

Strategies for Long Term College Curling Club Success

This is the third in a series of articles that concentrate on how to start up a college curling program at your school and potentially earn an invitation to the USA Curling College Championship.

In the first article we explored what is required for students to be eligible to participate in the championship and the qualifying events that lead up to it.

In the second article we looked at the first three of the five key elements for a successful college curling program: 1) Student Leadership with organizational skills, 2) Integrate the college club with an established cooperative community based curling club, 3) Find a Faculty/Staff Advisor who is interested in curling, 4) Develop an academic reason to curl, 5) Find an Extracurricular draw to bring in new curlers, and how the first three are instrumental to a start-up.

In this final article, we will look at how points three, four, and five on that list are essential to the long term success of a college curling program.

The careful reader will notice that point number three, regarding an interested Faculty/Staff Advisor, is important to both the start-up and the long term success of a college curling program. The Faculty/Staff Advisor is critical to help the students navigate the paperwork involved to be recognized as a club sport on campus. Obtaining "Club Status" is highly encouraged. There are many advantages to being a recognized on campus club including added student body exposure to curling activities, and access to student organization funds that may help defray the costs of curling activities.

The Faculty/Staff Advisor can also help with on campus recruiting, club budgeting and perhaps most importantly, act as the club's "institutional memory."

The biggest danger for any college curling club is that many successful college curling start-ups eventually fail because of the "hyper-leader", the cult figure. We had an individual like this several years ago at the school I was associated with Michigan Tech. He was amazingly charismatic and MTUCC membership exploded. He also did all of the work required to keep the organization in good standing with the university. Then, unexpectedly, he dropped out of school. Just as quickly as the MTUCC membership exploded, it crashed. None of the remaining student members knew what was required of them, and their Faculty Advisor at the time was indifferent and a non-curler. It took several years to pick up the pieces.

It will also be a tricky transition when I graduate in spring 2016, I've been working with a great group of individuals who will hopefully carry on the tradition and spirit of curling long after I leave but the reason the Yale curling collapsed previously was because of the graduation of one very enthusiastic member. -- Kelsey Schuder, President, Yale Curling Club

The Faculty/Staff Advisor is very important when this situation arises as they, usually, transcend the short time that most students are involved with college club programs.

Clubs must pay attention to recruiting new members and grooming future club officers. Clubs that fail to do this are at risk of failing. A faculty/staff liaison can be very helpful here. -- Roger Rowlett, Faculty Advisor, Colgate Curling Club

Ultimately, college curling programs have as much to gain by actively recruiting new members as they do by being good on the ice. ANYTHING that gets new or experienced curlers on ice will help with that. Which brings us to points four and five.

Academic reason to curl. Almost every successful long term college curling program will require an educational component.

Mary Jane Walsh and I both work at Colgate, and also happened to be our club curling school instructors, so we ran the college curling sessions on Sundays (2 hours) and served as faculty liaisons and familiar faces for students. -- Roger Rowlett, Faculty Advisor, Colgate Curling Club

The next logical extension would be to bring these sessions under the academic umbrella. One draw that brings in new student members is the opportunity to earn a Physical Education credit for curling. Depending on the cooperation of the college's Physical Education Department, this arrangement can be simple. At Michigan Tech University (MTU) we had an arrangement where, the student would sign up for a PE "Special Topics" course and pays the tuition fee for that credit as they normally would. The student may become a member of the MTUCC (and by extension, the local club the regional association and the USCA). The student then attends regular weekly curling sessions, whether on the traditional community club league nights or with the MTUCC only night, is their choice. Instruction was provided by a USCA certified instructor in a couple special "classroom" sessions. After that, the students earn their credit by simply logging their time.

Extracurricular draw to bring in new curlers. ANY campus event that can be extended to the curling ice should be explored. The biggest event that brings in new student curlers was making curling part of the Michigan Tech University Winter Carnival. This annual event includes a number of activities for which student groups (like fraternities, resident halls, and other campus groups) participate and earn points in competitions that are totaled to declare a Winter Carnival winner. Several years ago, the local club offered open use of its facility to the Winter Carnival organizers for the addition of a curling event. Curling became one of the most popular Winter Carnival sports. Annually about 50 teams compete in four divisions over two weekends. For most students, this is their first curling experience. Many come back the next year as regular curlers in the MTUCC. Dorm and fraternity/sorority parties are also a great way to bring potential new curlers onto the ice, as are school specific Learn to Curl sessions.

We hope that these three articles have helped give you some ideas of how to start, grow, and maintain a college curling program in your area. If you ever have any questions regarding college curling in general or the USA Curling College Championship feel free to check out our website <http://www.collegecurlingusa.org> or email me at info@collegecurlingusa.org.

Gordon A Maclean
Chair College Curling Committee
906-482-6788
gmaclean482@gmail.com



USA Curling
5525 Clem's Way, Stevens Point, WI 54482
715-344-1199
715-344-2279 (fax)
www.usacurl.org
www.collegecurlingusa.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/170170503016950