



Connection

Break Away: The Alternative Break

Vision: A society of active citizens who value community and make it a priority in their life choices.

Mission: To train, assist and connect campuses and communities in promoting quality alternative break programs that inspire lifelong active citizens.

Founded in 1991, Break Away works with college students, staff, and faculty to assist in the development of strong campus alternative break programs. An alternative break is a trip where a group of college students (usually 10-12 per trip) engage in volunteer service, typically for a week. Alternative break trips originated with college students in the early 1980's as a counter to "traditional" spring break trips.

Alternative breaks may occur during students' fall, winter, weekend, or summer school breaks. Each trip has a focus on a particular social issue, such as (but not limited to) poverty, education reform, refugee resettlement, and the environment. Students learn about the social issues months beforehand and then perform week-long projects with non-profit organizations. Alternative breaks are also drug and alcohol-free experiences, with a heavy emphasis on group and individual reflection.

Alternative breaks challenge students to critically think and react to problems faced by members of the communities they are involved with. Being immersed in diverse environments enables participants to experience, discuss, and understand social issues in a significant way. The intensity of the experience increases the likelihood that participants will transfer their experience back to their own communities even after the alternative break ends.

Statistics gathered in Spring 2008:

- For the last 6 years, Break Away has tracked a 10-15% increase in participation on alternative breaks
- Number of students who did an alternative break in 2008: 64,200
- Estimated number of colleges/universities with alternative break programs: 417
- Average number of alternative break trips in a campus alternative break program: 10
- Estimated number of alternative break direct service hours: 1,400,000
- Estimated number of community organizations who host alternative breaks: 750
- Domestic trip cost average per participant: \$249 (fundraised)

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