

Starting a College Curling Program on your Campus

With the Olympics fresh in our minds, new dedicated curling facilities opening and arena facilities offering more ice time than ever for curling activities across the nation, we have been fielding a lot of "How do we start a college curling program?" questions lately.

The answer is "It's pretty easy" and this is how it is done.

First, all participants MUST be dues paying members of the United States Curling Association (USCA). That is usually taken care of through membership in their local USCA Member Clubs. You can find your nearest curling club at www.teamusa.org/usa-curling/clubs/find-a-club/member-clubs/usa-curling-clubs.

Second, all players must register on the USA Curling Playdown Registration site (www.teamusa.org/usa-curling/events/championships-microsite/inside-the-championships) before the annual deadline on January 31. There is no additional cost to register and after the player's account is setup, it only takes about five minutes.

Third, look for local college bonspiels to participate in. Playing in these events will earn your school points. Earn enough points and your school will receive an invitation to be one of the sixteen participating schools in the USA Curling College Championship the second weekend in March each year. The college bonspiel event list can be found on the USA Curling website events page (www.teamusa.org/USA-Curling/Events-Section) and at the College Curling USA website (www.collegecurlingusa.org/Calendar/calendar.html). The event organizers will forward the results for recording and the current point standings will be updated on the College Curling USA website.

If your school is in an area with few opportunities to compete in college bonspiels due to distance, we have alternatives detailed elsewhere for you to still have a chance at competing in the Championship.

It is highly recommended that your college curling team(s) become a recognized on-campus organization. The process and details vary from school to school, but usually it involves getting a minimal number of students agreeing to form the campus club and finding a faculty/staff advisor. If you can find an advisor who also curls you have hit the jackpot because they should know the ins and outs of being a campus club, the resources and financial advantages of being a campus club, and also something about the bonspielling world.

Having the support of your local USCA Member Club helps a lot too. Getting ice time can be difficult if your community relies on arena ice. Hopefully, your USCA Member Club would permit you to play together as a team(s) in their regular leagues. If you have a dedicated curling facility nearby, see if you can come in together as a team for some extra ice time.

Really, that is about all it takes to get started.

We've covered the how, the next important thing is the "who".

The USCA College Curling program and the USA Curling College Championship have two goals. First, it is designed to introduce the sport to new players who due to life circumstances may never have had an opportunity to play before. Second, College Curling acts as a bridge for those who have to cut back on Junior curling due to school or who have "aged out" of the Junior program but cannot dedicate the time to adult competitive curling.

With those goals in mind, we want to make College Curling as available as possible, but we do have to set some limits.

College Curling participants must be enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student (with a minimum of 6 credits) at a college or university in the United States. This season you must have been born on or after January 1, 1989 and on or before December 31, 1999.

The one thing you must remember is that the USA Curling College Championship is an invitational and it is the school that receives the invitation, not a set team of players. Schools are invited and encouraged to bring as many team members as they want and are free to swap as many players between games as they want. If you want to bring ten players to the Championship and play all ten at some time, you are free to do that. However, at the Championship all the players on a team must be from the same school.

Full details on eligibility and event points can be found on the College Curling USA website in our published "2018 United States College and University Curling Championship Guidelines".

The 2018 USA Curling College Championship will be held at the Eau Claire Curling Club, March 9-11. In 2019 the Championship will be held at the Broomstones Curling Club, March 8-10.

If you are interested in College Curling, whether as a student or as an enthusiastically supportive non-student, join the over 400 members currently in our Facebook group ("US University Club and Varsity Curling" www.facebook.com/groups/170170503016950/)

For all things College Curling related, including current standings, visit our website www.collegecurlingusa.org

Next time, "Strategies for a College Curling Start-Up"

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