-month experiential program that focuses on leadership and teaching as well as the development of technical skills and natural and cultural history knowledge bases. Upon completion of training, qualified students will be hired as Outdoor Education Staff members. Staff members may lead physical education courses offered to the entire Colgate student body and Backyard Adventure outings offered to the entire Colgate and Hamilton communities. In addition, OE staff may lead Wilderness Adventure trips offered to incoming first-year students as well as teambuilding activities and other outreach programs.

First-year students and sophomores are eligible to apply. Previous outdoor experience is not a prerequisite. Leadership potential, a desire to learn and to teach, and a positive attitude are paramount. Twelve to sixteen trainees are selected through an interview and application process. The Director, Assistant Directors, and Student Staff Trainers of Outdoor Education will instruct staff training.

The staff training program promotes the mission of Colgate Outdoor Education: To provide the community with experiential opportunities that emphasize safety, environmental awareness, and technical skills, while promoting personal growth and group development through rediscovery of the natural world.

Curriculum:

Trainees learn skills by doing. After all trainees are proficient in basic wilderness skills, we will focus on teaching and leadership and branch out and cover a more diverse offering of outdoor skills such as:

- Hiking
- Fly Fishing
- Winter Camping
- Survival
- Canoeing
- Snowshoeing
- Backpacking
- Sea Kayaking
- X-C Skiing (skate and classical)
- Rock Climbing
- Whitewater Kayaking
- Telemark Skiing
- Caving
- Whitewater Canoeing
- Ice climbing
- Tree Climbing
- Fly Fishing

The curriculum is designed as a two-part progression – the focus is first on the learning of skills and second on teaching and leadership skills. Emphasis is on the development of a “leader mindset” in order to safely lead people in the outdoors. Upon successful completion of Staff Training, trainees entering the program with no prior experience, will (at a minimum) be able to co-lead a basic backpacking trip.

The baseline curriculum is divided into three main areas – technical skills, people skills, and land skills:

**Technical Skills**
- Learn, practice and master the “backcountry basics” (e.g. navigation, stove repair, first aid)
- Gain exposure to more advanced skills (e.g. kayaking, rock climbing, telemark skiing, ice climbing)
- Develop a “leader mindset” and risk management strategies in order to make effective decisions while managing groups in the outdoors
- Develop teaching skills in order to utilize experiential teaching methods

**People Skills**
- Develop leadership skills in order to facilitate a positive learning environment and foster positive group dynamics

**Land Skills**
- Practice and teach Leave No Trace skills
- Gain an understanding of natural and cultural history of wildland areas
- Develop a personal connection to place

Teaching and leadership opportunities occur throughout the training process. Each trainee prepares and teaches several mini-classes (10-15 minutes) on environmental topics such as tree identification, environmental organizations, etc. During trips, trainees are designated as “CLODs” (Co-leader of the day) and are responsible for overseeing safety and logistics, facilitating group dynamics, and teaching field lessons.

Trainees also apprentice an Outdoor Education course that is taught by two upper Staff members and offered to the student body for physical education credit. This is a hands-on opportunity to learn about the planning and logistics specific to leading a course at Colgate University.
TEXTBOOKS:
An array of books on outdoor leadership, wilderness ethics, wilderness travel and natural history will be utilized throughout training. Trainees will receive copies of selected books to keep in their personal library. Examples include, but will not be limited to:
- The Backpacker’s Field Manual, Rick Curtis
- Mountaineering, The Mountaineers
- Reading the Forested Landscape, Tom Wessels
- Endurance, Alfred Lansing

CALENDER: The 9-month training is comprised of the following components:
- Two class meetings per week (fall) (Every Monday @ 4:30 - 8:30pm; every Thursday @ 4:30-7:30pm)
- Weekend Day/Overnight Trips (Canoing, Climbing, Sea kayaking, Survival, Caving, Backpacking)
- Mid-Term Break Trip (4-day canoeing or sea kayaking trip in the Adirondacks or Thousand Islands)
- January Break
  - Wilderness First Responder
  - Winter Trip
  - Basic Water Rescue
- Staff Extravaganza (All-staff weekend at Rock and River lodge)
- Base Camp Series (Guest lecturers/speakers per semester)
- Spring Break Trip (see notation about spring break options under cost below)
- Teambuilding Training
- Skills Seminars (Offered in February/March 2010 in x-c skiing, telemark skiing, kayaking, etc.)
- Apprenticeship (Apprentice a PE course during Spring 2010)
- May Training Trip (self lead in small groups of trainees)
- Instruct Wilderness Adventure (August 2012 etc.)

COST: Staff Training operates on a break-even budget. The $2,000 course fee covers all costs including:
- Wilderness First Responder course this year ($650) and Recertification Senior Year ($200)
- Trip Expenses: transportation, food, gear rental, and lodging ($200)
- Misc. Expenses: ski lift tickets, guest speakers, permit fees, maps, etc. ($400)
- Food for Monday night dinners and trip food ($200)
- Instructor Staff Trainer Wages (approx $350 per trainee)
- Telescoping Trekking Poles, headlamp, flint, thermos ($150)
- Text Books ($100)
- $200-$300 subsidy towards (exact subsidy will be determined before the September info session):
  - An Outdoor Ed Spring Break trip during Training Year* to work on specific skills development
  - Costs of a personal trip that improves ones outdoor skills. Must be approved by the Director
  - A professional clinic, skill certification (i.e AMGA Top Rope Certification) approved by the director
*Trips for the spring may include: Climbing in Joshua Tree, Desert Hiking and Canyoneering, XC skiing in Canada, Dog Sledding in Canada, NE Winter Backpacking, Sea Kayaking in Lake Powell, Bahamas or Florida).

SCHOLARSHIPS:
Partial to full scholarships based on financial need are available. Acceptance to the program is need blind. Once accepted, scholarship awards are determined through consultation with the Student Aid office.

JOURNAL:
Each student is required to keep a journal for note taking during weekly classes and recording field observations during trips.

GRADING: Trainees are awarded the two required physical education credits. Wilderness First Responder and CPR certifications are also received. Ongoing feedback and assessment are an integral part of the training process. Each participant will have at least two “Benchmarks” with the Director to discuss leadership development. In addition, verbal feedback from the Director, Assistant Director and Student Staff Trainers will be given on a regular basis to facilitate the development of leadership and teaching skills within each participant.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is MANDATORY. In order to be considered for hire as an Outdoor Education staff member, all classes and field trips must be attended. Due to the time requirements and experiential nature of the course, attitude (i.e. a desire to learn) and commitment are essential. An "excused" absence may be permissible for unforeseen circumstances.

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