

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 Athlete Leadership 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 have a management team member attend a two-hour certification session. During this training, the program's Athlete Leadership Coordinator will learn of the various roles available for athlete leaders, Athlete Leadership Councils (ALCs), Athlete Leadership University requirements, expectations for volunteers (mentors), and development of an action plan to meet these requirements.

The Athlete Leadership Certification is offered at the State Conference and available for Areas or Counties (via Zoom) if multiple management team members are being trained.

ATHLETES SERVE IN MANY MEANINGFUL ROLES

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCILS (ALC): Athletes who participate in ALCs 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 ALC and/or the input council session held at Athlete Leadership University.

ATHLETES AS GLOBAL MESSENGERS: Athletes trained in presentation skills are speakers, giving presentations to schools, community groups, parents, etc.

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 COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEMBERS: Athletes serve on National, State, Area and County Management Teams and the SO Indiana Board of Directors. The current athlete leaders on the SO Indiana Board of Directors are Heather Himes of Marion County-East and Mitch Bonar of Hamilton County. In May 2021, Melony Salla of Benton County will be replacing Heather, whose term ends.

ATHLETES AS HEALTH MESSENGERS: Athletes serve as health ambassadors, 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 LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Indiana Athlete Leadership Council was reimagined in 2019 and added to the SO Indiana organizational by-laws. The policy provides guidelines to counties for participation in the statewide ALC.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

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

HANDBOOK FOR ATHLETE LEADERS

For complete details on Athlete Leadership and Athlete Leadership University procedures and policies, see the *Handbook for Athlete Leaders* available at each Athlete Leadership University and posted on the resource page of our website (www.soindiana.org).

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Indiana has been providing training in athlete leadership since 1997. The program was formalized and expanded in 2003 with the introduction of Athlete Leadership University, which provides education for Special Olympics athletes in a variety of leadership topics.

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

ELIGIBILITY

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

Each athlete must be accompanied by a volunteer (mentor) who works with the athlete during each course 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 Athlete Leadership University must have a mentor (one-on-one).
- Exceptions to these rules are subject to the approval of the Athlete Leadership University Management Team.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY PREREQUISITES, CURRICULUM AND CREDIT

The course curriculum chart on a following page outlines the plan of study for Athlete Leadership University. The first course for all students is *Introduction to Athlete Leadership University*. The second course for all students is *Understanding Leadership*. During completion of these courses, athletes can choose a major and take courses as outlined in the chart. The final course to graduate with a major and each new major is *Leadership Capstone*.

PRACTICUM WORK FOR CREDIT IN A COURSE

Each course requires the completion of a practicum in order to receive credit for the course. The practicum certification must be sent to the State Office within **five** (5) months of taking the class. Some leeway is given for the Sports core courses 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 Athlete Leadership 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 courses have prerequisites. Note: An athlete cannot take a class within their major unless they first take *Introduction to Athlete Leadership* AND *Understanding Leadership* courses and receive credit.

Other prerequisites:

- *Global Messenger* plus practicum before *Global Messenger II*.
- *Event Planning* plus practicum before *Event Management*
- *Leadership Through Visual Arts I* plus practicum before *Leadership Through Visual Arts II*.
- *Introduction to Health & Fitness* plus practicum before *Health & Fitness Advocates*.
- *Athletes as Coaches* plus practicum before *Training Fundamentals*.
- Three (3) courses in a student's major plus practicums before *Leadership Capstone*.

ORDER OF TAKING COURSES

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

EARNING ADDITIONAL DEGREES

Once athlete leaders completes their first degree, they 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* course must be repeated.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Athlete leaders are encouraged to repeat courses on a periodic basis to update their leadership knowledge and skills. Course content changes over the years as new concepts are introduced.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

COURSE CURRICULUM

COURSE CURRICULUM FOR ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY						
Introduction to Athlete Leadership						
Understanding Leadership						
COMMUNICATION MAJOR	EVENTS MAJOR	GOVERNANCE MAJOR	HEALTH & FITNESS MAJOR	SPORTS MAJOR	TECHNOLOGY MAJOR	VISUAL ARTS MAJOR
Global Messenger I	Event Planning	Governance: Athlete Leadership Councils	Introduction to Health & Fitness	Athletes as Coaches	Any Two (2) Technology Courses	Leadership Through Visual Arts I
Global Messenger II	Event Management	Governance: Boards & Committees	Health & Fitness Advocates	Training Fundamentals		Leadership Through Visual Arts II
One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class	Introduction to Health & Fitness	One (1) Elective Class	One (1) Elective Class
Leadership Capstone						
<p>Each course is a 7-hour course. <i>Introduction to Athlete Leadership</i> is the required first course, <i>Understanding Leadership</i> is second, and <i>Leadership Capstone</i> is the final course. Courses in the athlete's area of concentration require participation in the course 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> <p>*This includes two (2) online "Core Coaching Knowledge" Courses and a practicum.</p>						

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Athletes must attend *Introduction to Athlete Leadership* as their first course. Athletes must have 1-on-1 support from a mentor during any course. *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
INTRODUCTION TO ATHLETE LEADERSHIP	Overview of athlete leadership 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.
UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP	Builds basic leadership skills to give athletes a foundation to fill a leadership role with confidence.	To complete the assigned reflection questions.
GLOBAL MESSENGER I	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.
GLOBAL MESSENGER II	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.
ATHLETES AS COACHES	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.
TRAINING FUNDAMENTALS	This new Sports core course will be unveiled in the Spring 2022 semester.	To be determined as part of course work.
GOVERNANCE: ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCILS	Covers governance definition; SO mission statement; Athlete Leadership Council structure; practice in leadership councils & working together in meetings.	To attend five (5) Athlete Leadership Councils or start a Council if your Area or County does not have one.
GOVERNANCE: BOARDS & COMMITTEES	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 Leadership Councils or start a Council if your Area or County does not have one.
BASIC POWERPOINT	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.
TECHNOLOGY: INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS	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.
TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL MEDIA	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.
INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH & FITNESS	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.
HEALTH & FITNESS ADVOCATES	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.
LEADERSHIP THROUGH VISUAL ARTS I	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.
LEADERSHIP THROUGH VISUAL ARTS II	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.
EVENT MANAGEMENT	Covers the basic concepts of event management including personnel, planning, volunteers, and risk management.	To be determined as part of course work.
EVENT PLANNING	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.
LEADERSHIP CAPSTONE	Focuses on the difference between effective and enduring leaders through value-based leadership.	Leadership project(s) chosen by the athlete leader.