



# Athlete Leadership

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of Athlete Leadership is empowering athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement and create inclusive communities around the world. The primary mission of the Athlete Leadership Program is to provide Special Olympics athletes a variety of choices in how they participate in the program.

## **DEFINITION OF ATHLETE LEADERSHIP**

Through organized training and practical experiences, Athlete Leadership prepares athletes to undertake meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the Special Olympics organization, both on and off the playing field.

## **PROGRAM CERTIFICATION**

Area and County Programs that seek to involve athletes in leadership roles (coaches, volunteers, management team members, speakers, etc.) are required to attend a two-hour certification session. During this training, the program's ALPs Coordinator will learn of the various roles available for athlete leaders, Athlete Input Councils (AICs), ALPs University requirements, expectations for volunteers (mentors), and development of an action plan to meet these requirements.

The Athlete Leadership Certification is offered at the SOIN State Conference in two (2) workshop sessions.

## **ATHLETES SERVE IN MANY MEANINGFUL ROLES**

### **ATHLETE INPUT COUNCILS:**

Athletes who participate in AICs discuss ideas and problems, respond to program proposals, make suggestions, and propose recommendations to the State Office and County programs. Athletes have the opportunity to participate in their Area or County AIC and/or the input council session held at ALPs University.

### **ATHLETES AS GLOBAL MESSENGERS:**

Athletes trained in presentation skills are speakers, giving presentations to schools, community groups, parents, etc.

### **ATHLETES AS COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEMBERS:**

Athletes serve on National, State, Area and County Management Teams and the SO Indiana Board of Directors.

### **ATHLETES AS COACHES:**

Athletes become coaches or assistant coaches after attending certification training. Many Special Olympics athletes in Indiana are certified coaches.

### **ATHLETES AS OFFICIALS:**

Athletes learn the officials' code of ethics, athlete-centered officiating, general officiating principles, and safety guidelines.

### **ATHLETES AS BOARD MEMBERS:**

Athletes serve on Area and County Management Teams and the SO Indiana Board of Directors. The current athletes on the SO Indiana Board of Directors are Heather Himes of Marion County - East and Mitch Bonar of Hamilton County.

### **ATHLETES AS HEALTH MESSENGERS:**

Athletes serve as Health Ambassadors, Athlete Volunteers and Health & Fitness Coaches to promote healthy lifestyles for teammates and peers.

### **ATHLETES AS TECHNOLOGY SPECIALISTS:**

Athletes produce PowerPoint presentations, take photographs and video, support websites, and fill other technology-related roles.

### **ATHLETES AS STORYTELLERS**

Athletes who create through visual media share their message, stories, and inspire.

### **OTHER ROLES FOR ATHLETES:**

Athletes also serve as employees of Special Olympics, fundraisers, volunteers in the program, class instructors, and donate money to programs.

## **INDIANA ATHLETE INPUT COUNCIL**

The State Athlete Input Council was reimagined in 2019 and added to the Special Olympics Indiana Operating Policy. The policy provides guidelines to counties for participation in a statewide AIC.

## **ALPS UNIVERSITY**

Indiana has been providing training in athlete leadership since 1997. The program was formalized and expanded in 2003 with the introduction of ALPs University, which provides education for Special Olympics athletes in a variety of leadership topics. Using a university model where athletes receive credit for attending classes and completing practical experience, participants can earn degrees in Communication, Governance, Health & Fitness, Technology and Sports.

## **HANDBOOK FOR ATHLETE LEADERS**

For complete details on Athlete Leadership and ALPs University procedures and policies, see the *Handbook for Athlete Leaders* available at each ALPs University and posted on the Resource page of our website ([www.soindiana.org](http://www.soindiana.org)).



# ALPs University

## ALPS UNIVERSITY

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Using a university model where athletes receive credit for attending classes and completing practical experience, participants can earn degrees in Communication, Governance, Health & Fitness, Sports, Technology, and Visual Arts.

## ELIGIBILITY

Athletes who sign up for ALPs University must be at least 16 years old.

Each athlete must be accompanied by a volunteer (mentor) who works with the athlete during each class and locally during the required practical experience. Information on mentor responsibilities is available in the *Handbook for Athlete Leaders*.

- Parents are allowed to be mentors for their son or daughter on a trial basis. Other relatives of the athlete can be mentors.
- Unless otherwise designated, each athlete attending ALPs University must have a mentor (one-on-one).
- Exceptions to these rules are subject to the approval of the ALPs Management Team.

## ALPS UNIVERSITY PREREQUISITES, CURRICULUM AND CREDIT

The course curriculum chart below outlines the plan of study for ALPs University. The first class for all ALPs University students is *Introduction to Athlete Leadership*. During completion of this class, athletes can choose a major and take classes as outlined in the chart.

## PRACTICUM WORK FOR CREDIT IN A CLASS

Each class requires the completion of a practicum in order to receive credit for the class. The practicum certification must be sent to the State Office within **five** (5) months of taking the class. Some leeway is given for the *Athletes as Coaches* class if the sport the athlete is interested in does not happen within five (5) months.

**Note:** All practicums **MUST** include a statement from the mentor and sign off by the ALPs Coordinator. All practicums are tracked and approved by the instructors. Instructors will inform SO Indiana when an athlete completes the practicum.

## PREREQUISITES FOR ADVANCED-LEVEL CLASSES

Only a few classes have prerequisites. Note: An athlete cannot take any second class unless he/she first takes the *Introduction to Athlete Leadership* class and receives credit.

Other prerequisites:

- *Global Messenger* plus practicum before *Global Messenger II*.
- *Introduction to Event Planning* plus practicum before *Event Planning II*.
- *Leadership Through Visual Arts I* plus practicum before *Leadership Through Visual Arts II*.
- Three (3) classes in a student's major plus practicums before *Leadership Capstone*.
- Governance classes may be taken in any order.
- Technology classes may be taken in any order.
- Introduction to Health & Fitness plus practicum before Health & Fitness Advocates

## ORDER OF TAKING CLASSES

Classes may be taken in any order from the curriculum chart (with the exception of those with prerequisites above.) Students may take classes outside their major and may repeat classes.

## EARNING ADDITIONAL DEGREES

Once an athlete leader completes his/her first degree, he/she may wish to earn additional degrees. Courses taken as electives may or may not count toward an additional degree. For every additional major, the *Leadership Capstone* class must be repeated.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

Athlete leaders are encouraged to repeat classes on a periodic basis to update their leadership knowledge and skills. Class content

COURSE CURRICULUM FOR ALPS UNIVERSITY						
Introduction to Athlete Leadership						
COMMUNICATION MAJOR	EVENT PLANNING MAJOR	GOVERNANCE MAJOR	HEALTH & FITNESS MAJOR	SPORTS MAJOR	TECHNOLOGY MAJOR	VISUAL ARTS MAJOR
Global Messenger I	Introduction to Event Planning	Governance: Athlete Input Councils	Introduction to Health & Fitness	Athletes as Coaches	Any Two (2) Technology Courses	Leadership Through Visual Arts I
Global Messenger II	Event Planning II	Governance: Boards & Committees	Health & Fitness Advocates	Introduction to Health & Fitness		Leadership Through Visual Arts II
One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class	Level 1 Coaches Education Program* OR MATP Coaching	One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class
Leadership Capstone						
<p>Each class is a 7-hour course. <i>Introduction to Athlete Leadership</i> is the required first course and <i>Leadership Capstone</i> is the final course. Courses in the athlete's area of concentration require participation in the class and completion of a practicum within five (5) months. Exceptions to the five-month rule will be granted if an athlete chooses to coach a sport that does not take place within that timeframe.</p>						



## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Athletes must attend *Introduction to Athlete Leadership* as their first class. Athletes must have 1-on-1 support from a mentor during any class. *Leadership Capstone* is the final course and is only available to those athletes who have satisfied all the necessary prerequisites and practicum hours for their chosen major.

Athletes may register for **ONE** class only per semester.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS		
COURSE	DESCRIPTION	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE
<b>INTRODUCTION TO ATHLETE LEADERSHIP</b>	Overview of ALPs choices, input councils, and basics of leadership concluding with development of personal mission statement and selection of a major.	To volunteer at least 10 hours at Area, County or State events and become a Class A volunteer.
<b>UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP</b>	Builds basic leadership skills to give athletes a foundation to fill a leadership role with confidence.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>GLOBAL MESSENGER I</b>	Initial training for athletes who want speaking experience and would like to learn speaking skills.	To conduct at least five (5) presentations to community, school, or civic groups.
<b>GLOBAL MESSENGER II</b>	Additional training for athletes who have speaking experience and would like to refine their skills.	To conduct at least five (5) presentations to community, school, or civic groups.
<b>ATHLETES AS COACHES</b>	Introduction to coaching skills, focusing on the qualities of an effective Special Olympics coach.	To serve as a coach or assistant coach for a Special Olympics team for a full season.
<b>MATP COACHING</b>	Learn coaching skills to assist MATP athletes achieve their potential.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>GOVERNANCE: ATHLETE INPUT COUNCILS</b>	Covers governance definition; SO mission statement; Athlete Input Council structure; practice in input councils & working together in meetings.	To attend five (5) Athlete Input Councils or start a Council if your Area or County does not have one.
<b>GOVERNANCE: BOARDS &amp; COMMITTEES</b>	Covers governance definition; SO mission statement; policy setting; practices in board and committee meetings; athletes' role as a decision maker.	To attend five (5) Athlete Input Councils or start a Council if your Area or County does not have one.
<b>BASIC POWERPOINT</b>	How to build PowerPoint® presentations, including use of digital photography.	To prepare at least two (2) new PowerPoint® presentations to be used by County/Area Management Team or the State Office.
<b>TECHNOLOGY: INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS</b>	How to use Social Media tools (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to promote Special Olympics and communicate with our audiences. How to use email, internet, and utilize search engines	To complete a series of eight (8) technology-related tasks using a computer.
<b>TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL MEDIA</b>	How to use photography and videography in your role as an athlete leader.	To complete a series of technology-related tasks using a computer and camera.
<b>INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH &amp; FITNESS</b>	Overview of basic health and fitness information, and provides hands-on practice to develop your skills as a Healthy Lifestyle Messenger to your fellow peers.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>HEALTH &amp; FITNESS ADVOCATES</b>	Provides athletes with guidance and support to develop their advocacy skills. Athletes build on their personal successes and community leadership experiences from the Intro to Health & Fitness course practicum.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>LEADERSHIP THROUGH VISUAL ARTS I</b>	Through visual arts, athletes will develop necessary skills such as confidence, collaboration and self discipline, that will prepare them for any leadership role and can be applied to all aspects of life. No prior experience required.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>LEADERSHIP THROUGH VISUAL ARTS II</b>	A deeper study of the necessary skills learned through visual arts and how to apply them to become a confident, disciplined, inspiring leader.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>INTRODUCTION TO EVENT PLANNING</b>	Covers the basic concepts of event management including personnel, planning, volunteers, and risk management.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>EVENT PLANNING II</b>	Covers what to consider when planning and staging a Special Olympics event including budgeting, divisioning, ceremonies, awards, and competition guidelines.	To be determined as part of course work.
<b>LEADERSHIP CAPSTONE</b>	Focuses on the difference between effective and enduring leaders through value-based leadership.	Leadership project(s) chosen by the athlete leader.