Best Practices for Collegiate Club Programming

This document provides best-practice checklists for collegiate clubs at all levels, from newly formed to well-established, serving as a guide to help ensure their longevity and success.

Overview

This Best Practices document was created to help collegiate triathlon clubs grow and thrive by providing clear guidance on club development. It is organized into three levels - base, junior, and senior - designed to build on one another over time.

Many elements overlap between tiers, so practices introduced in earlier levels should carry through as your club matures.

Whether your club is just starting out or looking to take the next step, this document serves as a roadmap to strengthen operations, grow membership, and foster a vibrant triathlon community.

Base-Level Club Engagement

1. Starting a Club
- Building the Foundation: Begin by connecting with interested students and filling out the necessary paperwork to register as a recognized organization (if required by the school).
- Unofficial Status: As an unofficial club, focus on creating a welcoming community for like-minded students interested in triathlon.

2. Register with USA Triathlon
- Registration: Registered clubs receive resources, benefits, and connections with conference commissioners. They are allowed to compete even if their club is not yet officially recognized by their institution.
- https://member.usatriathlon.org/manager/club

3. Securing Funding
- Fundraising Ideas: Explore options like membership dues, local sponsorships, school grants, or crowdfunding.
- University Resources: Check with student activities for potential funding or advice on budget-friendly ways to get started.

4. Minimal Weekly Commitment
- One Hour Per Week: Begin by dedicating just one hour weekly to club planning or workouts, allowing members to balance club activities with their other commitments.
- Casual Involvement: Keep the initial time commitment manageable to encourage participation from new members.

5. Organizing Weekly Group Workouts
- Introductory Workouts: Plan one organized workout per week for each sport, focusing on skill-building rather than competition.
- Encourage Variety: Offer sessions for different skill levels to ensure everyone feels comfortable, motivated, and included.

6. Inclusive, Fun Environment
- Promote Participation: Encourage a casual and positive approach, inviting members to learn and develop their skills in a friendly, supportive setting.
- Focus on Growth Over Competition: Initially, avoid pressuring new members into races; instead, emphasize personal development and enjoyment of triathlon and each of its disciplines.

7. Advanced Athlete Opportunities
- Skill Growth for All Levels: Offer options for advanced athletes to lead "easy workout" sessions, allowing them to enjoy a relaxed pace while mentoring newer members.
- Training Groups: Establish small groups for those interested in more structured training, supporting both beginners and experienced members in achieving their goals.

Junior-Level Club Engagement

1. Fulfillment of Handbook Requirements
- Official Club Status: Ensure compliance with all university club requirements as outlined in the Collegiate Club Handbook to achieve and maintain official club status.
- Benefits: Official recognition provides access to campus resources, increased visibility, and potential funding or support from the university/community.

2. Dedicated Leadership
- Establish Key Roles: Appoint a committed club President and additional leadership roles if possible (e.g., Treasurer or Social Media Coordinator).
- Enhanced Commitment: Leaders should dedicate time to managing club activities and representing the organization, fostering a reliable foundation for club operations.
- Advantages: A structured leadership team strengthens the club's ability to run effectively and provides members with a clear point of contact.

3. Increased Time Commitment
- Commitment Level: Encourage members and leaders to dedicate more time to club activities, including meetings, team workouts, and races.
- Impact: This extra time commitment enables smoother operations, improved training, and enhanced camaraderie within the club.

4. Social Media Presence
- Establish a Club Page: Create and maintain a social media page to connect with members and promote club activities and achievements.
- Engagement: Use this platform to update followers on events, post photos, and build a sense of community, making the club accessible to potential new members.

5. Potential Use of School Facilities
- On-Campus Access: Explore options for using school facilities for meetings, training, or events to reduce costs and encourage participation.
- Benefits: Access to campus facilities can increase convenience for members, promote regular attendance, and foster a stronger campus presence.

6. Emphasis on Social Engagement
- Community Building Events: Host regular social events, like team dinners or casual gatherings, to build a strong sense of camaraderie, inclusion, and fun.
- Advantages: A social component enhances member satisfaction, retention, and helps create lasting friendships, making the club more enjoyable and supportive.

Senior-Level Club Engagement

1. Professional Coaching
- Hire a Paid Coach: Hiring a qualified, paid coach adds credibility, structure, and expertise to your club. A paid coach brings consistency and quality to training, leading to better athlete development and club growth.
- Find a Coach: Don't know where to start? Use the "Find a Coach" portal on the USA Triathlon Membership Hub to filter based on location, certifications, and specialties: https://member.usatriathlon.org/coaches, or contact the Collegiate Club Triathlon Coaches Association (CCTCA)
- Benefits: A paid coach improves the club's standing, helps retain members, and attracts new participants seeking a structured and professional training environment.

2. Hosting Club Races/Events
- Run Your Own Events: Hosting events, whether races, training camps, or fundraisers, establishes your club as a key part of the sport's local community.
- Impact: Events offer members practical leadership experience, boost the club's reputation, and generate additional revenue.

3. Strong Executive Board Leadership
- Executive Board Structure: Establish a committed executive board with clearly defined roles (e.g., President, Treasurer, Social Media Manager, Uniforms, Recruiting).
- Recruitment: Identify potential leaders by reaching out to active members and emphasizing the resume-building potential and networking opportunities.
- Benefits: A solid executive team brings stability, ensures continuity, and strengthens club governance, especially when there is student turnover.

4. Social Media Excellence
- Branding: Consistent and compelling branding across all platforms creates a recognizable club identity, helping attract new members and foster a sense of pride.
- Media Days & Photography: Schedule media days with a school photographer to capture high-quality images, allowing you to share dynamic, engaging content. This builds a positive club image and promotes the club as a serious and competitive team.
- Community Building: Showcase club events, highlights, and member achievements to create a desirable club presence that members want to be part of.

5. Alumni Relations and Donor Engagement
- Alumni Relations: Build and maintain strong connections with alumni. Reach out regularly with updates, achievements, and ways for them to stay involved.
- Donor Engagement: Encourage alumni and community support through fundraising initiatives and emphasize the role their contributions play in sustaining and expanding the club.
- Long-Term Benefits: Alumni and donor support provide crucial funding, resources, and networking opportunities that help the club thrive and expand.