A Template for High School Philosophy Summer Camps at Colleges and Universities
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This document has been inspired by our experiences leading the Western Michigan University Lyceum, a weeklong philosophy summer camp for high school students facilitated primarily by graduate students. At the WMU Lyceum, students engage in discussions and participate in fun activities that are geared toward introducing them to philosophy and helping them improve their critical thinking and writing skills. The WMU Lyceum has evolved each year, starting with six graduate students who worked with four local high school students. For the summer of 2019, the Lyceum planning involved over a dozen graduate students, a faculty advisor, local high school administrators, and wide-reaching discourse across the University, which resulted in the attendance of fourteen high school students from across and beyond the state of Michigan, including seven female students and seven students of color.

1. Why run a high school philosophy summer camp?

A well-run high school philosophy summer camp at a college or university has at least three distinct beneficiaries: high school participants; the camp leaders; and the college or university associated with the camp.

By participating in philosophy summer camps, high school students are exposed to philosophy in a fun, engaging, and supportive environment. Along with honing participants' critical thinking skills, philosophy summer camps tend to draw high school students interested in discussing "Big Questions" about themselves and the world with their peers. This often leads to exciting new friendships forged by students from a diversity of schools, grade levels, convictions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, the opportunity to engage with one another and the camp leaders in a college setting tends to leave students more comfortable discussing their views with others, helps them identify problems with their own views and the views of those around them, and increases their college readiness. These benefits are recognized not only by camp leaders and parents, but by high school students themselves:

> "Lyceum cultivates an environment of friendship, casual learning, and respect for one another's ideas that is not present in a typical high school classroom. Students are encouraged to speak their minds, to take a stance, to seek answers, and to question others. I have learned to create and present a strong argument, but also to listen to others and to change my mind. I have met some really incredible and interesting people through this summer camp, and I would absolutely recommend Lyceum to anyone interested in Philosophy, in exciting discussions, or in thinking about the world."

> –2nd and 3rd Annual WMU Lyceum Participant

Philosophy summer camps can also be an incredibly enriching experience for the camp leaders, whether they be faculty members, graduate students, or undergraduate students. Working with high school students in an environment less formal than a classroom often rekindles a passion for both teaching and studying philosophy among camp leaders, while also stretching them to facilitate philosophical conversation in new, innovative ways:

"Last year, the Lyceum took place in the middle of the Summer semester. And at this point in my first year of grad school, I was feeling a little burnt out with respect to philosophy. Participating in the lyceum really recharged my batteries, though. The Lyceum is an environment where there is more fun to be had doing philosophy. And it is also a kind of workshop space for those instructing or delivering any content. It is a really interesting challenge to deliver accurate and quality content on these subjects in a way that is accessible and engaging for the high school audience. My overall experience with the lyceum has been wholly positive, a great growth experience, and a ton of fun."

–2nd and 3rd Annual WMU Lyceum Graduate Student Leader

A philosophy summer camp is also advantageous to both the department that supports the program and the respective college or university: high school students—and their parents—gain a close, hopefully positive, personal connection to the camp leaders, the campus, and the department whose students and faculty are leading the camp efforts. Such positive connections increase the likelihood of high school students attending the college or university and taking classes, or even majoring, in philosophy.

2. What resources does it take to run a philosophy summer camp well?

An answer to this question largely depends on the size and scope of the camp in question. For example, a smaller philosophy summer camp can flourish with only a few camp leaders while a larger camp is difficult to facilitate without more support. Thus, running a philosophy summer camp well requires a sense of how many students and faculty are willing to participate in the camp before planning recruitment strategies.

Despite the major differences across philosophy summer camps, a core group of undergraduate or graduate willing to plan and attend the camp, as well as some departmental or institutional support, is vital for almost any camp's success. And while departmental or institutional support may take a variety of forms, it is ideal to have at least one advisor who can serve as a bridge between students and administrators, help students plan curriculum where needed, and establish the programs reputation among prospective parents and local schools.

As an example, the 2019 WMU Lyceum had a core group of three individuals who did the bulk of the recruiting, overall organization, and daily lesson plan design. For the camp itself, the typical session had about a 3:1 student to facilitator ratio. This low ratio fosters opportunities for participants to form close relationships with camp leaders, inviting conversations about their college and career plans, as well as the various, non-philosophical activities they enjoy. The hour lunch sessions—where both graduate students, faculty, and high school participants eat together—has been a particularly effective venue for these conversations. It allows us to, at week's end, provide each camper with a philosophy book aimed at an issue they've shown interest in over the course of the camp. We have found that our budget runs approximately $50-$75 per student and our central costs are: background checks for graduate student facilitators, a food budget (we provide snacks and lunch to campers and instructors), field trip expenses (admission, transportation), and a book budget.

3. How should a philosophy summer camp be planned?

The following is based on a rough timeline for the WMU Lyceum. This timeline will likely work for those starting a program from the ground up, but it may be wise to start exploring faculty and student interest in late-summer or right at the beginning of the semester rather than waiting until early fall.

Early-Mid Fall
- o Hold an interest meeting to see how many students and faculty are interested in participating in the philosophy summer camp.
- o Begin thinking about the following:
  - ▪ Will the camp have a theme? If so, what will it be?
  - ▪ When will the camp take place?
  - ▪ What leadership roles are important? Who will occupy them?
  - ▪ What costs will the camp have (books? food? field trip?) Should the camp have a small fee paid by the campers or be funded? If it will be funded, where will the funds come from?
  - ▪ What are some ways to advertise the camp to high school students?
    - ● Recruit from high school ethics bowl or debate teams
    - ● Contact high school principals and teachers
    - ● Identify college/university connections to local schools
- o Begin researching funding opportunities
  - ▪ Student Government
  - ▪ Department Funding
  - ▪ External Grants
- o Check with college/university administrators about the need for things like background checks for camp instructors, official college/university approval for the camp, and other administrative/legal requirements

Before the end of Fall Semester
- o Finalize date and theme, any potential field trips, and the camp's location
- o Discuss promotional materials and recruitment strategy for spring semester

When classes resume after winter break
- o Finalize promotional materials
  - ▪ Website

- Poster
- Officially register the camp with the college or university
  - Send out promotional materials to local high schools, community organizations and intercampus resources

A month before classes end
  - Finalize camp leaders
  - Begin planning curriculum (see the next section for an example)

4. How should a philosophy summer camp be taught?

The following curriculum is based on the 2019 WMU Lyceum: Philosophy and Technology, which met from 10am-5pm Tuesday-Friday and concluded with student presentations from approximately 10am-12pm on Saturday.

T-R, 10-11: Introduction & Logic

T-R, 11-12: Metaphysics & Epistemology

T-F, 12-1: Lunch in the University Cafeteria

T, 1-3: Normative Ethics

T, 3-5: Censorship and Social Media

W, 1-3: Campus Tour

W, 3-5: Research

R, 1-3: Brains, Minds, and Artificial Intelligence

R, 3-5: Virtual Reality Tour

F, 10-11: Virtual Reality Follow-Up

F, 11-12; 1-2: Research

F, 2-3: Ethics of Self-Driving Cars

F, 3-5: Student Choice/Sendoff

Note that this is only a rough skeleton for the camp. Each day's sessions should anticipate and aim to take advantage of occasions where fruitful conversations develop organically, molding the content and questions of the camp to the interests of the participants, not molding the interests of the participants to the pre-planned content and questions of the camp. While the content and style of these individual sessions varied quite a bit in our case by topic and the graduate students who facilitated them, both camp leaders and student participants reported that problem-based, group-oriented, active learning better achieved the camp's goals than lecture-based learning. For example, rather than camp leaders explaining the difficulties faced by various theories of what constitutes the self, they might instead first facilitate a brainstorming session among participants on what makes them the individuals they are, split participants into groups, and then work with them to engage in a debate.