

Managing a Successful Collegiate Cycling Team



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Purpose of this Handbook

Collegiate Cycling teams run the gamut from having just a single member to over 120 active racers, from school-funded Varsity programs to heavily sponsored club programs to the completely unfunded grass roots programs. Every year, though, between 10 and 20 collegiate clubs don't renew with USA Cycling, and fade into the history books. Typically, these are small teams that don't have a structure in place to pass down leadership once the team president graduates, but we've seen it happen to big, successful teams, as well. To a certain extent this turnover is unavoidable, but some of these losses are preventable with just a little extra effort on the part of the team leader.

This handbook is intended for the student leaders of collegiate cycling, with the goal of providing essential protocol, tips, tricks, and insight into organizing and managing a collegiate cycling team. Keep in mind that a truly successful collegiate cycling team isn't just one that wins championships, but also is consistently well organized throughout the years and contributes to the collegiate cycling community.

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Foreword

If you're reading this, it's probably safe to assume you were just "voluntold" that you're going to be an officer for your cycling team next year and don't know where to start, or already know what you're doing but are a bit of an over-achiever. We hope that regardless of where you're coming from, you find this guide helpful.

Leading a cycling team is time consuming and somewhat daunting at first, but really not particularly difficult. Like any leadership position, it comes with deadlines, responsibilities, coworkers, and the general fear of failure that occurs whenever the possibility of disappointing others is present. Nothing you can't handle. And as the numbers above suggest, you're not alone. Perhaps the most important resource for running a collegiate team isn't found in this guide – it's your conference director, your team's previous officers, and USA Cycling staff. Additionally, get in touch with other team leaders in your conference either through your conference email list or face to face at races or your conference meeting. Use this document for the basics, and those people for the details.

As a caveat, this guide was written as a sort of catch-all, intended to encompass an entire year's worth of planning and racing for all disciplines. We understand that most teams out there are not racing all four seasons, that not every team hosts a race every year, and that there are, inherently, some holes in this document. Additionally, don't be overwhelmed by the length of this guide. You don't have to read it from start to finish and memorize the contents. Take a look at the Table of Contents, pick out the topics that you feel your team needs the most help with, and start there. That said, take it, read it, and use what applies to you as you see fit.

And if there is something that you think of that should be in here but isn't, [let us know!](#) This guide is meant for you, and those like you, so don't be shy about helping to make it better. We want this to evolve in time and become more and more helpful over the years with your help.

Finally, the best step you can take is to download the [editable version](#) of this document and adapt it to your team's specific needs. Add in local and school contact information, provide your successors tips that you learned along the way, and write down everything you do and how you do it, so that next year, when the next person misses a meeting and later finds out that he or she was elected president at that meeting, that person's not left reinventing the wheel.

Starting a New Team

Starting a successful new team at your school is not difficult with a bit of planning, and the utilization of the numerous resources available to you. Combine enthusiasm with a bit of organization and voilà, a new program is born.

Detailed steps for starting a new or improving a current program are laid out in the [Starting a Collegiate Cycling Club](#) document.

Club Organization

Organization is the cornerstone of a successful collegiate cycling program. Most collegiate clubs are student run, and therefore have a high turnover rate within leadership positions. This often leads to a cycle of good years during periods of strong leadership, followed by a downturn when those leaders move on. A strong organizational structure and defined leadership roles help prevent these sorts of swings, leading to a more stable club.

Being a club officer is not just an opportunity to help your team be productive and successful, it is also an opportunity to make a difference and improve your team using your own unique talents and know-how. Officers should therefore be encouraged to work in areas that suit their strengths. Additionally, it's a great addition to your resume once you graduate and go out looking for jobs. What you learn as a club officer is incredibly valuable experience in the real world, too.

Selection of Officers

The officers are the backbone of the club and are the key ingredients to the long-term success of the club. The most highly motivated of these individuals can have a huge impact on the long-term growth of collegiate cycling as a whole, assuming they are driven and devoted to the cause.

Hold Elections Early

Officer elections are the easiest way to select new officers. With many small clubs, it's often not necessary, but elections make everyone feel better. Make sure potential officers know the details of the position they're running for. Pass out position descriptions and sample Officer Handbooks well in advance of elections.

For the sake of an easy transition between officers, avoid the temptation to hold officer elections just before the end of the school year. Instead, hold them shortly after coming back from winter break. This allows for a few months for new officers to shadow their predecessors and see exactly what the job entails. New officers will be better prepared for taking control once the school year ends. Ideally, your new upper level club officers will be ascending from lower level positions of leadership within the team, so they'll already have an idea of what to do, further ensuring a smooth transition.

Terms should start and end on the last day of a given school year. Make this abundantly clear so that there is no confusion. The new crop of officers should have control of the club starting at the beginning of the summer term, so they can begin preparing for the fall season. Depending on your clothing timeline, the officer in charge of that project may be on a different election calendar from everyone else.

Update Contact Info

Whenever new club officers are elected, make sure that contact information is updated in all the appropriate places, especially:

- a. With USA Cycling: Outgoing officers should log into their USAC accounts and, by clicking on “Manage USA Cycling Clubs,” add the new officers (and their license numbers) under Club Contacts. At that time, they should remove their own names from the list, as well. Only USA Cycling staff members and club officers who already have their accounts linked to the club can add or remove these contacts, so if the previous club officers have disappeared off the face of the earth, call or [email USA Cycling](#) and we’ll take care of it for you. Be sure to check the contact info in the upper left-hand corner of the club account page at this time, as well.
- b. With your club sports department: They should always be kept abreast of officer changes, especially for the President and VP. There may be forms to fill out when these positions change over, or a simple email might do, but find out from your school ahead of time.
- c. On your team website: Sounds fairly obvious, but you’d be surprised how often this is overlooked.

Officer Positions

In an ideal world, each of the following positions would be filled by a highly motivated, highly skilled individual. In reality, college students are at worst, notoriously flaky and at best, extremely busy. The most important roles should be filled by the most confidence-inspiring individuals.

Therefore, the following is more a list of duties than of individual officer positions. One officer may, and often does, cover more than one duty – the Treasurer, for example, may also act as the Club Sports Liaison, since their position already entails extensive contact with the club sports office. A precise structure of officer positions needs to be developed based on your own club’s size and needs (smaller teams just starting out can probably get by with just a President and Vice-President, for example). If the President is expected to take on multiple duties, make sure the incoming President knows up front what is expected of him or her.

- *President* – The role of the president is to be the representative of the team. The president needs to be dynamic and visible to the public, as well as responsible and professional. This person also needs to have energy for, and dedication to, the club and its direction. They need to be the motivator for not only

“The most important role of a club President is that of Chief Motivator. I always viewed my job as 70% motivation and 30% organization. Delegate, delegate, delegate. You have the rest of the officers for a reason – focus on getting kids on bikes, and let the other officers do their jobs.” - Caley Fretz, Colorado State University

the other officers, but also the team as a whole. This person should be able to make sure all

officers are following through with their duties by setting a weekly agenda for the team and holding officer meetings, and give advice on how to improve current situations within the team. This is a time- and energy-intensive position.

- *Vice President* – The VP is the President’s right-hand officer. It is the job of the VP to make sure things get done in the absence of the President, but also in his or her presence. The VP should have knowledge of every position within the officer core and be able to help each officer with his or her respective duties. In essence, the VP is like an advisor to every position. The VP should also be able to pick up any slack within the officer core, and offer advice on how to run things more smoothly.
- *Women’s Leader* – This individual (most preferably a woman, obviously) focuses on recruiting and retaining female members. Teams with female leaders typically have much higher female membership rates, and they know best how to create an environment that is welcoming, rather than intimidating, to new female cyclists. This person should manage the team’s women’s-only listserv, lead women’s-only clinics and rides, organize social functions for the women of the team, and be in charge of actively recruiting women to the team. This position also gives women cyclists someone to go to in the leadership of the team with concerns or questions that they might not feel comfortable approaching a male team leader with.
- *Secretary* – The secretary is in charge of making meeting room reservations, taking notes at officer core meetings, sending out a meeting overview via email to the club pre- and post- meeting, preparing a final report of the year’s activities, and maintaining all team records. This is a good position for someone who is organized and is looking for a way to get involved with the club, but has limited experience.
- *Treasurer* – The treasurer deals with all thing’s money related. This role is responsible for making sure the budget balances, and all money is accounted for. The treasurer collects dues, prepares and submits a budget (account for income and expenses), dictates the feasibility of economic decisions, and informs the officer core of the current financial standings. This person should be very responsible and obviously good with numbers and finances.
- *Club Sports Office Liaison* – The club sports office liaison deals extensively with your school’s club sports office. The position tends to be time intensive and vital to the smooth running of the club, and as a result the officer taking on this role is often on his or her way to becoming president the following year.
- *Race Directors (two)* - The road and mountain race directors are responsible for organizing and putting on road and mountain races. In order for a race to be successful, the director needs a committee of people who help make it happen. These are positions such as race sponsorship, registration and results, volunteer coordinator, and co-director a.k.a. details person (i.e. getting permits, officials, announcer, etc). It is ideal if one person within the club can assume this role, but given that it can be a rather large commitment (almost on par with team presidency), that is not always possible. It may also be a good idea to split up the duties of this officer among a few people, or among a few of the pre-existing officers within the club.

- *Clothing Manager* – The clothing manager is responsible for designing, ordering, and distributing clothing. He or she should have the final design approved by team officers and title sponsors. Beyond making sure team members have the clothing they need; the clothing manager should make sure alumni and retailers have access to any clothing they require. This position will require working with retailers and the clothing manufacturer over the summer months. This is a moderately intensive job, with peaks of increased responsibility rather than consistent flow.
- *Sponsorship Director* – The sponsorship director is responsible for acquiring, maintaining, and distributing goods from sponsors. They are responsible for educating the team as to who their sponsors are and placing team orders throughout the year. This position offers great flexibility and possibility for making connections within the bike industry. This position is also great to incorporate as a senior project or an internship. All future business majors should apply for this position as it is a great way to get your foot in the business world and see how things work. This position should be mentored by the previous sponsorship director, so as long as you are motivated, apply! This is a time intensive position if done correctly.
- *Public Relations (PR)* – The PR director creates a relationship between your club and the community. News organizations (such as your school paper and local paper) and sponsors should have press releases sent to them regarding events, results, and other happenings on a weekly basis during the race season. The PR officer also works with marketing and sponsorship to create brochures to distribute to sponsors and the community. They create flyers and help promote club events. This is moderately intensive position and one that is good for someone with limited experience.
- *Web Designer* – This is generally not an elected position, rather a call for assistance. The web designer is responsible for maintaining the web site and email listserv. Press releases on events, results and other happenings should be posted on a weekly basis during the race season. The web designer is also encouraged to seek out ways of promoting your site to the public. Once a website has been created, this is a low intensity position that can be performed by anyone with the right skill set.
- *Social Chair* – The social chair is responsible for social events within the team itself. These may include team dinners, movie nights, trainer parties, post-Nationals celebrations, etc. This person should also coordinate team awards and fun events (parties and pasta feeds), organize clinics and bring in guest speakers, and keep the energy within the club alive. The social chair can also be responsible for conducting officer elections.
- *Road Coordinator* – The road coordinator is responsible for promoting road riding and racing year-round. They organize group rides and

“Keep track of those that are willing to help, and what they can do. Keep track of those who you want to avoid. Consider working with other (non-cycling) clubs, ideally those with different seasons.” – Ryan Post, West Virginia University

leaders for those rides and distribute ride schedules to the club. During mountain season they should make the club aware of any local road races and promote participation of road racing. During road racing season they should distribute race flyers and coordinate travel, lodging, and

other logistics for the team during the season. The road coordinator or should be passionate about cycling and help maintain a strong road following. This is a moderate to low intensity position.

- *Mountain Coordinator* - The mountain bike coordinator is responsible for promoting mountain bike riding and racing year-round. They organize group rides and leaders for those rides and distribute ride schedules to the club. During road season they should make the club aware of any local mountain bike races and promote participation in mountain bike racing. During mountain bike racing season, they should distribute race flyers and coordinate travel, lodging, and other logistics for the team during the season. The mountain bike coordinator, like the road coordinator, should be passionate about cycling and help maintain a strong mountain bike following. This is a moderate to low intensity position.
- *Track/Cyclocross Coordinator* – This position is similar to the previous two, but dedicated to the development of cyclocross and/or track programs within the team. Given the shorter seasons for these disciplines, this is a lower-intensity position, but the ideal individual will have a passion for these rapidly growing niches in collegiate cycling.
- *Minions* – Pretty much what it sounds like. Unofficial officers, motivated members of the team. Most likely next year's officers.

Membership with USA Cycling

All USA Cycling club memberships expire on December 31, so it's important to renew your club's membership before the first race of the new year. Rider licenses expire 1 year from date of purchase, so some of you members may have an active license, while others may not. Riders can't buy their collegiate license until the club membership is first renewed. Clubs can renew their memberships beginning on November 1 of each year, and it's always the best idea to do this as early as possible to avoid panic later. The fee is \$100 and there are two ways to do it.

Online Renewal

By far the easiest way to renew your club's membership is online. Every club is linked to its officers' personal USA Cycling accounts. If you are listed as a Club Contact in the USAC database, make sure you are logged into your account and then click, [MANAGE YOUR CLUB HERE](#). When new club officers are elected, the old ones should log into their USAC accounts and, by clicking on that link, add the new officers (and their license numbers) under Club Contacts. At that time, they should remove their own names from the list, as well. Only USA Cycling staff members and club officers who already have their accounts linked to the club can add or remove these contacts, so if the previous club officers have disappeared off the face of the earth, call or [email USA Cycling](#) and we'll take care of it for you.

Once you're listed as a club contact, simply click "[MANAGE YOUR CLUB HERE](#)" link to check to ensure that all the contact information we have for the team is correct, and there aren't any long-graduated club officers still listed on the club page, and then click "Renew." You can then pay the \$100 fee by credit card.

IMPORTANT: When renewing online, you **MUST** mail, email, or fax in the [Club Eligibility form](#) to USA Cycling. This form must be filled out by a school official, as it proves that the club is officially

recognized by your school. Your riders will NOT be able to buy their individual licenses until we receive and process this form. Don't put this off until the Friday before the first race of the season!

Paper Form

Fill out both the [club application](#) and the [club eligibility](#) form and mail or fax it in. (This is the only way to start a new club). The first page can be filled out by you, but a few notes:

- a. The name of the team must be exactly the name of the school as it appears in the [IPEDS database](#).
- b. The contact information in the upper left-hand corner should be consistent from year to year as much as possible, especially for the email address – this should be the master email address discussed below under Communication. This is a good place to put your club sports director or faculty advisor, with his or her permission.
- c. Your contact information and that of your fellow officers should go under Club Officers lower down on the page, with your license numbers, so that the club account is linked to your personal account. This will then allow you to manage the club online in the future.

The second page must be filled out by a school official. This proves that the club is recognized by your school and you're not just some crazy guy off the street that is pretending to represent your school.

Developing a Constitution

Creating a club constitution is all about spelling out expectations of the officers, team members, and advisors. A constitution should encompass the purpose and goals of your club, as well as lay out the system of governance and rules that will help you achieve those goals.

Begin with a mission statement, and keep it relatively simple. Define your club's purpose, and who it will serve. The mission statement will include the official name of your team – a name that you should stick to across the board. Yes, even collegiate cycling teams should pay attention to branding.

For example: "The Cycling Team of Dartmouth College is a student-run organization with the mission of promoting athletic achievement, encouraging student leadership, fostering personal growth, and supporting community outreach. A priority shall be developing new riders and creating a welcoming and teaching environment. The team also seeks to serve as a social outlet for its members and as a positive ambassador for the College in all its activities."

Next, begin to lay out the structure of your club. Having these basic rules in place for your club will avoid confusion later, especially when it comes to finances. These concepts may seem self-evident now, but eventually there are always questions about whether club funds should go toward regular season racing activities, or national championship expenses, for example, or whether the focus of the club is racing or riding casually. Include the following, at a minimum:

1. Leadership
 - a. Set election dates and protocols
 - b. Define the duties of each officer position
 - c. Define the power structure among officers
2. Membership

- a. Define the requirements to be a club member
 - b. Define benefits and rights of becoming a club member
 - c. Lay out rules and code of conduct for members so that, if need be, you can expel members
- 3. Sponsorship and Funding
 - a. Define financial priorities (Nationals? Paying for regular season race entries? Free clothing for everyone?)
 - b. Require that your club maintains a balanced budget at all times
 - c. Define regular funding sources (Club Sports office, alumni, fundraisers, etc.)
- 4. Traditions
 - a. Put them on paper or they could disappear
- 5. Rules for amending the constitution
 - a. An untouchable document doesn't do anyone much good down the line

Coaching

Having a team coach can make the difference between a good team and a great one. A quality cycling coach will provide the team assistance with training plans, skills, tactics, and many other aspects of the sport that will improve the overall ability of the group. In addition, depending on the amount of time the coach is willing to commit, he or she can also help with the organizational side of things, and act as a constant across transitions between leaders.

Most new riders just assume that if you just ride as hard as you can as often as you can, you'll get faster and that's that, but as any experience cyclist knows, the matter of training, and winning races, is much more complicated than that. A coach can explain everything from the basics of training to nutrition to race tactics, helping new riders make their way from the Intro category to National Championship-level competition.

The most successful way to find a certified coach near you is to visit the USA Cycling website and use the [Find a Coach function](#). There is an extensive list of certified coaches across the country. Some coaches may be willing to volunteer their time with a collegiate team and others may charge a fee for their services. A coach, though, does not have to take on a formal or full-time position within the team. For some clubs, and especially when getting started, it may be more feasible to seek someone who acts more as a knowledgeable advisor, providing a general training outline applicable to most members. This will be especially helpful for those with less racing experience.

What's a "certified coach?"
 USA Cycling offers an education and licensing program for cycling coaches. A coach that is licensed by USA Cycling has passed both a background check and at least one test (more for higher level coaches) on how to coach competitive cyclists. More info is available [here](#).

You can approach potential coaches as you would a traditional sponsor (see below), where the sponsorship you are asking for is their services at a reduced (or free!) rate.

You can also become a licensed coach yourself and save your team some money. To become a coach, you must first order the "Introduction to Coaching Cyclists" manual, and then take a test online once you've read the manual. Once you've passed the test, you can purchase a license, and you're all set! More information on this process is available [here](#).

Even if you have no official coach, though, the more experienced racers can do a lot to educate the newer riders on your team, so that no one shows up to his or her first bike race without a clue what's going on. Host skills clinics, discuss nutrition and hydration, and talk about basic training principles at meetings. You can also bring in guest speakers (local coaches and pros) occasionally to touch on these topics. People in the cycling community are usually pretty enthusiastic about giving back at the grass roots level.

Team Management

With a solid officer core in place, productive and efficient management is the next goal. Managing the officers themselves as well as communicating with team members are both vital to a program's success.

Leadership

You can't do it all – really. The various officers that have been elected to lead your club have job descriptions for a reason. The President's job is to delegate duties to these officers, and hold their feet to the fire if they fail to accomplish them. Trying to do everything has unraveled more than one otherwise exceptional club officer.

“Delegate administrative tasks, lead by example on the bike, emphasize team training, and don't get carried away looking for lots of sponsors or ordering tons of high- end kits.” – Kyle Shipp, University of Georgia

In addition to saving oneself from headache, delegation keeps officers involved and interested, and feeling like they are contributing to the team. If kept out of the loop and rarely called upon, motivation wanes and they may not be there when you really need them. A good leader uses the power of delegation to do more than just get things done.

Delegation and the democratic nature of the team must also be balanced, though, with firm decisiveness as a leader. Democracies are great, but they also take a long time, which college athletes don't have a ton of. Dictatorships work pretty well in certain situations of collegiate team leadership. Don't ask, “When should we leave for the race on Friday?” Tell your team, “We're leaving at 4:00pm on the dot. Be there.”

Officer Handbooks

These should be written by someone familiar with each position and passed from one generation of officers to the next. They should include basic protocol for the position, a timeline of relevant events and deadlines for the entire year, school and local contact information, and any tips and tricks that may be helpful for the new officer.

Putting officer handbooks up on the web, using Google Docs or a similar service, makes it easier to transfer them between officers. It also makes them easier to update. The handbooks should be added using the team's master email account (see below). Having these living documents are essential to the continued success of your team. We offer an editable version of this document for download [here](#), so that you can use this framework as a beginning, and go from there.

Even if you don't want to start from scratch or if you don't have time to put together a step-by-step guide, simply keeping lists of **everything** you do and eventually the guide will write itself. Just maintain copies and lists of everyone you work with as an officer, every permit and form you fill out, and just include little notes of lessons learned along the way.

Not only is this practice beneficial to your team down the road, but it also preserves your legacy as a club officer, and ensures that all your hard work to build up your team doesn't go out the window when you graduate. It is heartbreaking to watch a team deteriorate and fade away over the years after you dedicate countless hours to its development. So, don't let that happen – just keep track of what you do and pass along the information to your successor!

Communication

Good communication among officers, the rest of the team, and fans/alumni is vital. Today's technology makes it incredibly easy to get information to the people that need or want it, so use it!

Team Email Account

It's critical that your team creates and maintains a master team email account. This should be the primary contact email address that USAC has in its database for the team, and the email listed on the school website for the club as well as on the team website. This allows all officers access to the email, and ensures that when you graduate, you can simply pass on the account info to your successor by way of the officer handbooks.

Email Listservs

Set up at least one email listserv for your team, and one for officers only. Google and Yahoo both offer free listserv services that are easy to moderate. You need to decide whether team listservs will be open to the public or just to team members. Keep in mind that your team members may not always use the sort of language and discuss topics that alumni, parents and fans might find acceptable. It may be best to create a separate alumni listserv in addition to the current members-only one.

- Use a master email address from which all email lists can be moderated. DO NOT allow a single team member to create and control the listservs
- Determine access settings that make sense for your club
 - Invite-only is a pain for larger clubs. A better option is to require anyone who wants to join to request an invite.
 - Open access invites evil spam-bots to send viruses and other undesirables out to your team, so we suggest not using this type.
 - Make sure members have the option to "reply" OR "reply all." Having the former prevents a lot of clutter on the list.
- Make the rules clear
 - Most collegiate clubs are dry, as required by their schools. That means that mention of alcohol in conjunction with a team sponsored event in a listserv email is a big no-no. Photos too. Make sure your team members know that.

Website

Creating a website gives your club a public face, and it should be treated as such. There are easy-to-use website templates available on the web (Google Sites, Blogger, and Wordpress are all great options that allow you to build and update the site easily). Even if you have a computer whiz within your team that builds something custom, it may not be easy to edit and update later on down the road, when there isn't a computer whiz on your team. The key is to make it easily editable by anyone with the correct login information so the site doesn't die off with someone's graduation. And make sure to keep it current with race reports, calendars, team events, sponsor logos, and contact information. Most importantly, only commit to a site that you (or whoever is in charge of the site) will have time to keep current. More features are great, but more features aren't so great if they are out of date.

Meetings

Weekly, monthly, or even per term, meetings are the best way to get information to and psych up your team. Most schools have reservable space on campus that can be used for free by school organizations.

- If possible, keep meetings in the same time and place
- Increased frequency is good, particularly as the race season approaches and weekend logistics become a priority
- As a general rule, your team's excitement \leq your excitement about bike racing. So be excited.
- Send email about what to expect before each meeting – HYPE them up!
- Send meeting notes for those who missed the meeting after each one
- Try to make team meetings useful to your members. Guest speakers, mechanic clinics, race tactics, etc.

The officers should have their own meetings as well. Meeting weekly for a half hour before the regular meeting is an easy way to get everyone together and make sure the club is steering in the right direction.

Alumni and Fans

Connecting with alumni and fans of your school is extremely important. Such contacts can be invaluable when organizing a race, soliciting funds, or simply when you need an extra hand.

Keep track of your contacts:

- Include: Name, Position, Email, Phone, and what they did for your club
- Each new generation of officers should not have to search out the same contacts
- Like the officer handbooks, consider keeping contacts on a Google Doc or similar form to make them easily accessible to the next generation of officers.

Newsletters & Press Releases

You should make regular updates to the website and send out newsletters to alumni, sponsors, staff and faculty, or anyone else with an e-mail address. For really big news, such as a national championship, write a press release, call up the school and/or local newspaper, and they'll probably run it. It's that easy. Just always include photos along with captions and credits that fit them.

Here's an example of a newsletter from Colorado College:

April 2008

Dear Friends,

It has been only two months since the last update, but tons of things have happened. There's lots to catch up on, so here goes:

THE WEBSITE

After months of work (and a lot of waiting for availability), tigercycling.org is finally up and running. It still has a few design bugs, which should be worked out in the near future, but the framework is there, so go check it out! We even have a webstore, where we sell all of our cool new...

CLOTHING

We've already had a ton of compliments on our new jerseys, and if you haven't seen them yet, check out the

gallery on our website. They're so popular that we're all but sold out of everything already! In response to the incredible success of our clothing, we're placing a reorder soon, so if you want anything, let us know! This success is also fueled by our chief sponsor, Heuberger Motors, which has decided to sell our clothing in the parts department. You should be seeing even more plaid around Colorado Springs, and around the country, very soon. Many thanks to Sugoi Performance Clothing for manufacturing some great looking high-quality clothes.

RACING

Oh yeah, I suppose we do that racing thing, too. And truth be told, and modesty aside, the team has been kicking butt this season. We've already had races in Albuquerque, Denver, Boulder, Greeley, Grand Junction and Golden, and there are two more races left on the regular season schedule, followed by conference championships and nationals, which are right up the road in Fort Collins. Some of our star performers have been the unbeatable trio of Kasey Rumrill, Kay Sherwood, and Amy Krull in the Women's A category, who consistently and almost without fail make it into the top ten in every race. In the Women's B category, Glynn Kerr has made her name known by placing in the top five with consistency. (She took second at the Denver criterium—missing first by only half a bike length!)

THE CC CAMPUS CRIT

Things are coming together nicely as we approach our April 19th race here at CC. We are expecting large crowds, and plenty of racers. It's definitely going to be a big day at CC—keep your fingers crossed for sunshine! We hope all who are in the area to come down and check out the action. We've put a lot of work and money into the race, and we'd love to see you there when all that effort pays off. We'll be out there from 11-7, so be sure to stop by.

THE 2008-2009 SEASON

Yes, it's that time already, to start looking ahead to next year. Though we're losing defending national collegiate criterium champion Jared Faciszewski and our gangly road star Todd Nordblom to that pesky graduation business, we already know about three newcomers who'll be arriving at CC this fall, ready to dominate next spring. I've ridden with one of them, and I can testify to his major potential on the road (read: he kicked my butt). Our mountain champions will be back again: Colin is currently off racing in Switzerland, Mitch is criss-crossing the country racing for Tokyo Joe's and Kay is honing her strength kicking butt on the road here at CC.

We've also elected next year's leadership, as current VP Amy Krull will be taking over the presidential reigns immediately following our campus race, as I step aside and promptly step on a plane for Spain (true story—I leave the country two days after the race). I'm very confident in her abilities to lead the team this next year, and there's no one I'd trust more with being in charge. In an effort to share the load, though, John Barker and Tyler Ruggles, who will both be seniors next year, will be taking full charge of our spring race, as well as helping Amy out with other duties along the way. This will hopefully be a very effective system so that no one gets burned out, and everything gets done efficiently over the course of the year.

Thanks for reading and we'll talk to you again soon. In the meantime, we'll see you on the road!

And a sample press release (don't forget to attach photos!):

COLORADO COLLEGE PROVES ITSELF A 'CYCLING POWERHOUSE'

Colorado Springs, Colorado – November 7, 2007 - Colorado College concluded the Fall 2007 mountain bike season with a bang. At the 2007 Collegiate Mountain Bike Championships, held in Banner Elk, NC, CC left no doubt that it has some of the best young cyclists in the country. The 6-person CC Mountain Bike Nationals Team displayed their dominance, returning home Sunday with 4 National Titles, 6 Podium Spots, and 9 Top-Ten finishes.

Banner Elk had been hit hard with rain two weeks prior to the event, making much of the muddy single-
Managing a Successful Collegiate Cycling Program

track course unrideable, forcing riders to run the steep hills, pushing their bikes. While the thick, sticky mud may not favor those used to the dry rocky conditions out West, CC dug deep, proving their fitness and toughness against their skilled Eastern competitors.

The nation's fifty best collegiate men lined up Friday to tackle the harsh conditions doled out by the 20-mile Division II Cross Country race. Colorado College edged out their competitors from the gun. Colin Cares built a huge lead on the field, finishing 4:38 over his nearest competitor. Mitchell Hoke came in 7th, earning himself a strong Top-10 finish and Harrison Precourt showed his East Coast roots, finishing 18th. Zac Ramras rounded up the four-man squad, gritting it out for 32nd, despite suffering a flat tire and mechanical problems.

In the afternoon the CC women showed their prowess in the 15-mile-long Women's Cross Country race. Kay Sherwood led the effort, securing herself a podium spot, with a 5th place finish, while teammate Amy Krull rode in to a solid 9th place, locking in another Top-Ten finish.

Little did CC riders know, but the Cross Country results were only a sign of things to come in Saturday's Short Track race. The day began with an exciting women's race, in which Kay Sherwood quickly separated herself from the women building up a 15 second gap in the 25-minute race. Despite repeated attacks by her competitors, she was able to maintain her lead, rolling across the line to take the win, snagging herself the coveted Stars n' Bars National Champions Jersey. Amy Krull battled it out, finishing the race 12th.

The men, determined to keep the pressure on, started the race with a plan. Mitchell Hoke and Colin Cares attacked the field from the gun. Colin rode away from the field, building himself a tremendous 30 second lead. The battle for second was a crowd pleaser, in which Mitchell narrowly out sprinted his rival at the line, so that CC went 1- 2 in the Men's Short Track race. Harry Precourt and Zac Ramras snagged great points for the team finishing 22nd and 24th respectively.

The 2007 fall mountain bike season concluded with tremendous success. At the awards ceremony Colorado College was awarded 4 National Champion Titles, with Colin Care's two wins enough to secure him the Overall Omnium, without riding either of the gravity events! CC visited the podium 6 times, and concluded the weekend ranked 10th in the nation!

We would like to extend a special thanks to Steve Crosby, Jonathon Bredin, our wonderful coach Alison Dunlap, parents, and sponsors for their invaluable support! Without them these results would not have been possible. And once again, congratulations to each of our CC riders for their hard-won efforts!

Visit <http://www.cyclingnews.com/mtb.php?id=mtb/2007/oct07/collegiatenats07/default> for full results and race reports.

Dealing with Your School

All schools have a different set of rules you will have to abide by and procedures you need to comply with in order to receive permission for funding, travel, event hosting, etc. To make sure that you're up to date on all the latest formalities, stay in close contact with your school's club sports director, or your club advisor if you have one. Don't be shy about speaking with and fostering a relationship with these individuals, especially your club sports director (or whatever analogous position oversees your team at your school). He or she can be a great resource to you and will likely be willing and eager to help, as it's this person's full-time job to know how to get things done and to ensure that you are able to grow and operate properly, not to mention to grow club sports in general. Talk to them about recruitment, fundraising, events, or anything else you need help with. When you're not sure where to turn in the school administration for a particular problem or question, this is where you should go first. They will most likely

be able to point you in the right direction.

Many schools' club sports departments also organize a leadership/club sports officers training summit at least once a year. It is absolutely in your best interest to attend this meeting, whether or not you are a newly elected team leader. If you are new to your position, you will likely learn a lot of useful tips about how to run a club sports program. Even if you are a grizzled veteran of collegiate cycling and club presidency, it never hurts to maintain contact with the school administration and make sure that, every year, you know just who to talk to for your every need. And school policies are infamous for changing without warning, so it's best to stay current on all of them.

Most importantly, since policies and procedures vary extensively from school to school, a key point to include in your officers' handbooks are who to contact for what, and a list of relevant policies and procedures for dealing with your school.

Finances

Funding is almost always the pinch point of a team's success. Without enough, a team is severely (though not insurmountably) limited in every direction. Getting to races, hosting races, aiding financially strapped team members, or simply providing the benefits members need to excel becomes much more difficult when the accounts are low.

In collegiate cycling, funding comes from three primary sources: your school, the team itself, and sponsorship/external fundraising.

But before you can start chasing funding, you must know how much money you need. That's where careful budgeting comes in, a prerequisite for a financially stable team. Many school's club sports offices require yearly budgeting, but even if yours doesn't it's an exercise worth performing every year.

When establishing your budget, ask team members to rank their priorities, including transportation costs, hotels, food, kits, equipment, and so on. Especially on teams with a limited budget, this will be helpful for allocating your funds where they are most needed and most useful.

"IT COSTS MORE IN TIME AND MONEY THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE WHEN YOU START, BUT WHEN YOU SEE IT ALL COME TOGETHER AND YOUR TEAM GOES TO A RACE, RIDES WELL, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY HAS A TON OF FUN IN THE PROCESS IT'S ALL WORTH IT..."— BRANDON WEAVER, CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY

Accounts and Payments

Wherever your funding comes from and whatever your budget, you should first be clear on where the money will be kept and what processes are required to deposit, withdraw, and spend that money. Keep track of the forms and timeframes necessary for all the financial procedures required by your school in your Officers' Handbooks.

To avoid red tape, some teams open up their own bank accounts outside of the framework of the school. This allows them to save and spend money freely, but it also means that there are fewer checks and balances in place to ensure that your sometimes seedy treasurer doesn't cash out and run (believe it or not, that has happened to some collegiate cycling teams), so require receipts and regular check-ins to keep everyone honest. Additionally, though, having a bank account independent of the school business office

may be against university policy (and in some states against the law – as in jail-time law), and you can get into serious trouble if you don't check out the rules and regulations concerning the practice first.

Budgeting

At the very least, make a spreadsheet of expected expenses for the coming year, and expected revenue streams. Try to get them to match up.

Don't forget the following expenses - assuming your club plans to cover them for members:

- License fees
- Regular season travel (van rental, hotels, food)
- Regular season race entry fees
- Nationals travel (tends to be much more expensive than you think)
- Nationals entry fees (preregister, it's cheaper)
- Miscellaneous travel expenses
- Coaching
- Clothing
- Capital expenditures: team trailer, loaner bikes (especially for track and cyclocross), team tools
- Race Expenses (this is a separate topic not covered in this guide, and it requires its own budget, but the net loss or profit from the race should be included in your team's budget)

Take your expenses number, and figure out how to match it using the following funding sources:

- School Funding
- Team Dues
- Sponsorship
- Fundraising
- Existing Funds
- Race Revenue (this is a separate topic not covered in this guide, and it requires its own budget, but the net loss or profit from the race should be included in your team's budget)

“REMEMBER TO KEEP IT FUN. DO THE BUSY WORK OVER THE SUMMER. CALL SPONSORS AND REACH OUT TO ALUMNI FOR DONATIONS. IF IT'S NOT FUN YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG!” – JAMES MCCABE, WAKE FOREST

If your revenue exceeds your expenses, time to grow the team! What follows are some details on your potential revenue streams.

School Funding

Few clubs are able to rely primarily on school funding and still grow and prosper. A few, though, have developed programs that are largely school funded, a number of which are officially recognized varsity programs. Even club teams can get some funding from their school, however, if they make the argument the right way. For example, club sports departments will usually give clubs a bare minimum amount of money to cover USA Cycling dues and fees. Be sure to figure out the processes and policies about this well in advance of when you actually need to buy the licenses and membership, as many university business offices take MONTHS to process this type of thing. Check with your club sports director about what school money can and can't be spent on.

One common trait that many of varsity teams share is that they have proven to their school administration their value as a recruitment and publicity tool. Cycling is a means of attracting students that might not otherwise consider attending a particular school. It is also an opportunity for schools to earn prestige and

recognition as their teams achieve national success. If you want to take your team in this direction, you will want to consider how you can prove to your school administration that your program can provide this type of value. Speak with the athletic department, a dean, a vice president – anyone who can clue you in to the school's priorities and goals so that you can explain how supporting your program can help them achieve them. In general, though, the most success is found outside the traditional athletic structure: many Athletic Directors are focused on revenue streams from ball-sports, and are also completely strapped for cash, but external departments sometimes have more money and are able to look at things like cycling teams a little bit more creatively.

In any case, school funding, and how to get it, varies so widely between different schools that your best bet is to find an advisor or speak with your club sports director, who knows the system, and get their help. Whether your school funding is a little or a lot, this is a good place to start, because it tells you how much more you will need to raise on your own.

Overall, though, don't be afraid to think creatively about where funding can come from, and appeal to as many departments and funding sources within your school as possible. For example, the admissions department can be a great (albeit seemingly random) place to turn for extra school funding. Club sports offer a potent and unique recruitment tool for schools, and you can pitch your organization as such to the department. Also consider the dean's office, the president's office, student government, and student activities department in addition to the usual suspects. You never know who will be sympathetic to your cause, and it never hurts to ask. Just be professional and respectful in your approach, and pitch the legitimacy of collegiate cycling alongside the benefits for the school.

Dues

Requiring that team members pay dues is an easy way to help finance a team. Paying dues also helps ensure dedication to the team by its members, since they have at least a small financial stake. They can also increase participation at races, and help ensure team success, as most dues-paying members will want to get their money's worth. On the flip side, dues can turn potential members away who can't afford them, or simply don't want to pay. Members also expect more benefits from their club if they've paid to join it.

Rates should be set carefully after considering team size, funding requirements, general enthusiasm of the membership, and planned member benefits. Cost should be as low as possible – this is collegiate cycling after all, and few of your members have much extra cash lying around. Keeping costs low keeps the barriers to entry minimal, which is good not only for your club but for the sport as a whole.

Exempting members from dues for providing the team certain services can also be a good way to help manage team expenses. If your team has to rent cars, for instance, you can allow anyone who offers use of their own car for enough races (two, for example) to forego paying dues. It will probably save the team money in the long run, and help with transportation logistics.

Sponsorship

The cold hard truth is that sponsorship at the collegiate level is more often akin to charity than anything, and you should solicit it as such. No one has money these days to give away (gear and swag is a bit easier), so you have to find people in a charitable mood. It's pretty hard to pitch a college cycling team sponsorship as a viable business option, but giving back to the community and supporting a grassroots team is much more sellable.

Pursue as many companies and leads as possible, because one will probably pay off, and it will almost

without exception be the most random one (or at least the one you never thought would actually get out the checkbook). At the same time, though, be realistic with your time. Sponsorship is almost never a reliable source of funding, and given the amount of time it takes to develop and nurture sponsor relationships, the end return on your [time] investment isn't always as high as you might think. People love to think of sponsorship as the silver bullet, but at the end of the day, there is no easy money out there. And sponsorships are among the hardest dollars to come by.

Again, though, it's worth trying, so here are our tips:

Targets

A few groups make easy targets:

- *Alumni*: Alumni who own local businesses have the opportunity to not only give back to their alma mater, but also get a little advertising out of the process. It's a one-two punch of a sales pitch.
- *Cyclists that own businesses*: Those most charitable to your cause are usually cyclists. See if you can sniff out some cyclists that are also business owners (usually not bike shop owners... they often don't have any cash to spare) are usually the way to go. Ask around within the cycling community in town to see who might be worth a shot.
- *Big companies with offices the area*: Oftentimes there's a disconnect between the community and Big XYZ corporation with headquarters or offices in town, and they're eager to smooth things over with the locals. Supporting a little local college team is a great way to achieve that goal. So, pitch it that way to them.
- *Car dealerships*: They sometimes have just the right combination of extra cash on hand (sometimes, they'll even have some extra money directly from their car company to spend on community projects), involvement with the community, potential for an actual return on their investment in the advertising, and extra advertising opportunities if you host a race.
- *Ask around*: Even if the company you approach can't help you, there's nothing to lose (especially at that point) in asking if they knew anyone else in the community that might be willing to sponsor the team. Business owners in a community are generally connected with one another and know the scuttlebutt on who's who and where you might find some (additional) cash.
- *Local foundations and other non-profit organizations*: If it's big enough, your city probably has a Sports Development commission, or at least a Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and sponsoring a college team could be right up their alley. Many communities also have local foundations whose mission is to develop their community in any way possible. Again, ask around. These organizations will be especially helpful if you are hosting a race in town.

The Approach

While you obviously want to vary your method of communication and how you sell the sponsorship based on who it is you're asking, you should start with a basic template that you don't have to modify too much from business to business except for the address.

Put together a flashy sponsorship packet (graphic design and PR majors are good to keep around for this reason) touting the positive attributes of your club, but don't limit yourself to how many Cat 1's you have or how many races you've won. Include all of the following, plus anything else you think would be useful or interesting without overwhelming the potential sponsor.

- *A letter to the sponsor*: Lay everything out in a business format. Make this kind of an overview of who you are, the team's needs, your past relationship with the sponsor, and what they get. It's also important to have some background info on the team telling someone what you're all about,

especially for new sponsors. Keep it personal and friendly yet professional (again balancing charity and business savvy: appeal to the heart and the checkbook).

- *Fact Sheet*: This should include team size and makeup (how many riders of each category and gender), race results, community involvement, races hosted, contact info, etc.
- *Budget*: You don't want to include everything from your initial budget, but anything that would be logically relevant and help you to get money. You want your sponsors to know where their money is going. Emphasize how poor you are, and how much money you need: many people assume you get plenty of money from your fancy college, so why should they give you more? Be detailed without being overwhelming.
- *Photos*: Anything, even just a team photo, helps establish more rapport and give them a better feel for who the team is. If you host a race, photos of this are especially important, since that makes up the bulk of the team budget and is the prime opportunity for exposure. Think about a poster, too, that you could give them as advertising (and offer to put their logo on it in the future) with team photos and info on it.
- *Options (Jersey Diagram)*: Consider creating different levels of sponsorship and providing the potential sponsor with options. If you have room on your jersey for multiple levels of sponsorship, a diagram of what size logo they get for what price exudes planning and professionalism, as do examples of web advertising space and promotion at the race you host. It helps to objectify the question of how much they should give you, too.
- *Your Professionalism*: Friendly and casual, but keep in mind you are asking for anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars. The more organized you appear and the more seriously you appear to take this, the more likely they are to give you that money.

Non-cash Sponsorships

Product sponsorship and discounts are often easier to attain than financial backing, and though it can't be used to balance the books it can be used to provide benefits to members, making them more likely to pay dues. Many companies will have an application on their website – if not, email or cold call whatever contact you can find. Sponsorship season in the cycling industry generally runs from late summer to mid fall for the following product year, so think ahead and get your applications in with plenty of time to spare. Even if it isn't cash, product sponsorships help make the sport a lot more affordable for team members. A useful tool is asking the team very early on what they want you to pursue. Specifically, ask them if they could have one or two sponsors what those would be. What do people want/need the most? You don't have time to pursue sponsorships from every company in the bike industry.

Many teams get discounts from their local bike shop, but before pursuing this, take a look at the numbers, and see whether that 10% discount is really going to be used by your team, and if it is, whether that benefit outweighs skipping the bike shop sponsorship in favor of selling your clothes in not only that shop, but their competitors' stores, too.

Appreciation and Consistency

Plenty of sponsorships disappear because the sponsor doesn't feel appreciated or the collegiate team flakes out from year to year. It's critical that you make sure your sponsor is thanked properly and you communicate with them regularly. At the bare minimum, send them a thank you note at the end of the

year. One step better is a signed jersey and/or team photo (that's an extra win for you, as they'll probably display this in their business and you'll get some advertising out of it). It is also a great idea to have an annual event, such as an Alumni and Sponsor Appreciation Ride, to keep them involved with the club and feeling like they are a part of it. This is also a good way for them to see some of the faces that they are helping out with their support, and to keep that support for the future.

Most importantly, keep track of all contacts, good and bad. Don't badger the same curmudgeons year in and year out. In your Officer's Guide, keep track of each contact's name, phone number, email, company, and a brief description of the last time they were contacted. You should also keep the contact info for any company reps you deal with as well. While you don't need to drive existing sponsors crazy, you should at least check in with them at the beginning of every racing year to make sure they are still on board and to keep them in the loop.

Fundraising

When school funding and sponsorship monies fall short, you need to fundraise. Actually, you need to fundraise even if they don't – that's how you expand your club and provide better resources for your riders.

There are numerous means of fundraising, the common denominator being that they all require quite a bit of work. Be very wary of anyone who says otherwise.

Hit up the Alumni

Older folks are where the money is, so tapping your alumni base is the fastest way to raise funds. Your job is to let them feel connected to the team, so that they'll be more likely to support it financially. Set up an alumni email list and send frequent updates with results and other goings on, and *occasionally* solicit funds. Make it personal – a letter from the club president, signed by the club president, is going to be more effective than public spam. And, as stated above, a yearly event that they can come to and take part in is as effective a tool as any for enlisting their support.

Alumni can be particularly valuable when you are in a pinch, like when scrambling for money to go to Nationals, for instance. This is why you want to keep your alumni informed and involved, though be sure not to bug them too much. This way, when you are really in desperate need of a little extra money for a particular reason, you can probably count on them to bail you out. This is a great resource, but don't abuse it.

At the end of every season, you should also send a list of graduating seniors to the alumni office. They will be happy to keep a list updated for you so that, years down the line, future club members will know who to reach out to for potential donations and sponsorship. You never know, one day you might be in the position to sponsor your alma mater.

Letter Writing Campaign

Along the same lines, consider a letter writing campaign. This form of fundraising is so common that many sport clubs' offices will have sample letters to help get you started. Get team members to send them to friends and family and ask for donations. Be sure to find out from your sport clubs office how the donations should be sent (or who the check should be made out to), and whether they are tax deductible (they should be). If they are, make that fact abundantly clear and send them a record for their taxes.

Some schools also offer clubs the opportunity to volunteer at the school call center one evening, where a portion of the funds raised by the club members end up in the club coffers.

Sell Clothing

Again, alums are going to be the primary source of income here. Sell clothing on your team website, at your events, the school bookstore, and at your local bike shop (if you have one). Don't short change yourself – mark up considerably for alums. They know they're donating to the team and will most likely be happy to pay.

You will likely move more volume through your school bookstore and local bike shop, so you don't need to mark that kit up as much – 25-30% is plenty, so the shop can make a few bucks as well. Having your sponsor shop buy a batch of clothing from you all at once is a good way to pad the coffers going into a race season, too.

Host a Party

Hosting an event with a small cover and silent auction is effective as well. Solicit donations *well* in advance, and make sure the stuff is good. Contact local pros, your sponsor shop, and alumni, as well as local businesses. Again, make it clear that their donation is tax deductible.

The key to silent auctions of this type is to keep starting prices low, unless you have a huge draw. If you have a bunch of European pros as alums, and they're all going to be there, you can probably up the prices a bit. Otherwise, know your place. Don't expect people to pay over retail for items you got donated for free.

Endowment

Talk to your school development office about setting up an endowment for donations. That way you can earn interest and have a steady revenue stream even during dry years. This usually requires a large chunk of change to set up at first, but it's worth investigating.

Existing Funds

Keep cash on hand in case of emergencies – it's as simple as that. Some schools require that you spend your budget by the end of the year or you lose the money for next year, so if the money doesn't roll over, obviously make use of it. But if that's not the case, a little cushion is always helpful.

Recruiting Members

You have two sources for recruits: cyclists (and athletes from other sports interested in getting into cycling) already at your school, and high school seniors/transfer students. To grow your club, you must pay close attention to both.

Internal Recruiting

Students already attending your school are the easiest to get in contact with, and generally provide the majority of new members in a given club. The key to attracting them is awareness – take advantage of every opportunity to make your club visible. As an example, all your group rides should start from a central location on campus where students can see you meet up and depart.

Most schools have some sort of “extra-curricular activity day” at the beginning of the semester – you

MUST be there. Bring a bunch of bikes, sign current members up to sit at the booth all day, perhaps play some cool videos and give out candy. Better yet, get someone to ride the rollers at your booth. You'll be amazed at the interest this draws. Have flyers with the information about your first meeting on them to hand out. Most importantly, take down the name and contact info for EVERY interested student you come across, and put them straight on the team email list. It's also a good practice to follow up the activities fair with a general interest meeting soon after. Just send out a mass email to the listserv and all the new contacts you got with the time and place.

Leading up to the activities fair and prior to your first meeting of the year, plaster campus with signs/flyers, particularly in high-traffic places like the campus center, dining hall, and bathroom stalls (no joke). Walk around and put them on any nice bikes you see being used as commuters (or heck, cheap bikes, too). Stick them in all the dorms so the freshmen see them. Keep them simple, with a few quick facts about the team and the date/time/place of the first meeting. This is also a good idea before your race.

It's often amazing how many students have no idea their school has a cycling team. To that end, you need to publicize yourselves whenever possible. Won a race or conference title? Contact the school newspaper minutes after, so they have time to write a story and file for Monday. Have someone on the team send them a great photo or two, some race notes, and not only will students take notice, but so will your school administration (\$\$\$).

External Recruiting

This one is a bit more difficult, and potentially costly. Much of it can simply be accomplished through some effective PR and good Nationals results, which will put your school on people's radar.

Lastly, simply having an up to date website with your team's basic info and officer contact information is free advertising. Make yourself accessible to anyone already looking at your school who is also interested in cycling. Make sure that your team site is tied to the school athletics site, so that it is easy to find for anyone wondering if your school has a team.

Diversity

Lastly, the more you have to offer, the more attractive you are. If your team only races on the road, you're likely only going to be able to draw people interested in road biking. If you can offer a mountain bike or track or cyclo-cross squad, or all of the above, you'll have pull with a much broader crowd. Not all teams have the resources to compete in multiple seasons, or the interest. But if you have one or two riders that want to race 'cross, tell them to go for it! This will only increase your visibility and add another selling point to your program. This way, when some stud junior asks you about your club, you can tell him that he won't be alone racing in the mud. Additionally, going to multiple national championships increases your [national ranking](#), which is always a positive selling point with your school.

For an example of how a modest investment in pursuing a new discipline can do wonders for your team, check out James McCabe's (Wake Forest) articles in Cyclo-cross Magazine about what cyclo-cross did for their teams [here](#). Really valuable information, so read up!

Developing and Maintaining Female Membership

One of the most critical elements of any successful cycling team, where success is not only defined by

winning championships, but also by maintaining a full, well balanced team of all abilities that doesn't ebb and flow in size, strength, or organization, is making sure your team maintains a solid female contingent, and that women are well integrated into the team. Women's races have point totals equal to that of the men's races and any team that wants to place well within their conference or on a national level needs to have both a strong men's and women's team. Not only can 'a bunch of dudes' not win championships as they lack 'the better half' of a full team, but they also are missing out on what makes collegiate cycling truly special: the fact that it is a co-ed sport.

Recruitment

Attracting women to the sport and your team requires a few different tactics from drawing men in. No, guys, contrary to popular belief, women aren't completely foreign creatures, and in fact, a lot of these principles are true for men, as well, but be sensitive to priorities that may be different from those of men. This is a key role for your team's Women's Leader.

The most important step to growing your team's female membership is identifying the issues that prevent women from entering the sport or joining your team, and how to counteract those issues, as well as determining what factors will actively attract more women.

- *Safety concerns:* In general (we're going to have a lot of generalizations in here, but there are always exceptions and these are based on information culled from lots of female riders and their coaches [of both genders]), women are more timid about the dangers of competitive cycling, especially when it comes to riding in a pack. They tend to place a higher value on their personal bodily safety than a lot of men do, and they can view cycling as more dangerous than it needs to be. *Suggestion:* Make it a high priority to not only host lots of slowly progressing skills clinics, but talk about them early on and if your conference hosts intro clinics at races, use those as a selling point early on. **Don't push female riders into racing situations before they're ready**, and let each rider progress at their own pace while still providing encouragement and support.
 - Skills clinics throughout the year are important so that your riders not only handle their bikes safely, but so that they feel confident and prepared when going into races. In addition to skills clinics such as changing tires, cornering, crossing wheels practice, etc... holding a mock crit will help boost the confidence of new riders before race season. As you are probably all aware, crits are hard to explain and you never really understand them until you've raced in one. In the past our team has hosted mock races but nobody would show up to them - mainly because all of the new racers were scared and intimidated - they didn't want to race with the returning riders who knew what they were doing.
 - Here are some useful tips for a mock crit:
 - Hold the mock crit directly after a skills practice - this way the mock crit is less of a race and more of a practice. Make sure you choose a course that is very secluded from traffic (industrial parks, new housing developments, etc...) and remind people that this is not a closed course.
 - If you have enough riders, split it into two races - one with the women and one with the men (remember, men can be extremely intimidating to women).
 - Have returning riders join the mock race, but not to actually race - have them teach and encourage during the race.
 - Explain the rules beforehand and make sure you remind people that it is a mock race - nobody gets a prize for winning - it is supposed to be a learning experience.
 - Have the group that is not racing watch traffic and cheer on the racers!
 - After the race talk about whether the riders thought it was helpful, if they felt they

knew what a crit was afterwards, what they felt like they might need to improve on after the race, etc...

- *Numbers:* Many teams that are made up of only men often complain that finding that first woman to join the team is the hardest, and that's often very true. But even then, when there are only one or two women on the team, the skill level will often vary widely between those women and that lack of critical mass (namely the lack of women to ride with) will be a deterrent to women's growth. *Suggestion:* Look to female cyclists in the community (outside the collegiate club) to join rides and help build that critical mass so that women can ride with people at their ability level. If you're still struggling to recruit that first girl, you can also ask a female cyclist in your community to help you by sitting at your table at your campus activities and club sports fair, so that there's a female face. This individual could also help lead the first couple of informational rides and meetings for women. Finally, make sure that your team rides that include both genders are no-drop rides. It's just common sense that if you're new to the sport, getting dropped is a pretty quick recipe for dropping the sport itself.
- *Attitudes:* Women's cycling is not a joke or a side show, and to treat or even think of it like anything but an equal half of collegiate cycling is to seal your team's fate as a men's only club. Even if you do "everything right" when it comes to recruitment, if the motivation and attitudes aren't genuine, it will be obvious to the women thinking of joining the team. A lot of women get scared off by clubs that exude a male-dominated culture, and only think of recruiting women as an afterthought or simply a pathway to more points. *Suggestion:* Only a true desire to include women in your team alongside an environment and culture that is welcoming to them will succeed here.
- *Equipment:* Cycling is a male dominated sport, and despite recent women's specific movements in the industry, cycling products reflect the gender bias. *Suggestion:* If your team has invested in loaner bikes, make sure you have small sizes so that women interested in trying out the sport don't have to make a \$1200 commitment first. Also, when choosing clothing companies, make sure they offer a women's specific cut of jersey and shorts, **especially** when it comes to the chamois.
- *Lack of Role Models:* If the face of the cycling team is male, the obvious implication is that it's a men's sport, and that's an instant turnoff for a female rider on the fence about joining the team. *Suggestion:* Lead with your team's women, and make them the face of your recruitment campaign (who knows, it may draw in more men, too...). If you don't have any women on your team, try to convince a female faculty or staff member to be your club advisor, so there is some kind of female leadership in the team. Ask that individual (or, as mentioned above, a female cyclist from outside the college) to attend your campus activities fair and the first few meetings. It's usually more essential for women to have other women around as part of the team, than it is for men to have other men around.
- *All racing, all the time:* If the club is focused too heavily on racing and training, it's often discouraging for women who are also looking for a social avenue and might not be interested in racing at first. *Suggestion:* Make sure the social aspect of your team is emphasized and kept alive. Host social events for the women of your team to bond, not only with each other, but also with their male teammates. The racing might not draw women in, but a friendly, social atmosphere that also involves riding bikes might. Also emphasize the social aspects of the race weekends as opportunities to hang out with women from other schools in your conference. The inter-team camaraderie is one of the wonderful aspects of collegiate cycling for all of us, so play it up!

Recruitment Activities:

Activities Fair (new student orientation day):

This is super important. Most of your new cyclists will come from the freshman class, and they will be the ones to invest in the team for the next 3 years if they have a good experience. Put a lot of effort into this event!

- Don't wear anything intimidating such as sunglasses - you want the new riders to be able to see your eyes. Think about refraining from wearing a team kit - a large number of our women provided feedback at the end of their first year that matching team kits, while awesome, are intimidating to newcomers.
- Make sure that if you're working at the table, you're focused on meeting and talking to new riders and not catching up on what your friends or teammates did over the summer. Be outgoing! Try to talk to everyone that passes - a simple "hello" with a smile works wonders!
- For team members that are not working the table but want to stop by - please do! Say hello, talk to a new rider, but don't have the entire team taking up the space. If you want to hang out at the table for an extended amount of time, you should sign up for a shift. This is another thing that was mentioned on a survey - too many people at the table that clearly know each other is intimidating.

Opening Week Rides:

Bringing first-year students into the team right away is important. There are so many activities available to freshmen and you don't want to miss out on potential riders because you didn't hook them into the program quickly enough. Opening rides are a great way to allow new students to meet each other and the team in a fun & relaxed riding environment. Consider hosting short rides every day during the first week.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Make sure that the ride leaves from a central point on campus that everyone (even the new students) will know.
- Make sure that introductions are made before the ride takes off. Name, hometown, and year in school are pieces of information that don't take long, may spark riding conversations, and help the students to feel like they aren't riding off with a group of TOTAL strangers...
- Be extra aware of road safety - go over hand signals at the start of the meeting and make sure your returning riders know to be extra careful. Some of these students may not have ridden in traffic before.
- Make sure that returning riders talk with new riders. While it is also great for new riders to connect with each other on these rides, returning riders need to start learning names and making connections with the interested racers. If returning riders are only riding next to each other, then the new riders will feel excluded from the group.
- Avoid non-inclusive conversations. For example, don't yell to someone three riders ahead of you, "hey remember that time last year when we rode the TTT in the snow in Montana?" This is hard to avoid, especially during the first week of the year, but you need to keep in mind that opening rides are for recruitment, and new riders are not going to want to join a group in which they feel totally isolated. Instead, act as a tour guide to the riders, help them out with group riding etiquette, and ask them about where they are from. Get to know your future teammates!
- Move around in the group and talk to more than just one new student/rider.
- Team kits. DO NOT wear full team kits on these rides. We have heard over and over about how the cycling team is intimidating, especially for women, and part of this is because of the matching kits. Try to wear mismatched kits the first week and avoid gear with the team name on it. You

could even think about wearing a t-shirt as opposed to a jersey - many of the students probably won't have seriously ridden before college and will show up in a t-shirt and running shorts. If you dress down, they will feel a lot more comfortable.

- Keep the rides short - 45 minutes is a good length. Again, many of these riders will not be used to sitting on the bike for a long time and the shorter the ride, the more riders you will probably get.
- The pace of these rides is SLOW!!!!!! One returning rider should lead and someone needs to pick up sag. Everyone should ride together. NOBODY gets dropped and NOBODY sprints ahead of the group. They don't need to prove anything to you and YOU don't need to prove anything to them.
- Make sure that nobody complains about how slow the pace is. More likely than not, there will be riders that are working hard & hearing that someone thinks the pace is slow will only discourage them from coming out for a second ride.
- Keep all comments positive! Encouraging words are never looked poorly upon, and honest compliments related to riding such as, "for your first group ride, you are very calm and in control of your bike!"
- We sent out a survey to our women's listserv (includes current racers, alumni, community members, other Whitman students not involved in racing) and the opening rides were the reason that 3 of 4 girls initially very interested in joining the cycling team decided to not join.
 - They felt like they were too slow/out of shape for the team or that the team was too intense/intimidating for them.

Follow Up:

The importance of following up with anyone that shows interest is important. This is easier to do at a small school, but it makes a huge difference in retention.

- Have invested upperclassmen in the team each take a few prospective riders (ie ANYONE that shows interest. You might be surprised by who ends up getting bitten by the cycling bug!) and email them a nice note, explaining that:
 - You're excited that they've shown interest in the team.
 - A short and sweet antidote from your own experience in collegiate cycling.
 - INVITE THEM ON A RIDE! A slow, easy, scenically beautiful ride. Or if they have done more riding, try challenging them a bit if they are up for it.
- Email them again in the next 5 days. You may feel creepy. Don't.
- If someone comes on a couple rides, and you don't see them again, send them an email and ask them why they decided to not continue with the team. Don't grill them, but this will be helpful information for the future.

The Next Two Months:

This is still a really important time. You have new people, but you need to keep them interested! Team bonding activities, in addition to calling several rides each week will increase retention. Here's some ideas:

- Movie nights - have a bike themed movie (or any other genre too!) played on a projector outside on early fall nights or in an upperclassman's house. Also, delicious popcorn doesn't hurt. Make sure to start the movie a little later than advertised - this will give the riders time to talk with each other. Always be encouraging connections between teammates.
- Have a potluck or a barbecue at a rider's house. Have the upperclassmen bring delicious home-cooked food that freshmen miss out on because they're in the dining halls.
- Ladies Night - get the upperclassmen girls to throw an evening of girl awesomeness. Make energy bars (you can find a number of easy recipes online), watch one stage of a big women's race and

have an experienced racer explain what's happening, paint nails your team colors, go to an ice cream shop, etc...

- **Team Rides:** Make sure that you're calling at least one main, no-drop team ride a week. Try to have some fun rides too, where you stop to pet some pretty horses or llamas, pick some wild blackberries that are in season, or eat a snack at a cool country deli. You can still call longer/harder rides, but just make sure that you also call easier, 20 miles, 1-1.5 hour rides too! *1 hour rides are way less intimidating to new riders.

Retention

Many of the same issues that turn women away from the sport before trying it, as discussed above, are also the same reasons they leave it after a while. A few suggestions, though, to keep in mind along the way:

Women's Only: Make sure your team has a women's only email listserv so that the ladies of your team can communicate freely, and arrange women's only rides, clinics, meetings, and social events. This should be moderated by your team's Women's Leader.

Travel: When arranging travel to race weekends, make sure that the women of your team are involved in the discussion, so that no one has to share rooms with the other gender if they don't feel comfortable with it. Same goes for transportation: sharing a van with 10 sweaty boys is very few girls' idea of a good time, especially when the conversation, and the jokes in particular, turn to the usual college-aged male topics. Arrange travel accordingly, with sensitivity to the desires and concerns of your female teammates.

Culture: Again, make sure the culture of your team continues to focus on women's development and the inclusion of women in team activities and leadership. It must be a continued effort, past the recruitment stage and into the very nature of your team. Your team's Women's Leader should feel comfortable calling her male teammates out on things that are inappropriate or potentially hurtful to your team's women.

Social: Again, the social element of the team is sometimes much more important for female riders than it is for men, so make sure there are plenty of opportunities to get together within the team. Team dinners and barbeques, movie nights, roller sessions, stopping for coffee while out on group rides: try to arrange some kind of small get together weekly.

Race Etiquette:

Retention is extremely important and while you may have some girls come out to one or two races, there is a chance that you will never see them again if they don't have a great experience. Part of this is often due to the fact that the ladies don't feel supported at their races and that too much of the focus is put on the upper category races - especially the Men's A races. How do you combat that? Have a large portion of your A racers at the start of the women's races - if the A riders are on the line with the girls getting them pumped up, giving high-fives, and taking jackets, the women will feel that they are an integral part of the team - because they are!!

- Make sure you congratulate riders after their race! Ask them how it went.
 - Didn't go so well? Talk with them about areas they would like to improve and offer to help them out. If they see that you will give up an hour one afternoon to help them one-on-one with cornering, they will see that you feel they are an important part of the team.
- Make sure that just as many team members are out supporting the lower category races as the

upper categories.

Another reason that women drop out of racing is due to the ‘first race crash’. I know a number of girls that don’t return to racing after they crash out - this number is much higher than the number of males that drop out due to a crash. This can be due to a number of factors, but the best thing that you can do is talk with them about the crash and help them work their way back onto the bike. If she crashed on a corner, offer to lead her through some corners at speed after classes. If she crossed wheels and went down, help her out with her bike skills. Remember to stay positive and remind her that the team is there to help her out.

Male Etiquette:

While it is definitely important to have strong female role models, the way that the men on your team act is just as important to both recruitment and retention.

Intimidation Factor:

Men are intimidating to new female riders. There is not a whole lot you can do to get rid of the problem, but there are definitely actions that can be made to help the situation.

- Talk to new women riders. Get to know them - ask them where they are from, what their academic interests are, etc... If women see that the males on the team are genuinely interested in what they have to say, and start getting to know them, they will come off much less intimidating.
- Talk to the new women outside of riding - if you see them on campus, say hi, call them by name, chat for a minute. Ask how classes are, if they will be on the next team ride, etc...
- If you didn’t start racing or riding until you got to college, make a point of letting the new riders know. This will give them a huge amount of confidence and inspiration about how they may improve over the next few years.
- If there is a new woman on the team that is falling off the back of a team ride, have one of the more experienced males drop back to ride with her. If she sees that one of the faster males is fine with, and taking the time to sit up and ride with her then she will feel like she has a place on the team.

Female Etiquette:

Obviously how the upperclassmen girls act on the team is vital to attracting a retaining new female (and male) riders. Because there are often not very many girls on the team, they have the power to really set the tone for the rest of the group.

- Keep the level of gossip down within the team.
- Make sure that the upperclassmen women on the team all take one of the new women riders on the team under their wing. Make them feel like they have a friend on the team, someone they can confide in if they are having problems, etc.
- Most of the information in the “Male Etiquette” category applies to ladies too!

Clothing Design and Ordering

The most important thing is to do everything *early*, so that when your clothing is four weeks late because the boat from China was lost in a typhoon (which always seems to happen), it’s still a few weeks early. Making your team race in t-shirts is not cool.

The following is based on a fall season time schedule, meaning kits have to be ordered by June at the

latest to arrive by late August.

Pick a Company

You get what you pay for, and the cheap companies will have cheap product. That said, chances are that your riders will balk at a total kit cost of much over \$100, so you're somewhat limited. Ask around and shop around, and pick the company that seems to be the right level of quality at the right price for your particular team. Make sure to consider things like turnaround time, customer service, the ordering system (some companies have awesome online ordering systems these days), order minimums and design time (see below). If you can find a local company, the ability to go and yell at a real person face-to-face is always a plus.

Also, be sure to look into whether or not your school has any licensing requirements to use their logo. Your club sports director should know the answer to this, and it is something you will have to take care of before picking a company, as some companies might already be licensed for your school, but many are not.

Many companies have also offered at least 10% discounts to collegiate teams in the past, too. You just have to ask, and don't be afraid to let one company know that another offered you a better discount, and see if they can give you an even better deal. Pick your company in early spring.

As soon as a company is chosen, request a fit kit so your riders can try everything on before you order. This also lets you feel the quality first-hand, and if it's terrible change companies. Nobody likes a bad chamois.

The Design

The design is up to you and the team. USA Cycling requires that you all race in identifiably similar kits that have your school name on them – larger than any of the sponsors (you can't be Bob's Bikes presented by Texachussetts State University). It's always a good idea to keep the design consistent from year to year, so that riders aren't forced to buy new ones each year. Some teams have had the same design for years, while others enjoy breaking out a newly designed kit each year. Either way, the Conference Director should approve your jersey design in order to avoid looking like other teams: this could lead to confusion at races for both the officials and you.

Most companies will help you with design for a fee, or give you a few hours of design time for free, past which point they will charge. More than one team has sent in a crayon'ed proof and had their kit turn out excellent. Just give the company a call and talk to a real person about what you need. They want your business and will be happy to help you out. If you have someone who's graphically inclined on the team, though, and has access to Adobe Illustrator (check with your campus computer labs – there's usually a design lab that you can use), you can do the designs yourself and not worry about whether the company's designers go overtime and charge you. Either way, nail down the design by mid-May.

Ordering

Clothing should be ordered by mid-June at the very latest, even if your company says 4-6 week turnaround. It could be 8, maybe 10. You need to know how many of everything you need, and figure out how to pay for it. You have two options, but either way, make sure **NOBODY** gets any clothing before paying up. Chasing people for money is a nightmare and a waste of time.

Pre-Pay

Make riders pre-pay and order specific pieces of kit. This works well for small programs, but for large ones, you will end up with riders who join late or are just spacey racing in t-shirts. Try and order a few extras to have on hand for these situations. Send an order form out to everyone with prices and illustrations so all they have to do is fill out their sizes and send it back to you. A good way to organize this is with a robust spreadsheet that tracks total price, payment, sizes, and options. This way you can easily keep good records and make sure people get what they ordered and only what they ordered – the scoundrels will undoubtedly swear up and down that they ordered more than they did.

This method usually requires a spring delivery or a reorder in the winter to accommodate new members in the fall.

Purchase on Delivery

Guesstimate number of kits needed based on previous years and make people pay when they get it, rather than before ordering. Talk to last year's president and clothing person for numbers. If the design is changing considerably, assume most will buy new kit. If not, probably 50% of current riders will, plus the new riders. (Keep in mind that cyclists are usually tiny. You're going to need a lot more smalls and mediums than larges and XLs.) This option leaves you with the potential to have a lot of leftover product (or not enough), however, which means wasted money. This also requires lots of money up front. Many clothing companies will take 50% up front and 50% upon delivery, which helps, but a large club will still be making an order of many thousands of dollars. Make sure your finances are straight before ordering. A good way to help offset some of the cost is to order a bunch of clothing for your sponsor shop/bookstore/alumni, and have them pay up front.

Minimum Orders

Bear in mind that many companies have a minimum order. That means that you have to order a certain number of short-sleeved items, a certain number of bibs, etc. Sometime the team might need to shell out a few dollars to buy extra items to meet those minimums, but you can often sell these to alumni or keep them as spares to sell to team members if they crash and ruin their kits. Extras are not a bad thing to have around.

Timeline of Events

What follows is a very loose outline of what the year will look like for you. You'll notice that the busiest time of year is the beginning of the season. Most importantly, take this and adapt it to the specific calendar of your team. Every time you do something as a team leader that will need to repeat next year or next month, add it to the list! Better yet, if it is something that all teams should do, [shoot the suggestion to us in an email](#) and we'll add it to this document.

July

- General:
 - Keep momentum going for team – send an occasional email
 - Plan for track nationals
 - Gauge interest among team
 - Travel, lodging
 - Talk to administration about possible funding opportunities

- Finances:
 - Poll team for what kind of sponsorships you should pursue
 - Lay out initial budget for year

August

- General:
 - Meet with club sports department to arrange paperwork, make connections, and get general information for the year on what they need from you
 - Reserve vehicles for fall race weekends if not done in spring
 - Develop agenda for first few meetings
 - Update roster for sponsors and school
 - Get appropriate waivers and forms from each member
 - Track Season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
 - Register for track nationals
- Communications:
 - Post fall race calendar on website
 - Post weekly meeting calendar on website
 - Send back-to-school email update to team:
 - Dues
 - Racing schedule
 - Clothing
 - Other Costs
 - Weekly meeting and ride schedules
 - Distribute team info flyers around campus
- Clothing:
 - Meet with sales venues (bookstore, bike shops, etc)
 - Set up sales on website
 - Arrange processes for sales to club members
- Finances:
 - Set up meetings with old sponsors
 - Investigate potential new sponsors
 - Meet with school administration to discuss additional funding for the year
 - Lay out detailed budget for year

September

- General:
 - Continue to update roster for local sponsors
 - Attend student activities fair – RECRUIT!
 - Back to school party, meet and greet new members
 - Host mountain bike skills clinics for new riders
 - Mountain bike season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
 - Plan for Mountain Bike Nationals
 - Book and arrange travel, lodging
 - Make qualification procedures clear to team
 - Track Nationals
 - [National Championship Eligibility Form](#)

- Communications:
 - Back to school newsletter
- Clothing:
 - Sell and distribute
- Finances:
 - Meet with sponsors, negotiate for the coming year
 - Fill out industry sponsorship applications

October

- General
 - Mountain bike season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
 - Mountain Bike Nationals
 - [National Championship Eligibility Form](#)
- Clothing:
 - Check in on sales at shops and bookstore
 - Begin reorder process if necessary
- Finances:
 - Finalize sponsorship agreements
 - Continue pursuing new sponsors

November

- General:
 - Renew USA Cycling club membership
 - Cyclocross season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
 - Plan for cyclocross nationals
 - Book and arrange travel, lodging
 - Make qualification procedures clear to team

December

- General:
 - Renew individual USAC licenses.
 - Begin to drum up interest in possible officer replacements for next semester
 - Cyclocross season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
- Clothing:
 - Reorder if necessary

January

- General:
 - Back to school fired up meeting
 - Hold officer elections for following year
 - Get all student forms filled out and handed in (if needed again for new semester)

February

- General:

- Hold road skills clinics

March

- General:
 - Road season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
- Clothing:
 - Begin design process and company search for following year

April

- General:
 - Road season
 - Weekly, arrange travel, lodging, registration
 - Plan for Road Nationals
 - Book and arrange travel, lodging
 - Make qualification procedures clear to team
- Clothing:
 - Select company if different from last year

May

- General:
 - Road Bike Nationals
 - [National Championship Eligibility Form](#)
 - End of the year party/ BBQ
 - If possible, reserve vehicles for fall race weekends
- Clothing:
 - Finalize clothing order – quantities and design
- Finances:
 - Thank you notes and gifts to sponsors
 - End of year budget review

June

- General:
 - Take a break!
- Clothing:
 - Place clothing order