

**Steering Committee**

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Dear FOP Leader Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in FOP! Since its inception in 1979, we have worked hard to provide safe, inspiring, and fun orientation trips for incoming Harvard students. We owe much of our success to our wonderful leader community, and we hope that this letter will answer some of your questions about FOP and becoming a leader.

**What is FOP?** FOP (First-Year Outdoor Program) is an introduction to Harvard that takes place across the mountains and lakes of northern New England. This year we had 431 FOPpers on 43 trips all over New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont. While on campus, the FOPper and Leader communities continue to learn from and support one another, creating spaces for reflection and growth throughout the year. This year's FOP trips will run from Wednesday, August 16th through Tuesday, August 22, 2017, and your commitment as a leader would run from **August 11th through August 22nd**.

**Who are FOP leaders?** **FOP Leaders need not have gone on FOP themselves as first-years!** Because we lead trips for over one-fifth of the freshman class, it is important that our leader pool represent the vibrancy and diversity of Harvard. Currently, our 100 leaders span a variety of ages, interests, levels of outdoor experience, talents, and backgrounds. FOP leaders should be ready to engage with the unknown and uncomfortable, supporting themselves and those around them as they learn, grow, and reflect.

**What do FOP leaders do?** Leading FOP is a serious responsibility that requires leaders to take charge of 8-12 first year students and have the capacity to learn both interpersonal and technical skills. Applicants should be willing to learn the following and must be able to do them by the end of training. Leaders must be able to:

- Communicate and work effectively with a co-leader(s)
- Help ease the transition to Harvard and open-mindedly discuss views on the Harvard experience with first-years
- Navigate potential conflicts between FOPpers while maintaining group safety + happiness
- Engage with difference in a thoughtful, respectful manner
- Continue to serve as a resource once back on campus through active engagement with FOPpers
- Recognize and balance both individual and group needs
- Learn and become comfortable with technical skills necessary for backcountry travel

- Safely lead incoming first-years according to FOP policies and procedures
- Effectively deal with unexpected and emergency situations

**What kinds of trips are there?** FOP offers many different types of trips for incoming first-years. Trips vary in distance, elevation, and difficulty.

Backpacking Trips: Backpacking trips are six-day treks through the mountains of northern New England.

Switch Trips: Switch trips include canoeing and backpacking. NOTE: Leading a switch trip requires lifeguard certification (switch trainees have the opportunity to certify) as well as additional training during the spring.

Service Trips: Service trips give back to the wilderness community on which FOP depends. Trips range from onsite construction and trail work to combination hiking and service in the backcountry.

Cabin Trip: Trips will spend the week learning about one location from a variety of perspectives. Students will stay in cabins, and will use different methods to develop a deeper understanding of the place they are staying. For example, some Site Exploration trips will stay at the Harvard Forest, a Harvard-owned experimental forest in central Massachusetts. Participants there will: engage with the ecological research currently being conducted there; learn about the history of colonial New England by examining Forest property and buildings; appreciate the current recreational value of the forest through day hikes; and so on.

**What makes a good leader?** FOP leaders promote the development of social support and self-awareness for first-years. We are looking for applicants who convey interpersonal skills and who are able to foster a positive environment for group bonding and self-exploration, drawing on their own experiences as well as those of other leaders in the community. FOP leaders are dedicated to acting as a resource for students who will be experiencing a wide range of emotions as they enter an entirely new community.

Since FOP is conducted in a backcountry setting, leaders are faced with particular challenges regarding the safety and comfort level of participants on their trips. With this in mind, we look for applicants with sound decision-making abilities and a readiness to improve their outdoor skills.

Potential leaders should have the desire to become comfortable in the outdoors and/or prior experience in the outdoors-- but no prior experience is necessary! Additionally “prior experience” can come in a variety of forms, including organized trips with outdoor programs, adventures with friends and/or family, and participation in outdoor sports. These and other outdoor activities can all contribute to one’s outdoor knowledge and capabilities.

For all trainees, with or without past outdoor experience, we offer the Backcountry Skillz Day (BSD) as part of our training program (see below). We **strongly encourage all trainees to participate**, regardless of their wilderness abilities prior to the weekend – all who go will emerge with much-improved technical skillz, and will be better prepared for training trips!

Again, **you do NOT need to have gone on FOP to be a leader!**

### **Misconceptions about being a FOP leader**

- You do *not* need to be an experienced outdoorsperson. We take trainees of all levels of experience and will *teach* you the technical skills necessary to lead a FOP trip.
- *Not* all FOP leaders are super energetic, bubbly, outgoing people. We believe that there is value in many types of leadership styles! We value bubbly people *and* quieter people alike

as we believe different people can make different important contributions to our community.

- And lastly, **you do NOT need to have gone on FOP to be a leader!!** Many of our leaders did not go on FOP as first-years and are incredible leaders.

**How do I become a leader?** Applicants must complete two stages prior to their confirmation as leaders. The first, Trainee Selection, constitutes the application and interview process, and leads to the selection of leader-trainees. Those leader-trainees must then engage in a comprehensive training process throughout the spring. Upon successful completion *and evaluation*, trainees are asked to become leaders. Sometimes, leaders whose skills need significant improvement in certain areas may be required to complete additional training after leading in the fall. Additionally, a trainee may be asked not to participate in FOP if his/her skills are significantly lacking. With that said, *once trainees have been selected we are committed to doing everything we can to help trainees successfully complete training – in exchange for those trainees’ commitment of the time and effort that it will take.*

#### Trainee Selection:

The first step of the process is to submit a complete application. If appropriate, we will then contact you for an interview. Interviews will take place from January 25th through February 16th and are intended to give Steering Committee members a better understanding of the applicant's leadership capabilities and decision-making abilities. The number of interviews we will conduct depends on the size of the applicant pool.

If past years are any indication, trainee selection will be a highly competitive process. In a typical year, we receive between 130-160 applications and end up accepting about 45 applicants. This year we will be accepting around 70 applicants. We will notify you of our final decisions **by email** on or before February 21st. If you are selected, you will become a FOP leader-trainee and will begin training.

Training: The following are the training requirements for the spring of 2017. Final selection as a leader is dependent on completion of these requirements. Under EXTREME circumstances, we may be able to make an accommodation for missing one of the trainings, but you **MUST** notify us immediately if you think this might apply to you. Before you apply, **please be sure you can commit to these dates.**

If you foresee a **significant and unavoidable conflict** with the listed **Training Trip dates**, please notify us in the designated section of the application, explaining the exact nature and timing of the conflict. We encourage applicants to carefully consider their responses, as they will have bearing on their application.



#### IMPORTANT DATES

- (1) **Wednesday, February 22, 7 – 9 PM:** Welcome Meeting
- (2) **April 1 - 2, OR April 8 – 9, 8 AM – 6 PM:** Wilderness First Aid and CPR Certification

All trainees need to sign up for one of two weekends to train and receive WFA and CPR certifications. These are two-day courses, and if you cannot make either of these weekends, you will have to arrange your own WFA and CPR certification before Training Trips begin, and FOP will reimburse you for its cost.

(3) **Spring 2017 semester: Office Hours**

Each trainee will be expected to contribute 5 volunteer hours to FOP.

(4) **Spring 2017 semester: Weekly "Gaggles"**

Trainees will be expected to attend weekly 2-hour training sessions on technical and interpersonal skills on the day of their choosing (ideally attending the same group every week). Gaggles will consist of 6 trainees and 2 leaders.

(5) **Tuesday, May 2, 6 – 8 PM: Training Trip Send-Off Meeting and Dinner**

(6) **May 14 - 22: Training Trips**

Our training trips are an evaluative process designed to allow leaders to develop their outdoors and leadership skills. They take the form of a weeklong wilderness trip in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Training trips are a wonderful opportunity to learn, teach, and become familiar with all the responsibilities of leading a FOP trip.

(7) **August 11 – 15: Pre-FOP – You must be back at Harvard by 4 pm on August 11th.**

(8) **August 16 – 22: FOP trips**

(9) **Spring 2017 (SWITCH ONLY): Lifeguard Certification Classes**

All switch leaders need to be Lifeguard certified. For those not currently certified, FOP will be offering an evening course at the MAC this spring. We will notify you as soon as we confirm the dates.

(10) **Spring 2017 (SWITCH ONLY): Canoe Skillz Day**

All switch leaders are required to attend a canoe skills training day, to be held in the MAC or on the Charles River.

(11) **One day in Spring 2017 (OPTIONAL, BUT HIGHLY RECOMMENDED - CAN BE COMPLETED IN PLACE OF SPRING OFFICE HOURS): Backcountry Skillz Day/Weekend**

As FOP trips take place in the backcountry of New England, FOP leaders must be comfortable making decisions in an outdoor setting. For those hoping to improve upon their existing outdoor experience, FOP offers a day or weekend trip sometime in the spring, the Backcountry Skillz Day/Weekend. If you think that you would benefit from this additional experience (and we think that everyone would regardless of prior experience!), please check the designated box on the FOP leader application. Expressing your interest does not mean that you are required to go on these trips.

NOTE: Check the following link for additional MANDATORY trainings which will be held in the spring.

**Anything else I should know?**

- Students who will be on leave for either Spring semester 2017 or Fall semester 2017 are not eligible to apply.
- The cost of **leader training is paid for by FOP**. Clothing, backpack and sleeping bags can be borrowed from FOP as well.

**Some great (optional) training opportunities:** For anyone who enjoys spending time in the outdoors or wants to learn more about the outdoors, there are some fun upcoming opportunities that may be of interest. Please note that selection as a FOP leader-trainee is not determined by whether you

attend. We do, however, believe that training is an important aspect of developing leadership skills and encourage anyone that is interested to take advantage of these opportunities.

WFR: There will be a Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course offered during Wintersession, **January 14th – 22nd**. This course provides an opportunity for leaders and other Harvard undergraduates to get more advanced emergency wilderness medical training. That said, all trainees go through a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) course as part of their training, and WFR is not required. It can, however, significantly enhance one's comfort and ability in dealing with an outdoor emergency. All Harvard undergrads can take the course at a reduced rate.

Sincerely,  
The FOP Steering Committee 2017  
Contact: [harvardfop@gmail.com](mailto:harvardfop@gmail.com) or 617-495-7935  
Office location: Matthews Basement

NOTE: PLEASE KEEP THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS AS A REFERENCE FOR FUTURE DATES

### **FOP 2016-17 Leader Application**

*FOP applications will be collected via emails to [app@harvardfop.com](mailto:app@harvardfop.com). Please use the following document to think about your response. Once you have composed your answers, you should copy and paste them into a template available for download on our website.*

#### **Section F(ree response) of FOP**

**Please answer the following questions.** Due to the large volume of applications we receive, we kindly ask you to **limit each response to no more than 150 words.** There are no right or wrong answers. Please be **specific** in your answers and illustrate using **examples**.

#### **Question 1**

Tell us something about you that you think we should know. Several optional prompts are below. We emphasize that you are not restricted to these.

- Describe an experience of personal growth. What challenged you to grow, and how did you respond?
- If you had to pick one person in the world to describe you, who would it be, and why?
- Tell us about an aspect of your life that you consider a fundamental part of your identity.

#### **Question 2**

What do you think your strengths would be in leading a group of first-year students? What would be your greatest challenges? Please form your answer while considering a combination of necessary interpersonal, leadership skills and more technical skills.

#### **Question 3**

Describe a situation in which you made a difficult decision. What factors did you consider? Are there other factors you wish you had considered? Take us through your thought process. The decision does not have to have been a monumental one. We recommend that you not describe your decision about whether to come to Harvard (we get a lot of these).

#### Question 4

In FOP we are actively and constantly working toward making our trips and community as inclusive as possible, though we recognize that we still have significant room for growth and programmatic development. What does the idea of inclusion mean to you in the context of helping FOPpers, about to embark on their first year of school, make the transition to college life? What steps would you take to create an inclusive space on your trip? Please consider this question in terms of different identities (ex. race, class, gender, sexual orientation-- by no means an exhaustive list of all identities) which FOPpers may hold.

#### Question 5 (for re-applicants only)

What have you done in the past year that might enhance your ability to lead a FOP trip? What have you learned?

#### **Section O(outdoor and leadership experience) of FOP**

##### Question 1

Please list chronologically your teaching experiences (outdoor or otherwise, volunteer or paid), any group leadership experience, and any positions of responsibility you've held that have been valuable to your development.

##### Question 2

What does the "outdoor" in "First-Year Outdoor Program" mean to you? What do you think the outdoors would mean for you in a FOP context? Why do you think we do FOP outdoors and how does that make our program unique? Applicants with no outdoor experience often bring new perspectives to these questions and should not worry about having a "correct" response—we have plenty of wonderful leaders who applied with no previous outdoor experience! (150 word limit)

#### **Section P(ut your feet in their boots) of FOP**

*Imagine that the following scenario describes a day on a FOP trip you are leading. After reading it, please list three of your concerns, elaborating about why they are concerns for you, and how you would react to them. There are no right or wrong answers, but you should try to pick the three concerns that you feel are the most pressing. Please note that, while leading FOP can be a demanding experience, the situation described below is not typical and has not happened on an actual FOP trip. Any resemblance to friends is purely coincidental. (500 word limit)*

You are about to eat lunch on the third day of your FOP trip with 8 FOPpers and 1 co-leader. So far, your trip has gone smoothly except for the first night: it was raining and you couldn't get one of your stoves to work, so you had a late dinner and a short night of sleep. Also, Dennis and Rafael's sleeping bags got damp, and they are still drying out. Lunch is later than usual today because the terrain in the morning was steep with a lot of elevation change. Neha, your most fit FOPper, thought the morning was really easy and was voicing her frustration that the group had been moving so slowly. Brynne hiked in the back the whole morning and could barely keep up. She told you that she was worried about holding up the group, but that this was the hardest thing she'd ever done before.

At lunchtime, the whole group sits down and you start to pull out the salami and cheese. One of your FOPpers, Jacob, is Jewish and does not eat salami, which you knew beforehand, so you pull out the peanut butter for him. Another one of your FOPpers, Greg, says he's never met a Jewish person before and asks Jacob why he's not eating salami. Neha turns to you and asks if she can have peanut butter instead because she's sick of salami. You know if you passed the peanut butter around today, there probably would not be enough peanut butter to last for the next two lunches. You are about to ask Neha to hold off when your co-leader, Ted, says "sure!" and passes it to her. You

try to signal to him but he doesn't see you, and lunch goes on. You notice that Dennis is sitting separate from the group and not participating in the conversation.

Joanna, one of your most outgoing FOPpers who went to boarding school in Massachusetts, has been talking about her two older brothers who also went to Harvard. She announces to the group that she wants to go to medical school, and that she wants to write for the Crimson. One of your quieter FOPpers, Catherine, is from a rural town in Idaho and is the eldest of five siblings. She is listening intently to Joanna, and asks her what the Crimson is. Joanna explains to her that it is Harvard's daily newspaper, one of the top college papers in the country, and that it looks really good on a resume. Joanna goes on to tell Catherine how she and her mother have already planned out all of the courses that she will take over the next four years. Catherine looks worried and continues to ask Joanna about her college plans.

As you're eating lunch, Ted takes out the map and shows everyone the route for the afternoon. He says that we still have two miles over challenging terrain, and that we're going to have to pick up the pace if we want to get to camp before dark.

Dennis is still sitting away from the group, and you realize that he has been separate at meals for the past two lunches. You decide to go check in with him, and when you ask him how he's doing, he tells you that he's fine, just tired. You ask him if he wants to come over and join the group and he shrugs his shoulders and says maybe later.

As you pack up lunch you wonder what to do next. As a leader of the group you want to make sure everyone gets the most out of this FOP trip. You wonder how best to prepare everyone for the rest of the day and the remainder of the trip.

### **Letters of Evaluation**

Please make sure that your evaluations are completed by people who have observed you in a position of leadership or responsibility such as a high school teacher, extracurricular instructor, employer or, if you went on FOP, one of your FOP Leaders. It is generally not constructive to submit an evaluation from a roommate or close friend. Likewise, it is often helpful to submit evaluations from individuals with diverse perspectives on you (i.e., submitting evaluations from both of your FOP Leaders would not be recommended).

Make sure to give the following information to those whom you are asking to write evaluations for you:

1. Your full name (the same one that you will enter in this form)
2. Your Harvard email address (the same one that you will enter in this form; it should contain "@college")
3. Whether or not you have waived your right of access to the evaluation

**The link to the eval form can be found on the "Apply to Lead FOP" page of our website.**