Information for Colleges

Swiss Semester, founded in 1986, is an extension of its participating schools, which are leading private schools from all over the United States. For the first semester of their sophomore years, about 40 students from these schools come together in Zermatt, Switzerland, to enjoy unique opportunities for personal and academic growth. The sophomore year has been chosen, because it is often the time when a different setting and routine are most needed and can be most beneficial. Swiss Semester has found that highly qualified and responsible sophomores are adaptable and impressionable and can make the most of the many opportunities provided by Swiss Semester. Many of Swiss Semester’s most important educational goals concern personal growth and the “empowerment” that results from increased confidence, higher expectations of oneself, the development of a “can do” attitude, and the resulting inclination to “seize the day.” To further these ends, Swiss Semester has very high expectations in all areas and provides a variety of challenges and an uncommon level of activity.

History and Location

The director of Swiss Semester is Kris Robbins, son of the founders of the program who continue to remain involved in an advisory capacity. Swiss Semester was founded in 1986 by Raymond Robbins and his wife, Lenita Robbins. Mr. Robbins spent fifteen years as headmaster of University Liggett School in Grosse Pointe, Michigan and seven years as headmaster of The American School in Switzerland in Lugano before founding Swiss Semester.

The campus of Swiss Semester is Zermatt, Switzerland, an out-of-doors paradise that epitomizes the security, stability, healthfulness, and natural beauty for which Switzerland is so renowned.

Admissions

The hallmarks of Swiss Semester—academic rigor, a very fast pace, and strenuous physical exercise in the outdoors—make it particularly appropriate for students of above average academic achievement and motivation who are responsible, of positive attitude, energetic, and mature enough to take full advantage of the program’s unique opportunities and to appreciate the need for limits to individual freedom.

Admission to Swiss Semester is competitive, and decisions are based upon records and references from the home school. The admissions committee first attempts to establish that an applicant can succeed in an academically demanding program. Then the committee considers personal characteristics and the likelihood that the applicant will take full advantage of the opportunities of Swiss Semester and contribute to the quality of life in a small, residential community.

Academic Program

Swiss Semester has been designed to provide change and challenge—and consequently personal growth—without sacrificing rigorous academic preparation for competitive colleges. The curriculum has been carefully planned with the help of the participating schools so that academic credit toward graduation from the home school will be uninterrupted. Every effort is made to ensure academic continuity and ease of reentry. In fact, there are sound reasons why Swiss Semester students most often seek greater academic challenge and achieve higher grades upon return to their home schools.

The following courses are offered at Swiss Semester: English, French (all levels), geology, German (depending on interest), humanities/art history, Latin (depending on interest), math (all levels), Spanish (all levels).

The mathematics and foreign language courses are not, strictly speaking, Swiss Semester courses, but rather a combination of class work and tutoring designed to keep the students abreast of what is being covered in their home schools and thus to prepare them to reenter those programs at the end of the semester. Students use the textbooks of their own schools.

The English and humanities courses work on the skills of analysis, discussion, and writing associated with these areas of study, but the courses do not attempt to duplicate the content of those offered in the home schools. Both courses incorporate Swiss Semester travel in their themes and content.

The science course, which is not a substitute for any particular science course in the home schools, is essentially a rigorous field geology course based on the spectacular and unique geological characteristics of the Zermatt region. Weekly four hour field labs to glaciers and high alpine regions give the students ample opportunity to observe and interpret geological phenomena.

Travel is an important and integral part of the Swiss Semester curriculum. Through careful planning and preparation, travel contributes significantly to the personal and academic growth of Swiss Semester students. The English and humanities courses rely heavily, although not exclusively, on the ideas, literature, art, and architecture of western civilization. The travel is largely designed to reinforce and extend what is learned in the classroom.

Faculty

The majority of teachers at Swiss Semester have an advanced degree and more than ten years experience. Affiliated schools use the temporary Swiss Semester teaching appointments as rewards for especially valuable and capable teachers. These teachers, along with the permanent staff of Swiss Semester, constitute a highly qualified faculty who is responsible for the demanding, yet supportive and friendly, environment that characterizes Swiss Semester. Grades range from A+ to F; numerical grades are converted to letter grades:
It is not unusual for the grades of Swiss Semester students to drop slightly during Swiss Semester because:

1. **Students have less time to spend on their studies due to the many other demands made upon them.** On the other hand, all Swiss Semester students learn to take full advantage of their limited study time.
2. **Students cover, in three weeks less time, as much if not more material than they would at their home school.**
3. **Students accepted to Swiss Semester are in general in the top quintal of their academic classes making the academic level of Swiss Semester classes higher and more uniform; consequently, superior grades are a greater challenge.** There is no “grade inflation” at Swiss Semester.

**Activity Program**

Swiss Semester’s out-of-door activity program is also rigorous and has been designed to take advantage of Zermatt’s incomparable alpine setting. If one is not in good physical condition upon arrival, one will be by the end of the semester. Students spend about five hours a day in the mountains. Emphasis is placed upon hiking, climbing, and skiing. Group instruction by well qualified Swiss alpine guides and ski instructors is provided as part of the program. Endless summits and ridges beckon students as they gain climbing skill and confidence. Weekday adventures are supplemented by weekend options including tour biking, mountain biking, ice climbing, rock climbing, gorging, and hiking.

** Colleges Most Frequently Attended by Swiss Semester “Graduates” (as of 2014) **

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<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Institute 1</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Institute 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Dartmouth</td>
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<td>Middlebury</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Princeton</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>Georgetown</td>
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<td>Colby</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Vanderbilt</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>University of Texas</td>
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**Initial Sponsoring Schools**

- The Blake School, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- The Hockaday School, Dallas, Texas
- Robert Louis Stevenson School, Pebble Beach, California

**Sending Schools (multiple students)**

- Agnes Irwin School, Rosemont, Pennsylvania
- Kimball Union Academy, Meriden, New Hampshire
- Breck School, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Laurel School, Shaker Heights, Ohio
- Castilleja School, Palo Alto, California
- Mary Institute & St. Louis C.D.S., St. Louis, Missouri
- Chadwick School, Palos Verdes Peninsula, California
- Lovett School, Atlanta, Georgia
- Chapin School, New York, New York
- The Montgomery Academy, Montgomery, Alabama
- Charlotte Country Day School, Charlotte, North Carolina
- The Morristown-Beard School, Morristown, New Jersey
- Charlotte Latin School, Charlotte, North Carolina
- National Cathedral School for Girls, Washington, D.C
- Chase Collegiate School, Waterbury, Connecticut
- The Nightingale-Bamford School, New York, New York
- Columbus Academy, Columbus, Ohio
- The Pembroke Hill School, Kansas City, Missouri
- Deerfield Academy, Deerfield, Massachusetts
- Pingry School, Martinsville, New Jersey
- Durham Academy, Durham, North Carolina
- Princeton Day School, Princeton, New Jersey
- The Episcopal Academy, Merion, Pennsylvania
- Riverdale Country School, Bronx, New York
- Episcopal School of Dallas, Dallas, Texas
- St. Albans School, Washington, D.C.
- Great Valley High School, Great Valley, Pennsylvania
- St. Luke’s School, New Canaan, Connecticut
- Greens Farms Academy, Greens Farms, Connecticut
- St. Mark’s School of Texas, Dallas, Texas
- Greenwich Academy, Greenwich, Connecticut
- The Seven Hills Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio
- Hanover High School, Hanover, New Hampshire
- Sewickley Academy, Sewickley, Pennsylvania
- Harpeth Hall School, Nashville, Tennessee
- Shipley School, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
- Hathaway Brown School, Shaker Heights, Ohio
- The Spence School, New York, New York
- Kent Denver School, Denver, Colorado
- University Liggett School, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
- Kinkaid School, Houston, Texas
- The Wellington School, Columbus, Ohio
- Kingswood Oxford School, West Hartford, Connecticut

----3920 ZERMATT SWITZERLAND----