



# Handbook for Athlete Leaders

## Athlete Leadership University (ALU)

Fall 2025

**BUTLER**

COLLEGE of EDUCATION

**Special Olympics**  
Indiana





## The Mission of Special Olympics

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

## The Mission of Athlete Leadership

To empower athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices to assume meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement, and educate communities around the world that results in positive life changes.

~ ALPs Summit, Vancouver, BC, March 2011

## 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 governance, sports, communications, technology, visual arts, health and fitness, and events; 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.

## Basic Athlete Leadership Philosophies

- Respect athletes as equal partners in your Special Olympics experience.
- Value athlete opinions and preferences.
- Athletes can improve your program TREMENDOUSLY!
- Listen! Take the time to be sure you understand when athletes speak to you.
- Whenever possible, involve athletes in your work via leadership positions that are meaningful.
- Athletes make excellent volunteers if you let them.
- Athlete leaders are the best fundraisers you can possibly have.



## Roles for Athletes

**Athlete Leadership Council Member** — You can improve your local program by making suggestions and discussing problems. Become a participating member in your county program or area leadership council or start one if they do not have one. **YOUR INPUT IS VALUABLE AND IS NEEDED!**

**Athletes on Board of Directors or local/area committees** — You can become a representative of athletes on these very important groups. Training prepares athletes to participate in Special Olympics programming and policy meetings. Learn listening skills and how to read financial reports. Indiana has had several athletes on its Board of Directors. The current athletes are Heather Himes and Mitch Bonar. **BECOME A BOARD MEMBER; MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS!**

**Athletes as Global Messengers** — Do you like to talk? You can learn presentation skills to become an expert speaker. We will even teach you to use PowerPoint to give presentations to groups and organizations in your community. **GIVE A TALK & GET NEW PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS!**

**Athletes in the Media** — You can get the Special Olympics WORD out. You can write articles, do television, radio shows, or work with the newspapers. Some athletes in Indiana are involved in their county's Facebook pages. Special Olympics athletes in Indiana produce and host their own weekly podcasts on YouTube. In 2014, Wes Hartwell from White County was one of the official photographers for the National Games. **JOIN US AND HELP GET THE WORD OUT TO EVERYONE!**

**Athletes as Coaches** — You can become a coach or assistant coach if that is your dream! You will need to make a commitment to attend certification training by the Indiana State Office then apply your training. Many Special Olympics athletes in Indiana have become coaches. **BECOME A COACH IF THAT IS YOUR DREAM!**

**Athletes as Officials** — You can become an official if that is your dream! Special Olympics provides athletes information so they can participate in sport National Governing Body certification programs as an official or other skilled sport personnel. At the 1995 World Games in New Haven, Connecticut, there were 39 officials who were Special Olympics athletes! **BECOME AN OFFICIAL IF THAT IS YOUR GOAL!**

**Athletes as Technology Specialists**— Do you like to use your computer or mobile device? You can train with Special Olympics in various technology skills to become an expert in several subjects. We will teach you to use PowerPoint, email, the Internet, search engines, photography and videography, or social media. All these can help your local program be better and more effective. **BECOME AN EXPERT IN A TECHNOLOGY SUBJECT AND SUPPORT YOUR PROGRAM!**



**Athletes as Health & Fitness Advocates and Messengers** — Do you have a passion for promoting a healthy lifestyle? You can help your fellow athletes improve their fitness, make healthy food and drink choices, and form healthy habits.

BE A HEALTH MESSENGER AND HELP YOUR TEAMMATES BECOME THE BEST THEY CAN BE!

**Athletes as Visual Storytellers** — Do you like to create through visual media to share your message? You can share stories, inspire, and spread messages about Special Olympics through visual media. BE A LEADER THROUGH VISUAL ARTS AND HELP TELL OUR STORIES!

**Athletes as Special Olympics employees** — Someday you might be employed by Special Olympics. Several state Programs, including Indiana, and the international office, have athletes on their payroll as employees.

WORK FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND BE A MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM!

**Athlete Congress Member** — Congresses exist in several states (not Indiana) and there is a World Congress. It provides a formal, deliberative process and place for athlete input on programming, policy, and other processes of Special Olympics. Indiana athlete leaders have attended four world congresses. Six Indiana athletes have attended the World Congress and Athlete Leadership summits in the past.

WANT TO KNOW MORE, ENROLL IN A GOVERNANCE COURSE!

**Athletes as Instructors or Teaching Assistants at ALU** — Do you feel you have the skills to teach other athletes? You can teach or support courses at ALU or even design and write new courses. Most of our instructors are athletes.

BECOME AN INSTRUCTOR IF THAT IS YOUR DREAM!

**Athletes as mentors or advocates** — You can help fellow athlete leaders by being their mentor at ALU or advocating for their rights when they have sports or leadership problems. We encourage athletes who graduate from ALU to mentor other athletes on their journeys through ALU.

PASS ALONG YOUR KNOWLEDGE AS AN ATHLETE LEADER!

**Athletes as volunteers, fundraisers, or donors** — Many of you already have done this maybe without realizing it. You may have helped with candy sales in the past. Perhaps you helped chaperone other athletes for a little while. Many of you have done these leadership roles for Special Olympics when you are not competing.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WILL ALWAYS NEED VOLUNTEERS!

**Athletes on event or management teams** — You can be a valuable asset on a Special Olympics Games management team. Some athletes are filling important roles in their counties, areas, and the State Office helping plan and conduct the games that you compete in. More than half the management teams have an athlete representative.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND HELP MAKE SPECIAL OLYMPICS COMPETITIONS EVEN BETTER!



## Common Courses to All Majors

### Course requirements for all majors

- Leadership Fundamentals (first course for a new athlete leader)
- SOIN Class A volunteer, complete the process to complete this training
- Courses specific to the major
- Electives not specific to the major
- Leadership Capstone (this MUST be the LAST course before graduation)

### Leadership Fundamentals

**Goal:** Teach you basic leadership and discussion skills so you can effectively lead and engage others in meaningful discussions. You will develop your leadership story and identify the skills you want to continue to develop. You will develop a personal mission statement to guide you in choosing the role you want to fill and the major you want to pursue in ALU.

**Description:** The topics and activities in the course puts leadership theory into practice. The leadership skills you learn in this course help you begin to recognize your own potential as a leader. The course uses group activities, simulations, and practice to help you build these skills.

### Leadership Capstone

**Goal:** Provide you with the advanced leadership skills necessary to plan and complete a capstone project that fits with your leadership vision.

**Description:** Focuses on helping athletes determine what kind of leader they want to be. Athletes revisit their personal mission statement, apply their skills to goal setting, and project planning. Includes determining project scope, developing a communication plan, and identifying resources.

### Course Order and Availability

You may take courses in any order from the curriculum chart except for those with prerequisites. You may take courses outside of your major and repeat courses.

Most courses (e.g., Global Messenger I and II and the two Governance courses) are offered once a year. Be sure to check the course offerings and register for the course you are ready and eligible to take. Failure to do this will mean you wait an entire year for that course.

Work with our academic advisors to plan your schedules.



## Communications Major

### Goal

Provide you with the skills necessary to become an effective representative for Special Olympics at a variety of events and at a variety of levels (County, Area, State, or National).

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Global Messenger I (offered once/year)
- Global Messenger II (offered once/year)
- One of the Elective Courses
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You must take Global Messenger I *before* Global Messenger II.

### Global Messenger I

Review basic facts about Special Olympics and Special Olympics Indiana; Special Olympics Mission Statement. Learn how to write a speech and what parts to include in a speech. Discuss ideas on opportunities for giving speeches and making contacts. Work with a mentor who offers support in arranging speaking opportunities.

### Global Messenger II

Discuss and practice advanced skills and ideas on speech writing. Learn to adapt to specific types of speaking engagements, including emceeing an event, accepting a gift, and introducing speakers.

### Elective Courses

- **Health & Fitness:** Introduction to Health & Fitness
- **Governance:** Introduction to Governance
- **Governance:** Councils, Boards, and Committees
- **Sports:** Principles of Coaching
- **Technology:** Internet Communications
- **Technology:** Digital Media
- **Technology:** Presentation Design
- **Visual Arts:** Leadership through Visual Arts I
- **Events:** Event Planning

### Communication Leadership role examples

- **Public Speaker:** Give speeches to prospective athletes, schools, service clubs, management team, etc.
- **Emcee:** Host a local, area, state, or national event
- **Special Olympics Ambassador:** Speak to the Board of Directors, at State Games, at Area Management team meeting, or to prospective donors at events
- **National Global Messenger:** Become a public speaker at the national level for Special Olympics



## Governance Major

### Goal

Provide athletes with the skills necessary to become an effective board and committee member or Athlete Leadership Council representative. Learn basic skills to become a member of a decision-making group.

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Introduction to Governance (offered once/year)
- Councils, Boards, and Committees (offered once/year)
- One of the Elective Courses
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You may take Governance courses in any order.

### Governance: Introduction to Governance

Review the Special Olympics Mission Statement and Special Olympics county, area, state organizational structure. Learn the definition of governance and policy setting as well as how to read a financial statement. Practice board and committee meetings.

### Governance: Councils, Boards, and Committees

Review the Special Olympics Mission Statement and organizational structure of Athlete Leadership Councils. Learn about the roles and responsibilities on a leadership council. Provides athletes with the additional skills necessary to establish and conduct Athlete Leadership Councils at local, area, and state levels. Practice in leadership councils and committee meetings.

### Elective Courses

- **Communication:** Global Messenger I
- **Health & Fitness:** Introduction to Health & Fitness
- **Sports:** Principles of Coaching
- **Technology:** Internet Communications
- **Technology:** Digital Media
- **Technology:** Presentation Design
- **Visual Arts:** Leadership through Visual Arts I
- **Events:** Event Planning

### Governance Leadership role examples

- **Leadership Council Representative:** Participate in a local, area or state Leadership Council
- **Area Athlete Representative:** Participate on a Management Team, committee, or fund raise
- **State Athlete Representative:** Participate on the Board of Directors, state management teams, committee, or fund raise
- **National Athlete Representative:** Participate in a Congress, committee, task force, or fund raise



## Sports Major

### Goal

Provide athletes with the skills necessary to become an assistant or head coach. Learn the coach's role during both practice and competition and in the planning process.

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Principles of Coaching (offered once/year)
- Training Fundamentals (offered once/year)
- Introduction to Health & Fitness
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You must take Principles of Coaching *before* Training Fundamentals.

### Principles of Coaching

Prepares athletes to pursue a role in coaching. Participants will develop their coaching philosophy, learn effective coaching techniques, and the basics of team management.

### Training Fundamentals

Teaches athletes practical methods for enhancing athlete performance and providing a safe environment for athletes during training and competition. Students learn the principles of strength, endurance, and flexibility training as well as nutrition and its importance in a training plan.

### Introduction to Health and Fitness

Presents basic concepts and information on SO Healthy Athlete topics. Provides experiential learning activities to apply concepts and meet the course goals and objectives.

### Sports Leadership role examples

- **Coach:** Act as an assistant coach or head coach at a local, state, or national level
- **Team manager:** Help manage and organize a local or state team
- **Timer or Scorer:** Help at local or state sporting events with timing and score keeping



## Technology Major

### Goal

Provide athletes with the skills necessary to use technology to become better communicators and athlete leaders.

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Two of the Technology courses
- One of the Elective Courses
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You may take Technology courses in any order.

### Technology: Internet Communications

Learn how to use email, search engines, the internet, and social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to promote Special Olympics and communicate with our audiences.

### Technology: Digital Media

Learn techniques in photography and video editing as well as how to use photo and video equipment.

### Technology: Presentation Design

Learn how to use features of popular software and practice completing a presentation.

### Elective Courses

- **Communication:** Global Messenger I
- **Health & Fitness:** Introduction to Health & Fitness
- **Governance:** Introduction to Governance
- **Governance:** Councils, Boards, and Committees
- **Sports:** Principles of Coaching
- **Technology:** remaining technology course
- **Visual Arts:** Leadership through Visual Arts I
- **Events:** Event Planning

### Technology Leadership role examples

- **Social Media Manager:** Create a county Facebook page, maintain the Twitter or Instagram account for your delegation, or create a podcast to share stories and information
- **Media Producer:** Create slide shows or videos for your Sports or Awards Banquet, or assist a Global Messenger's by creating her/his presentation
- **Data Assistant:** Help ALU by entering the evaluation results into survey software or Healthy Athletes data at Summer Games
- **Photographer or Videographer:** Capture memorable moments and history at a local or state event through photography or video



## Health & Fitness Major

### Goal

Learn the concepts and skills covered in the SO Healthy Athlete disciplines needed to become a health and fitness advocate. Through experiential learning activities, athletes apply concepts to meet the course goal and objectives.

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Introduction to Health & Fitness
- Health & Fitness Advocates (offered once/year)
- One of the Elective Courses
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You must take Introduction to Health & Fitness *before* Health & Fitness Advocates.

### Introduction to Health & Fitness

Introduces basic health and fitness information. Participants learn the skills and knowledge to make incremental lifestyle changes through experiential learning activities and practicums.

### Health & Fitness Advocates

Practices advanced skills and builds on participant experience gained from Introduction to Health & Fitness course and practicum assignment. The course further develops advocacy and mentoring skills and helps participants use their personal experiences from the Introduction course to inspire peers and their communities.

### Elective Courses

- **Communication:** Global Messenger I
- **Governance:** Introduction to Governance
- **Governance:** Councils, Boards, and Committees
- **Sports:** Principles of Coaching
- **Technology:** Internet Communications
- **Technology:** Digital Media
- **Technology:** Presentation Design
- **Visual Arts:** Leadership through Visual Arts I
- **Events:** Event Planning

### Health & Fitness Leadership role examples

- **Health Ambassadors:** Social media contributor, public speaking, speaking to Leadership Councils, Management Teams
- **Healthy Athlete Volunteers:** Support Healthy Athlete screening activities at various events
- **Health & Fitness Coach:** Support your fellow athletes by peer-to-peer mentoring on health and fitness topics



## Health Messenger Certificate

Any athlete who has earned a degree at ALU may enroll in the *Introduction to Health & Fitness* course as a path to earn a *Health Messenger Certificate*. The certificate is intended to complement an athlete's leadership degree and activate the athlete as a promoter of health and fitness in her/his community. The athlete is expected to incorporate health and fitness messages into her/his leadership work, for example:

- **Communication degree:** Add a message about the importance of health and fitness for Special Olympics athletes to a speech given at an event.
- **Sports degree:** Promote healthy choices at a team practice or a fitness club meeting.
- **Governance degree:** Offer ideas to promote health and fitness for athletes at an athlete leadership council or Area Management Team meeting.
- **Technology degree:** Post messages about health and fitness on social media.
- **Visual Arts degree:** Create artwork that inspires athletes to exercise and eat healthier.
- **Events degree:** Include health and fitness activity or themes at events.

Practicums for the certificate will incorporate the athlete's existing degree area and required training from SOI. Certificate recipients commit to becoming active ongoing Health Messengers in their communities.

### Certificate requirements

- One completed ALU degree
- Introduction Health & Fitness and practicum
- Complete Health Messenger Training requirements from SOI
- Health Messenger practicum that compliments previously earned degree (practicum **MUST BE** approved by course instructor)



## Visual Arts Major

### Goal

Develop necessary skills such as confidence, collaboration, and self-discipline that prepare athletes for any leadership role and apply to all aspects of life. Present opportunities to co-create artwork and experiential learning activities to apply concepts to meet the course goals and objectives.

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Leadership through Visual Arts I (offered once/year)
- Leadership through Visual Arts II (offered once/year)
- One of the Elective Courses
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You must take Leadership through Visual Arts I *before* Leadership through Visual Arts II.

### Leadership through Visual Arts I

Introduction course designed to provide basic knowledge about visual arts. The course provides participants with skills and knowledge to begin creating artwork that inspires through experiential learning activities and practicums.

### Leadership through Visual Arts II

Advanced course designed to build on participant experience gained from Visual Arts I and practicum assignments. The course further develops leadership skills through visual art and teaches athletes how to convey their message to peers and their communities.

### Elective Courses

- **Communication:** Global Messenger I
- **Health & Fitness:** Introduction to Health & Fitness
- **Governance:** Introduction to Governance
- **Governance:** Councils, Boards, and Committees
- **Sports:** Principles of Coaching
- **Technology:** Internet Communications
- **Technology:** Digital Media
- **Technology:** Presentation Design
- **Events:** Event Planning

### Visual Arts Leadership role examples

- **Visual Artist:** Inspire others with Special Olympics messages through works of art
- **Social Media Contributor:** Post visual content to county and ALU social media
- **Digital Storyteller:** Tell stories of Special Olympics through visual media



## Events

### Goal

Provide basic knowledge about the tasks required to plan and management events. The course prepares athletes to participate on event planning and management teams. Experiential learning activities and practicums give athletes opportunities to apply needed skills to meet course goal and objectives.

### Course requirements

- Leadership Fundamentals (see Common Courses)
- Event Planning (offered once/year)
- Event Management (offered once/year)
- One of the Elective Courses
- Leadership Capstone (see Common Courses)

**Note:** You must take Event Planning *before* Event Management.

### Event Planning

Develop necessary skills such as organization, project management, communication, and problem solving that prepare athletes for a leadership role in event planning.

### Event Management

Develop necessary skills such as task management and implementation, communication, delegation, and problem solving that prepare athletes for a leadership role in event management.

### Elective Courses

- **Communication:** Global Messenger I
- **Health & Fitness:** Introduction to Health & Fitness
- **Governance:** Introduction to Governance
- **Governance:** Councils, Boards, and Committees
- **Sports:** Principles of Coaching
- **Technology:** Internet Communications
- **Technology:** Digital Media
- **Technology:** Presentation Design
- **Visual Arts:** Leadership through Visual Arts I

### Event Planning Major Practical experience examples

- **Planning Committee Member:** Contribute to the planning of a local, area, or state event
- **Management Team Member:** Participate as a member of the team that manages a local, area, or state event as it happens
- **Event Lead:** Lead and manage a specific activity or station at a local, area, or state event



## ALU Prerequisites, Practicum, and Credit

### Practicum work for credit in a course

Each course requires the completion of a practicum to get credit for the course. The practicum certification must be sent to SOIN within five months of taking the course. The official deadline is six weeks before the next ALU. The practicums are monitored and tracked by the instructors. Instructors will inform ALU leadership when an athlete completes the practicum.

### Prerequisites for advanced-level courses

In only a few courses have prerequisites as described below.

#### Other prerequisites

- Global Messenger plus practicum *before* Global Messenger II.
- Event Planning plus practicum *before* Event Management.
- Introduction to Governance plus practicum *before* Councils, Boards, and Committees
- Introduction to Health & Fitness plus practicum *before* Health & Fitness Advocates.
- Principles of Coaching plus practicum *before* Training Fundamentals.
- Technology classes may be taken in any order.
- Leadership Through Visual Arts I plus practicum *before* Leadership Through Visual Arts II.
- Three (3) classes required for the student's major plus practicums before Leadership Capstone.

### Earning additional degrees

Once an athlete leader completes his or her first degree, they may wish to earn additional degrees. All additional degrees require the three (3) courses outlined for the major plus retaking Leadership Capstone.

**Note:** Credit for a course may be applied to one degree only.



## Practicum Requirements At-a-Glance

All practicum work must be completed **after** the ALU class is finished. Practicum forms must be received by due date **before** the next ALU. Presentations and time spent in class **do not** count toward the practicum.

### Leadership Fundamentals

- Complete the Class A volunteer application and training process.
- Reflect on one of the 50 Game Changers.
- Submit a personal Mission Statement
- Complete 2 hours or more of volunteer with reflection

### Global Messenger I or II

- Make five presentations to any group about Special Olympics. One presentation must be about ALU.

### Event Planning

- Plan one event, interview event planners, and create a personal skills development plan.

### Event Management

- Evaluate one event, interview event managers, and create a personal skills development plan.

### Governance (Introduction to Governance and Councils, Boards, and Committees)

- Attend five meetings that follow requirements. Submit a report on the meeting criteria.

### Introduction to Health & Fitness

- Set two personal health & fitness goals; and one community leadership goal.

### Health & Fitness Advocates

- Develop plan for role as an H&F advocate. Complete the steps to register with SOI as a Health Messenger.

### Health Messenger Certificate (Completed degree and Introduction to Health & Fitness)

- Complete a significant project related to your existing degree area with a focus on health and fitness topics. Commit to remaining active in your community as a health and fitness advocate. Project plan must be approved by the instructors.

### Principles of Coaching

- Develop coaching philosophy statement, coach interviews, coaching assessment, and reflection.

### Training Fundamentals

- Create an eight-week training plan and get feedback from an experienced coach.

### Technology: Presentation Design

- Make two new presentations to any group about Special Olympics.

### Technology courses: (Internet Communications and Digital Media)

- Make a variety of media samples and share with instructor and county contacts.

### Leadership through Visual Arts I

- Visit a place with artwork and write about a selected piece. Create a Special Olympics inspired artwork of your own. Submit reflection worksheet with practicum form.

### Leadership through Visual Arts II

- Research and write about three artists who are, or were, leaders in their community. Create a sketchbook with at least 10 art works.

### Leadership Capstone

- Complete a significant project related to your major that benefits Special Olympics. Project plan must be approved by the instructors.

# Athlete Leadership University Curriculum Chart

Curriculum for Athlete Leadership University						
Leadership Fundamentals						
COMMUNICATION MAJOR	EVENTS MAJOR	GOVERNANCE MAJOR	HEALTH & FITNESS MAJOR	SPORTS MAJOR	TECHNOLOGY MAJOR	VISUAL ARTS MAJOR
Global Messenger I	Event Planning	Introduction to Governance	Introduction to Health & Fitness	Principles of Coaching	Technology Course 1	Leadership Through Visual Arts I
Global Messenger II	Event Management	Councils, Boards & Committees	Health & Fitness Advocates	Training Fundamentals	Technology Course 2	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						
Each course is a 7-hour course. <i>Leadership Fundamentals</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 course and completion of a practicum within five (5) months.						



## ALU Rules and Policies

### Curriculum chart and first courses

Special Olympics Indiana has provided training in athlete leadership since 1997. The program was formalized and expanded in 2003 and 2006 with the introduction and expansion of ALU (formerly known as Athlete Leadership Programs or ALPs), which provides education for Special Olympics athletes in a variety of leadership topics.

The program uses a university model, where athletes receive credit for attending classes and completing practical experience requirements. Athletes can earn degrees in Communication, Events, Governance, Health & Fitness, Sports, Technology, and Visual Arts.

### Eligibility

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

Each athlete must be accompanied by a mentor (volunteer), who works with the athlete during each class and locally during the required practical experience.

### Program certification

Area and County Programs that seek to involve athletes in leadership roles (coaches, volunteers, management team members, speakers, etc.) are required to complete the Athlete Leadership training modules. During this training, the program's ALU Coordinator will learn the various roles available for athlete leaders and the expectations of volunteers (mentors) in successfully meeting these requirements.

### Mentors (i.e., helpers)

Each athlete attending an ALU class must be accompanied by a mentor (volunteer) who works one-on-one with the athlete during each class and locally during the required practical experience. Parents can serve as mentors on a trial basis. New mentors are asked to complete a 90-minute training provided before the ALU session.

Mentors should agree to a six-month commitment to work with their athlete.

## Athlete Leadership Council

The Indiana Athlete Leadership Council, originated in April 2004, gives input to the State Office on a variety of subjects. Members develop recommendations for Special Olympics Indiana and respond to proposals from other parts of the organization. For more information on Indiana ALC, read the handbook located in the Resource Library under Athlete Leadership: <https://soindiana.org/resource-library/>



## Roles of the Mentor

Mentor roles are multi-dimensional and may include, but are not exclusive to, the following:

- Commit to a partnership in making the athlete leadership experiences and roles as meaningful as possible.
- Adapt to new role from being a helper, speech coach, facilitator, advisor, confidant, teacher, and friend to athlete's needs as athlete leader becomes more independent.
- Monitor progress of practicum work and follow up as needed.
- Ensure there are adequate opportunities for practicum experiences.
- Always value the athlete-leader's opinions.
- Provide constructive and honest feedback.
- Advocate at all times.
- Help athlete understand minutes of meetings, after action notes and to do lists.
- Ensure the athlete knows about training opportunities within and outside of Special Olympics.
- Work with parents, caretakers, and Special Olympics volunteers to ensure they understand Athlete Leadership.
- Help work through transportation challenges.
- Help athletes with medical or diet needs.
- Commit to being a short-term mentor(s) to assist the athlete's initial learning of a desired new role if the mentor's expertise or experience does not meet the need of the athlete at that time such as becoming a coach or an official.

During the class and other ALU activities, it is the responsibility of the mentor to make sure the athlete leader is getting the most out of the experience. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Monitor the athlete leader during the class to ensure they are engaged and understanding the course content.
- Provide clarification of difficult concepts.
- Do not speak for the athlete, give only necessary help.
- Help the athlete leader develop and express *his or her* opinions. (***Do not express your opinions.***)
- Assist athlete with technology and paperwork if needed.
- Be energetic, positive, cheerful and attentive during class. Model great student behaviors.
- Help the athlete leaders identify adequate opportunities for practicum experiences required by the course they are taking.
- Help athlete understand homework, action items and to do lists both during ALU weekend and when s/he returns home.
- Ensure the athlete follows the schedule of events for the weekend, knows locations, and arrives on time for meals and athlete activities.
- Work one-on-one during each class and monitor follow up tasks such as practicum work.
- Consult with ALU Coordinator for your county if assistance is needed to motivate an athlete leader to finish her/his course work or practicum.
- Pushes athlete a bit. Athletes may not fully realize what they're capable of if no one in their life has ever really let them blossom.



## History of ALPs and ALU in Indiana

1997	September	Eleven athletes attend an Athlete Empowerment Workshop presented by Billy Quick and Laura Doucette at the annual SO Indiana state conference
1998	February	First ALPs courses offered: Introduction to ALPs, Making a Presentation (now called Global Messenger)
	June	Athlete input sessions begin at State Games
	October	ALPs 101 offered at State Conference. 26 athletes attend; 12 athletes recognized for leadership in their local programs
1999	April	Governance, Global Messenger two-day workshop held
	October	At State Conference; ALPs-trained athletes present sessions
2000	June	Athlete Leadership booth debuts at State Games, providing information on ALPs to athletes at the Games
	July	New Area Input Councils presented at Annual Leadership Retreat
	September	ALPs 101, Athlete Council sessions at State Conference
2001	February	Meeting of Athlete Input Council mentors
	June	ALPs Task Force meeting in New York
	July	Two-day meeting of athletes to discuss future of ALPs in Indiana
	October	ALPs 101, ALPs 201, Global Messenger, ALPs Business Meeting
2002		Courses held around the state in Introduction to Athlete Leadership, Global Messenger, Developing Input Councils, and Governance
	October	Three athletes attend Picower workshop in San Francisco
2003	April	First ALPs University session held at St. Vincent New Hope, using a university model where athletes receive credit for attending class
	Fall	Four ALPs courses offered at the State Conference
2004	April	Second ALPs University session, moved to its new home, Christian Theological Seminary
	Fall	Three one-day ALPs courses offered around the state
2005	April	Third ALPs University session
2006	February	First year of ALPs Program certification for counties and requirement for athletes to complete practicums to receive credit
	Fall	Three one-day ALPs courses offered around the state
2008	April, Nov.	First two-session ALPs University year; first graduate with the new format of required practicums
2009	August	Eight Special Olympics leaders from programs around the world attend ALPs University to observe courses and Input Councils
2011	November	Eighteen Special Olympics leaders from across the US attend ALPs University to observe courses and share experiences
2012	April	Fifty-four athlete leaders are enrolled in a record eight courses
2012	November	Eight athlete leaders are featured speakers at the International Law Enforcement Torch Run Conference. Many more serve in meaningful leadership volunteer roles
2013	April	ALPs University is 10 Years Old! A record 56 athlete leaders are enrolled in seven courses and 37 athlete leaders have earned 55 degrees.
2014	November	A new record of 64 athlete leaders are enrolled in six courses
2016	October	ALPs University surpasses the 100 <sup>th</sup> degree-mark, awarding a total of 107 degrees so far.
2017	April	ALPs University moves to Butler University after 13 great years at CTS. Thank you CTS!
2017	April	Two new majors are introduced: Technology and Health & Fitness
2017	April	A new record of 65 athlete leaders are enrolled in eight courses
2019	April	New major introduced: Leadership through Visual Arts
2019	April	A new record of 24 new athlete leaders enroll in Introduction to Athlete Leadership
2020	April/May	SOIN offers the first virtual Athlete Leadership Webinar Series to provide information and engagement for athletes during the COVID-19 "stay at home" order
2020	October	SOIN offers the first virtual Athlete Leadership University and you were there!



## Indiana Athlete Leader Accomplishments

1998	April	Athlete Brian Glick creates first Area Input Council in Indiana
1999		Tippecanoe County Athlete Brian Glick elected interim chair of the first Global Athlete Congress
2000		Drew Metzger, Porter County, attends the second Global Athlete Congress in Puerto Rico
2001	June	Brian Glick attends ALPs Task Force meeting in New York, working on the various targeted initiatives: Governance, Global Messenger, Athletes as Coaches, Media, Athletes as Officials
2002	October	Brent Bowgren, Jan Griepenstroh, and Brian Glick attend Picower Workshop in San Francisco, which introduces leadership training courses for athletes
2006	October	Jessica Crook, Cass County, named one of 12 Sargent Shriver Global Messengers from around the world; she attended the 2007 World Games in Shanghai, China
2010		Brent Bowgren, Porter County, and Ken Melvin, Montgomery County, attend the Special Olympics Global Congress and Global Athlete Congress in Morocco, where participants crafted a new Strategic Plan for Special Olympics
2011	June	Ken Melvin attends the Special Olympics World Games in Athens, Greece, as part of the U.S. Presidential Delegation that includes Jill Biden, wife of the U.S. Vice President
2011	July	Brent Bowgren and Lee Anne Bettenhausen, Porter County, attend ALPs Task Force meeting in Vancouver, Canada, that developed the Mission Statement for Athlete Leadership Programs
2011	Fall	Wes Hartwell creates Photography and Videography course for ALPs University
2012	November	Ken Melvin teaches the Special Olympics 101 course to those attending the International Law Enforcement Torch Run Conference in Indianapolis to educate them about the Benefits of the organization the officers support
2013	July	Ken Melvin attends the Special Olympics North America Leadership Conference in North Carolina
2014	June	Wes Hartwell, White County, serves as an official photographer for Special Olympics National Games in New Jersey
2015	April	Wes Hartwell is commissioned to produce a video promoting Athlete Leadership Programs by Special Olympics called "Beyond the Vision"
2015	July	Ken Melvin attends the World Games in Los Angeles as a military representative who participates in Special Olympics
2015	Fall	Jennifer Hoover, Tippecanoe County, creates Social Media course for ALPs University
2016	August	Wes Hartwell introduces his "Beyond the Vision" video to representatives from Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio and Ken Melvin moderates the athlete meeting during the Special Olympics Great Lakes Regional Conference in Indianapolis
2016	December	Kevin Callahan completes the first National Health Messenger Training in Washington D.C.
2017	January	Danielle Oehlham completes the National Health Messenger Training in Indianapolis.
2018	April	Wes Hartwell creates Advanced PowerPoint course for ALPs University
2018	July	Jason Plante serves as the emcee for the Special Olympics 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in Chicago, IL
2019	September	Kendra Franklin selected to attend SOI national training on Unified Leadership
2019	October	Karen Kerr and Teala Raetz are selected to attend SOI national Health Messenger train-the-trainer
2020	May	Chelsea Davis completes the first virtual National Health Messenger Training.

Past and present ALU members of the Special Olympics Indiana Board of Directors: Brent Bowgren, Porter County, Brian Glick, Tippecanoe County; Ken Melvin, Montgomery County; Heather Himes, Marion County; Mitch Bonar, Hamilton County; Melony Salla, Benton County; Kendra Franklin, Ripley-Ohio-Deerborn County; Ben Gregory, Montgomery County

Past and present ALU athletes who serve as Athlete Leadership University faculty in Indiana: Mike Baker, Steven Benson, Lee Anne Bettenhausen, Andrea Boling, Michael Byerly, Brent Bowgren, Chris Bowling, Brittany Brown, Jessica Crook, Chelsea Davis, Brian Glick, Wes Hartwell, Anastasia Helmich, Paul Hicks, Heather Himes, Jennifer Hoover, Brian Kellems, Katy Kelly, Ryan Kempf, Karen Kerr, Sam McNew, Charlotte Miller, Ken Melvin, Danielle Oehlman, Penny Peterson, Jason Plante, Derrick Roberts, Jimmy Richardson, April Robertson, Melony Salla, Kim Szelinski, Shannon Williams, Tanner Wills



## ALU Athlete Contract

Renewed each ALU session

By signing below, each **Athlete Leader** agrees to the following:

1. Follow the Special Olympics Code of Conduct, and practice respect, courtesy, and good sportsmanship.
2. Attend ALU to obtain a degree in one of the major subject areas offered ~ Communication, Sports, Governance, Technology, Visual Arts, or Health & Fitness.
3. Attend any additional ALU presentations that will complete the ALU degree program.
4. Attend scheduled athlete leadership meetings (local, area, state) as needed. I will let my Mentor know if I need transportation.
5. Read over meeting materials with my Mentor ahead of time so that I will be able to offer my comments and suggestions at the next meeting.
6. Work with my Mentor ~ ask them questions if I do not understand something and offer my comments and suggestions that might improve the Special Olympics athlete experience.
7. Recognize that as an Athlete Leader, I am a representative of Special Olympics at the local, area, state and national level.
8. In order to become a successful Athlete Leader, I agree to a two-year commitment to the ALU program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Athlete Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Athlete Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Area number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of commitment



## ALU Mentor Contract

Renewed each ALU session

By signing below, each **ALU mentor** agrees to the following:

1. I am a Class A volunteer in good standing.
2. My athlete leader is an equal partner in our Special Olympics experience.
3. I will always help my athlete leader develop and express *his or her* opinions, *not my* opinions.
4. I will be encouraging, supportive and cheerful.
5. I will value my athlete leader's opinion.
6. I will be attentive in the classroom and be prepared for any questions or discussion that may arise.
7. I will help my athlete leader stay on task and assist with understanding material.
8. I will *listen* and take the time to understand what my athlete leader is asking and what other athlete leaders share in the classroom.
9. I will work in a one-on-one relationship with my athlete leader during each ALU class and locally during the required practical experience.
10. I will advocate for my athlete leader and help the others understand the significance of the program to the athlete.
11. I will ensure my athlete leader has transportation to and from athlete leader events.
12. I will help my athlete leader find meaningful positions of influence and leadership.
13. Agree to a minimum 6-month commitment to partner with my Athlete Leader to make her/his ALU experience as meaningful and educational as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Area number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of commitment