

Strategies for a College Curling Start-Up

In my previous article titled "Starting up a College Curling Program" (Curling News, Winter, 2014), I discussed what is required for any group of qualifying college or university students to participate in the USA Curling College Championship and the events that lead up to that championship. The key points are that the students MUST meet the age and course load requirements set forth in our College Championship Guidelines, be members of the US Curling Association, must register on the USA Curling Playdown Registration website before January 31, and that they become a recognized on-campus organization at the school to which they belong.

Through the years, those of us who have been involved in college curling have noticed that there are common elements to successful startups and to their long term success. These points can be summarized: 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.

Points one and two are essential for start-ups to happen. Points four and five are necessary for long term success. Point three is extremely helpful for startup and essential for long term success.

Startups work best when points one, two, and three happen simultaneously. Having any two of the three represents a great start. Colgate University actually started when an interested Faculty (Point 3) went looking for curlers and found a student who curled and was willing to start the organizational process (Point 1):

I set up shop at the fall 2005 student activities fair at Colgate with a display of curling equipment and some videos of the Brier and Scotties. The student activities fair is an event intended to help students join clubs and activities, especially but not limited to first-year students... I was very lucky in that inaugural year when one of our first-year students identified herself as someone who had curled previously, and she was overjoyed to learn that there was a curling rink nearby in Utica. I convinced her to organize the Colgate Curling Club and run for President. As for most colleges, there is a considerable amount of paperwork to get recognized as a club sport, and it was very important for that first club organizer to have a faculty or staff member at the college to help navigate the system and help convince administrators that the club was a worthy investment.-- Roger Rowlett, Faculty Advisor, Colgate Curling Club

In another case, a student with leadership skills and curling experience took the initiative (Point 1) and worked with the club where she was a member (Point 2) to jump start a college club:

In 2012 I started thinking about getting college and graduate students out to curl and decided to give it a try. I have been a member of Nutmeg Curling Club since fall 2011 and knew some of the instructors as well as who to contact to organize things. I sent out mass emails to the entire graduate student body, tried to help organize carpools, and even secured a few dollars per person to offset the cost of a Learn to Curl (\$20 - Nutmeg had already reduced the price from \$30 just for college). We had about 20 people come to that first LTC and I kept in touch with those individuals over the summer months and asked them all to come out and join the group as well as attend another LTC that I organized in fall 2012. This time we secured a little more money to offset the price, I had been working with Nutmeg to figure out what defined a college curler and how much they would pay per year for membership . -- Kelsey Schuder, President, Yale Curling Club

Sometimes starting a new college club in a "non-traditional" curling area may depend on getting an existing community club (Point 3) working with a devoted individual (Point 2) to find students at any nearby school to jump start a college program:

In this area of the world curling is not a traditional sport. The roots are very shallow. I'm a firm believer that the community Curling Club will have to drive this level of curling for at least 10 years before the roots are strong enough to take hold. My personal goal for the SW Ohio region is to build some "rivalries" between the local schools (Cincinnati, Xavier, Northern Kentucky, Miami, Wright State and Dayton all have enrollments of over 10,000). How does a six school conference sound? It might be a bit of a dream but there is strength in the alumni type activities as it grows. -- Jonathon Penney, President, Cincinnati Curling Club, Member College Curling Committee

There you have it. There is no single best way to start-up a college curling program. But if you can bring together at least two of the first three points outlined above you should have the beginnings you are looking for.

In the next article we will explore the "Strategies for Long Term College Curling Club Success"

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