Colgate University Outdoor Education — STAFF TRAINING OVERVIEW 2026-2027

Our mission is to provide Colgate students with leadership, wellness, personal growth, sense of place, and community-building opportunities through outdoor and experiential programs. In addition, our community values sustainability, diversity and inclusion, safety, and improvement.

OVERVIEW: Outdoor Education Staff Training is a nine-month program, open to first-years and sophomores. Upon completion, qualified students are eligible to be hired as Outdoor Education staff members. Staff members lead Wilderness Adventure trips, physical education courses, backyard adventures, team building programs, break trips, and are also eligible to apply for other work at the Angert Family Climbing Wall and the Outdoor Equipment Rental Center.

PREVIOUS OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE IS NOT REQUIRED

CURRICULUM: The training program encompasses six primary areas of instruction and learning:

Leadership	Teaching	Risk Management
• Understand your default leadership style • Utilize a variety of decision making strategies	• Employ a variety of teaching styles • Engage the group mentally and physically • Deliver meaningful feedback	• Recognize and manage hazards • Evaluate risk in terms of likelihood and consequence
Group Development & Teamwork	**Skills**	**Sense of Place**
• Communicate effectively • Promote inclusion and diversity • Strive for efficiency and timeliness	• Achieve mastery of backcountry basics • Develop proficiency in a variety of outdoor pursuits	• Develop a familiarity with the natural and cultural history of the ADKs • Define your own wilderness ethic

Through the training program, all trainees will gain significant experience in **backpacking, canoeing or sea kayaking, winter camping, and snowshoeing.** All trainees will also be exposed to **ice climbing and classic cross-country skiing**. During all trips and outings, trainees will learn **Leave No Trace camping practices** and will become certified LNT Trainers. Trainees will also receive **CPR and Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification** through Wilderness Medical Associates. WFR is an internationally recognized medical certification and is the standard in the outdoor guiding industry.

COURSE FEE: The Staff Training fee pays directly for every aspect of training. The **$3,000 course fee** helps cover:

- Wilderness First Responder course ($500) and recertification senior year ($300)
- Student-staff trainer wages ($600 per trainee)
- Gear: headlamp, water bottle, gloves, thermos, 40L liter daypack ($300)
- Trip Expenses: transportation, food, gear rental, and lodging ($1,500)
- Misc. expenses: ski passes, guides, permit fees, maps, etc. ($600)

Total Value = $3800, you pay $3000

The training fee will be added in 2 installments to your tuition bill. One for fall ~Oct. 15 and one for spring ~Jan 15th. Alternate arrangements can be made by request, such as splitting into several smaller payments over the course of the training year, not adding the fee to the tuition bill, etc. Speak with the Director of OE if you have any questions.

FINANCIAL AID: Acceptance to the program is NEED BLIND. Once accepted, financial aid is determined through consultation with the Student Aid Office. We typically provide 90% of the percentage of aid you receive from Colgate. For example, if you receive 80% assistance from Colgate, you would receive 72% (0.9 x 80%) aid towards the training fee.

SCHEDULE: The Staff Training program is a serious commitment, involving weekly classes, numerous weekend outings, and a variety of other required events. See the Staff Training Calendar for exact times and dates of the core training commitments.

Monday classes are 5:00-7:00 followed by OE Staff Meeting from 7:00-8:00. Wednesday classes are 4:30-7:30.

In addition to the classes and trips on the calendar, you will also complete apprenticeships and additional skills trainings. Apprenticeships occur during the spring semester, and involve accompanying two current leaders on a PE class or BYA, observing their leadership and teaching style, and contributing as a third leader. Additional skills trainings take place by participating in one or two PE classes or seminars. These sessions are up to you to choose, and will allow you to begin to develop the technical skills needed to lead some of our more advanced trips and outings, which may include:

Bouldering Mountain biking Rock climbing Geocaching	Sea kayaking Stand-up paddle boarding Team building Technical tree climbing	Cross-country skiing Ice climbing Skate skiing Ski touring

ATTENDANCE: Attendance at ALL classes, outings, and trips is EXPECTED. Though an excused absence may be permissible for previous commitments, academic conflicts noted on the application, illness, etc., missing a significant portion of training may result in ineligibility for hire as an OE leader after training. In general, significant absences are defined as:

- Missing >4 classes
- Missing >1 trip
- Missing >2 skills/seminars/apprenticeship days

Due to the time requirements and experiential nature of the course, a positive attitude, desire to learn, and commitment are essential. An excused absence may be permissible for illness, previous family commitments, or for academic conflicts noted on the application.

Self-care is a critical skill for any outdoor leader. Students are expected to attend to their self-care and make sound decisions regarding their total number of extra curricular commitments, academic load, employment obligations, etc. and to balance those with their physical and mental health. Students who have signs and symptoms of a transmissible illness should not attend classes or outings where they could spread illness to other students.

A student who misses some classes or trips will be offered, if feasible, the ability to make those up, however a student who misses a significant portion of the training program may not be eligible for hire as an OE staff member. In some cases, those individuals may be given the opportunity to make up lost training with next year's training class.

CREDIT, CERTIFICATIONS, AND EVALUATION: Trainees receive two physical education credits for successful completion of staff training. Wilderness First Responder, and CPR certifications are also received. Ongoing feedback and assessment are an integral part of the training process. Each participant will complete at least three written self-evaluations and participate in three "benchmarks" to discuss their leadership development.

SPRING BREAK: In order to maximize your skill development during your training year, OE offers a $250 discount for any trainee who goes on a spring break trip. Spring break trips have included in the past: rock climbing in Red Rock Canyon or Red River Gorge, mountain biking in Moab, UT, lightweight backpacking in Arizona, backcountry skiing in Canada, canyoneering in southern Nevada or northern Arkansas, New Hampshire winter sampler, and sea kayaking in the Everglades or North Carolina.

AFTER TRAINING: Your development doesn't end after your training year. OE staff lead/teach at least one PE class or BYA per semester and one WA per year. Initially, you will be staffed with a more experienced co-leader who will help you progress as an instructor. Continued skill development is also expected. Upper staff attend "staff extravaganza" twice a year to refresh their skills and additional seminars to further develop their skill sets. Those who want to teach in many skill areas also devote personal time to getting out and practicing those skills.

QUESTIONS: Contact Director of Outdoor Education, Heidi Riley at 315-228-6117 or hriley@colgate.edu.