Building Your Knowledge for Freedom Program

A comprehensive toolkit designed to help your campus launch a program over a 12-18 month planning process.

KNOWLEDGE FOR FREEDOM

A Teagle Foundation Initiative

Program Calendar

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18-12 Months Before

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12-8 Months Before

3 **Recruitment**
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4 **Finalizing Program Details**
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6 **Final Student Check-In**
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Determining Feasibility
18-12 Months Before

OVERVIEW

During the planning stages, your goal is to determine the feasibility of your project. You'll need to identify colleagues interested in collaborating in this work, draft a preliminary syllabus, sketch out a program structure, gain the support of your administration, seek guidance from experienced staff on campus, and establish the active engagement of local recruitment partners.

I.   **Secure approval from your school**

     Secure approval from your department and campus administration

II. **Identify individuals on campus**

     Identify individuals on campus with experience running programs for high school students who can advise and guide you through the particular needs of your campus

III. **Establish recruitment partnerships**

     Establish recruitment partnerships at local high schools or community organizations

IV. **Design your program and syllabus**

I. SECURE APPROVAL FROM YOUR SCHOOL

The work you are planning to undertake is significant and you should go into this process with the full support of your department and college. As you read through this toolkit you'll discover that the work required for running this program goes well beyond the hours actually spent in the summer classroom. You can ease this workload greatly by having the professional and practical support of your administration. Since you are the expert in navigating the particular bureaucracy of your campus, we will only offer a few guiding questions to frame your discussions:

How will your department support you?

• How will your department acknowledge and account for your work on this program in terms of its professional, teaching, and service requirements?

• Can you rely on your department faculty to help? They might recruit undergraduate teaching assistants or offer guest lectures, for example.

• Can your department's administrative staff help you? You will likely need their help to process staff hires, reserve classrooms, and order supplies, among other things.

How will your college support you?

- What financial resources can your college give your program? Can they donate or give you discounts on classroom space, dorm rooms, meal plans, etc.?

- What administrative resources can your college provide? Will they help you write grants, publicize the program, fundraise among alumni?

- Does the college have policies already in place for bringing minors to campus and can they help you navigate your compliance responsibilities?

II. FIND EXPERIENCED ADVISORS ON CAMPUS

No one person can run a Knowledge for Freedom program alone, and you should start by finding allies within your own college community. After securing your department's support for the program, you will want to find individuals or organizations that have experience bringing in and working with high school students on campus. Some of these people may show real interest in supporting your vision or collaborating with you all the way through the end, while others may offer periodic advice as needed. Our current programs have found campus advisors in a wide array of places:

At Yale, Bryan Garsten and Stephanie Almeida Nevin worked with the **Office of New Haven Affairs**, which has connections in the community (as its name suggests) and hosts local high schoolers through a STEM summer program. At Carthage College, Ben DeSmidt and Eric Pullin received advice from their dean in the Division of Arts and Humanities, who had experience hosting summer music theater camps for high school students on campus and provided guidance. At Ursinus College, Paul Stern organized summer programming under the umbrella of the college's larger **Summer Burst** program and worked with its leader as well as the Director of Residential Life and the Writing Center to facilitate the logistics of teaching and hosting students on campus. At the University of Rochester, Joan Rubin consulted with the office overseeing activities for minority and first-generation students, as well as with an Admissions staff member and a librarian in Rare Books and Special Collections. Columbia's program began as part of the **Double Discovery Center's** Upward Bound Summer Academy. The program pulled students out for the morning seminar and then returned them to the DDC in the afternoons and evenings.

Whether your partner becomes fully incorporated into your program or only helps with your development, the two most important issues to work out with them are **compliance** and **budgeting**. Most likely your college already invites minors to campus for a variety of programs including sports camps, prospective student visits, daycares, and as patients, interns, or participants in after-school programming. As a result, your school should have a "protection of minors (POM)" policy that will dictate your basic responsibilities to your students. Your first step towards making your program compliant with university policies may be to register your program with your university, probably through HR. If your school has no policy or has no office implementing such a policy, you may want to follow standards from the American Camping Association (ACA) or our **stand-alone compliance guide** in the appendix.

Work with your campus advisor to plan an appropriate budget and discuss the major costs of hosting students on campus, including meals, dorms, transportation, and classrooms. Columbia's program can cost up to $4,000 per student. Half of this amount pays for the salaries of summer staff (professors, teaching assistants, and graduate coordinator), a quarter is spent on summer housing and meals, and the remainder goes towards events, supplies, and academic-year meetings. This amount can change drastically depending on available discounts from or partnerships with campus entities, so knowing what rates the college offers other programs and what it may offer yours will be a major factor in determining your budget.

Because institutional knowledge can be such a critical resource for your new program we recommend reaching out to find several advisors. Get as much information as you can from across the campus so that you are not reliant on only one staff member.

III. ESTABLISH RECRUITMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Student recruitment is consistently the biggest hurdle for new programs. Convincing educators, parents, and students of the benefits of a Knowledge for Freedom program is more difficult than you may imagine. Stories from our newest programs illustrate some of the specific challenges we face:

At University of Rochester, Joan Rubin originally decided to work with East High School--a formerly failing local school with a pre-existing relationship with the University. Initially, she partnered with a teacher who designed a master's degree program around the project, but that teacher became seriously ill. After postponing the program for a year, she then worked to recruit other teachers, and even paid several to attend an information session about the program. Only two teachers from that session ultimately followed through, although they proved to be great partners.

At Ursinus College, Paul Stern was connected with four area high schools by someone who runs college scholarships in those schools. Only two of the administrators showed any interest and only one actually followed through. At that school, it was a guidance counselor who inspired enthusiasm for the program among faculty. She recognized that her students had many opportunities for summer STEM programs at large universities but nothing in the humanities and nothing at liberal arts colleges, and was eager to fill that gap. The guidance counselor got other high school teachers on board, and they ended up sending 21 students to Ursinus for its first summer. Paul and the teachers prioritized getting as many students into the program as they could, and so several members of the first cohort did not necessarily fit their target demographic, something they would like to improve upon for next year.

Both of these institutions worked with one high school for their first year and plan to partner with multiple schools in subsequent years. Joan found an ally at her university's admissions office who recently invited her to speak to 70 guidance counselors from high schools across the city. After her talk, one teacher approached Joan saying she already had several students in mind who would be perfect for the program. She is hopeful these teachers can help her overcome challenges from last year, including competition

for students from other University programs. Paul continued to make new contacts at other area high schools and now schools are reaching out to him and showing interest in the program.

To overcome educator ambivalence look within your university for partnerships that already exist and ask your colleagues for introductions to high school principals or organization directors. Rochester found a sympathetic partner in the Admissions Office and library staff; Ursinus got connected to schools through a local scholarship program. For Columbia, student aides from Teacher's College and staff at the Double Discovery Center have opened up some high schools that were otherwise unresponsive. From the experiences of these and other schools we recommend a robust student recruitment effort that includes the following steps:

Identify potential recruitment partners.

Teachers and students in your community may have good reasons for being skeptical of your program. Depending on your university's footprint in the community, local schools may be wary of your plans. Educators might be getting multiple requests like yours to recruit students for various programs and they need a reason to invest their limited time helping you. Be prepared to run into the problem of competition from other programs that serve the same student population, as well as summer school and summer jobs.

If there are no existing programs on your campus that work with local high schools, you might have luck emailing and calling principals, guidance counselors, and teachers directly. You might also try reaching out to community organizations, especially those that are education-based and work with your target demographic. Persistence is key: you may have to send multiple emails and make several calls before you get any responses. Once you've made contact with a potential recruitment partner you'll still have to invest time in building their confidence and interest in your program. At Carthage, for instance, Ben DeSmidt and Eric Pullin were able to double the size of their program when they invested more energy into building their relationship with their partner high school.

Win your recruitment partner's full support.

Once you've identified individuals who may want to help, you'll want to get them on board with your recruitment goals by sharing your own enthusiasm for the program and finding out what appeals to them and their students.

Ben DeSmidt and Eric Pullin found that high school counselors are most receptive when programs offer tangible benefits to students. Both Carthage and Ursinus offer college credit, and all programs have provided college letters of recommendation to students. Paul Stern's recruitment partner was most interested in how his program offered students exposure to a liberal arts education and humanities curriculum. Other programs have worked individually with counselors to determine the specific kinds of students who would most benefit from or be interested in the program. When a counselor leaves a conversation saying "I have some students who would be perfect for this" they are often more likely to follow through with recruitment.

What will your program offer to high school students? Consider the following:

- College credit

- Letter of recommendation from a college professor

- Introduction to college level work in the humanities

- Comfort on a college campus and familiarity with college resources

- Increased confidence in reading, writing, and discussing challenging texts

- Higher participation in civic life including voting, volunteering, attending public forums, and contacting representatives

- Expanded network of mentors and teachers invested in helping the student reach their college goals

Give your recruitment partners specific ways to support your efforts.
This will be key to turning their enthusiasm into action and bringing students into your program. Current programs have mobilized their partners in many ways:

At Yale, high school teachers, librarians, and counselors are asked to formally nominate students for the program. **See the nomination form here.** Students may also apply directly, but most students only submit applications after receiving an email and letter congratulating them on their nomination. At Ursinus, Paul Stern's recruitment partners not only helped him develop the application, but also read through applications and helped him select students. Last year Columbia finally made contact at one area high school after a recruitment partner sent an email introduction to the guidance counselor. Although the principal of the school had never replied to one of Jessica Lee's emails, the guidance counselor was so enthusiastic that he bought pizza to entice interested students to attend Jessica's presentation. He then helped students compile and submit their applications and now 10 of his students are participants.

How can your recruitment partner help you bring students into your program?

- Can they invite you to present the program to other teachers and students?

- Can they reach out to strong candidates and encourage those individuals to apply?

- Will they help students compile and submit their applications?

- Will they communicate with hesitant parents?

IV. DESIGN YOUR PROGRAM AND SYLLABUS

The center of a Knowledge for Freedom Program is a humanities seminar.
While no two programs in the consortium are the same, all programs bring low income high school seniors onto a college campus for an intensive summer seminar taught by college faculty and supported by undergraduate teaching assistants. All syllabi include transformative texts in the humanities connected by ideas or questions about the nature of government, freedom, and democracy. Each program is free to design its own syllabus. Examples of current syllabi are included in the **resource bank**.

Organizing your course

When designing the overall calendar and daily schedule of your program, we recommend keeping a few things in mind:

Your seminar's goal is to provide space and resources for students to work through some of humanity's biggest questions for themselves. Designing your syllabus and your daily seminar discussions around **questions** is a great way of ensuring student engagement. Knowledge for Freedom programs are designed to give students an opportunity to become actively engaged in texts and to practice the art of making informed and thoughtful comments in a classroom setting. **They should be active participants in learning rather than passive recipients of knowledge.**

Your instincts may lead you to pack the schedule full of formal teaching opportunities, but **your students need breaks** from the texts, from thinking, from sitting, and from being around each other. Columbia cut down its afternoon reading time to accommodate a forty minute rest period in the dorms after lunch. They were pleasantly surprised to learn students were still able to finish the reading even with fewer minutes because they came to their reading sessions ready to work rather than burnt out from the intense morning session and hectic lunch period.

Students need time to read, understand, and write about each of the texts. Create structured time when support is available for them to work through the texts even if that help is virtual. Structure also helps students manage procrastination. When students at Columbia turned in their daily responses to their professors at 9:30am they often stayed up the night before and into the early hours of the morning writing those papers. By changing the deadline to 9:30pm almost every student is able to turn in their papers on time, with some students getting an hour extension from their tutors as needed.

Consider how your writing assignments reflect your writing goals. Having students turn in a nightly writing assignment before they have discussed the texts with professors or tutors will not be the best reflection of their final comprehension of the texts. It will, however, help destigmatize the writing process and increase student comfort and confidence in writing. Carthage originally tried having students write one paper for the whole summer but found it limited how much feedback students could get and did not accurately display their development over the three week course. Columbia originally had its final paper due on the last day of class, in addition to regular reading and response papers. It may have been an accurate simulation of the pressure and panic students experience during finals on campus, but did not allow students to present their best writing.

All Knowledge for Freedom Programs aim to increase **college preparedness and civic engagement** among their students, though they follow many different models for doing so. Look through the **summer-only** and **full-year** college preparedness models as well as the **summer-only** and **full-year** civic engagement models.

Finally, **consider the evaluation of your students and your program**. How will you track student progress and tell if your program is accomplishing its aims in the hard skills of reading and writing, and the soft markers of increased confidence and interest? Carthage and Columbia have employed outside assessors who studied the program and its students with Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission. If a full outside review is too much for your first year you can still conduct **simple surveys** of students before, during, and after the program with self-reporting data to track any improvement. This data will not only help you improve from year to year, but will also help your fundraising efforts later.

Your students will also want to know how they're doing. If your program is giving college credit, you may need formal evaluations and grades to give to students. If not, your students may still crave a final evaluation or comments on their performance and development over the course of the program. The letter of recommendation you provide for college may not help in this case, since it should be kept confidential.

Program examples

At Columbia, students get their first assigned reading before the first day of class and are expected to read it and turn in a paragraph-long response before the first class. Starting on the first day students have a daily 2-hour seminar with their professor and 14 other students beginning at 9:30am (the group takes a short bathroom and stretch break in the middle). Columbia runs three seminars with three professors teaching concurrent syllabi. Teaching Assistants observe the seminars and lead their own hour-long tutorial sessions with a set group of 7-8 students following the seminar and a 15-minute snack break. In tutorial sessions, Academic Teaching Assistants typically split their time evenly between reading comprehension, writing skills, and public speaking. In the afternoons and evenings students have scheduled time in the libraries to read the next text and write their response papers with Residential Teaching Assistants acting as tutors. Responses are submitted online by 9:30pm. Columbia runs a four day orientation (commuting) followed by three weeks of seminar (residential, except weekends). Students write a daily one-paragraph response (sometimes with guiding prompts, sometimes not) and a final 3-page paper due two days after the program ends.

At Yale, students move onto campus the afternoon before classes begin, and after ice breakers, a welcome meeting, and an orientation, they have dinner together. In the evening, they complete their reading assignments for the first morning. Each day they have one seminar session led by one faculty member beginning at 9:15am, followed by a second seminar session led by another faculty member at 10:30. After the two seminar sessions, students break into small-group discussion sessions led by Residential Teaching Assistants (RTA). Each RTA is assigned five students. After lunch, students participate in an afternoon activity intended to link their readings on civic life with reflections on New Haven today. In the afternoons and evenings students have time for reading and writing. Each night students sign up for an appointment with any of the three RTAs, with meetings lasting about 20 minutes per student. Much like office hours, in these appointments students work one-on-one with the RTA on their writing. Each night students must write one paragraph, due by 9:30pm. Yale runs a two week residential

program with students returning home on weekends. After the residential program, the students become CTW Fellows and return to campus for monthly meetings from September through May.

At Ursinus, a 90-minute seminar begins at 9:00am. The students read the day's primary texts in seminar with the professor, and both closely analyze the text and discuss connections to contemporary issues. The professor ends the class with a major political question for students that can be debated using seminar texts (i.e. "should we have open borders or restricted migration?"). The four undergraduate tutors then lead separate small group discussions for about 45 minutes in which they try to lead students to come to a consensus on the question and then return to the large group to discuss. The tutors meet individually with students during the writing sessions on their essays. At 4:00pm the bus takes students home during the first week in which students commute to the program, or they break for other activities during the second week when the students are in residence. Students move in on the Saturday before the second week, and attend a day-long field trip to Philadelphia on Sunday. Students write one paper per week, with formal drafts due over the course of the week.

At Rochester, students arrive to campus by 8:30am and begin class by 9:00am. The first session is a 90-minute guest lecture, which often includes 15 minutes of formal lecture followed by an open discussion about the ideas and history being presented. Immediately afterwards, students spend 45 minutes reading the related text. After a 15-minute break, students have an hour-long Q&A session with the professor and then draft a one-page response to the reading. After lunch, faculty lead a 45 minute seminar discussion on the same texts. The afternoons and lunches include conversations with civic leaders and a civic project, and students leave campus by 4:30pm. In its first year, Rochester held a two week commuting program with a residential weekend beginning Friday afternoon and ending Sunday after lunch. Saturday and Sunday activities included two field trips, a writing workshop, and film screenings. Students produced a daily writing response as well as a script for a podcast which they created in the afternoons over the two weeks. Subsequent programs will be fully residential for two weeks, allowing students to complete reading assignments in the evening and freeing up more class time for short writing exercises and other activities.

Clarifying Your Goals
12-8 Months Before

OVERVIEW

You should now focus on clarifying your goals and preparing yourself to move quickly through the next eight months.

I. **Confirm your recruitment plan**

II. **Determine your staffing needs**

III. **Secure space, meals, and other resources**

IV. **Develop student application and recruitment material**

V. **Budget**

I. CONFIRM YOUR RECRUITMENT PLAN

Reach out to your recruitment partner to clarify your process, deadlines, and goals. You may want to present the program directly to students, in which case you and your recruitment partner should begin scheduling a presentation as soon as possible and thinking together about how to get the right students in the room.

II. DETERMINE YOUR STAFFING NEEDS

For commuting programs you may only need academic teaching assistants or tutors who can work with your students on reading and writing skills, act as a peer consultant for understanding college life, and help them navigate the application process. Residential programs will need staff to work in the evenings and may behave more like camp counselors than academic tutors. Some of our programs employ graduate students to organize logistics such as classrooms and field trips, or to train and supervise undergraduate teaching assistants and tutors. We recommend at least a 1:10 staff to student ratio for general activities and smaller groups for group tutorials. Yale has one set of staff that acts as residential and academic teaching assistants by staggering their hours in the afternoon and evenings. Columbia divides the staff in two: academic TAs work in the mornings (and throughout the academic year) while residential TAs begin their days at lunch. Ursinus has one commuting week and one residential week. It has four tutors that it recruits from the writing center and two residential TAs. All six work full days during the commuting week, and then divide into morning and afternoon/evening shifts for the residential week.

Once you've determined your pedagogical needs, you'll need to **check in with your compliance office or campus advisor** to find out your legal needs. Your school may dictate a staff-to-student ratio for minors on campus. For students aged 15-17,

the American Camping Association recommends a 1:12 supervising ratio during the day and 1:10 at night. Housing, dining halls, public safety, and HR/compliance may have different answers to the following questions, so be sure to get clarity on what is required as opposed to what is recommended. Students should be accounted for at all times, but there are many different ways of ensuring that your staff know where all the students are.

- **What is the required staff-to-student ratio on campus?** Is this different at night and during the day? What about during meals or in the dorms?

- **What should supervision on campus look like?** Do students need to be escorted everywhere on campus or can they walk independently between classes, meals, and activities? Are there any areas that are prohibited to minors even with supervision?

- **What should supervision off campus look like?** Are there different policies for field trips and off-campus activities? What about for students commuting to and from campus?

III. SECURE SPACE, MEALS AND OTHER RESOURCES

To give your students the full college experience you'll probably need approval from each individual entity on campus, and you may need to pay fees. **Reaching out to each office as early as possible can help you avoid major problems later.** Be prepared for dining halls to close during the summer or for other programs to book the dorms and classrooms you want. Now is a good time to check in with your campus advisor or the relevant offices to answer the following questions:

- When and how do you reserve dorm rooms for your students?

- When and how do you reserve classroom space?

- Can students get campus IDs?

- What dining halls are open in the summer, what times do they serve meals, and how can students request Halal meals or address other dietary requirements?

- Can students access all campus libraries? Do they need library cards?

- Can students access the gym and swimming pools? Will they need to fill out a waiver?

- Can students use campus computers, borrow laptops, and/or print on campus? If not, how can you provide those tools to students?

IV. DEVELOP STUDENT APPLICATIONS AND RECRUITMENT MATERIAL

Your recruitment material should simply tell students **why, when, and how to apply to the program.** They'll need to know the program's dates and what they can expect to do during that time.

Sample recruitment material from Columbia, Rochester, Yale, Ursinus, and Carthage.

The application should gather basic information about the students, offer them ways to articulate their interest in the program, and demonstrate their writing ability. Carthage is able to do this with a brief form and one essay question, while Columbia's application is quite lengthy.

See sample applications from Yale, Carthage, Rochester, Ursinus, and Columbia.

Consider asking students for some or all of the following information. Keep in mind that longer applications could discourage students from applying but could also help you identify the best possible candidates.

Student information

- Name
- Date of birth
- Contact: cell phone, address, parent contact
- Gender (if necessary)
- Country of birth, Parents' countries of birth
  - Do you need to ask this? You might, if you want to provide immigrants or their children with extra resources such as ESL, TOEFL, or targeted college application help. This question could also discourage applications, so you might wait to ask until after they have been admitted.

Eligibility

Determine your program's eligibility standards: how will you be sure to accept students from your targeted demographic? At Columbia the eligibility requirements are stated: "Students must be current juniors in a New York City high school to apply. We give preference to students from low-income families and those who will be the first in their families to attend college. Other students are encouraged to apply as well."

- High School, current year in school, GPA (if necessary)
- Highest level of education for parents
- Low-income status
  - You may wish to rely on **Federal TRiO income levels** to determine if your applicants are "low income." If so, you'll need to ask for the family's taxable income and number of people living in their household.
  - Alternately, you might ask your recruitment partners if they have a shortcut for identifying low-income status (i.e. eligibility for free school lunches)

Attachments

All of our current programs ask for an **essay or statement from the student** explaining why they are applying for the program. You might ask for some of the following attachments to gauge a student's preparedness, interest, and commitment to the program.

- Personal statement or response to writing prompt

- High school transcript

- Letter of recommendation

- Writing sample

- Parental permission (signature)

V. BUDGET: IDENTIFY MATERIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Budgeting is something you've likely already done as part of your grant application, but now you can get more specific. Write out a daily schedule of your program that synthesizes the program syllabus with the day-to-day practical activities that will take place. Visualize a day in the life of your students and consider your students' needs at each hour. This can mean the practical requirements--course packets, pens, laptops, sports equipment--**as well as their social and emotional needs.** What additional equipment, food, rental space, or staff might you need and what will they cost to provide?

Recruitment

8-4 Months Before

OVERVIEW

These two simple tasks require substantial investment of your time, but if you have prepared well in the months before, you should be able to run through them smoothly. The right recruitment partners will help you reach students who are interested, available, and ready for your program. With clear information about compliance and human resources you should now be able to focus on finding the right individuals to staff your program.

I. **Recruit students**

II. **Recruit and hire staff**

I. RECRUIT STUDENTS

You'll probably want to **give one or more presentations directly to students** about the program to encourage applications. Some students will be interested to know how your program can help them get into college, while others will be motivated by the content of the course. Try pitching to both groups. If you have only a few minutes to present, speak to their emotions: this is an exciting opportunity for them to read challenging philosophical texts with real college professors and ask some of the big questions about society in a judgment-free and constructive environment. They'll make new friends, debate important issues, and practice living independently before college. If you have more time, you might go into the syllabus in more detail. At Columbia, Jessica Lee has had success sharing a (very) short reading with students, such as an excerpt from **Aristotle on friendship**, and asking them to talk about what friendship means to them. Roosevelt Montás does something similar with a copy of Frederick Douglass's autobiography. Other times Jessica has told the story of the trial and death of Socrates or engaged students in a debate on voting eligibility.

Expect to get some of the following questions and comments from students:

- Do I have to live on campus? What if my parents won't let me?

- How much will this cost me?

- I know I'm into STEM, so this won't apply to me.

- What GPA/SAT score is required? (Or, I'm not smart enough to do this.)

- Will this help me get into your college?

- What if I have to work this summer?

- What is the year-long commitment? What if I can only commit to the summer?

- How do I apply?

Give yourself plenty of time to recruit students. Aim to present the program in early January, close applications by early March, and accept students by late April. You will probably end up extending deadlines, but starting earlier gives you the necessary flexibility.

II. RECRUIT AND HIRE STAFF

Recruitment

At Columbia, the staff recruitment of 13 undergraduate teaching assistants begins immediately after winter break, with interviews scheduled in late February and final decisions made before spring break in March. At both Ursinus and Columbia professors teach related college seminars during the academic year, and Columbia has had success recruiting TAs from those classes. In recruiting undergraduate or graduate staff to apply for your program you will want to consider the following:

Information to share about the job

- Exact dates of the program, including training and post-program wrap-up

- Hours on-site and any off-site prep work they might need to do

- Desired skills and experiences

- Skills they will they gain and what will they learn from this work

- Requirements for eligibility

- Pay rate or stipend

- Housing and meal plan benefits (if applicable)

Advertising the job

- Reach out to your former college students. Ask for their recommendations, or request their help spreading the work about the job opening

- Talk to your colleagues and ask for their recommendations or help advertising the program

- Find related courses in your campus directory and ask professors to advertise the job in class

- Use your campus online job marketplace, if one exists, or contact career services to find out about how you can advertise broadly on campus

How staff can apply

You may want to keep the basic application simple to encourage applications, and spend more time vetting your candidates through in-person interviews. Information you may want for an application includes:

- Cover letter

- Resume

- Transcript

- Writing sample

- 2+ references with contact information, related to work or volunteer history

Hiring

The American Camps Association recommends a **personal interview** for summer staff, and we highly recommend one as well. Try asking questions that get them to provide specific examples of their past behavior, or decisions they have made in certain instances, rather than in hypothetical scenarios. Remember your undergraduate staff are not only teachers but may also be camp counselors and project managers, depending on the scope of your program. Questions you may want to ask:

General

- Tell us about your transition to college--what helped or hindered your adjustment and how might that experience inform your work with our students?

- Why are you interested in this job? What are you hoping to get out of it?

- Which of your professional or volunteer experiences do you think is most relevant to our work, and why?

- (At the end): Is there anything you'd like us to know about yourself or your experiences that we haven't asked about?

- (At the end): Do you have any questions for us?

Teaching

- Have you had a seminar professor or TA who you thought did an outstanding job orchestrating a full group discussion? What did they do that you might emulate in your own class?

- Have you ever had to lead a group activity in a club, job, or volunteer experience? What are strategies you have for getting the full group to participate?

- Think about our syllabus (or the syllabus of a related class you took): is there one text you're most excited to teach? How would you explain the texts to your students before they read it to get them excited? What is one concept you think your students must walk away from that text understanding?

- Have you ever edited or taught writing to peers or students? What did you learn from that experience? How did you balance making your own edits with maintaining the author's own voice?

- Imagine we are high school students. Can you tell us what a thesis statement is and how we can tell if we've written a good or bad thesis statement?

- Think back to a time (or consider a time in a relevant work experience) in which

you've had to tell a peer "no." How hard was it to set up a boundary and how did you do so without hurting your relationship with that person?

Residential

- What about the residential position interests you besides the free housing? What kind of experiences are you hoping to have with the students?

- Have you ever been in an authority position with people close to you in age? How have you managed that relationship?

- Consider your own freshman orientation leaders or residential advisors in campus housing: what did they do that you would want to emulate with our high school students in the dorms, or what would you avoid?

- How do you want your students to think of you (how would you want them to describe you)? What actions could you take and what behaviors could you practice that would ensure your students see you as _____?

- What would you anticipate being the biggest issues you might face supervising high school students in the dorms?

- Have you ever felt highly stressed or overwhelmed on campus? What coping strategies did you employ that you might teach to your students?

- How might you build community with students during down time?

Year-long Civic/College Mentorship

- Have you ever worked on a long-term group project? What was that experience like and what did you learn about getting a group to complete an assignment on time?

- How do you balance your time during the academic year so that you have time for your extra-curricular activities?

- Our students will have a lot going on during their senior year and you may struggle to get them to attend meetings as the year progresses. What tactics might you employ during the summer or at your first meeting in the fall to encourage their year-long commitment?

- What civic issues would you like to work on? Pick one: how would you explain to one of our high school students why they should care about this challenge?

Background Checks

Your school's Protection of Minors policy will almost certainly require staff background checks every one to three years, likely coordinated through HR. You can expect that your newly hired staff will need to submit a background check authorization form that will ask for personal information including their social security number, date of birth, and residential history. Many schools will only require criminal history and sex offender registry checks every few years, and will not require fingerprinting. The ACA recommends yearly background checks for seasonal staff (**see the ACA guidelines here**). Background checks vary in cost and time based on the individual's residential history. At Columbia, the university uses an external company to conduct checks. In 2019 background checks took between one and five business days to clear, and they cost between $9.15 and $227.90 per person. You should retain documentation that your staff has cleared background checks.

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Finalizing Program Details
4-2 Months Before

OVERVIEW

Now you have all the people you need for your program. You can take a breath and focus on confirming plans you made earlier in the year. You'll want to maintain communication with accepted students and reconfirm deals with campus partners to make sure everything is as it should be.

I.   **Develop student paperwork**

II. **Secure student commitment**

III. **Finalize the syllabus, program calendar, daily schedule**

IV. **Confirm campus details of housing, meal plan,classroom space**

I. DEVELOP STUDENT PAPERWORK

Typically programs request **five types of documents** from students and their guardians before beginning. Your school may have templates you should use. Check with your compliance office, office of human resources, or campus advisor. If your school does not have templates we have included samples from various universities below each item. Figure out what you need now so that you can collect the documents as part of the enrollment and retention process.

1. Waiver and Release of Liability

This document, signed by participants and their guardians, releases the university and the program from future claims against them. Some states outlaw releases and some courts will find them unenforceable (particularly in claims of negligence rather than inherent risk), but releases are a good idea even if they are not required. **As the ACA explains**, a release is a "part of a larger agreement" and an opportunity to communicate with guardians and students what your program involves. You should retain a copy of the release for three years or until the minor turns 20, whichever is longer.

A basic release will include:

- A description of activities and where they will take place

- A description of some of the risks including those that are inherent to the program activities

- Acknowledgement from the guardian that some risks are inherent

- An agreement by the guardian to release the university and program from claims arising from the student's participation

Sample university releases:

- **Drexel University** (including photo and medical emergency release)
- **Rutgers University** (including photo, medical, transit release and code of conduct)
- **New York University**
- **University of Colorado**
- **Northeastern University**
- **Yale University** (in Spanish)

2. Health Form

Your release form may include language about authorizing campus staff to attain emergency medical care for participants, as well as authorizing them to dispense prescription or non-prescription drugs. Regardless, we recommend following the standards put forth by the American Camp Association.

A health form that follows ACA standards should include the following:

- Emergency contact information
- Record of allergies and/or dietary restrictions
- Record of current medications, both prescribed and over-the-counter
- Record of past health treatment, if any
- A statement from the custodial parent/guardian attesting that all immunizations required for school are up to date including the actual date (month/year) of last tetanus shot (a physician statement, a government immunization report, or a school immunization report is also acceptable).
- Description of any current physical, mental, emotional, social health, developmental, or psychological conditions requiring medication, treatment, or special restrictions or considerations while at camp; and description of any camp activities the camper should be exempted from for health reasons
- Medical insurance information
- Authorization to treat
- Signature from guardian

Sample Health Forms

- **American Camp Association**
- **Catholic University**
- **New York University**
- **Yale University**

- **Boston College**

3. Photo/Video Release

You will certainly want pictures of students in your program, including close-ups of minors in which they are identifiable, and that will require a photo and video release. Media releases may not be part of the standard protection of minors (POM) policy, but your university likely has an image policy that applies across the campus as well as a standard form. You might locate that policy and form in your school's public relations or communications office. Make sure the form includes a line for the signature of the guardian of a minor participant. If your school does not have such a form, here are some school forms you might look to as a template:

Sample Media Releases:
- **University of Richmond**
- **University of Washington (in multiple languages)**
- **Ithaca College**
- **University of West Florida (online submission)**

4. Field Trip, Commuting, and Off Campus Permission Slips

You can include information about field trips, commuting, and off-campus time in your program waiver and release of responsibility, or you can opt for separate documents. Again, this is a chance to communicate with parents and participants what the program will entail.

A field trip permission slip should include:
- Date, time, and location of the trip
- Supervision structure
- Method of transportation
- Emergency contact information, authorization to treat (you should already have this in your health form, but including it in your permission slip means you will have it on hand when travelling together off campus)

Sample commuting and permission slips:
- **Catholic University Commuter Agreement**
- **Auburn University** General Information and Transportation Form

5. Program Agreement Form

Here you may lay out the rules for participation in your program. Some universities require a form that dictates appropriate behavior for minors on campus. For those that don't require such a form you may still want some documentation that outlines your expectations for student participation, like a "code of conduct."

An agreement form might specify:

- Drug, alcohol, weapons, illegal substances policy (specify whether this applies for prescription or OTC drugs)

- Appropriate conduct with students, program staff, and others on campus

- Where participants can and cannot go on (and off) campus

- Electronic policy

- Curfews

Sample agreement forms:

- **Yale University**

- **Catholic University**

- **University of Kansas**

II. SECURE STUDENT COMMITMENT

Retention is the last hurdle you may face in student recruitment. Just because you have accepted students does not mean they will show up on the first day: participants drop out for summer school, summer jobs, and family reasons each year. To keep enrollment high, both Columbia and Yale maintain a waiting list of students. Yale tries to minimize late dropouts by getting students and parents to sign commitment forms. Columbia has students commit via email and then collects enrollment paperwork (health forms, photo waivers, etc.) in the following weeks. They have found that most students who drop out will do so before the deadline to turn in paperwork, though there are always surprises. In the summer of 2019 Columbia had a student drop out after the first day of orientation because her father revoked his permission for her to attend. Unfortunately, the next student on the waitlist had the same problem with her father, and after spending several days trying to convince both fathers the program ran with just 44 students. They spent $1,200 on an empty dorm room and uneaten campus meals that month.

Carthage's program begins a number of weeks after public schools close for the year, and Ben and Eric found they were losing students during that gap. In addition, they noticed that many students had applied using their high school email addresses as their point of contact, but then stopped checking those email addresses after school let out, causing them to miss critical information about the start of the program. Now Ben and Eric employ an undergraduate "recruitment coordinator" to stay in touch with students through social media and by text message during that time. The coordinator shares important information, makes personal connections, and gets the students excited for the summer.

Suggestions for retaining students

- Host an information session for students and parents shortly before the program begins

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- Obtain commitment papers from parents and students

- Use your recruitment partners to check in with students

- Employ an undergraduate to stay in touch with students

- Collect necessary paperwork a few weeks in advance of the program's start date

- Invite students for pre-summer events and orientation

III. FINALIZE SYLLABUS, PROGRAM CALENDAR, DAILY SCHEDULE

Take this time to walk through your summer's plan, keeping in mind the needs of your professors, undergraduate mentors, and students. Make any necessary changes and set reminders for yourself to complete tasks during the program, such as confirming guest lecturers or ordering food.

IV. CONFIRM CAMPUS DETAILS OF HOUSING, MEAL PLAN, CLASSROOM SPACE

Check again with your vendors to confirm what they're providing, how you'll pay them, and who you can contact in case problems arise during the summer.

Preparing Staff and Parents
2 Months– 1 Week Before

OVERVIEW

I.   **Collect student paperwork**

II. **Order materials**

III. **Host an information session**

IV. **Plan staff training**

I. COLLECT STUDENT PAPERWORK

If any activities are conditional on student paperwork we recommend collecting those documents before the first day of the program. Find a suitable method of organizing the documents so that your staff can easily access them when needed. You don't want to be scrambling for emergency contact information or insurance numbers while a student with a broken leg is on their way to the hospital. Rather than rely on hard copies in a locked office, you can scan the documents into Google Drive so anyone on your staff can access them.

II. ORDER MATERIALS

If your program starts in June or July you may need to order instructional and office supplies before the start of the new fiscal year. If so, speak with your department's financial officers about how to pay for supplies in advance of the program. By purchasing through your university you should not have to pay sales tax, and you may be able to access discounts for instructional supplies.

III. HOST AN INFORMATION SESSION

Some of your students have never slept outside of the home before. Ease the transition for them and their parents by hosting an information session. Make sure to explain the daily schedule and monthly calendar, lay out student and parental expectations, and give them an opportunity to meet some of the summer staff and ask questions. This is also a good time to collect necessary paperwork.

IV. PLAN STAFF TRAINING

You'll need to design a staff training plan that encourages collaboration, prepares staff to lead discussion, and elicits the staff's help in planning for the rest of the summer. Depending on how much you expect your staff to do and know, you may need quite a

bit of staff training. **Columbia's staff training lasts 30 hours** and is spread out over five days before the program. Yale's staff training is condensed to just two to three days. Much of Columbia's training time is spent role playing, writing lesson plans for the summer, and planning for the academic year. Staff also spend time writing and preparing for student orientation. Outlined below are the major points you should cover in your training:

Building community and comfort in the classroom

• Role playing scenarios as teachers and students

• **Ice-breakers, mixers, and name games**

• Seminar-style discussions

Understanding the program

• Purpose, mission, goals of the program, and how we implement them

• Outline of full program

• Listing of staff responsibilities and roles at each level

Policies & Safety

• Clear expectations of staff conduct

• Outline of all student policies and how staff can implement them

  • Appropriate and inappropriate consequences for students

• Review of Protection of Minors (POM) protocol and mandatory reporting procedures

• Emergency procedures (consult with public safety)

• Non-emergent medical attention (consult with your compliance office or campus advisor)

  • CPR/AED/First Aid Training if necessary for residential staff

Pedagogy

• Teaching objectives

• Working with diverse student populations

• Building student relationships

• Putting students first

• Behavior and classroom management

• Lesson planning

Protection of Minors Training

Most schools also offer some form of training for Protection of Minors (POM), possibly as a webinar that staff may complete online and in their own time. POM training is typically geared towards preventing, recognizing, and reporting child abuse only. The POM training should clarify your staff's reporting responsibilities if they suspect a minor is being abused. While you are not likely to be **mandatory reporters** by state law, your university may require mandatory reporting regardless. You should retain documentation that your staff has completed the required POM training.

Final Student Check-In
1 Week Before

OVERVIEW

I. **Run staff training**

II. **Check-in with students, confirm attendance**

I. RUN STAFF TRAINING

This is the real start to the program. Give your staff a schedule for training with specific topics for each session. Even if you have to adapt your plan during this time your staff will feel better knowing what the training goals are and being able to trace their progress through the agenda.

II. CHECK-IN WITH STUDENTS, CONFIRM ATTENDANCE

This is your last chance for a check-in with students, so take advantage of the time you have. You might need to collect outstanding paperwork, answer last-minute questions, and speak with nervous parents. Make sure your students know exactly where and when to meet for the first session and have a phone number to text in case they are running late or get lost.

During the Program

OVERVIEW

You are the expert on how your program is going to run at this point, but there are some special items you probably want to fit into the summer schedule.

I. **Student Needs**

II. **College Preparedness**

III. **Observe and evaluate staff**

IV. **Field trips**

V. **Evaluate the program**

I. STUDENT NEEDS

High school students need more than a thick book of philosophy and a vibrant discussion to get through the day. Below are some lessons from programs about catering to your students' other needs:

Food

Paul Stern at Ursinus College is only partially joking when he says good snacks will guarantee your program's success (he recommends salty chips and gummy fruit snacks). Order bulk snacks in advance and make sure you have breaks throughout the day to provide them. If your students are commuting to campus, providing breakfast will not only boost student attention but can also reduce tardiness to class. At Yale and Carthage the students eat together in the dining hall, and Ben and Eric consider those meals at Carthage "community time." Professors and tutors eat with the students and learn about their students' non-academic interests during those meals.

Security

You'll work with your office of public safety to ensure the physical safety of your students, but how will you ensure that students feel secure participating fully in the program? Consider how you will articulate to students that it will be OK to mess up, to ask dumb questions, or to share a deeply unpopular point of view. At Columbia, students begin orientation by writing the expectations they have for themselves, their classmates, their teachers, and their dormmates on Post-Its. They stick their Post-Its up around the classroom and then read each others' expectations, grouping similar ones together. At the end of orientation they reflect on this exercise to collectively draft a class contract. Through contract-writing, the students and their TAs articulate community values that encourage students to ask questions, listen to each other, and challenge themselves.

Community

Even if all of your students come from the same high school, they may not know each other at all. Spending time before or during the program to build connections between students and tutors is incredibly beneficial. While **structured icebreakers** are obviously useful, you might need to get creative structuring community time into your tight schedule. We recommend making the most of down time and transitions between scheduled activities. Use your undergraduates to play **transitional games and activities** while walking between meals, on bus rides, eating snacks, or throughout the day.

Recognition

Regardless of your program's size, students can feel overwhelmed by the quick pace of the daily schedule or classroom discussion. Think with your staff about finding ways to acknowledge and connect with students individually. At Yale, students sign up for nightly individual meetings with one of the teaching assistants. Beyond giving students the individual feedback they need, these sessions can also be a chance to catch small problems before they become large. At Columbia, students receive formal certificates on the last day, but also a decorated paper plate award that acknowledges their unique contributions to class. The "Pericles Award" may go to the greatest public speaker or the "General Will" award may go to a student who was interested in finding consensus among classmates.

Autonomy

As much as you would like to advertise your program as a "real college experience," your students will know from the timing and pace of the daily schedule and the limitations on their freedom that college will be very different. Consider ways that you can offer students independence, solitude, or freedom even with high standards of supervision. Maybe students want unstructured time on the campus quad with a frisbee or music speakers. Perhaps they can do their own thing in the school's gym for an hour each day. Yale has a generally unstructured late-afternoon and evening schedule, with students choosing how to spend their time reading, writing, or relaxing within the residential college. They are not permitted to leave campus, but they may request group outings supervised by an RTA. At Columbia, students are allowed an hour of off-campus free time when they can go into the shops on Broadway, and 40 minutes after lunch to decompress in their rooms.

II. COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS
(Part I: Summer Module)

Knowledge for Freedom programs should include some kind of **college application support for students.** Most current programs do at least three of the following actions during the summer, and students would benefit greatly from all five:

• Invite representatives from your campus admissions and financial aid offices to speak

to students about the process of applying to your college. Most programs do this.

- Set aside designated time for teaching assistants and other college students to speak about their own experiences applying to college. You may want to have students write up questions anonymously in advance to help guide the conversation.

- Tour your college and others in the area. Show your students the full extent of what your campus offers, especially for students who are interested in majoring outside of the humanities discipline. Carthage College takes its students on field trips to the University of Chicago and University of Wisconsin to show them their options. During Columbia's orientation students play a version of **"truth or dare"** that takes them around campus and teaches them about college resources, much like a scavenger hunt.

- Talk through the basic steps of college applications and the general timeline. The **Common App** website has robust guides and videos for preparing the college application. Other resources for a college application calendar can be found at:

  - **Big Future**: The College Board's college application timeline
  - **New York State College Checklist for Senior**: A few items are only relevant to New Yorkers but overall the list is thorough and helpful.
  - **Khan Academy**: college timeline
  - **College Covered**: created by Discover Student Loans

- Identify and clearly communicate other college application resources such as free SAT prep courses. Too often students do not know that they should be studying for the SAT until after they've taken the test. Others may not know that they need to register for prep courses and take them well in advance of the SAT. It's likely that your students are eligible for two **SAT registration fee waivers** plus two subject test waivers. They'll need to apply for those waivers through their high schools, but in the summer you can help them understand the test and what they should do to prepare.

  - **Kaplan**: Free SAT and ACT prep classes and practice tests online
  - **Princeton Review**: Free or low cost SAT/ACT in person and online
  - **Khan Academy**: College Board's Official SAT prep course
  - Your local public library may offer free SAT courses

If you expect students to come back during the academic year for more college support, be sure to set those dates in advance and communicate your expectations to students during the summer. **See the academic year section for college preparedness modules during the academic year.**

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
(Part I: Summer Module)

The goal of the year-long civic project is to help students apply the seminar's ideas to their contemporary political lives and to gain practical skills and experience engaging with their own civic world.

In the summer module, programs incorporate civic issues into the summer program through field trips, guest speakers, projects, and debates. Incorporating contemporary civic issues into the summer program helps the syllabus come alive, with students immediately working through the contemporary ramifications of ancient arguments. With so few hours each day, there are limits to the thoroughness of such a civic curriculum and trying to fit it into your summer schedule may tempt you to cut important reading, writing, or relaxing time. We recommend that civic engagement extends into a year-long program following the summer seminar. **See the academic year module for civic engagement after the summer.**

At Yale, mornings are dedicated to the seminar and small group sessions with teaching assistants. After lunch each day from 2:00 - 4:00pm the students have an activity scheduled, which is often a discussion with a local civic leader. Previous guests have included the New Haven Chief of Police, New Haven Board of Education President, New Haven Alder, Executive Director of the New Haven Land Trust, a playwright, a public artist, and a news correspondent. Students have also gone on walking history tours of the city and visits to the Yale art gallery and other area museums. The Yale program is not strictly summer-based. During the academic year students return monthly to campus to continue reading and discussing texts and to collaborate on a capstone project. In the winter and spring, students organize an event for high school students at **Yale's Minds on Society, Arts, Ideas, and Culture (MOSAIC)** interactive lecture series.

At Rochester, Joan Rubin invites civic leaders to lunches nearly every day at the Humanities Center. Past guests have included a civil rights veteran, the former mayor of Rochester, Rochester City Council Member, a city court judge, a program director of a local refugee organization, and a Latinx community leader. After lunch the group has its hour-long seminar on the day's reading, followed by a second civic activity. Those activities alternate between field trips and a project at the rare book and manuscript library. Field trips have included visits to art galleries, a Native American site, a neighborhood walking tour with the Community Design Center, and observing courtroom proceedings and meeting with a judge. At the rare book and manuscript library the students spend about 14 total hours over two weeks reading archival documents about the 1964 riots in Rochester. The students write and record a podcast about what they gleaned from the documents.

At Ursinus, contemporary civic questions are woven into the seminar. Each lesson is designed to connect primary texts from America's founding with current debates, and the seminar ends by breaking students into groups of five to discuss the day's question. For example, on the first day students read the Declaration of Independence

and Jefferson's Letter to Weightman while discussing the universality of American citizenship. Students then break into small groups to answer the question "what does it mean to be an American citizen?" On another day, students read and discuss the Bill of Rights, and then debate whether hate speech should be protected online.

If you will be continuing with a full-year civic module make sure to set dates during the summer and communicate your expectations to them about when exactly they will need to return to campus. **See the academic year section for full year modules on civic engagement.**

III. OBSERVE AND EVALUATE STAFF

This program can benefit your undergraduate teaching assistants as much as the high school participants if you support their work and help them cultivate the craft of teaching. Approach evaluations of your staff with two goals: first, help your undergraduate teaching assistants improve their teaching skills; they will appreciate the opportunity to learn from your experience and guidance. Second, document specific actions that your TAs did well for future letters of recommendation. Recording your observations and evaluations during the summer allows your staff to improve and provides documentation that you can use to easily write strong letters of recommendation. At Columbia, many of the undergraduate teaching assistants had little or no teaching experience prior to the summer but were nonetheless able to successfully pursue teaching jobs because of the experience and recommendations they received from the program.

Having formal observations of undergraduate-led classes allows the tutor or teaching assistant a chance to demonstrate their ability to accept feedback and improve. We recommend observing each undergraduate instructor **twice** over the course of the summer. At Columbia, the graduate coordinator and executive director **fill out a simple form** in which the observer writes down everything that happens throughout the class. These notes are incredibly useful for letters of recommendation that TAs may request months or even years later. The form also has space for the observer to suggest behaviors or practices that the teaching assistant can stop, start, and continue doing in class. The observer tries to come up with feedback in each category (the last one usually has the most). After class the six teaching assistants converge for a 20 minute meeting while students are at lunch to reflect on their sessions as a group and hear any important announcements. Following the meeting the student who was observed has a short one-on-one meeting to review the evaluation with their observer.

IV. FIELD TRIPS

You know your community best! Consider field trips that are connected to themes of citizenship, activism, college preparedness, or to the course texts or authors themselves. Your local museums likely offer discounted or free admission and guided tours for public schools and you should inquire about whether your program is eligible (sometimes it works!). Whatever form of transportation you use, remember that high

school students are notoriously slow movers and that you should conduct a headcount before leaving any site.

V. EVALUATE THE PROGRAM

First, consider how you will use any evaluation you perform. If you are just trying to improve the students' experience and get great quotes to use for future student recruitment or donor solicitation, consider having the students fill out a program evaluation at the end of the summer **like this one from Columbia**. If you are trying to track student progress and academic achievement to report on student outcomes, consider having students fill out a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the program for comparison. You might then ask students to rate their confidence in writing, reading, and speaking in class and evaluate whether they've gained knowledge about citizenship, college, or other important topics. Finally, if you would like detailed evaluations or to publish research about your program you'll probably need a designated staff member to evaluate the program and go through IRB approval.

Continuing Student Support
1-2 Months After

OVERVIEW

I. **Prepare letters of recommendation**

II. **Set up Academic Year College Support**

III. **Finalize the Civic Project Curriculum**

I. PREPARE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

A good letter of recommendation will explain the program and show why it is a good indicator of a student's ability to succeed in college. It will provide specific examples of how a student contributed to the classroom, grew intellectually over time, and/or challenged him/herself. You might have teaching assistants take notes for the letters in class over the summer, and transcribe key insights that students make in class. At Columbia, TAs are provided with the professor's recommendation template, sample letters, and some guiding questions to draw up the first draft of the letter before classes start in September. Professors then edit and return the letters to program staff to submit in time for early decision (November 1) or regular decision (January 1) deadlines. High school students are even worse than college students about giving recommenders ample notification of their deadlines, so we recommend having them all ready before October 31st.

• **University of Arizona's** tips on avoiding gender bias in letters of recommendation

• **MIT's** thorough guide on writing good letters of recommendation

II. SET UP ACADEMIC YEAR COLLEGE SUPPORT
(Part II: Academic Year Module)

A robust Knowledge for Freedom program **will continue to provide college application support after the summer program ends**. At Columbia's Freedom & Citizenship Program, eligible students are enrolled in community based organizations that provide intensive college support, such as **Columbia's Double Discovery Center** and Goddard Riverside's **Options Center**. All students receive confidential letters of recommendation from their professor that the program staff then send to the students' high school counselors or submit directly as part of the students' college applications. Finally, program staff recruit Columbia University undergraduates to participate as one-on-one college mentors for students who request such support. About half of the students sign up for this voluntary mentoring option. Mentors are background checked, provided Protection of Minors (POM) training, and a college

application training session, and they communicate with program staff about student concerns or issues. Program staff pair mentors and mentees, and check-in regularly about the progress of the mentorship. Otherwise mentor pairs schedule their meetings on their own, and meet in public campus spaces at their own discretion.

Below are some steps you might take for providing college application support to your students. Whatever support your program offers, make sure to communicate these options early and often to students:

• Help students request their professor's letter of recommendation

• Pair a student with a college mentor. Your students are likely to be working with a college counselor at their school who is supporting 250 other students (**and probably more than 450 students**). While a peer mentor will not have the advanced training and experience that a professional counselor has, they can help your students identify appropriate colleges, finish their applications, and manage the FAFSA process. Columbia's Freedom & Citizenship program has **some information for mentors on its website** that you may reference while establishing your mentorship program.

    • Volunteers working with minors on your campus may need to clear background checks and take POM training. You'll want to factor in the time, energy, and cost of recruiting, training, and starting mentorships into your plan.

    • You might want to have mentor meetings take place under your supervision in your department offices, perhaps with laptops provided by your program. Columbia allows mentors and mentees to schedule meetings at their convenience and asks them to work in public spaces around campus, some of which have computers accessible by students.

• Enroll a student with a campus or community based organization (CBO). This is something you'll want to plan well in advance of the program's start. Organizations in your community or on your campus may receive Federal aid in the form of grants that stipulate which students they can enroll. Professionals who work specifically with low-income high schoolers will provide a great service to your students. You'll want to make sure you're on the same page about how to enroll your students in the organization, what kind of support they'll get from you and from the organization, and how you'll communicate with each other about student needs.

III. COMPLETE THE CIVIC PROJECT CURRICULUM
(Part II: Academic Year Module)

In an academic year module, students will continue to return to campus from September through May for civic work. Some programs currently invite students back for individual events, reunions, and college counseling. Yale has students return monthly during the academic year to work on a civic engagement project. The Columbia model, outlined below, is more robust than most programs can manage, but the ideas behind an action civics curriculum such as this may be adaptable to suit your needs.

In the Columbia Freedom & Citizenship program students commit to returning to campus twice monthly from September to May to work on an actions civic project of their choice. In the **civic curriculum** students practice skills for professional, college, and civic success while learning about a topic that interests them. Students cultivate leadership skills in developing their own "guide to civic action" that instructs their peers how they can make a difference on their chosen issue. This curriculum requires a substantial commitment from students, teaching assistants, and the program manager throughout the academic year. Columbia has found that meeting less than twice a month led to a steep reduction in attendance, and though the majority of meetings are well attended, sometimes only two out of eight students will attend. Students and teaching assistants find the work to be incredibly rewarding, and alumni/ae have indicated a strong connection between their preparations in Freedom & Citizenship and their subsequent engagement on their college campuses.

When students apply to Columbia's program they indicate which civic topics interest them. Academic TAs then choose six topics based on their own interests and the students' choices. During orientation each student gives a 5 minute presentation on why their topic is relevant and significant. Students are assigned projects based on their after-school availability during the academic year and their interest in the topics. Academic TAs work with the same group of students in their daily tutorial sessions and their civic projects throughout the academic year. The academic year schedule is then set around high school and college closures, with about 16 meetings set per year.

During the fall semester students spend much of the time researching their individual topics and understanding the nature of political engagement. During the spring semester students figure out what they and their peers could do to make a difference on their issue and develop a project that guides their peers in taking that action. While the students present their final call to action and reflect on their year's work at the annual Civic Night in May, the curriculum is designed so that the civic practice students gain during the meetings is more important than any final project. For instance, students practice research literacy and then prepare a fact sheet about the topic, practice formal communication when reaching out to activists on their topic they would like to interview, and practice leadership in meetings when they organize themselves to attend a local event on their issue. Some of those achievements will be apparent in their final presentation but others will not.

Academic TAs are responsible for communicating with students between meetings to confirm attendance and then run the meetings based on the pre-written lesson plans. TAs are paid for four hours of meeting time and four hours of prep time each month.

Supporting College Applicants
2-10 Months After

OVERVIEW

I. **Support college applications**

II. **Run Civic Engagement Program**

I. SUPPORT COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Applications begin early! QuestBridge is due in late September, Early Decision
is typically November 1, and Regular Decision is often January 1. If you have already
established your **academic year college support module**, make sure to have
it operational by the end of September.

II. RUN THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Allow your teaching assistants and graduate coordinator to demonstrate their project
management and team leadership skills. TAs should take responsibility for making
sure students show up to required meetings in addition to running the meetings and
keeping students on task. Recognize that perfect attendance is unrealistic throughout
the academic year and that you should make room in your calendar for high school
and college vacations, exams, college visits, and other interferences.

Appendices

Resources for Working with Students:

- **Stand-Alone Compliance Guide**
- **Icebreakers and Name Games**
- **Community Building During Downtime**
- **Truth or Dare Campus Scavenger Hunt**
- **Consequences for Residential High School Students**
- **Student Reflection/Evaluation**
- **Academic Year Civic Leadership Curriculum**

Resources for Hiring and Supervising Staff:

- **Stand-Alone Staffing Guide**
- **Sample TA Training Schedule**
- **Teaching Assistant Observation Form**
- **ACA Guidelines on Background Checks**

Resources for College Application Support:

- **Introduction to The Common App**
- **Big Future** College Application Timeline
- **SAT Registration** Fee Waivers
- **Khan Academy** SAT Prep Course
- **Columbia's Mentor Resrouce Page**
- **Gender Bias in Letters of Recommendation**
- **How to Write a Good Letter of Recommendation**

Samples

- **Sample Budget**
- **Sample Syllabi**
- **Sample Daily Schedules**
- **Sample Program Calendars**

Recruitment materials:

- **Carthage**

- **Columbia**
    - **Columbia Brochure**

- **Rochester**

- **Yale**

- **Newberry**

Applications:

- **Carthage**

- **Columbia Paper Application**
    - **Columbia online application**
    - **Columbia application checklist**

- **Rochester**

- **Ursinus**

- **Yale (Paper Application)**
    - **Online Nomination Form**
    - **Request for students' records**
    - **Apply Online**