

## TWELVE QUESTIONS THAT MOST PEOPLE ASK BEFORE GOING ON ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK

### 1. So what's all the hype about Alternative Spring Break?

Everyone who participates in ASB at Ithaca College gets a type of experience that only service immersion trips can offer. ASB is one of the best ways to learn more about yourself, and why community involvement is important. Students who participate in ASB have the privilege of serving alongside a variety of community organizations whose mission it is to alleviate injustices in their respective areas. ASB has changed lives. Students have formed college service clubs based on their experiences, joined Americorps and Peace Corps after completing an undergraduate degree, and gone to work at non-government organizations. It is an experience that will in some way change the way you see the world.

### 2. How do I get selected for ASB? My résumé is a mile long!

Acceptance into the ASB program is competitive. In 2010, 44% of applicants received acceptance letters. The only thing that everyone *must* do to be reviewed is submit a completed application before the stated deadline. To improve the quality of your application, consider the following:

- Your past service experiences
- Your present involvement, both on and off campus
- Why you want to participate in ASB
- Indicate whether you are qualified to drive an Ithaca College Vehicle

**Note:** OSEMA understands that senior IC students may have accumulated more service experience than those in their first or second year. We assure everyone that the review process is equal. Quantity of experience never implies quality of experience, and the application only allows for applicants to exemplify several meaningful experiences in their lives. Thus, we strongly encourage you to consider *how* you will describe your service experiences, regardless of how many they are. This will allow us to see the depth of the engagement and how it has impacted the person you are today.

### 3. How do I pay for ASB? Remember, dude: I'm in college right now!

This is the biggest concern of ASB hopefuls. Make no mistake about it - ASB does come at a cost to the participant. Before I discuss raising money for your trip, I will mention that OSEMA does help! OSEMA provides a subsidy to the budget of every trip, as well as the administrative support. For instance, a trip to Here-nor-There, PA, might cost a student \$400.00 without any subsidization. But OSEMA may provide \$500 toward the trip's budget, at which point participants are only required to pay \$350.00. Obviously, this does not cover everything. For the rest, you'll need to fundraise:

## 10 Ways to Get You There

**1. “The Letter” – THIS IS THE EASIEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO FUND YOUR TRIP!**

In the 2011 ASB program, an Ithaca College student sent a letter to virtually everyone he knew, explaining his reason for wanting to partake in this experience, why he needed the assistance, and how any amount of assistance – even \$1 - would help make his trip a reality. The young man received more than a dozen donations from a variety of people in his life – from his relatives to his high school principal! To make a long story short: in the end he paid \$75 to go to Florida for a week. EVERYONE SHOULD PRODUCE A LETTER! As soon as you are accepted, send your fundraising letter to friends, family members, church members, coaches, teachers, professors, anyone – many of them will want support your choice to do this.

**2. Be Creative** – The biggest mistake that people often make when it comes to funding ANY project is that they don’t immediately start fundraising ideas. Please, don’t wait until February to come up with two hundred dollars! Just imagine this: you launch a kickstarter.com account in November to make a film or photo documentary (doubling as a class project?) about your ASB experience. Maybe this earns one, two, three hundred dollars in donations and some class credit! Don’t hesitate to seek out your fellow spring breakers and make this a group effort.**3. Save and be mindful** – If you currently have a job, consider the ways you choose to spend any of your extra income, and figure out a fraction to save for ASB. Saving \$50 a month could make a big difference. Choosing between a winter ski vacation or ASB in March may be a tough decision, but it’s a decision that’s yours to make...**4. Scholarships, Academic Programs, Department Grants** – If you are in a scholarship or special academic program (CSTEP, for instance), check with the chairs and directors of that program to see how much of the program cost can be subsidized. Check with your particular academic school to see if any grants are available.**6. Holiday gift wrapping** – We’ve all been to a big bookstore around Christmas and noticed some people gift wrapping books by the entrance. These are common people raising money for common things. This is usually a volunteer activity (i.e. the store doesn’t pay you), but requesting donations from people is allowed. If the big stores are uncooperative, consider looking to a local bookseller in Ithaca or your hometown.**7. Textbook Buyback(ers)** – Students have been contracting with book buyback companies to gather old textbooks that still have value, and sending them to the companies for a commission. It works differently depending on the company with which you contract, but hey – a little work collecting textbooks may send you to Florida next year!**8. Ithaca Chili Festival and other events in your area**– Contact the organizers of Chili Festival (Google will find them for you...) and ask to sell cornbread, cider, coffee, tea, cocoa – anything that’s cheap and you can make a big return on! (Hey, in fact, you could go see the good people at Gimme! Coffee or Ithaca Coffee Company and see if they will actually donate the coffee to your efforts! Be on the lookout for events in your hometown over break. You’d be surprised what people will pay for a cup of fair trade coffee and a piece of zucchini bread at a holiday function! Connect with your local churches, rotary club, or community center. Get a local event catalogue for your area and think of something that you can make or do to raise money. Remember: most people will want to see you participate in a program like this one.

- 9 Work** – If you have not lined up a job for the holiday season, and you’re running out of ideas, this may be the time to consider it.
- 10 See options #1 - #3.**

#### **4. Where do I make payments for ASB?**

Once you’ve been accepted, you’ll get an information sheet detailing the payment process, but the short version is that you pay your deposit and balance at OSEMA: 325 Egbert hall, third floor across from the cashier’s office. Note: for security purposes, the only person who can accept your payment is Administrative Assistant, Patti Banfield. There will be designated times that you can submit payments.

#### **5. Where do we sleep during our trip? In tents?**

This varies depending on the area. Several trips sleep at other colleges! This is safe, convenient, and offers participants a lot of amenities. Some groups stay in churches or at retreat centers. Expect to bring a sleeping bag or your own linens! Women and men always have separate sleeping quarters. And for as cool as it may seem, we do not sleep in tents.

#### **6. Do we do anything other than community service on our trip?**

Yes. Alternative Spring Break is a cultural experience, as well. Past groups have met with IC alumni to discuss career options, visited historic parts of New Orleans, enjoyed an afternoon at the beach in Florida, and more. **Note:** While you will definitely have “downtime” during ASB – mostly in the evenings and after dinner – this does not mean that you have a pass to roam as freely as you would on your own, independent spring break vacation. Many of the service reflection sessions take place after dinner, and...well...students are often tired after a long day of work or have homework to be done. In short, ASBers do not spend a tremendous amount of time being “vacationers,” largely because it removes us from the trip’s fundamental purposes: service, cultural immersion, camaraderie, teamwork.

#### **7. How’s the food? You *do* feed me, right? Oh, did I mention that I’m vegan?!**

Just like the lodging, expect a very basic diet during your trip! The trip would simply be unaffordable if meals were eaten at expensive restaurants. Some trips will cook their own meals, while others will utilize college cafeterias.

Last year’s New Orleans trip saw several students who preferred a vegan diet or had dietary restrictions. Everyone was accommodating to everyone’s wants and needs. No one had to compromise their needs/wants when it came to diet. So, you do not eat PB&J for every meal, but don’t expect fine dining to appear on the menu either.

#### **8. How do we get there? It’s too cold to walk and my bike has a flat.**

Whatever is least expensive and most efficient, with the least expensive way always being first priority. So, we usually travel by van.

## 9. Who's in charge? The students, right?!

Well, Sorta. OSEMA cares a lot about creating opportunities for students to make leadership and team-based decisions; ASB is one example where students do a fair amount of decision-making. However, you need to know that every trip is accompanied by an adviser. Your adviser is a full-time employee of Ithaca College who has agreed to accompany your group. This person is responsible for getting you to-and-from your destination, making sure that you participate fully; managing the group's budget, communicating with the Assistant Director on important matters, and making decisions that involve your safety. It is unlikely that you will agree with every decision that your trip adviser makes, but it does matter that you acknowledge your advisor's authority. Nobody says that the ASB experience is a piece of cake. It can be very challenging to work cooperatively with several people who are different from you for more than a week. The students who gain a lot from this experience are flexible, and realize that tough decisions need to be made on occasion, and there isn't a lot of time to be democratic about it. We hope you can respect that the trip adviser may need to make a decision that is in the best interest of the entire group.

## 10. What if I'm 19 and finagle my way into a bar down the street. Can I drink?

Absolutely not! Check out how quickly your decision becomes a nightmare:

1. Our trip adviser finds out you've been drinking (and they will)
2. Your trip adviser calls me
3. I call you, and immediately inform you that you're coming home in the morning by any means necessary—bus, plane, train, foot, bike, hang glider, unicycle, horse, roller skates, etc.
4. I notify your parents that you, in fact, signed an agreement (which your trip adviser will have in her/his hands for review) promising that you would not consume any controlled substances on the ASB trip, and that you, in fact, blatantly chose to break said promise.
5. I notify your parents that you or them will be paying for your trip home as soon as possible.
6. We take disciplinary action against you as soon as the spring recess is over.

Drink or do drugs on this trip, and it's GAME OVER! We will stop at nothing to send you home as quickly as possible. By partaking in such activities, you've displayed no concern for yourself, and voluntarily placed your peers, the community you're serving, and the college you represent in serious jeopardy. We simply won't accept such behavior.

**Don't drink or do drugs on this trip. If you wish to consume during your spring break, do not apply.**

## 11. But I'm 21! The law says I can drink!?

Unfortunately, you still won't be enjoying that local brewery. You signed a participant agreement form that stated you would not partake in ANY alcohol or drug-related activities, irrespective of age, and you're not on the trip unless you've signed the form. Essentially, you forfeit your right to drink for nine days, or during the duration of the ASB program. Refer to question #10 for what would happen if you choose to exercise your 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights...

I'm going to put it in plain language right here: If someone cannot suspend all partying/drinking behaviors for nine days to partake in something that could potentially change his/her life, then this is not the trip for you. Do your best to get the most out of this experience.

**12. I'm not sure what to bring and what to leave home. I'm thinking about bringing my ipod, ipad, ipen, itoothbrush, and cell phone with me. What happens if they end up broken or stolen?**

We do not require you to bring these things. You brought them at your own discretion. And by signing the participation agreement form, you've released Ithaca College of all liability to your belongings. Not that you can't bring such items, just know that they are entirely your responsibility. Sorry...

Calm down. We prepare for you a comprehensive list of essentials, so you'll have everything you *need*. The best part about this list is that it is rather short. For some people, the immediate reaction when taking a nine day trip is to pack everything imaginable, with no redundancy. This is poor planning and does not account for the other volunteers riding with you to your site. Aside from your sleeping bag, everything else needs to fit into one small suitcase or a medium-size travel backpack. You may bring a book bag or laptop case in addition to your main bag.