

Bowie State University
Alternative Spring Break Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

A Brief History of Alternative Break at BSU

Bowie State University has prided itself on its role as an academic community promoting public service and social justice. This is exemplified in the mission of the Office of Student Life, which is to *provide all BSU Students the opportunity to be actively involved on campus..* BSU strives to meet our core values of:

Excellence - Inclusivity - Integrity - Accountability - Innovation

Alternative Break trips offer unique opportunities to integrate all of our core values in intensive, accessible, and relevant ways as participants take part in transformative short-term immersion programs throughout the world. Alternative Break trips are coordinated through BSU's Office of Greek Life and Community Service. The office works closely with student leaders to ensure that trips are safe, well organized, and educational while maintaining a focus on social justice, cultural enrichment, and community service.

Until the mid-1990s, alternative spring breaks had been domestic initiatives largely sponsored by service based organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity. Over the years these trips owe their success to the hard work and commitment of the staff and students who planned and implemented them, helping to streamline the process of planning an Alternative Spring Break trip and allowing trip organizers to spend less time on paperwork and spend more time crafting a meaningful experience.

Bowie State University Alternative Spring Break Mission Statement & Goals

Alternative Spring Break is a year long service enrichment program designed to connect BSU students with community service opportunities and to enhance student development through leadership training, social awareness, and cultural experience. Our program goals are to

- Create service based programming to assist those with a need for civic, social, or philanthropic change;
- Work with local, state, and national service based organizations provide opportunities for our students to serve and give
- Connect our matriculating students, staff, and faculty with service events to learn and develop the service based skill set needed to succeed post graduation
- To work with our Provost, professors, and academic staff to create academic based enrichment opportunities
- To provide our students with events, workshops, and forums that create lifelong bonds of friendship and sincere need to serve the greater community

Organizing An Alternative Spring Break

Criteria for Alternative Spring Break Trips

Proposals submitted to the Community Service Student Advisory Board (CSSAB), must meet the required criteria in order to be approved as an Alternative Break trip. General Students are also given the opportunity to meet with the CSSAB to recommend researched ASB locations.

Trips are reviewed for approval based on the following criteria:

- The community service theme is clearly articulated.
- Community service is represented in the proposed itinerary and activities for each day.
- The proposal is well planned and well thought out.
- The trip is feasible.
- The trip is safe.
- The students have researched high-quality local organizations, individuals, or trip service providers.

Meeting University Requirements

1. Obtaining Necessary Forms

- Make copies of passports and visas—leave a set on campus and travel with another set
- Community Service Center
- Bowie State University Alternative Break Website:

2. Submit Copies of Completed Forms

- Original Documents will go to the Vice President of Student Affairs (to be held for three years)
 - Copies will go to the Office of Greek Life and Community Service
- Be sure to include forms for leaders and advisors as well.

3. Detailed itinerary with on-site contact information

- must be provided to all participants and their parents (in a parent letter)
- must be left with the Division of Vice President of Student Affairs

Alternative Spring Break Trip Proposal Submissions

ASB site locations will be recommended the year before based on service need. 3 locations will be researched and planned for. The location will be selected by the coordinator of the Office of Greek Life and Community Service based on the three locations recommended by the Community Service Student Advisory Board.

Roles and Responsibilities

Community Service Coordinator- Oversees the trip, plans and creates the overall vision as well as reviews and approves student applications and logistics with the assistance of the Community Service Student Advisory Board. Verifies GPAs (2.5 required) for all students in attendance.

Faculty Advisor- will develop curriculum, learning goals and outcomes when ASB is given class credit.

Community Service Student Advisory Board - Student leaders for the community service branch of the office. Responsible for ideas and input for the ASB trip, along with marketing and programming assistance. Recommend the top 3 locations for the follow years ASB trip

Service Orientated Student Organizations - BSU Student organizations Lift, Circle K, and Keeping Bowie Clean will also assist with the planning of the ASB Trip

Alternative Spring Break Conduct Policy

Alcohol and Drug Free: Programs must be aware that issues of legality, liability, personal safety and group cohesion are of concern when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break. Programs should provide education and training on alcohol and other drug related issues as well as develop a policy on how these issues will be dealt with on an alternative break.

All university rules and policies are to be followed during off campus event and Alternative Spring Break Travel

Working with an On-Site Host or Partner

Should you choose to stay with an on site host, they can play a critical role in your experience, and you cannot overlook or overestimate the importance of your relationship with your on-site contacts. As you communicate with them, keep the following in mind:

Host contacts be sure to summarize your expectations in writing and review them in advance to ensure that you have a shared understanding. Strive for a mutually beneficial relationship. Respect each other's time, organizational and constituent needs, and the validity of your respective objectives and concerns. In your early discussions, be sure to talk about these issues:

Housing Will the host organization provide it for you? Can they recommend churches, hostels, campgrounds, or schools that might offer a safe, inexpensive place to stay? Where can you shower? Will you be in private rooms with beds and linens or on a multi-purpose room floor in sleeping bags with one common sleep space? Are there curfews or other rules?

Cost What fees are associated with partnering with an on-site host?

Meals What meals can they provide? Can they accommodate vegetarian and other special diets? Can you store groceries and prepare your own meals? Where can you find cheap eats?

Work Time vs. Free Time When will you have free time? What time are you expected to start and end your meetings or service projects? What are the local attractions?

Service Does the trip include service projects? What does the host hope to have your group accomplish? What skills are needed? What alternate arrangements can be made in the event of bad weather? Will the host provide an on-site orientation that covers the context of the work and any safety concerns?

Community Interaction To what extent will you have the opportunity to interact with a community? Will you engage in service projects with community members? Will the host provide structured opportunities to interact with local community members? Other social activities?

Education Does the trip include educational meetings with local universities, political or religious leaders, or local community organizations?

On-Site Fees. What is included? What forms of payment are accepted? If there is no set fee, is an honorarium or customary donation expected?

Transportation Who is responsible for on-site transportation? Is the transportation fee all inclusive (gas, parking, driver, insurance, etc.)? Students must be AUTO certified to drive a van. Alternative Break Manual 11

Safety and Liability What kind of insurance does the organization have? To what extent does it cover your participants? Where are the nearest medical facilities? Will you be under constant supervision? What liability forms need to be completed before you begin?

Communication Is there a phone number that you can use to receive incoming calls? Fax? Can you send and receive e-mail? What are the costs and restrictions? AU provides all international trips with a cell phone.

Input and Flexibility What are your strategies for accommodating your group's preferences, desires, and dissatisfactions with on-site activities or conditions?

Reflection On-site student leaders willing to conduct reflection-sharing-processing sessions with trip participants? Or will you be responsible?

Social Partnerships Post Experience How will you build consensus and commitment with participants for posttrip processing?

Travel Notes

Call a travel agent and find out how group rates range in price and variations by day. Find out how much a moderate hotel runs vs. university housing. Use the the BSU (Maryland State) preferred-provider travel agents for all quotes and estimates

Immunization expenses may be an additional participant expense. While immunizations are the responsibility of each participant.

All participants (students, faculty, and staff) are required to be covered under the university's travel insurance. (Information and cost)

Reminders

You will be better prepared to prevent or deal with emergencies if you follow these rules:

- Always carry on your person a first aid kit and copies of student health insurance and passports.

- Have students leave copies of credit cards, travelers checks, passports, and, if applicable, visas with the person identified as the emergency contact on the Consent and Release Form or a family member or friend known by the contact person.
- Prepay, whenever possible, such on-site expenses as lodging and transportation.
- If it is necessary to carry large sums of cash, divide the cash among the coordinator and chaperones and carry it on your person, or in various pieces of carry-on luggage

Note: The Office of Greek Life and Community Service will always keep copies.

On the Trip

Debriefing and Reflection Sessions

An essential component of Alternative Break trips is debriefing and reflection time. Students should take this opportunity to process what they have been learning, seeing, feeling, and experiencing during the day. Our schedule will have regular debriefing times scheduled into their itinerary, everyday along with Journal entry time. Please see Appendix A for techniques in how to lead the debriefing sessions.

Service Projects

Community service projects are important in order to gain firsthand experience working with the community with the intention of gaining an appreciation of the realities they face, as well as to demonstrate your willingness to contribute your labor to solutions to the problems. Both campus and local service projects will be required in order to qualify to attend the ASB trip each year. You must complete four service projects deemed by the Office of Greek Life and you can get extra credit for attending student organization service projects or local \ National service based projects (ie City of Bowie clean up, Redcross Blood Drive)

Selecting Roommates

For those students who do not have a roommate preference, roommates will be selected via roommate lottery during the ASB Selection Day Event.

Maintaining a Reflection Journal

Beyond simply recording a list of what was done that day, or writing about your feelings, it is important to keep a thorough reflection journal that details people you met with, what you learned, thoughts, observations, and analysis. This can serve for future research or can be an academic product in and of itself, if it is done in a rigorous manner. It can combine creative narrative sections, with details of activities, as well as your impressions of what you have seen and experienced. Remember to differentiate between objective observations and subjective analysis. Reflection will be done at least one entry every day.

For example:

- Observation: The women wear black wrap-around skirts with hand-embroidered white blouses and a blue scarf on their heads. On their feet they wear cotton slip-on shoes tied around their ankles.
- Analysis: It appears that the women are the carriers of the traditions because they wear traditional dress, and since the men wear Western clothes they must be acculturated.

Media and Documentation

Media Relations

In many ways, the Alternative Spring Break program captures the mission and unique capabilities of Bowie State University. News of our students volunteering far from home and learning through action helps shape the public image of our university and its graduates. The program is beneficial in it building a strong reputation within the larger community and by spreading the word on campus.

To take full advantage of the university's media resources, contact Media Relations (Katkins@BowieState.edu) early in your planning. They can help in writing and circulating media releases in our local area, the communities you visit, and the hometown media outlets of our participants. You should designate the task of writing a press release to a volunteer in the group.

Documentation

Similarly, documenting your trip and experiences can provide you with useful tools in recruiting for and building future Alternative Break trips. Creating your mementos can also offer your group exciting opportunities for reflection, group bonding, and closure. Consider creating materials that can be displayed around campus, organizing a discussion panel, creating a video to run on BSU-TV, or posting a Web site; The possibilities are endless.

Tips on Developing Documentation :

- Assume your experience is valuable to someone else.
- Raise the issue of documentation in the planning process.
- Decide in advance who will use the information and how.
- Name particular persons and groups who may be interested in putting together the report.
- Take the resources available (financial, material, human) into account.
- Based on the above decisions, decide on the format (print, video, photos, manual, or descriptive), when to produce the document (during or after the break trip), and what its basic structure and content will include.
- Make a realistic estimate of the time needed to turn the raw material into a usable document.
- Identify needed resources (financial, material, human).
- Maintain a group journal that is passed among all participants for entries and sharing—bring a notebook that can be shared. This notebook will be used for each ASB Trip
- Keep a Reflection journal with notes and reflections (this may be useful for academic work).
- Make a scrapbook with photos, artistic creations, and memorabilia from the trip.
- Keep a field journal that documents meetings and interviews (it would be useful to do a workshop for your participants on conducting ethnographic field research).

Post Trip

Evaluating the Trip

Students will fill out the Alternative Spring Break evaluations, which should then be used as data for the end of the year report for the Office of Greek Life & Community Service. In this report you should incorporate thoughts on what went well, what could be improved, suggestions for next year, and any other comments you'd like to share about the trip. You should also include your observations on the student learning that took place on the trip. The evaluations are due one month after return.

Follow-up and Thank-You Letters

There are probably a plethora of people you worked with who helped to make these trips happen—from the staff or faculty advisor and local contacts, to the bus driver and community organizations—who need to be thanked personally. It is a good idea to send them a thank-you letter once you return home, signed by the entire group if you can. Another very nice gesture is to send photographs to people you met along the way. If you promised pictures, make sure to follow through!

APPENDIXES

APPENDIXES A: TRAINING CONCEPTS AND EXERCISES**Group Dynamics**

Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, Transforming . . .

Groups tend to go through these four stages as they interact over time. As a facilitator, you should be able to recognize each and what you can do to get the group to work together. The following observations and suggestions are drawn from The Break Away Site Leader Survival Manual.

Forming: As a group of people first get together, “usually everyone is quiet, engaging in very simple conversation. There may also be some formality and awkwardness at this stage. It feels like everyone is walking on eggshells trying to sniff each other out.” They will look to you to review the program’s goals and rules. As the group’s facilitator, you also help to break the ice. Icebreakers and other activities will help with introductions and “will start to build a safe space of trust and support within the group.”

Storming: It is perfectly natural—indeed, normal—for tensions to arise in a group. This can be further aggravated in a group that has traveled to an unfamiliar place, is tired, and is living without their normal amenities. As individuals vent, the group can become polarized and lose focus on the goals of the program. As the facilitator, your role “should be that of a safe harbor,” listening to concerns and helping to direct energies towards conflict resolution. At this stage, you may need to use role playing to process conflict, reserve time for in-depth and structured group discussions, and hold one-on-one meetings to solicit input from those not willing to share in a group setting.

Norming: “After venting the tension of being with new people in unfamiliar circumstances, the participants will begin to find identities within the group.” At this stage, the group may be testing the waters, resulting in power struggles and cliques.

Afraid of another storming period, participants may not want to deal with issues directly, creating new conflicts. At this stage, your patience may be tried, but “your role here is that of a teacher that works to help the group empower itself to act.” While the group may want to split, try planning activities that will keep everyone together. Keep mixing up smaller groups.

Performing: When participants share vision and purpose and learn how to deal with conflicts and their own identities, they reach the productive performing stage. At this point, you play the role of the “reinforcer,” challenging the group to make their own decisions and to reflect on their experiences. Explore social issues critically, presenting different perspectives and ideas.

Transforming: “After the break, participants often are anxious about coming back to campus. They might be nostalgic and afraid of losing the intimacy they had as a group on the trip. This anxiety could lead to withdrawal, detachment, or a denial of the success of the break.” Your role now is to play “coach,” planning group reunion activities and helping participants to continue to stay connected to the service and issues they encountered on the break. Help the group to find ways to document their experiences and channel their energy towards continued action on campus.

Facilitation Exercises (Ice Breakers)

Alphabetical or birthday lineup: Invite participants to arrange themselves in alphabetical order by their first names. This task forces participants to find out other names in the group. Or do a nonverbal name lineup as a way to review names after participants have introduced themselves in conventional fashion. Ask participants to line up in alphabetical order by their first names without talking to each other. (Silberman, 1999) A popular variation is to have the group assemble by birth date without speaking.

About my name: It’s hard for most people to remember names but fairly easy to make names more memorable. Our names carry importance for us on different levels and for different reasons. Have participants, in turn, tell the group about their name. Participants may share how their name was chosen, how their marital or family status affected their name, a nickname, or funny stories about how their name has been understood (or misunderstood). This exercise helps participants to listen attentively to a person’s name in a way that values using the name correctly. Set time limits if necessary.

Silly (or serious) superlatives: Ask participants to introduce themselves with a superlative that starts with the same letter as the first letter of their name. Joyous Jane or Ridiculous Ron can reveal a lot about their personalities, and other participants will have one other trigger to help them remember names.

Two truths and a lie: Give participants a few minutes to think of two true statements about themselves and one false statement. The idea is that you chose true statements that reveal details that others would never believe to be true—I have a twin brother, I was a child actor, I’ve never traveled outside of my home state, etc. Participants then guess which of the three statements is a lie.

Scar (or tattoo) stories: This one tends to happen in most newly formed groups anyway—and doesn't require any structure at all! Almost everyone has a scar and a silly (or scary) story to go with it. Share as you will

Skittles: Pass a bag of Skittles (or M&M's) and invite participants to help themselves. Then announce that for each piece of candy, they need to share information about themselves! Use the colors to categorize the information. For example, "for every green candy, tell us about a time you were embarrassed; for every red candy, tell us one of your pet peeves," etc. This is can also be done with a roll of toilet paper, with each square representing one thing about themselves.

Personal maps or timelines. Use this exercise on-site. You'll need paper and some crafty supplies. Give each participant 20–30 minutes to create a representation of how they arrived at this place. Allow each participant to share (set time limits as needed). This is a great exercise to reveal a person's family life, major influences and decisions, and philosophies—many participants find that they have surprising similarities with each other.

Appendix B: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Alternative Spring Break Sample Timeline

General Information Campaign

All ASB marketing Materials will be promoted starting during New Student Orientation Week.

ASB Recruitment Tables

Recruitment\Sign up tables will run for the first two weeks of classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Interested students will provide contact information and pick up an ASB application

Application Deadline

(the Third Friday after classes have started)

Acceptance Letter Distribution

(25 acceptance letters will be disseminated 2 weeks after application deadline)

Introduction Orientation

(Orientation will provide the history, mission, and goals for ASB, along with discussing the required events and timeline that must be completed in order to attend the trip.)

Fall Community Service Events

(2 on campus community service events facilitated by the Office Greek life and Community Service must be attended)

Fall Student Leadership Workshop

(1 Student Leader workshop facilitated by the Office of Student leadership must be attended)

Spring Community Service Events

(2 on campus community service events facilitated by the Office Greek life and Community Service must be attended)

Spring Leadership Workshop

(1 Student Leader workshop facilitated by the Office of Student leadership must be attended)

ASB Announcement Day

(A celebration event, presenting the student selected to attend ASB and announcing the location of our Trip)

Health Screening Window

(Working with the University Health & Wellness Center to insure the every student attending the trip has a current medical screening)

Pre-Departure Orientation

(We will discuss all requirements and information need for the travel)

ASB Trip

Post Trip Reflection Session

On-Site Itinerary Example

Time	Activity	Location\Contact	Notes
8:00am	Breakfast, Daily activity preview	Hotel\On-Site eating area	Have breakfast and discuss the day's activities
9:00am	Depart for on-site service orientation	Parking Lot	Dress for painting and cleaning work
9:30am	Arrive at worksite. Sign in & sign waivers. Bob will provide an overview of Habitat for Humanity, our project for the week, and safety on-site.	St. John's Church	On-site supervisor Raymond James
Noon	Lunch	On-Site	Provided by the church
12:45pm	Resume work until 3:30 clean up		
4:00pm	Head back to the Hotel		
5:00pm	Dinner and social event	Downtown Disney	All students must report back to the van by 845 pm
9:00pm	Reflection journal entry and discussion	Hotel	
10:00pm	Lights out		7am Wake up call in the morning

Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection

Break Away at www.alternativebreaks.com offers publications and resources, an on-line site bank, and training support for planning break trips. A copy of the publication and resource order form is available at <http://alternativebreaks.org/orderform06.pdf> with descriptions.

Volunteer Directories Break Away's site bank

www.alternativebreaks.com International Volunteers for Peace, www.ivp.org. Youth Service America's Servenet (U.S. site bank), www.servenet.org

Needed created documents for Trip

- Suggested Packing List (Location & Climate based)
- Final Itinerary (Departure airport and leave time, return airport and leave time, travel arrangements, Emergency Contact roster, daily schedule)
- BSU Travel Rosters and Signed Waivers

APPENDIX C: STAFF OR FACULTY ADVISOR DESCRIPTION**General Description:**

Alternative Breaks are service-learning experiences designed to heighten participants' awareness of critical social issues, enhance their individual growth, and prepare them for lifelong social action. Each trip (4 to 7 days in duration) integrates service, reflection and education and focuses on topics as varied as community restoration, poverty, indigenous rights, fair trade, gender equality, and the environment. Trips are offered during the University System of Maryland recognized spring breaks to domestic and international destinations and may not occur during regular, scheduled class periods.

The Chaperone assists the coordinator and ensures compliance with policies, provides general oversight, manages emergencies & conflicts, co-facilitates the processing of on-site experiences, and may supervise the academic credit component of the trip if added.

This is a unique way for faculty and professional staff to volunteer their time and service participating in an alternative break experience. Chaperones are "situational facilitators"; their role is to support and enhance students' experiences by collaborating with student leaders to co-facilitating aspects of the program. The Chaperone is not expected to plan or organize the logistics of the experience, but is expected to support the student trip coordinator. The following guidelines further define this role, but are not meant to limit or restrict the possibilities of the experience.

Responsibilities of a Chaperone:

- Provide guidance and support to the coordinator and participants, when necessary
- Fully participate in all service, reflection and group activities (before, during and after the trip)
- Adhere to all ground rules agreed upon by the group (in a pre-trip meeting)
- Assist with transportation if and when needed
- Create a positive learning environment by ensuring the group is respectful and inclusive
- Facilitate individual and group discussions
- Complete trip evaluations and paperwork
- If needed assume responsibility for financial reserves carried during trip & for reconciling the financial report within 30 days of trip completion subject to BSU current Travel Expense policies and procedures

Qualifications:

- Full Time employed Bowie State University Faculty or Staff
- Written approval from Direct Supervisor
- Willingness to support student leadership
- Willingness to lead by example

Benefits and Compensation:

- Transportation, food & lodging expenses for the trip are covered by the Office of Greek Life & Community Service
- Opportunity to work hand-in-hand with student leaders and participants
- On-site, “hands-on” community service & social justice experience
- Learning/professional development opportunity
- International or domestic travel experience

APPENDIX D: KEY TERMS

Community Service - A volunteer activity or experience that benefits or improves the quality of life for an individual, a group of people, a neighborhood, a community, or an organization.

Service-Learning - The practice of integrating community service with academic learning. Students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that are integrated into their academic curriculum. The service is mutually beneficial: the student practices and develops skills and competencies in a real-world setting and the community or nonprofit group is helped to meet its needs and goals.

Social–Justice Learning - Learning that addresses structural systems of inequality, injustice, oppression, and marginalization. The basic tenet of social justice is that we can transform the world into a more equal society for all people regardless of ethnicity, religion, economic class, gender, etc., through social movements and political activism.

Debriefing and Reflection - The critical debriefing and analytical process that emphasizes self-awareness through students' examining their thoughts, feelings, and observations—a key element in Alternative Break trips. One goal is for students to recognize their own privilege and their role in the global system.