

# UNCOLLEGE

## Fellow Handbook

The Gap Year program we've built at UnCollege will take you through an intensive process of self-directed learning. The program is divided into three parts in three different locations – volunteering abroad, practicing new skills and working on projects in San Francisco, and working at an internship.

During this program, you will learn more about yourself and the process of learning, make friendships and connections from a variety of backgrounds, work with your UnCollege coach to set and achieve your goals, and develop the skills necessary to be successful both personally and professionally!

The goal of Gap Year is to help you to rigorously pursue your curiosity, take action and create things that you are proud of, and to confidently advocate for yourself and your work. It's an ambitious goal, but we seek ambitious people.

**Dale J. Stephens**

Founder, UnCollege Gap Year

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# CORE VALUES

The primary aim of Gap Year is to help people become more effective self-directed learners. In place of a list of rules and restrictions, we expect all Gap Year fellows to honor our core values, which are the foundation of our identity as a community. If you are in blatant and continued violation of these core values, you may be asked to leave the program.

## **Curiosity**

The basis of all learning is curiosity. We cultivate a burning curiosity to discover the answers to our questions and find out how things work. We are not afraid to follow the process of discovery wherever it leads, even when it confronts us with ideas and facts that challenge our most deeply held beliefs. As we seek greater understanding and wisdom, we also recognize that knowledge is never complete, and there will always be more questions to ask and answer. Hence we are comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, even as we strive for greater clarity.

## **Creation**

While the basis of learning is curiosity, the product of learning is creation. We are all creators, no matter what way or medium it shows itself in. During your time at Gap Year, you will be encouraged to constantly create. Your creations prove how much you are learning and are the product of that learning combined with hard work and grit. We recognize that there is always room for improvement, but also that it's better to finish something and learn from it than to try to perfect it.

## **Self-Advocacy**

One of the most important skills you will need in life — and something you're never taught in school — is self-advocacy. The ability to stand up for yourself, ask for what you want, and talk about yourself in a manner that garners respect is the essential foundation for the rest of your personal and professional life.

## **Independence**

We are never afraid to ask for help, but we usually try to find things out for ourselves first. We don't ask to be spoon-fed, but always take a proactive role in our setting our own goals and searching out information. We welcome good advice, and seek out mentors, but we know that the final decision always rests with ourselves.

# GAP YEAR PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The program is divided into three phases: Voyage, Launch, and Internship.

## VOYAGE

Our identities can get tied up in our daily routines, making it hard to have perspective on who we are and what is important to us. The Voyage phase is intended to disrupt that. We want you to get out of your comfort zone, get away from the everyday things that you do, people you see, and foods you eat, explore another culture, and learn more about yourself.

## LAUNCH

The Launch phase is a ten-week residential phase in San Francisco. You'll live with your cohort in a residence / dorm, participate in workshops, and work 1-on-1 with your coach to set learning goals, take on projects, build skills, create a portfolio, and present your work to the world.

## INTERNSHIP

During the Launch Phase you will learn important strategies necessary to enter the professional world. The Gap Year team will help you leverage these strategies to find an internship with a company or organization that is looking for dynamic young people like you. At your internship you'll learn how to add value to a company, how to be a great employee, and how to advocate for yourself to take on work that you want to do.



SEAN, 21 - BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

"As I look back on my time at UnCollege, I'm so thankful for the experience. I truly believe that this program and all the people I've encountered along the way have shaped me back into the person that I always believed I was but couldn't find.

*I'm confident*

knowing that I came out of this program a determined, self-driven and self-directed individual set to return to university, earn my degree, and begin the life that I had spent so much time before trying to build."

# PRE-ARRIVAL

## PAPERWORK

The enrollment form must be signed and submitted through HelloSign:

- [Gap Year Enrollment Form](#)

## HEALTH INSURANCE

U.S. citizens must have private health insurance. Non-U.S. citizens must have travel insurance that covers medical expenses. We strongly recommend insurance that includes the following coverage:

*Emergency services*  
*Hospitalization*  
*Prescription drugs*  
*Laboratory services*

## VACCINES

We require all Gap Year fellows to be current on Meningococcal and Tdap vaccines. Proof of vaccinations must be sent to [hello@uncollege.org](mailto:hello@uncollege.org) before arrival. If you are unable to obtain your vaccinations locally, please contact us for resources available in San Francisco.

## VISAS

Non-U.S. citizens are responsible for ensuring that they obtain the necessary visas and travel documents. You do not need an F-1 (student) visa. A standard 3-month B-2 (visitor) visa is sufficient for attending the 10-week Launch, though we recommend that you apply for a 180 day B-2 visa if you intend to pursue your Internship in the United States. (See Internship section below.) It may be necessary for non-U.S. citizens to do their internship in another country. We will work closely with you to arrange internships outside the U.S. and to support you as you transition out of Launch.

## PRE-READING

Please read “So Good They Can’t Ignore You” by Cal Newport and “The Startup of You” by Reid Hoffman before the Launch phase begins. Themes from this book will be discussed frequently throughout the Launch phase, so you’ll be miles ahead if you’re already familiar with the concepts.

# VOYAGE

## Learning Objectives

- Reflect on lessons learned during Voyage
- Reflect on your personal growth during Voyage
- Come up with a way to tell your story in a cohesive way
- Be able to talk about what you learned and experienced on your Voyage & how it impacted you

## DESTINATIONS

### India

Perched in the misty highlands beneath the Himalayas, Dharamsala is a market town, lush farmland, and spiritual retreat all in one. Fellows will be living and working alongside thousands of Tibetan monks who reside here. In contrast to the bustle and crowds of most Indian cities, Dharamsala serves as a serene retreat where fellows can meditate, practice yoga, and make a difference in the community while exploring northern India.

### Indonesia

Bali is a tropical island paradise with white sand beaches, rice paddies, coral reefs, lush jungle, and volcanic mountains. Fellows will stay in one of two small remote fishing villages where they will interact with the local community and culture daily in their volunteer activities. In their free time, fellows can make the most of the warm weather, friendly locals, and laid-back lifestyle by exploring ancient temples, taking a yoga class, or hiking waterfalls.

### Mexico

Mérida is not only the starting point of a series of journeys into Yucatan and its archaeological treasures, but a thriving town with plenty of good eats, bustling markets, music, dance, peaceful streets and parks. Mérida offers a small, safe community setting with a wide range of volunteer work available. The program is great for both those who already know some Spanish and for those looking to improve their language ability.

### Tanzania

Sitting in the shadow of Africa's tallest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, Moshi is a small, clean, and vibrant market town. Tanzania's natural beauty is easily accessible from Moshi, and fellows can go on safaris, visit one of the many nearby national parks, go mountain climbing, or check out the local hot springs and waterfalls. The city itself is low-key and provides a safe environment to volunteer with locals from the Maasai and Chagga tribes.

## VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

Each Voyage destination offers a different selection of volunteer projects, and fellows can choose the placement is the most meaningful to them to work on for ten weeks. Types of volunteer projects include:

**Teaching:** Teach English in a kindergarten, primary school, or secondary school; lead extracurricular after school programs in art, music, and dance;

**Caregiving:** Care for children and adults with disabilities

**Healthcare:** Volunteer in a health clinic or hospital; run educational health programs

**Construction:** Help with community painting and renovation projects

**Environment:** Help an environmental NGO spread awareness of sustainable development practices; volunteer in a nursery planting and repotting trees; monitor cleanliness of local rivers and water sources

**Street Children:** Work with disadvantaged youth to keep them engaged, in school, and off the streets

**Social Services:** Help a food bank collect and distribute food; empower women through educational and vocational programs

**Business:** Contribute your skills in web design, graphic design, event planning, or social media to a local business or NGO

**Tech & Computers:** Teach children and adults basic computer skills such as word processing and how to send emails

## WHAT HAPPENS ON VOYAGE?

While on Voyage, fellows will immerse within a new culture, give back to the community through service work, and make friends with other international volunteers, fellows, and local community members. Accommodations and nearly all meals are covered by the program tuition.

The UnCollege team will be in touch with fellows through individual coaching calls every other week, as well as available for any questions, concerns, and comments daily. Our ground team members are available 24/7 to assist with daily concerns and in-country emergencies. The UnCollege SF team and ground teams are in constant contact to assure that each fellow is safe, engaged, and getting the most out of their Voyage experience.

# LAUNCH

## Learning Objectives

- Learn to rigorously pursue your curiosity, constantly create, and confidently advocate for yourself and your work
- Develop good work habits
- Learn important skills necessary to succeed personally and professionally
- Create a portfolio and begin filling it with content
- Build mutually beneficial relationships
- Work with peers and hold each other accountable

In the second phase of the program, you move to San Francisco where you will live with all the other fellows in the Gap Year residence / dorm. Each week you will participate in workshops and one-on-one coaching meetings designed to help you develop personal and professional skills and habits, engage the world proactively, begin to fill your portfolio, and set yourself up for success beyond the program.

## CURRICULUM

Each week will include workshops on a variety of topics including Getting Stuff Done, effective habits, problem solving, growth mindset, physical wellness, personal branding, effective interviewing, how to interview effectively, financial literacy, overcoming objections, and many others. These sessions cover a vast amount of material in a relatively short time and are presented in a way to make the concepts actionable. The strategies we discuss will provide you with a solid foundation and prepare you to follow through on applying the new skills in your particular area of focus, all with the support UnCollege coaches.

### Workshops

Workshops on curiosity will help you to rigorously pursue your lines of inquiry, learn about professions that interest you and what it takes to enter them. Creation workshops focus on habits and mindsets that will help you to get things done. Self-advocacy workshops focus on execution: confidently presenting yourself and your work to the world.

### Work Sprint

During Work Sprints, you'll take an idea from concept to finished project in under two days. You can use Work Sprints to develop your independent project or work on something entirely separate - it's your choice. There are three Work Sprints throughout your Launch phase. The goal of Work Sprints is to focus on execution - to identify the elements essential to the success of your project, prioritize them, iterate on the concept rapidly, deliver something valuable, and then



present it. The products of your Work Sprints become artifacts of your learning and will be exhibited on your personal web site.

### **Friday Reviews**

Each Friday you will attend a two-hour group review session. These sessions are intended to allow you to reflect on the week, notice successes and failures, and check in with where you are within your progress.

This is beneficial for multiple reasons:

- If someone has experienced a life event, either positive or negative, it is difficult to participate fully in a meeting if it is still bouncing around their brain. Speaking about it can often release this distraction and allow them to be more fully present.
- It is helpful as a community to know how everyone is doing, who needs support, who is excited, etc.
- Authentic sharing breeds community.
- When we listen to people speak from a real and vulnerable place we feel closer to one another.

### **Attendance**

Fellows are allowed three unexcused absences from any scheduled programming, for sudden sickness, and unforeseen circumstance. A fellow will receive a warning after two unexcused absences, a final warning after the third, and will be expelled from the program if they are absent a fourth time.

Fellows may be excused from scheduled programming for professional development opportunities, illness, and family emergencies. To be excused a fellows must email their coach at least 24 hours in advance of the workshop that they wish to miss, and receive permission to do so.

## **COACHING**

Coaching is the culture of UnCollege. Fellows work with their coaches starting well before the program begins. Coaches share their personal cell phone numbers and are available day or night.

Each week during the Launch Phase you will have a dedicated one-hour goal setting session with your coach. You'll also how you're applying new skills, building positive habits, exploring different fields, taking on projects, and advocating for yourself. Coaches will help make connections for you and facilitate introductions with mentors.

In your coaching session, you'll define and articulate your weekly goals. Your coach will help you break down larger goals into actionable steps, keep you accountable, offer perspective on where to apply yourself, connect you with resources within the Gap Year network, and guide you through the process of learning to be self-directed.

### **Goal Completion**

The minimum expectation for goal completion is 70% each week. If you are struggling to follow through on the goals that you set with your coach, your coach will revisit your goals with you, and review your approach and performance. Metrics and milestones will be clarified and a clear strategy will be articulated for the following week.

If performance is under the 70% minimum expectation for two consecutive weeks, your coach will again revisit and refine goals with the fellow, and a clear expectation of improvement will be communicated. Your coach will connect you with resources and suggest strategies for successfully getting back on track, keeping in close touch throughout the following week and offering assistance as needed. Failure to meet the 70% minimum performance expectation for a third consecutive week represents a serious failure and is indicative of an underlying lack of commitment to the learning community. Fellows demonstrating chronic failure to follow through on goals and meet the minimum performance expectation from week to week will be asked to leave the program. We will use all of our educational resources to build safeguards to prevent this circumstance from occurring. However, responsibility rests with each fellow to commit the time and focus necessary to meet the performance expectations of the program.

## **MENTORSHIP**

Gap Year has a global network of professionals and practitioners who are excited to help young people grow in their chosen fields. They are impressive, accomplished professionals working at the tops of their fields and they donate their time because they like working with motivated, hard-working young people like our fellows. As you move through the first two phases of the program and the shape of your work within the program gains momentum, we will introduce you to a mentor who can help you learn a skill, give you feedback and brainstorm projects to take on.

Once you have been connected with a mentor, you will check in with them at least weekly. You can check in with them in person, by phone, or Skype. The purpose of these conversations is to help provide you with further sources of advice and support, and to give you access to someone with experience in a field or facet of life that holds your interest.

# CAPSTONE

## **Capstone Presentation**

In the final week of Launch, you will give a capstone presentation summarizing your experience and achievements over the course of the program thus far. The capstone presentation is a chance for you to advocate for yourself, think about your process and accomplishments, and present them in front of an audience.

## **Learning Review**

In addition to the Capstone Presentation, at the end of the Launch phase you will sit down with the Gap Year staff for your learning review. The learning review is your chance to reflect on the Launch Phase - what you've learned and how that will help you going forward.

# INTERNSHIP

## Learning Objectives

- Gain professional experience
- Learn how to add value to an organization
- Learn how to be a good employee
- Learn how to advocate for yourself in an organization, and take on work that you want to do
- Learn how to do things that aren't always fun
- Learn what it's like to work in a professional environment

After the Launch phase, you will spend three months as an intern at a company or organization that matches your learning objectives. It could be a giant tech company, a non-profit organization, or a tiny startup in San Francisco. The aim is to gain real world work experience that will make you stand out to future employers or investors.

With our support every step of the way, you will start planning your internship during the Launch Phase. Workshops will teach you how to be competitive for an internship, and Gap Year staff will make introductions, and give you advice and support to help you through the application process.

The internship does not have to take place in San Francisco, and in fact it can take place anywhere in the world. We encourage you to seek out the best experience for you, regardless of location. If you do choose to stay in the Bay Area, we encourage you to work with the other fellows to share housing. An UnCollege Program Specialist can help you locate the housing and relocation resources in the area.

UnCollege will recommend you for an internship based on the work you put into the Launch Phase. If you excel during the Launch Phase, accomplish your goals, work hard, and exhibit growth in your area of interest, we will excitedly connect you to opportunities where you can add value to an organization, and receive value in return. If you don't show up for workshops, don't follow through on your goals, and work lazily throughout the Launch Phase, we will not recommend you for an internship, and will work with you on work habits, skill building, and improving your portfolio during the internship phase.

Note for international fellows: most non-U.S. citizens enter the United States for the Launch phase of the program under B-2 (visitor) visa status. Under B-2 visa requirements, you are not allowed to earn money from any work that you do in the United States. You should be mindful of this limitation and plan accordingly as you prepare your finances for Gap Year. Please contact UnCollege Admissions ([admissions@uncollege.org](mailto:admissions@uncollege.org)) for additional information on applying for a U.S. visa.

# COMMUNITY

All fellows are required to abide by the terms and conditions in the [Housing Contract](#). Please familiarize yourself with the guidelines in the contract.

## DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Because this is a program that involves young people under the age of twenty-one, alcohol is banned from Gap Year residential facilities.

We understand that you may be from a country with a lower drinking age, but the legal drinking age in the United States is 21.

The use or possession of illegal drugs is also not allowed. Again, if it isn't legal it doesn't belong in your possession.

The penalties for underage drinking or getting caught with illegal substances are severe and harsh. If you are not an American citizen, **these penalties would likely involve deportation and being banned from entering the USA for ten years.** It's not worth it.

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Gap Year prohibits sexual misconduct of all kinds. This policy applies not only to fellows and employees, but also to guests, vendors and anyone else doing business with Gap Year. Any participant who feels that he or she has been a victim of sexual misconduct should notify a Gap Year staff member immediately.

Sexual misconduct is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when there is no clear, affirmative consent from all parties.

Explicit, affirmative consent must be clearly communicated in a mutual, non-coercive situation. Anyone who is physically or mentally incapacitated, meaning they lack the ability to appreciate the fact that the situation is sexual and/or to reasonably appreciate the nature and extent of the situation, is not capable of giving consent.

Prior sexual activity or an existing acquaintanceship, friendship, or other relationship that has been sexual in nature does not constitute consent for the continuation or renewal of sexual activity.

Examples of sexual misconduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Unwelcome sexual flirtation, advances or propositions
- Verbal comments related to an individual's gender or sexual orientation
- Explicit or degrading verbal comments about another individual or his or her appearance
- The display of sexually suggestive pictures or objects in any home or workplace location, including transmission or display via computer
- Any sexually offensive or abusive physical conduct, or threat of conduct, including but not limited to sexual assault of any kind
- Displaying cartoons or telling jokes which relate to an individual's gender or sexual orientation
- Using a position of power to manipulate a potentially sexual situation

## **SMOKING**

No smoking is allowed in the dorm or at the Gap Year office.

## **WEAPONS**

There are no weapons allowed in the dorm or the UnCollege offices. Fellows are not permitted to have anything on the premises that could be used as an offensive weapon unless the fellow has a valid and lawful reason for having it.

## **DECORATION**

Fellows are not allowed to put nails, screws, tacks or anything else in the walls. This is part of our lease agreement and is non-negotiable.

## **GUESTS**

No guests are permitted to stay past 10pm.

## **QUIET HOURS**

Quiet hours are from 10:00pm to 7:30am. During these hours everyone must use headphones with any devices that make noise, and must speak in hushed voices in the common areas. No talking in bedrooms past quiet hours.

## COMMON AREAS

Courtesy for one another is expected of our fellows at all times. Within the shared common area fellows must treat the space with respect. The common areas must be kept tidy and fellows using these spaces must abide by the same residential rules (such as quiet hours) as they would in the rest of the dorm.

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Community meetings occur weekly and are mandatory. Emergency meetings may be called at any time by the Learner-in-Residence (our community manager) or Gap Year staff. Fellows must abide by all rules set in these meetings.

## DISCIPLINE PROCESS

While we have never had to expel a fellow, UnCollege reserves the right to expel fellows at any time. Fellows will not be reimbursed for the remainder of the program if they are expelled. Fellows outside of San Francisco may be expelled only upon written approval of Gap Year Global Management, although they may be asked to leave their residence pending this approval as the director of their local residence sees fit.

For serious but not catastrophic failures to adhere to the rules, fellows will first receive a verbal warning from a staff member. This verbal warning will be documented in an email, cc'd to Gap Year Global Management subject line "verbal warning given". If the problem persists, a written warning will be issued indicating that further infraction of this offense and/or of other offenses will be grounds for expulsion from the program. Once this written warning is issued, a fellow should expect to exhibit consistently exemplary performance from that point forward.

Catastrophic failure to adhere to the rules include but are not limited to:

- Possession, distribution, creation, or consumption of drugs or alcohol in the residence / dorm or UnCollege offices
- The following are not limited to just those people in the program or on staff:
  - Sexual harassment of anyone
  - Sexual assault on anyone
  - Making threats of violence to anyone
  - Any attempt of violence on anyone
  - Any bullying, harassment, or prejudiced language or actions towards anyone

If you do any of these things while in the program, you will be immediately expelled without reimbursement of tuition.