

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP

PURPOSE

Special Olympics Indiana's work in Athlete Leadership empowers athletes to take on meaningful roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement and create inclusive communities across the state. Through leadership skills training and practical experience, athletes gain the confidence to use their talents and abilities in positions of influence and leadership throughout the Special Olympics organization, both on and off the playing field.

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Special Olympics Indiana offers programs that provide athletes the opportunity to learn, practice and use leadership skills. Through these programs, athletes find, create and re-imagine ways to contribute to the organization and their communities.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Athletes who participate in Athlete Leadership Council (ALC) discuss ideas and problems, respond to program proposals and make recommendations to the state office and county programs. Athletes have opportunities to participate in their county ALC and state ALC. The Special Olympics Indiana Board of Directors approved the athlete-led recommendation for every county program to have an ALC by the end of 2022. The Indiana ALC was reimagined in 2019 and added to the SO Indiana organizational by-laws. The policy provides guidelines to county programs 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 athletes in a variety of leadership topics. Using a university model where athletes receive credit for attending courses and completing practical experience. Students can earn degrees in communication, events, governance, health and fitness, sports, technology, and visual arts.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP WEBINAR SERIES

Throughout the year, enrichment and professional development topics are offered in a virtual setting. Topics vary from leadership skills to health and wellness to issues that impact our communities.

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Special Olympics Indiana leadership programs support athletes throughout the state in a variety of meaningful roles. Some of the many roles in which athletes are currently serving are:

- Athlete Leadership Council members
- Global Messengers or public speakers
- Committee and Board members
- Coaches
- Health Messengers
- Technology specialists
- Storytellers through Visual Arts
- Fundraisers
- Social Influencers
- Emcees and event hosts
- Podcasters
- Event managers
- Volunteers
- Mentors
- Instructors



COUNTY 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, 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.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

THE MISSION OF ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

Athlete Leadership University exists to enhance the lives of athletes with ongoing leadership training and experience in the areas such as communications, events, governance, health and fitness, sports, technology, and visual arts; it brings together talented athletes in an atmosphere of sharing, knowledge, trust, and respect.

- Special Olympics Indiana, October 2021

DEFINITION OF ATHLETE LEADERSHIP

- Allowing athletes to choose HOW and in what ROLE they participate in Special Olympics.
- Encouraging athletes to take meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the organization to help determine policy and set direction.
- Providing training for coaches, volunteers, and parents as they welcome athletes in their new roles.

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” and “Mentor Fast Facts.”

- Parents are allowed to be mentors for their child on a trial basis. Other relatives of the athlete can be mentors.
- Unless otherwise stated, 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 curriculum chart on the following page outlines the plan of study for Athlete Leadership University. The first course for all students is Introduction to Athlete Leadership. The second course for all students is Understanding Leadership. After the 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 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 months.

NOTE: All practicums must include a statement from the mentor and sign off by the County Program’s Athlete Leadership Coordinator. All practicums are tracked and approved by the instructors. Instructors will inform SO Indiana when an athlete completes the practicum.

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.

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 at SOIndiana.org on the resource library page.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

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 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 elective class	One elective class	One elective class	One elective class	Introduction to Health & Fitness	One elective class	One elective class
Leadership Capstone						
Introduction to Athlete Leadership is the required first course, Understanding Leadership is required second and 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. Courses in the athlete's area of concentration require participation in the course and completion of a practicum within five months. Exceptions to the five-month rule are granted if an athlete chooses to coach a						

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

Each course is seven hours. Athletes may register for one class only per semester.

COURSE	DESCRIPTION	PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE
INTRODUCTION TO ATHLETE LEADERSHIP	Overview of ALPs choices, input councils, and basics of leadership concluding with development of personal mission statement and selection of a major.	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.	Complete the assigned reflection questions.
GLOBAL MESSENGER I	Initial training for athletes who want speaking experience and would like to learn speaking skills.	Conduct at least five speeches to community, school, or civic groups.
GLOBAL MESSENGER II	Additional training for athletes who have speaking experience and would like to refine their skills.	Conduct at least five speeches or media interviews
ATHLETES AS COACHES	Introduction to coaching skills, focusing on the qualities of an effective Special Olympics coach.	Serve as a coach or assistant coach for a Special Olympics team for a full season.
TRAINING FUNDAMENTALS	Learn to create training plans that teach new tasks, reinforce previously learned tasks, and apply both to competition.	Create an eight-week training plan and get feedback from an experienced coach.
GOVERNANCE: ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCILS	Covers governance definition; SO mission statement; Athlete Leadership Council structure; practice in leadership councils & working together in meetings.	Attend five 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.	Attend five Athlete Input 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.	Prepare at least two 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 search engines.	Complete eight technology-related tasks using a computer.
TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL MEDIA	How to use photography and videography in your role as an athlete leader.	Complete eight technology-related tasks using a computer or 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.