



College of Commissioner Science

Developing a College

Written pre-2000, revised May 2015, September 2015, and May 2018

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Introduction

So you want to develop a college of commissioner science for your council, district, area, or region? Good luck – If you are willing to do that, there are many people who will be willing to assist you.

The following steps herein are presented to serve as suggested guidelines to aid you in completing your task.

FIRST: Gather a team of commissioners and attend other nearby colleges. Learn by observing others and don't be afraid to ask questions. We are all here to "help other people at all times." Talk with the college dean and the staff to learn as much about their process as possible. It is a good idea to request copies of their planning and operating documents. Examples are: college catalog, registration forms, marketing information, and items used by the registrar. Attend several of the classes and take note of instructor techniques and materials available. Register for the classes if you want course credit. Many of these items may be found on that college's webpage.

Next, read this set of suggested guidelines that can steer you through the process.

Getting Started – Learning the Basics

Have a meeting with your staff upon the return to your council to share this information, and to make decisions concerning your college.

Recruit a Staff

The staffing is divided into three main functions: administrative, instructional, and support. Recruit the administrative staff first. Instructional and support staff are discussed in more detail later.

Administrative Staff - includes the college dean, program deans (bachelor, master and doctor degrees, and continuing education), registrar and assistants, and any administrative support staff as needed.

Instructional Staff - includes the instructors and classroom assistants as chosen by the program deans. The instructors must have knowledge of the subject matter and have excellent presentation skills. The different deans need to mentor their faculty and review their preparations for the courses.

Support Staff - includes several departments: college facility, technical support, marketing and advertising, food service, and ceremonies.

Dean's Cabinet - This group is led by the college dean, who prepares an agenda, and meets on a routine basis with all of the staff above except for the instructional staff.

How to Recruit

Start by approaching the council commissioner and his or her assistant council commissioners, who are rich sources of talent within the council. Proceed to the district commissioners and their staffs to fill all the staffing requirements. Have several copies of the job descriptions with you so that prospective candidates know what you are asking of them.

The Importance of a Detailed Timeline

Now it is time to scope out the entire process for your college from beginning to end. This timeline will be your roadmap and time check to determine your progress. Include some buffer for contingencies. The best tool for this is the backdating timeline. It starts on the day that the commissioner college is scheduled to take place and works backwards to determine when activities need to take place. It is used to determine what needs to be done and when prior to the college. This ensures that everything will be on time and in place for a successful college. The dean of the college will use this detailed schedule to prepare the monthly agenda for the staff meeting. The chair of each of the key functional groups will report progress against this schedule. If dates cannot be met, then alternate plans will be determined by the Dean's Cabinet in order to maintain the program schedule.

NOTE: A backdater spreadsheet is available in the "Sample Planning Guide" subfolder. Just enter the date and the calendar math is performed by the macros in the spreadsheet.

Develop a Proposed Milestone Work Schedule (“Sample Planning Guide” subfolder)

This is a sample listing of work to be accomplished along with the established timeline. Some of the items that must be considered:

- Budget
- Ceremony plans, and any special guest invitations
- Council briefings
- Dean’s cabinet meetings
- Degree and course selection (based on an anticipated student enrollment)
- Determine the criteria for a facility, including any Internet or electronic needs
- Evaluation forms for participants, faculty, and staff
- Facility selection based on your criteria – note that this could dictate your date(s)
- Food and beverage arrangements
- Mementos for participants (patch, or other small gift); gift for special guests
- Marketing plan, beginning and end dates for registration
- Plan for record keeping
- Preparation of registration materials and the college catalog
- Reports at the conclusion of the college
- Scope and type of college, including tentative dates and times
- Staff meetings
- Staff selection and instructor recruitment
- Trading post for commissioner items

Determine the Scope and Type of Your Council’s College

First look at the size of your council and the number of districts available to you. Call surrounding councils and see if they might want to join you. Remember that starting out slowly is an acceptable approach. As your experience expands, the scope of your college may expand as well.

Depending on your commissioners’ experiences, you may wish to start with only bachelor courses the first year. You can add master, doctorate, and continuing education course in succeeding years. It’s your choice.

Then determine the type of college to be offered – one day, weekend, or Electronic – and if one council or multiple councils will conduct the college. If planning a multi-council college, it is a good idea to include staff from every council.

Develop a Budget

The budget should provide the best program possible within acceptable cost limits. Set a college fee, and multiply that amount times the estimated number of attendees. This will give you an estimate of revenue. Then calculate the expenses to end with a balanced budget, even if adjustments are made. (See “Sample Budgets” subfolder)

In trying to reach a figure for the participant’s fee, try to keep the cost affordable for your area. You don’t want to price your commissioners out of attending.

Expenses

These factors need to be considered in computing the budget and the allocated portion of these factors and the percentages given are guidelines. They can be varied to fit your situation. If you can obtain certain items at no cost, you can reallocate budgeted funds to another need.

- Council costs – overhead, copying, mailing, diplomas/certificates
- Facility costs – including any custodial fees
- Food service
- Internet or other electronic costs, support equipment
- Printed promotional material – posters, flyers, course catalog, registration forms
- Recognition – certificates, mementoes, and special gifts

Attendee Mementos and Special Gifts

Your budget needs to reflect these items that serve as a personal reminder of your college. You may be able to purchase some items in bulk to reduce the cost. However, you may want to spend a little more for especially invited speakers and guests.

Mementos are usually given to everyone attending. They can range from pens, a portfolio, lanyards, tote bags, notebooks, to specially minted coins.

Special gifts may be presented to show your appreciation to invited speakers, special guests, key staff members, and instructors.

Facility and Specific Needs

Do your best to gain access to an inviting venue that is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.

There many other factors when considering which facility will best meet your needs.

See the “Sample Facility Guide” subfolder for additional considerations.

Recruit Qualified Instructors

It is vitally important that you have qualified instructors. Be knowledgeable about his or her teaching methods. You may want to speak with other college deans to learn about the qualifications and knowledge of their instructors. Make note of your previous instructors and how they performed before asking them to participate in the new college. It is important for the degree deans to recruit their instructors as soon as possible so that they have time to prepare. Deans and assistant deans should not be scheduled as instructors, and only utilized in that capacity should an instructor is not able to attend.

See the “Typical Job Descriptions” subfolder and qualifications for instructors.

A good source for qualified instructors is the commissioner training team. Another source is the Assistant Council Commissioners and the District Commissioners. It is a very good idea to recruit two qualified instructors for each class. This way, if one becomes unavailable at the last minute, you still have someone to teach the course. It is also advisable to have instructors qualified in multiple courses of instruction. This will offer you flexibility in scheduling classes.

Commissioner College Course Materials

All training for commissioners is located on the commissioner training page of the National BSA website. <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/training/>

This includes links for courses for each degree, and a link to the college of commissioner science information and the course materials. Each course has a hot link with a “ZIP” file, which is a self-contained information file containing or listing of all materials necessary to teach a course effectively.

Each “ZIP” file will include multiple files with the following prefixes:

001 – List of the most current documents that should be in the file set

002 – Course Outline

003 – Teaching notes for the suggested primary and secondary teaching methods

These notes assist the instructor by providing suggested methods of engaging the participants. It is a teacher manual of sorts.

004 - A listing of materials needed for the class (chart pad, markers, Post-It notes, index cards, digital projector, laptop, printouts, support materials (manuals), etc.

010 – PowerPoint presentation of the course

This is a secondary method of presenting the course material.

PPT should be used sparingly as this teaching method does not engage participants as effectively as guided discussion and activity learning.

011 – 025 – Handouts, data sheets, manuals, or other materials used for the class instructor to prepare for and present an effective learning experience for all participants.

1. The instructor needs to download the material and review it long before the college. Everything is included in the course materials to eliminate the need for the instructor to develop an alternate teaching method. If necessary, a course could be slightly modified to meet the needs of the local council.
2. The instructor needs to request all necessary materials for the course from the college staff and make sure that they will be available.
3. It is recommended that the instructor practice the suggested teaching methods to be knowledgeable of the material and be in the best position to teach the course.
4. While preparing for the course, make a list of any questions to ask at the instructor meeting or address directly with the degree dean.

Instructor Meeting

The degree deans need to hold a meeting of the instructors and assistants to answer any questions concerning the course material they have prepared.

The classroom operating procedures need to be reviewed, as well as individual course materials and classroom needs are determined. The dean is to verify with the support staff that these needs have been or will be in place prior to opening day.

It is important to hold a meeting immediately prior to the start of the college. This is to share any reminders or handle last minute issues.

Dean's Cabinet meetings

The college dean prepares the agenda, and all except the instructors are invited to report on the progress in their areas. It is recommended to hold at least two meeting prior to the college.

Marketing and Advertising – PROMOTE – PROMOTE - PROMOTE

Promoting the college is critical to its success.

It is essential that an aggressive advertising campaign be conducted. Be upbeat and start early and use various methods often. It is a proven fact that the number of methods and frequency of promotion determines the final attendance. To generate a large group of attendees, there is no such thing as over promoting the event.

- Save the date flyer – early announcement of the date and location
- Course catalog – contains everything people need to know about the college
- Fliers, posters, tri-fold handouts, brochures, a mini version of the course catalog, including where to obtain additional information, registration process, and the reason for attending
- Council announcement – newsletter, webpage, electronic news
- Send information to neighboring councils to share with their commissioner staff
- List your college on the BSA Commissioner Training page of upcoming colleges which can be found at:
<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/Commissioners/training/Colleges.aspx>
- Make upbeat presentations at monthly roundtable and commissioner meetings
- Use the local media if available in your area

Be creative, upbeat, and positive. If people know that you are going to speak about attending the college before you say a word, then you've got them thinking that "The college is the place to be!"

Registration Methods

One method does not fit all.

Determine a method or methods that fit your circumstances. Perhaps a combination.

- Online registration – work with the council staff for the design and method
- Fillable PDF form
- Mail in

Throughout the registration process, the registrar needs to keep the college dean and degree deans informed on the number of participants per course for them to properly prepare any course materials.

Once the deans have developed the course catalog, the required registration forms, student information forms, and online registration links have been added to the council's homepage, registration can now begin. The size of the facility will determine the optimum number of students per course. If you are using electronic registration, it is a good idea to see if a maximum registration number can be placed on each class. There should also be an option for a manual registration, which needs to be announced ahead of time.

The registration system needs to be in place as soon as possible after the college courses have been announced. It is important to announce an ending date for online registration, with a previously determined late fee, if used. This ending date should be set to give sufficient time for the staff to obtain necessary items, as well as the support staff to prepare the facility.

Final registration acceptance is determined by the needs of the college. It should be about five to ten days prior to the event, but could be earlier if needed to obtain materials and/or arrange for food service. This will give the registrar and the staff time to develop the student class lists, instructor class lists, and student welcome packages.

Depending on the system used, determine how late registration would be accepted: at the council center, online, or at the college check in desk. If accepted at the check-in desk, it is a good idea to have someone designated to process these late registrations. This person needs a listing with the classroom and class information so that quick searches for available classroom space can be made.

If late registration at college check in will be allowed, it is important to announce this service with the late fee information in all of the marketing materials associated with registration so that no one is surprised by the extra charge, if applied.

Final Preparation before start of College

The college dean needs to check with each member of the dean's cabinet to see that everything is in place for a successful college.

College Facility Chair (See "Facilities Chairman" sub file in "Typical Job Descriptions" subfolder)

The facilities chair needs to discuss policies with the facility coordinator to make sure the college staff and participants follow those policies, such as no food or drink in the classrooms.

The facilities chair and staff should have access to the facility several hours prior to the start of check-in. The best situation is to have access to the facility the day or evening before the college.

The facilities staff shall prepare the classrooms according to the plans previously developed by the dean and the registrar.

The necessary signage such as classroom identification, restrooms, smoking areas, registration, general session, lunchroom and parking need to be affixed where necessary.

All of the classrooms need to be checked for adequate desks and/ or tables with chairs, small table for electronic equipment, easels, electrical outlets and extension cords (if needed).

The general assembly area needs to be checked for audio systems, seating, podium or rostrum, electrical outlets, and extension cords (if needed). Affix the necessary signage. At the conclusion of the college, the facilities chair and staff should return the facility to its original configuration. Actually, the facility needs to look better when you leave than it did upon arrival.

- Collect borrowed electronic equipment, electrical cords, and other classroom teaching aids to return to the owners.
- Remove all signage and determine if there is a possible future use.
- Return the tables and chairs to their original locations. (Before picture is helpful.)
- Sweep and clean the facility as needed.

Student Welcome Package

These are distributed at the check in table on the opening day of the college. Preparing these ahead of time will ease the check-in process.

Some suggested items included in an envelope or pouch:

- Administrative contact information
- Individual schedules
- College memento
- Map of the facility, highlighting the location of the classrooms
- Meal tickets (if used)
- Participant evaluation form
- Student name tag and individual class schedule
- Any other information deemed necessary for the student

Faculty and Staff Packets

Having a separate faculty and check-in area can prove helpful.

Packets are distributed at the staff meeting after arrival at the facility and prior to open ceremony.

The contents would be the same as the participant packets, with these possible additional items:

- Appropriate evaluation form
- Instructor attendance sheets for each of their classes
- Unique memento for staff

Commissioner College Event Operations

A. Conduct the College

The facility is ready, the registrar is ready, the instructors are ready, and the invited speaker and guests are available. Now it is time to open the college. In spite of all the planning and preparation, problems will arise. The college dean and the staff need to be alert to any problem that may occur and correct it immediately. Now execute your plan and enjoy the day.

B. Staff Availability

The staff needs to be available during the college to handle any questions or issues. The degree deans should not be scheduled to teach a course. However, they can be used to fill in for an instructor who is unable to attend.

C. The Opening and Closing Ceremonies: Setting the Tone

As with any scouting event, opening and closing ceremonies are extremely important parts of the event. They can make the difference between a well-remembered and great event and an event plagued with disaster.

At the opening ceremony, one of scouting's long-held traditions has been the flag ceremony. Scouters, Eagle Scouts, can conduct this a troop that has agreed to provide support, or even a community service organization such as the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Both the opening and closing flag ceremonies need to be done as professionally as possible and in full uniform.

It is your option to have a **keynote speaker** at the opening ceremonies to set the tone, or perhaps during lunch, as you feel appropriate.

At the closing ceremony and as a means to promote attendance at next year's commissioner college, announce the dean for the college, if the decision has been made.

Evaluating the College

Feedback is an important part of determining the success of the college. These surveys help evaluate the training received as well as the overall college experience. Although this seems to be a common sense issue, it is important to remember that valuable insight can come from the faculty and staff that operated the commissioner college to go with comments from the participants. As a part of the planning for the college, the college dean and faculty should identify not more than 25 questions they wish to ask on up to three unique surveys prepared for the participants, faculty, and staff. Compiling the answers to these evaluations will help determine what went well, and what can be improved for the next college.

Evaluation Survey Forms (See “Sample Evaluations” subfolder)

A. Keep the design simple

When designing the surveys, remember that people will be more honest in their experiences if you protect their anonymity. Those who want to provide honest feedback may fear their identity will be made known and not leave important criticisms. People may not find the time to fill out a complicated survey, and many do not care for a rating scale, unless you feel it is vitally important to the evaluation.

People may be more likely to complete a survey using these suggestions

- A simple yes or no might be just what is needed, with a space for additional comments.
- Add an optional space for name, phone number, and email address (required if they want to be contacted)
- Concise questions, with perhaps a check off or circle answer.
- Include a question to see if the person wants to be added to a contact list to attend or help with a future college.
- Include a question wants to be contacted for additional comments.
- Sometimes an open question is better than a check off.
- Avoid a 1-2-3-4-5 choice as a “3” response isn’t always accurate. Use 1-2-3-4 instead to avoid middle of the road responses.

B. Evaluation Survey Distribution and Content

You may decide to use all three types of survey or use the same survey for everyone. It is our recommendation to use a unique one for each group. However, the participant survey could additionally be given to the faculty and staff, or all three could be given to faculty and staff.

1. Participant Survey

This should be included with the participant packet. The questions can cover many topics from publicity to the instruction received. Have an optional area for name and phone number or email if they would like to be contacted for additional comments.

2. Faculty Survey

This should be included in a faculty packet distributed at the instructor meeting before the college opens. This should include an evaluation of the course materials, and would need to include the course title, and name of instructor with contact information.

3. Staff Survey

This should be distributed at the final staff meeting prior to the start of college. It could be a simple survey with only a few open questions:

What went right, what went wrong, what could be improved for our next college. However, this would need to contain space for name and contact information, with the area of responsibility.

C. Survey Collection

At the opening ceremony, lunch, and closing ceremony – remind everyone that their response to the survey is important to continuous improvement of the college, and where the collection will take place.

Having a centralized collection point, such as a box in the large group meeting room can provide a means to collect the surveys and protect anonymity. Some colleges will give a very small token of appreciation for turning in the survey.

Surveys for all groups could be collected in the same box, and sorted appropriately to be compiled after the college. (Use a different colored paper for each)

Evaluation During the College

Commissioner college is designed to be the premiere council-level commissioner training event of the year. It is the desire of the council's commissioner staff and professional corps that the event embody the very best training quality the council can provide. A report from the following staff members will be useful when making the closing report for the college.

A. Administrative and Support Staff

These people need to be available to make sure that everything is running smoothly. This may include helping students locate their classes, or answer policy questions. Any issues brought to their attention need to be handled quickly and satisfactorily. Make a record of these issues.

B. College deans and their Faculty

It is the responsibility of the college faculty, deans and the assistant deans, to assure that the instructors are providing the best training experience possible in the quality of instruction, distributed materials, and information shared. Deans and assistant deans should be utilized to observe courses with both new and experienced instructors.

The degree deans should observe classes throughout the day, to see if any assistance is needed. Special focus needs to be placed on new instructors to ensure they are providing the highest quality training possible in their assigned subject area.

Course observers should take note of the environment of the course (temperature, light, size, and layout), the quality of instruction (instructor seems knowledgeable about their course), course participation (all lecture versus discussion), and quality of materials (audio-visual materials, handouts, etc.).

Reviews after the College

Now that the college is over there are still some items that the faculty, staff, and professional corps need to complete together.

College Dean to Review Collected Evaluation Forms

The college dean should read over all evaluation forms and highlight both common complaints and common complements. Other staff members for items in their area should review all evaluation forms. The college dean may appoint someone to summarize all of the evaluation forms to include in the final report.

Share the complements that highlight the events most enjoyed, outstanding instructors, and any additional positive information indicated on the surveys. This will encourage the staff and may encourage them to volunteer their efforts for a future college.

If a number of complaints focus on an individual, do not discuss with the entire staff; make arrangements to meet with the individual(s) as needed.

Staff meeting to discuss success

It is important for members of the dean's cabinet to discuss the success of the event. Topics may arise that were not written on any of the evaluations. It is important to document anything that will help in planning the next commissioner college.

The agenda for the meeting should review and evaluation the following issues:

- Custom courses.
- Facilities used for the event.
- Final budget for the recent event.
- Food service for the event.
- Key faculty and instructors.
- Marketing methods used.

This meeting may also be a time to discuss plans for the next college, depending on the timeline

- Schedule/timeline of key actions needed

Final Reports at the Conclusion of the College

This is sometimes referenced as an “After-Action Report.” The report is a comprehensive written evaluation of what happened during your college, and is a valuable tool for a future college.

The college dean is responsible for seeing that this is prepared following the conclusion of the college. The registrar will be able to assist with some of this information.

Suggested contents

- Analysis of evaluation sheets from attendees and staff
- Comprehensive list of lessons learned to aid in improving a future college
- Listing of staff and instructors
- Number of degrees awarded per degree program
- Total number of attendees

Suggested Report to Council Registrars

This is sent to council registrars and council commissioners to list the degrees that were awarded at this college. Including the person’s BSA Membership ID# will provide the council registrar the necessary information to update that person’s training record. This is especially important for participants attending from other councils.