



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:

A+= 98-100	A = 93-97	A-= 90-92	B+= 88-89	B = 83-87	B-= 80-82
C+= 78-79	C = 73-77	C-= 70-72	D+= 68-69	D = 63-67	D-= 60-62
F = below 60					

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)

47 Dartmouth	22 Yale
39 Middlebury	20 Duke
38 Princeton	19 Brown
28 University of Pennsylvania	18 Stanford
27 Harvard	18 University of Southern California
26 Cornell	17 Columbia
22 Colgate	17 University of Michigan
22 Georgetown	16 Colby
22 Vanderbilt	16 University of Texas

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, Meridan, 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-Bear 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	