

Tips for Camps Hosting Students for Academic Credit

Hosting a student desiring academic credit can be a great fit. But, is it the right fit? There is an expectation that you do your homework and become a co-educator. Your investment in the process will likely increase the productivity for your staff and enhance the experience for all. Here are some tips to get you up to speed:

Why should I invest time? What are the benefits?

- Academic credit offers a target market approach to attract students in a variety of areas: health care, food service, counseling, behavior management, grounds landscaping and maintenance, as well as, program specific areas (environmental education, dance, fine arts, trail guides, etc.).
- The student really is earning a grade, so there is often a focused purpose and raised level of seriousness about their role at camp.
- You have the opportunity to prepare the next the generation of leaders (in camp and beyond) and learn from new perspectives and content areas because their school assignments often require reflection and thought about the experience; you'll have a window into their thoughts and the most recent trends.

If a student approaches me, what should I ask?

- What are your learning objectives and the programs goals?
- What length of time does your school require? How does that correspond with our needs at camp?
- Beyond summer, what time of year is possible? Off-season marketing/recruiting, pre-season planning, post-season wrap-up & evaluation, standards preparation, budget development, etc.
- What are the requirements for this project and the supervision (each university is different)?
- To be clear, is this a paid or unpaid experience?

How does it work from the academic side?

- Most departments have a database of possible sites, you'll want to contact the coordinator in several academic programs and get in those databases.
- Students typically find their own site; however, the faculty member approves the parameters and learning objectives.
- The process can take less than a month for practicum and independent study, but might take three to five months for internships.
- Prepare an e-mail that can be circulated to the students. Hint: test it! Have someone forward it back to you to consider the impression it makes. Include the link to your Web site in the email. School administrators are reluctant to forward an e-mail of poor quality.
- Be prepared to educate your school contact about the learning opportunities at your camp and how the scope of exposure during the experience will be different than working a job at the camp, if it is a professional internship.
- There will be paperwork (likely a long contract) to clarify roles around liability, insurance, assignments, and learning objectives. Be patient, as the university has its own set of liability issues and bureaucracy.
- There will be specific assignments ranging from a time sheet to a professional portfolio that will be verified by the camp supervisor and graded by the academic supervisor.
- The student will be paying tuition, and if negative performance review issues arise, there needs to be close contact with the academic supervisor as soon as possible.

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