**Starting a Ski & Snowboard Team**

**Northwest Collegiate Ski/Snowboard Conference**

### USCSA.tif

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14. **Welcome**

Starting a team can seem like an overwhelming task, however, many students have done this before you and have helped the NWCSC put together this manual in hopes to alleviate your stresses and provide a concise document with answers to your most important questions. The information within this document will guide you to create a successful team that will hopefully endure for many years to come.

1. **Securing Support from your University**

Each university operates differently, however, the majority of the collegiate sports teams of this nature fall under recreation departments, not NCAA sports departments. Check to see if your university has a division called the SportsClubs or RecSports department. While they say ‘clubs’, this is a misnomer. The recreation department will include non-traditional intercollegiate teams, recreational clubs, and intramural activities. Regardless of what the title is, your ski and snowboard teams will be competing in sanctioned intercollegiate competition.

Once you have located this department, you will want to make an appointment or drop in to see the department director. This person will be able to let you know what specific steps you must take to get a team running. Requirements for team status vary by university; some require two years of probationary status where the team will not receive university funds, some require only one year of this status, some will automatically provide team funds with just the submission of a budget, and still others require a faculty advisor to sponsor the team.

1. **Selection of Officers & Duties**

The selection of officers and their duties is critical for team success. Before assigning duties to the officers of your team, you should determine the complete descriptions of each of the officers. Common officer positions are President/Team Captain, Vice President/Co-Captain, Treasurer, Pro-Deal Officer, and Coach. If you expect to have a large team, you will want more people to help out with the administration and logistics of team operations.

How decision-making is to take place is essential for team officers to work in a ‘business’ without jeopardizing friendships made prior to the establishment of the team. The most difficult aspect of running a team is to be able to clearly separate team issues from personal issues. Working with friends can put a toll on friendships, but as long as each member understands that business and friendship are different, then when disagreements do arise, everyone will understand that the disagreement is not a personal attack on another person. Most efficiently, team decisions should be made only by the officers not put out to a vote by the whole team.

1. **Budget Setting & Finance Tracking**

The Team should establish a budget based on expected costs of operation throughout the year. This total should also have a built-in emergency amount (approximately 5% of the total) for any costs that are not expected. The Team Treasurer and President should monitor this budget closely throughout the season. All receipts should be saved and all reimbursements that are paid from the team funds should be clearly documented. If you are using a team checking account, then two people should be on the account at all times. These people should issue checks on behalf of the team, but at no time should they write checks directly to themselves. This eliminates the risk of perceived (or real) embezzlement.

Based on the projected number of teammates, the total budget can be divided evenly among the participants to determine an acceptable amount for team dues. Common team dues range between the high $200’s to the low $400’s for the season. The Associated Student body can also issue funds for certain school activities and this might be a good place to start when looking for team funds to help reduce the out of pocket costs for your athletes.

Fundraising might also be a good way for your team to raise money. Some schools have structured fundraising opportunities, so check with your NCAA, Sports Clubs, or Recreation advisors to see what might be available. There are many potential sources for fundraising, working as security at a concert, working as a clean-up crew for a concert, hosting an event at your local student union or pub, or doing a raffle where the grand prize might be a snowboard or other product you were able to get from companies in the industry.

In budget preparation, make sure to budget for the following items: Lodging, transportation, NWCSC dues, USCSA dues, and additional purchases such as team shirts.

1. **Joining the NWCSC**

In order to successfully join with the NWCSC, there are very few steps. Make sure that you contact the NWCSC President and have the NWCSC add your email address to their mailing list. The NWCSC has one mandatory meeting each year the first Saturday of October. The Fall Assembly covers all of the steps to register with the league.

The most important part of NWCSC registration is the determination of team dues. For payment, we suggest that if you are requesting a check from your university, allow 4-6 weeks to get the checks authorized by university officials and sent in the mail.

1. **Joining the USCSA (United States Collegiate Ski & Snowboard Association)**

Besides registration with the NWCSC, your team will need to register with the USCSA. This involves submitting proper paperwork by the USCSA deadline and there are also team dues. The dues structure for the USCSA is determined by the number of team disciplines that are at your university. Each University must pay the institutional fee of $146. Then for each discipline you must also pay $146. A discipline is defined as a single-sex sport; therefore female snowboarding is one discipline and female skiing is another discipline. For example, team dues cost you $438 for the year if you were a team of only male and female skiers. If you were a combined team of skiers and snowboarders, it would cost $730. For paperwork, you will need to provide Individual Competitor forms for each person on your team as well as the ski team eligibility and the snowboard team eligibility forms. The registrar of your university must sign the team forms. Allow at least 1 week to get the form signed and returned to you. Make sure that you photocopy the Individual Competitor forms because the NWCSC also needs to have a copy of this document for each racer. If you have people who join after you send in the paperwork, just have them sign the individual competitor form, keep a copy for the NWCSC and send a copy to the USCSA office. No athlete can compete in any competition unless this form is on file with both the NWCSC and the USCSA.

1. **Recruiting Team Members**

There are many different approaches to recruiting team members. What the officers of the team must discuss in advance are their desires for the direction of the team. However, initially the team might have no choice but to take everyone who is interested, for nothing more than financial stability. This might also be necessary in order to gain a critical mass of people to disseminate their experiences to other prospective students. Other considerations for team structure include should the team be comprised of a smaller number of hard-core members versus a large number of people who are not necessarily focused primarily on competition. If the goal is to have a more competitive team, then you will want to focus on the benefits to competition and what the program can offer. If the focus is more than just competition, you will want to find people who are compatible with each other in a social manner. Some teams have established criteria for team selection based on a questionnaire to gauge their interests in competition; others have attempted to hold tryouts for their members. The best group of people is those who are responsible people, interested in competing and having fun in a social atmosphere.

Do you want to be a skier only team? A snowboarder only team? Or have both? All three choices are acceptable with the NWCSC.

One of the most important groups to target during recruiting is freshmen. A large group of freshmen will ensure that a team remains strong for several years. However, freshmen often are interested in joining many different types of activities so it is important to recruit them early before they commit to another sport/activity.

**Freshmen Orientation Meetings**

Many schools have a freshmen orientation week right before school starts. Other schools may have periodic orientations throughout the summer before school starts. Often, the orientation programs will include a special program on the sports teams/clubs/campus activities that are available for the students to join. This can be a great way to introduce freshmen to all the benefits of joining a ski and snowboard team. Since the orientations are held before school starts in the fall, arrange a time to speak in person, make sure to provide the Orientation Programs staff with plenty of information about the ski and snowboard team.

**Freshmen Orientation Booklets/Handouts**

Many schools also distribute a booklet for all incoming freshmen that feature useful information. This can be a great source for introducing incoming freshmen to the ski and snowboard team. Many Orientation booklets will accept advertisements and this can be a cost effective way to advertise in something the students will have throughout the year.

**Reserving On-Campus Meeting Rooms**

If you are going to have an informational meeting about the team, it is best that you do this in the first few weeks back to school in the fall, as all students are looking to find out what they can get involved with during the year. This makes meeting room space very competitive during those first few weeks. Book the rooms early with the proper campus organization. Typically this will be handled through the Associated Student Body or a Facilities Manager.

**Posting Banners & Flyers on Campus**
When placing recruiting advertisements, it is important to emphasize all of the great benefits that ski and snowboard team members receive. Here are some points to *always* include on all of your recruiting materials:

* Discount lift tickets at your local mountain
* Free Ski and Snowboard Race Training
* Great prices on all types of ski and snowboard equipment, accessories and clothing. (Up to 70% off some brands!)
* Cheap housing when traveling
* Lots of chances to meet other racers from Northwest schools, not to mention the chance to get in a lot of skiing and boarding!!

Make sure to copy recruiting flyers on bright colored paper such as yellow or red. After you have made up eye-catching posters/flyers, make sure to post them all around campus. Before posting, make sure your university does not require approval to post; otherwise you will be wasting time and resources from posters/flyers being removed. Most flyers are ineffective unless they are seen by someone at least three times. Here are some good locations to post flyers and banners:

* On campus designated posting kiosks
* On-and off-campus dorms
* Sorority/Fraternity houses
* Classrooms
* Bathrooms
* University Center
* ATM machines
* Campus libraries
* Off campus – Restaurants, Shops
* Sporting Goods Shops in the area
* Team Website

Big banners and signs can also be a good way to recruit new members. You can usually buy inexpensive butcher paper at your local campus bookstore. Make sure to always list the benefits of being on the team, that all abilities of skiers and snowboarders are welcome and most important, the team’s meeting time, day and location. A contact name and number, as well as an email address, should also be included.

**Newspaper ads**

Student Activities Section of the Newspaper: Some college newspapers have a special section at the beginning of each week that is devoted to all of the student club activities that is going on during the week. Many of these sections will allow you to include your ski and snowboard meeting for free in the section each week.

Classified Newspaper ads: Classified ads can also be a great way to advertise your teams meeting. These ads are usually inexpensive and campus organizations/clubs may be able to get a discount. It is best to run the ad the day before and the day of the meeting. Make sure to include the meeting date, time, location, email and web site address.

Display Ads: These are big ads (1/8 page to full page) that can be expensive to run depending on your student newspaper. However, these ads can also be a lot more effective than a classified ad and can give you the opportunity to list some of the team benefits.

**Activities Fairs**

Your school’s Activities Fair or Club Day is a great opportunity to distribute information about the team. Make sure to have a table near the end of the aisle or near other sport-related clubs to ensure everyone will see your booth. You should have plenty of informational handouts, race schedules, and team pictures available for people to look at. Bring props such as skis, poles, snowboards, and boots so as to draw attention to your booth. Also, bring a banner for the front of the table that has the team name so that everyone can find the table. If you have access to electrical power, consider bringing a monitor to show ski and snowboard movies to get people excited about snow season. It is a good idea to have at least two or three people from the team at the booth at all times to answer questions and talk to potential team members. Try to have both skiers and snowboarders at the booth. If your team has team shirts or other apparel, it is a good idea to have everyone who is helping in the recruiting process wear their team apparel as this makes it easier for people to see you and you stand out. Make sure to also have an interest list where people can sign up with their name, email address and phone number. This will become your database for potential teammates.

**Sports Activities Fairs**

Some schools may also have a sports activities fair that features all of the sports clubs available for students to join. This can be a great opportunity to distribute information about the team, but remember that each team is competing against each other for the student’s memberships. Make sure to have plenty of information and fun things to display at your table in order to attract the most people to your team’s booth.

**Booths at the University Center**

Most schools will also let you set up a table in front of the Student Union or University Center or other heavily trafficked area. It is a good idea to have two to three team members sit at a table at least three times a week during peak student traffic times such as 10-2pm. This is also a great opportunity to distribute information to potential team members and get the word out about how much fun being on the team is.

**Ski/Snowboard Club Meetings**

If your school has a separate Ski/Snowboard Club, it is a good idea to attend the first informational meeting and get permission to talk about the ski and snowboard team. This can be a great recruiting tool as many students confuse the ski/snowboard club and the ski/snowboard team and would really like to join the team instead. Again, make sure to have lots of information available to distribute. Other ideas are to offer discounted memberships for students who want to participate in both, or consider merging both the club and team together.

**Recruiting Parties**

Another great way to attract potential members is to hold a recruiting “party” or BBQ to show potential team members how much fun being on the team is. A good way to do this is to have a party directly after the first team meeting so that everyone can go over together. Another good idea is to have a pizza night at a local pizza place to promote the event to potential new members.

**Team Website and Email**

Contact your schools computing facility for help on creating a web site and posting it on the Internet or design one yourself. You may want to ask your sports office if they already have a site set up for club sports teams. You can link your page to popular search engines such as Google and Yahoo so it can be brought up off of web searches. Also, make sure to include your web page address and email address on all of your recruiting advertisements. Make sure to link your team’s website to the NWCSC website at www.NWCSC.com. You can also link your team’s site to the national conference (USCSA) at www.uscsa.com.

**Word of mouth…tell everyone you know how great the team is!**

Spreading the word about the ski/snowboard team can be one of the best and easiest recruiting tools you have. Many potential team members may not even know that a team exists at your school. Make sure to tell everyone you know about the team, as you never know when they might know someone that is interested. During your orientation week and first week of school, try to get your teammates from the previous season to all wear their shirts. You can even have 1/4 page flyers that your teammates can hand out as they walk to class. If you belong to a sorority or fraternity, make an announcement at your weekly meeting about the ski and snowboard team, and post meeting information at the house. If you have team members that live in on- or off-campus residence halls, or apartment complexes, have them put up flyers and make announcements at their dorm/residence hall meetings.

1. **Transportation, Logistics and Lodging**

Transportation to the mountain can be done in a number of ways. Some teams rent vans from their universities, some rent vans from third-party sources, and some teams establish carpools using their own personal vehicles. If the size of the team is large, vans are the way to go. Otherwise you run the risk of having to deal with parking many cars at one location, which is usually very difficult. Riding in the vans is a great way to meet and really learn about people who are on the team with you. Team members from past years have met some of their very best friends through the closeness that our teams offer.

1. **Race Protocol**

Once your team is up and running, you will have many questions about how the program works. Racing events include Giant Slalom, Slalom, BoarderCrosss, SkierCross and Halfpipe. For Giant Slalom and Slalom races, there are only two runs each race day, respectively. Snowboarders do not compete in Slalom events. Each weekend the NWCSC teams all help host the races. For those of you who are serious racers, you will find competition in our league. For those of you who are new to the racing scene, that's ok, all the teams have people joining who are just like you. Racing brings a whole new aspect to the skiing and snowboarding world.

1. **Dates to Remember**

There are very few dates to remember, but the NWCSC does have one mandatory meeting each year. The Fall Assembly is the first Saturday of October. The deadline for NWCSC paperwork and dues is the 15th of December and the deadline for USCSA paperwork and dues is the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The first race weekend is usually MLK weekend and the collegiate season is complete with the USCSA Nationals in March.

1. **Maintaining a Successful Team**

Each team must figure out a set of tactics to keep itself up and running. They will also need to determine what aspects of team life are more important. Creating a comfortable combination of people who are ‘hardcore’ skiers and snowboarders combined with a group of more socially-minded teammates will provide the depth and breadth your team will need to be successful. If you focus too much on the racing aspects, it is possible you will see your team struggle if there is not a continued demand for the serious racing. Some years you might find only a handful of people who fit this type of description. However, if you focus too much on the social aspects, your team can run the risk of being removed from your university because all you do is party. Some of the members of our league take their racing seriously and require an environment that will promote success on the racecourse. The heart of every team in the NWCSC is the skiing and snowboarding, with our main goals to race and have a good time with friends skiing and snowboarding. While not everyone in the NWCSC competes at the same level, the friendships and experiences are what make this one of the best programs for college students.

1. **Closing**

Throughout the entire process, please remember that the NWCSC and the USCSA are both here to help out in any way that we can to make this process simple and not a burden on the athletes who are responsible for team success. Don’t be afraid to ask any questions or for help as we have all gone through the same experience you are about to embark upon. Collegiate racing and experiencing team life are things that will have a lifelong impact. Many racers in our program have developed stronger friendships than in any other event in their life; and some have even ended up meeting their future spouses. Through all of your hard work creating a team, the lessons you will learn are invaluable. See you on the slopes.