

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP



PURPOSE

SOIN'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

SOIN 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 their County Programs and the state office. Athletes have opportunities to participate in their county ALC and state ALC. The SOIN Board of Directors approved the athlete-led recommendation for every county program to have an ALC. The Indiana ALC was reimagined in 2019 and added to the SOIN organizational by-laws. The policy provides guidelines to County Programs for participation in the statewide ALC. The ALC handbook (available in the SOIN Resource Library) provides process details, examples, and tips for County ALCs. For more information, visit <https://soindiana.org/athlete-leadership/>

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

SOIN 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
- Athlete Spokesperson or public speakers
- Committee and Board members
- Coaches
- Health Messengers
- Technology specialists
- Storytellers through Visual Arts
- Social influencers
- Emcees and event
- Podcasters
- Event managers
- Volunteers
- Mentors
- Instructors
- Fundraisers



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 complete the Athlete Leadership training modules. During this training, the program's Athlete Leadership Coordinator will learn of the various roles available for athlete leaders, ALCs, Athlete Leadership University requirements, Unified Leadership, expectations for volunteers (mentors), and development of an action plan to meet these requirements.

For more information about the Athlete Leadership training module, contact Elesia Yoon (eyoon@soindiana.org)

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 Leadership Fundamentals. After successful completion of the first course, 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 and capstone projects that may take more than 5 months to complete.

NOTE: All practicums must include a statement from the mentor and sign off by the County Program's Athlete Leadership Coordinator. Practicums are approved by the instructors. Instructors will inform SOIN 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 GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Graduate Program is designed for individuals who have obtained a degree or certification from Athlete Leadership University. Individuals who have attained a degree, certificate, or have work experience from organizations or universities outside of Special Olympics are also eligible to apply. The purpose of the Athlete Leadership Graduate Program is to provide athletes with continued development opportunities and build on the skills gained from Athlete Leadership University. Participants in the Graduate Program take courses that allow them to develop workplace readiness skills while also working toward the implementation of a final project or product. Course and project selection vary based on the skills of the individuals participating in the program and the needs of the organization. Since the program serves as an additional step into a higher level of leadership, participants are largely expected to participate in the program without any additional personal support (personal mentor or parent). This does not include individuals that need additional support for transportation, mobility or sensory assistance, or adaptive technology. The program content is adapted to meet the developmental needs of the participants. The program is not offered every year. For more information, contact [Elesia Yoon \(eyoon@soindiana.org\)](mailto:eyoon@soindiana.org).

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP UNIVERSITY

COURSE 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	Athletes as Coaches	Any two Technology courses	Leadership Through Visual Arts I
Global Messenger II	Event Management	Councils, 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						
<p>Leadership Fundamentals is the required first 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. 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 by the instructor and if an athlete chooses to coach a sport that does not take place within that timeframe.</p>						