Introduction

The Tahoe Semester is a study away adventure for all high school graduates and college students who want to explore the question “What is nature?” through classroom learning and guided wilderness experiences that include mountain biking, skiing, kayaking, rock climbing, hiking, stand-up paddle boarding and trail running. No backcountry or wilderness experience is necessary to participate.

The health and well-being of our students and staff and the effective education of our students are top priorities. The wilderness environments the Tahoe Semester activities travel through can be remote and challenging. These environments along with the educational activities conducted and the living and traveling conditions encountered require each student to be fully committed to and capable of working hard, taking responsibility for him or her-self, and working effectively in the group.

The Tahoe Semester values diversity. The Tahoe Semester’s Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) is a list of the physical and cognitive requirements of the program and are intended to be a resource for anyone considering participating and are not intended to be exclusionary. If you have general questions about the Tahoe Semester’s EEC, please contact us at tahoesemester@zephyrpoint.org.

I) GENERAL ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ACTIVITIES

All participants in all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities must be able to complete the following general requirements without assistance:

- Contribute to a safe learning environment — no verbal or physically inappropriate behavior is tolerated for any reason.
- Be able and willing to equally share responsibility and tasks with course-mates.
- Effectively communicate ideas and concerns on an individual and group level.
- Have the cognitive ability to learn necessary skills within the time allotted.
- Perform, after being instructed, required activities without direct supervision.
- Be willing and able to follow rules and obey authority figures
- Maintain a positive attitude, even when challenged physically, mentally, or emotionally.
- Display tolerance, respect, and compassion towards all.
- Stay alert and focus attention for up to several hours at a time while traveling through open water, in wilderness terrain, attending classes, and receiving instructions.
- Learn and perform necessary non-verbal communication systems for a given activity, such as hand signals, rope tugs, body movements, etc.
- Respond appropriately to stress or crisis when encountering hazards, severe weather, or a medical emergency.
- Perform necessary self-care at all times, including in a remote and outdoor environment
- Maintain adequate nutrition and hydration, dressing appropriately for environmental conditions, maintaining personal hygiene, and managing personal (and, in some cases, group) safety gear.
- Manage any known medical conditions and medications daily, including in a remote environment for as long as two times the scheduled length of the trip.
- Take personal responsibility for your belongings and behavior and possess a willingness to put the needs of the group before those of the individual.
- Effectively notify leaders or other participants of personal distress, injury, illness, or the need for assistance.
II) ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ACTIVITIES WITH A CAMPING COMPONENT

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities participants on camping activities must be able to complete the following requirements:

- Learn and safely perform the fundamental camping skills of finding a campsite, setting up a shelter, and cooking with a camp stove.
- Move about the course or activity area to participate in instructional sessions, attend to toileting needs, and contribute to individual and group related tasks as necessary.

III) ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR WILDERNESS HIKING OR SNOWSHOEING ACTIVITIES

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on wilderness hiking and snowshoeing activities must be able to complete the following requirements without assistance:

- Walk and stand for up to 6 hours.
- Travel over uneven, variable terrain, including flat, uphill, and downhill.
- If conditions become adverse, travel without stopping for breaks for one hour.
- Tolerate living and traveling outdoors with inclement weather, insects, and wildlife for multiple days at varying elevations from 0 to 14,000 feet (4,267 meters).
- Effectively warn others of potential or impending hazards such as falling rocks, slippery terrain, snow or rockslide, aggressive animals or insects, fast water, falling person, or other environmental hazards.
- Complete the preceding warnings and notifications up to a distance of 50 meters and in conditions with limited visibility and audibility, such as darkness, inclement weather, loud background noise due to high winds or fast-moving water, or terrain where a line of sight to other group members or leaders is not available.

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on wilderness hiking and snowshoeing activities must be able to complete the following requirements with or without assistance from a trained aide:

- Carry personal and group gear required for the specific activity in a backpack.
- Carry the minimum pack weight for at least two hours beyond the intended duration of the activity.

IV) ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ROCK CLIMBING OR MOUNTAINEERING ACTIVITIES

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on rock climbing or mountaineering activities must be able to complete the following requirements without assistance:

- Meet all the unassisted Wilderness Hiking EEC
- Wear all required safety gear such as an approved harness, approved helmet, mountaineering boots, etc.
- Grip a rope firmly, grasp the rock face, and negotiate upwards on a climb.

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on climbing and mountaineering activities must be able to complete the following requirements with or without assistance from a trained aide:

- Meet all the Wilderness Hiking EEC
- Provide a reliable belay to another climber during roped climbs. To do so, a participant must be able to reliably manipulate a climbing rope through a belay device.
V) ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING ACTIVITIES

In addition to the EEC for all AMC-sponsored activities listed in section II, participants on mountain biking activities must be able to complete the following requirements without assistance:

- Pedal, steer, stop and negotiate a bike over a variety of terrain including flat, uphill, and downhill.
- Wear all required safety gear, such as an approved helmet.

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on road and mountain biking activities must be able to complete the following requirements with or without assistance from a trained aide:

- Get on and off a bicycle.

VI) ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR SKIING ACTIVITIES

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on skiing activities must be able to complete the following requirements without assistance:

- Withstand below freezing temperatures for two hours beyond the intended duration of the activity.
- Move on skis over a variety of terrain conditions, including flat, uphill, and downhill.
- After falling down, be able to get off the trail and get into position necessary to continue skiing.

VII) ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR KAYAK OR LAKE ACTIVITIES

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on boating activities must be able to complete the following requirements without assistance:

- Wear all required safety gear, such as approved personal flotation device
- Control a paddle and pull it through the water to steer and propel the boat forward.
- Hold their breath while under water and, while in the water wearing a properly fitted lifejacket, be able to independently turn from a face down to a face up position keeping their head above water.

In addition to the EEC for all Tahoe Semester sponsored activities listed in section I, participants on boating activities must be able to complete the following requirements with or without assistance:

- Enter and exit a wet or dry watercraft.