

# Alternative Breaks Trip Advisor Manual



**SMU Alternative Breaks**

*[www.smu.edu/ab](http://www.smu.edu/ab)*

## **Table of Contents**

Welcome Letter

About Alternative Breaks

    Mission, Vision, & Program History at SMU

The Active Citizen Continuum

Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break

2013-2014 Trip Information

Who's Who on Your Trip

Role of the Trip Advisor

    Responsibilities & Expectations

Emergency Contact Information

Participant Agreement Form

August 14, 2013

Dear Trip Advisor,

Thank you so much for deciding to take part in an Alternative Break trip this year. Alternative Breaks has a long history at Southern Methodist University, with more than 25 years of successful trips. Although the organization and program are student-led and run, I truly mean it when I say these trips would not be possible without faculty and staff advisors like you.

The Community Engagement & Leadership Center is committed to sending each and every trip with a carefully selected advisor; not only in case of emergencies, but also for the unique perspective you bring to the trip. Thank you in advance for the work you will do in the communities in which you spend your break, and also for the work you will do with our students. The key to the student learning that takes place on these trips is through immersion in a new community, examining social issues and injustices, and reflection on their observations and experiences. The students who run Alternative Breaks pride themselves on offering “world changing service and life changing experiences.” Get ready for just that!

The information that follows is intended to provide a more in-depth look at the Alternative Breaks program, as well as specific information about your trip, the role of the advisor, and other pertinent information. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time prior, during, or after your trip if you have additional questions.

Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing about your trip!

Best,

Bailey Guthrie  
Alternative Breaks Advisor  
Community Engagement & Leadership Center  
(214) 768-7304  
cguthrie@smu.edu

## **About Alternative Breaks at SMU**

Alternative Breaks is a student organization offering direct service opportunities during every academic break, including Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer, and even some weekends! Alternative Breaks takes groups of students, student leaders, and faculty/staff to communities in need across the country and world to perform vital service with amazing organizations. Participants have the opportunity to do quality service, gain education about important social issues, and reflect on how they can create positive social change. Alternative Breaks is a movement of active citizenship that strives to create sustainable change and fight social injustice in all communities.

### **Program History**

SMU Alternative Breaks was founded in 1987 on the SMU campus. It was started in the Chaplain's Office by then Chaplain Bob Cooper. The original three trips were called "work projects" and were offered in 1987-1988 in Brownsville, Texas, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Dallas, Texas. The sending of service trips on spring break was even going on earlier in the 1980's, but not within a formal program. The program began having student leaders in 1989, and had a few ups and downs throughout the 1990's. It was very strong in the mid to late 1990's, and dipped somewhat around the early 2000's. The program grew again in strength in 2010, skyrocketing from three trips in 2009 to 9 trips in 2010.

Now, in 2013, Alternative Breaks has a strong Executive Board consisting of 17 student leaders. The program is offering 17 trips in 2013-2014, to both domestic and international locations. SMU Alternative Breaks has also been a supporter and member of Breakaway since 1991, and was helpful in the founding of the national organization.

### **Mission**

To provide quality service experiences and awareness to all members of the Southern Methodist University community while creating active citizens through education, direct service, and reflection.

### **Vision**

To inspire the entire Southern Methodist University community toward active citizenship by offering world changing service and life changing experiences.

### **Values**

Love – Hope – Equality – Diligence

# The Active Citizen Continuum

MEMBER →

VOLUNTEER →

CONSCIENTIOUS  
CITIZEN →

ACTIVE CITIZEN

Not concerned with her/his role in social problems.

**Pre-Break: Transformation**

*Prepare students for on-site experience and provide basic education about site-specific social issues.*

- Education, Orientation and Training
- Pre-break service projects
- Icebreakers and groupbuilding activities
- Reflection: Goals and Expectations

Well-intentioned but not well-educated about social issues.

**On-Break: Transformation**

*Encourage participants to look critically at the root causes of social issues and challenge participants to evaluate the role that they can play in the community.*

- Strong Direct service
- Ongoing education
- Community involvement
- Daily reflection limited to service activities and education

Concerned with discovering root causes; asks *why?*

**Post-Break: Transformation**

*Help participants find avenues for continued community involvement and support participants' efforts to take the next "action steps."*

- Reorientation
- Continued education
- Reflection about teeny process
- Post-break service project
- Challenge to make changes in life choices to benefit the community

Community becomes a priority in values and life choices.

## **Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break**

**Strong Direct Service:** Programs provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or "hands-on" projects and activities that address critical but unmet social needs, as determined by the community. Community interaction during service projects and throughout the week is highly encouraged during breaks.

**Orientation:** Prior to departure, participants should be oriented to the mission and vision of the community partner or organization(s) with which they are working. Participants are encouraged to look at the context of the work of the organization within the broader community and to become allies to their mission and vision through direct service.

**Education:** Programs include issue specific educational sessions which participants attend prior to and perhaps during their alternative break. These sessions provide participants with the historical, political, social, and cultural context of the social problems they will be working with during the break. Effective education provides faces and opinions from all perspectives on the issue, including ways that the participants' personal life choices are connected to them.

**Training:** Participants are provided with adequate training in skills necessary to carry out tasks and projects during the trip. Ideally this training should take place prior to departure, although in some instances it may occur once participants have reached their site. Examples of training include teaching basic construction, learning how to read with children or gaining first aid skills.

**Reflection:** During the trip, participants reflect upon the experiences they are having - synthesizing the direct service, education, and community interaction components. . Applying classroom learning and integrating many academic disciplines can occur. The site leaders should set aside time for reflection to take place, both individually and in a group setting.

**Reorientation:** Upon return to campus, programs carry out reorientation activities for all participants where they can share their break experiences and translate them into a lifelong commitment to active citizenship. Through these activities, participants continue their volunteer efforts in their local area, learn about possible internships, engage politically in their community, obtain resources for continued education on social issues, and make life choices that benefit the entire community.

**Diversity:** Strong alternative break programs include participants representing the range of students present in the campus community. Coordinators should recruit, design, implement and evaluate their program with this end in mind. Break programs should also plan to intentionally address the issue of diversity and social justice, or in other words privilege and oppression, and how it relates to service work.

**Alcohol and Other 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 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.

Source: Break Away – The Alternative Break Connection found at <http://www.alternativebreaks2011.org/philosophy/8components/>.

# Alternative Break Trips 2013-2014

## Fall Break

October 12-15, 2013

- *Domestic Violence* – For the first time, SMU will partner with an organization right here in Dallas, Texas, Genesis Women’s Shelter. We’ll be sorting and collecting donations at the Genesis Thrift Store as well as leading a “Fall Themed Activity” for the children at the shelter. The thrift store receives over 300 donations each day and raises close to \$1,000,000 every year. In all, the store is crucial to fundraising for Genesis and gives the women and children an opportunity to get the belongings they need for free.
- *Affordable Housing*– In *Hartshorne, Oklahoma* we’ll partner with Rebuilding Together Kiamichi Country to work on home repairs and improvements for low-income homeowners. Rebuilding Together strives to develop “A safe and healthy home for every person.”
- *Hunger* – For the first time, SMU will be serving with the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma in *Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*. We’ll be sorting and packing food. According to the bank, “There are over 675,000 Oklahomans at risk of hunger every day, including one in four children in the state. The Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma distributes enough food to feed more than 90,000 hungry Oklahomans each week through more than 1,000 community pantries, shelters, soup kitchens and schools in central and western Oklahoma.”
- *Youth Education* – In *San Antonio, Texas* we will be partnering with City Year. Tentatively, we’ll work to inspire struggling students as well as engage in many different kinds of service from preparing and serving food to people who are currently living without homes to working with adults with special needs. There may be opportunities to focus on community development as well.

## Winter Break

December 19-23, 2013

- *Community Development* – In *Austin, Texas* we’ll be working with Blackland Community Development Corporation, a non-profit that supports Austin residents who earn less than 60% of the median income for Austin. Participants will serve in the Blackland Neighborhood by washing windows, painting, cleaning up the

community playground, as well as assisting community members tend to their local garden.

## **Winter Break**

### **January 2014 (exact dates TBD)**

- *Education in a Third World Country* - Participants will travel to *Quito, Ecuador* to volunteer with UBECI, which is an organization focused on providing educational services, recreational opportunities and social support to at-risk youth and their families. Students will assist in educational programs for the street children and child laborers of Quito. Through their service, students will gain exposure and knowledge on issues of global poverty and lack of educational opportunities.  
*\*In order to apply: Must have a passport that is valid until at least August 2014.*

## **Spring Break**

### **March 9-15, 2014**

- *Disaster Relief* - SMU will return to New Orleans, Louisiana to serve with a recovery organization called Youth Rebuilding New Orleans. YR engages youth in the recovery and rebirth of the New Orleans area through rebuilding distressed and foreclosed homes that are then sold to teachers to stabilize neighborhoods and positively impact the education system.
- *Global Peace* – In *Indianapolis, Indiana* we work with a grassroots community farm located in a low-income semi-urban neighborhood called Global Peace Initiatives. The purpose of the farm is to raise red wiggler worms in order to cultivate high-quality soil and compost for urban agriculture. During our time at Global Peace Initiatives in 2013, we planted onions for harvest, mended hoop houses, sifted soil, and built an aquaponics system. A typical day consisted of extremely informational manual labor, unlike any other work you've done! The dynamic of the work combined with constant learning makes for a beneficial experience for both breakers and the Indianapolis community.
- *Persons with Special Needs* – In *Kimberton, Pennsylvania* we'll be partnering with Camp Hill Kimberton to work alongside adults with special needs. Sometimes we'll be working out on the farm and other times we might be assisting indoors with activities and workshops.
- *Human Trafficking* – Participants will travel to *Mexico City* (tentative) to serve with CIAM, an organization that provides shelters and rehabilitation programs to women that have been victims of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence. CIAM also provides educational programs in surrounding communities.

Students will have the unique opportunity of engaging in a current, pressing social issue in an international context.

- *Food Deserts: Providing an Oasis* - In *New York City, New York* we'll be partnering with God's Love We Deliver to prepare and serve food to individuals living with serious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and cancer, who are not able to provide quality meals for themselves as a result of their illnesses. Every day, God's Love We Deliver prepares and delivers close to 4,6000 meals!
- *Education in a Rural Setting* - In *Taos, New Mexico* we work with Roots and Wings Community School. The school is very understaffed, so volunteers are crucial to creating a positive classroom experience. While at Roots and Wings over Spring Break 2013, SMU Breakers spent a majority of their time tutoring and teaching mini lessons in classrooms. They also repainted the school's entry hallway and helped with outdoor landscaping and remodeling. SMU students are able to serve as role models for younger children as well as truly inspire and positively influence the lives of many children.
- *Child Abuse/Neglect* - In *St. Louis, Missouri* participants will be volunteering at Crisis Nursery Kids, which provides temporary care for young children in order to help prevent child abuse and neglect. We'll serve by giving the children individual attention from rocking and playing to feeding and dressing at the 24-hour shelters.
- *Environmentalism*- In *Memphis, Tennessee* we'll partner with Living Lands and Waters where we'll spend time on the Mississippi River removing debris such as tires and appliances that are damaging the habitat of the surrounding wildlife.
- *Civil Rights & Youth Development* - In *Selma, Alabama* we'll be focusing on civil rights through our work with Freedom Foundation. Although our schedule is not set yet, we plan to engage in many different kinds of service from tutoring to construction while immersing ourselves in the issue of civil rights.
- *Sustainable Water* - For the first time, we'll be partnering with the Watershed Committee of the Ozarks in *Springfield, Missouri* to sustain and improve water resources, while learning about watersheds and sustainability.
- *Medical/Health Issues* - SMU will travel to *Memphis, Tennessee* to partner with the Regional Medical Center at Memphis to volunteer in the NICU working on the March of Dimes campaign.

## Who's Who On Your Trip

Each trip is comprised of a few key leaders and participants. Below is a description of each key role:

- **Co-Site Leaders** - responsible for his/her designated trip. This includes planning pre and post-trip activities, participant development, leading reflection, planning all details given to them by the Site Trip Coordinator, planning community programming day ("Fun Day"), documenting the trip, keeping an itinerary, and managing the money/receipts on the trip. Site Leaders attend their trip for no charge.
- **Program Participants** – each trip hosts approximately seven to ten participants who are selected for the trip through an application and interview process.

## Role of the Trip Advisor

As outlined in the AB Constitution, the Faculty/Staff Trip Advisors:

- are responsible for adding their valuable experience to the trip and its participants
- are not meant to micromanage the trip, but provide leadership in the event of a crisis and help ensure all students are abiding by agreed upon student contracts
- are expected, although not required, to participate in pre and post trip activities as much as possible
- will attend their trip for no charge

Expectations of the Trip Advisor are to:

- Participate in all trip service, reflection, and fun activities
- Be accessible to trip leaders to provide mentorship and facilitate leadership development.
- Communicate and collaborate effectively with trip leaders.
- Communicate and collaborate effectively with community organization representatives.
- Be prepared to facilitate conflict resolution strategies.
- Be prepared to help participants process issues encountered.
- Be prepared to help trip leaders manage stress, logistics, conflict, exhaustion, and crisis.
- Be prepared to share your thoughts and experiences with participants.
- Complete appropriate follow-up activities, evaluations, and program documentation with participants.
- Uphold the mission, values, and policies of the Alternative Breaks program.
- Must be certified through SMU to drive a 15-passenger van and willing to serve as a driver.
- Assist students in the event of an emergency.

Ultimately, the Alternative Break is student-driven, and the Community Engagement & Leadership Center asks that advisors give student leaders the opportunity to exercise their leadership 'muscles.' Potentially, this may involve them making some decisions that you yourself would not make if you were to be the leader of the group, and/or them taking a longer time to arrive at certain decisions than you would take yourself. If their decision will result in a hazardous situation, it would be appropriate to step in and suggest a different approach, a debrief of which could be a great learning opportunity for the students. Otherwise, we encourage advisors to let the students figure things out for themselves.

## Emergency Contact Information

Here are the resources that are available to you through the Community Engagement & Leadership Center in the event of an emergency on your trip:

- Bailey Guthrie, Alternative Breaks Advisor

(817) 946-9163 (cell phone)\*

- Community Engagement & Leadership Center (8:30am-5:00pm; M-F)

Main CEL Office Line – (214) 768-4403

- SMU Police Department (24/7 Availability)

(214) 768-3333

\*Site Leaders or Assistant Site Leaders are asked to call to check in at least three times during the trip – when you arrive at your location, mid-way through the trip, and when your group returns to campus. This is just so that CEL staff know things are going great with your group's trip.

\*Feel free to call at any other point that you deem necessary or have questions.

## Participant Agreement Form

Alternative Break Policies: The AB program is an alcohol and drug free event. All SMU policies apply while away campus and students are subject to following to the Student Code of Conduct, including the following provisions:

- 1) Participants are to stay with the group at all times and participate in daily activities planned by site leaders. This includes the days and hours you may not be working with a community agency.
- 2) Please remember that regardless of age, AB does not allow for the possession, consumption, or purchase of alcohol during the trip. Similarly, no drugs other prescription drugs prescribed to you by your physician are allowed.

If found in violation of these policies while on an Alternative Break trip, you will pay for your own immediate return to SMU. All violations will be followed up judicially once classes start. Please sign the below statement that indicates you understand this policy and will adhere to it while attending Alternative Break.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to attend Alternative Break with the understanding that this is an alcohol and drug free event. Regardless of my age, I will not be in possession of said items, will not consume said items, and will not purchase said items. I understand that violation of this or any other SMU policy while on the AB trip will result in my immediate return to Dallas, TX. Any expenses accrued due to my violation of this policy and having to be sent back to Dallas, TX will be charged to my SMU student account. These violations, as I understand it, will be followed up through SMU Student Conduct Procedures.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Break Trip Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_