Dear incoming Swarthmore student,

Congratulations, you are now part of Swarthmore! So what’s next? Want to meet other new students, make new friends, learn about Swarthmore, hone your leadership skills, get to know upperclassmen, have a unique orientation experience, and have fun? Apply to go on a Swarthmore Wilderness Action Trip (SWAT)! SWAT is Swarthmore’s annual wilderness pre-orientation trip for new students that will introduce you to new friends and new skills and allow you to learn about Swarthmore before orientation week. As one of last year’s participants said, “nothing makes lasting friendships quite like dirt, sweat and campfires. Once the year takes off, you'll be glad you had the opportunity to start by getting comfortable in a small-group setting. These people and the particular challenges we handled together became the cornerstones of my freshman year.”

This letter will provide you with just about everything you need to know about the program. You may, however, visit the new students’ website or email swat.orientation@gmail.com if you have any additional questions. This is our second year, and we’ve worked hard over the past few months to build on last year’s experiences to come up with a fun and exciting program. This year’s trip will run from Thursday, August 23, through Monday, August 27. We hope you’ll join us!

No Previous Experience Required: SWAT is open to everyone. Even if you don’t have any previous outdoor experience, we’d like you to apply—as long as you’re willing to try it, we’re sure you’ll enjoy the program.

SWAT Leaders: Your SWAT Leaders are some of the most energetic and engaged students at Swarthmore. You’ll learn an incredible amount about the College from these student leaders who cover a variety of academic and extracurricular interests on campus. Your leaders have excellent training and experience in outdoor skills and can teach you all the things you need to know to be comfortable in the outdoors. If you are selected and enjoy your trip, you might consider becoming a SWAT Leader and pass on your positive experience to others.

The Trips: There will be two SWAT trips this year, both of which will travel to beautiful Northern Pennsylvania. The more strenuous of the two will consist of backpacking a total of about 30 miles over four days. The second trip will be planned to accommodate the interests and physical capacities of those who apply. Please indicate your trip preference on your application. Participants will take an active role in every aspect of the trip: from cooking dinner to carrying group gear, you’ll be playing an integral part in making the experience work. If you have any special needs that will impact the type of trip you can participate in or any special dietary needs, please indicate this on your application.

Trip Dates & Arrival: This year the trips will run from Friday, August 24 through Monday, August 28 but you will need to arrive on campus on Thursday, August 23 for trip orientation. At that point you’ll meet your leaders and the other members of your group and start preparing for your trip. You will be able to pick up your room key and place your belongings in your dorm room on Thursday, August 23, but you should not expect to have time to move in completely. That afternoon, you will
check-in and meet your leaders and the other members of your group, and get any equipment you may need. That evening will be spent getting to know your group, learning and reviewing outdoor basics and packing up for your departure the following morning.

**Students with Differing Abilities:** Outdoor Action can often accommodate students with differing abilities such as hearing impairments, visual impairments, or mobility limitations. Please make a note of this on your application.

**Cost and Financial Aid:** The cost of the trip is $350, which covers all trip expenses (food, equipment, transportation, etc.). Swarthmore College is committed to making sure that the SWAT Program is available to all incoming students. Financial Aid is available from the generous support of the Dean’s Office. Any student who is receiving financial aid from the College is eligible to apply for financial aid for SWAT by simply checking the box on the application form. We will review your request with the Financial Aid Office and let you know about your request if you are accepted. The amount of your aid award is based on the amount of aid you are receiving from the College.

**Safety Concerns:** SWAT leaders have gone through training in outdoor skills including certification in Wilderness First Aid and CPR. More than any other pre-orientation program, SWAT focuses on helping new students learn about college, hone their leadership skills, and become part of the diverse campus that is Swarthmore. Research has been conducted to evaluate similar outdoor orientation programs and has found that these programs, with their unique small group environment, are the most effective means for building strong social networks and leadership skills for new students. Trip leaders are trained in emergency procedures and each trip carries a satellite phone. SWAT will have a contact at Swarthmore throughout the trip to respond to any problems.

**What You Need to Bring:** There is very little equipment you will need other than outdoor-appropriate personal clothing and hiking boots. Since this trip involves backpacking you will also need a synthetic-fill or down-fill sleeping bag with a nylon shell (cotton sleeping bags are NOT acceptable) and an internal or external frame backpack. **If possible, please borrow these items from a friend or relative.** We have a limited ability to supply this equipment. If you absolutely cannot obtain either a sleeping bag or a backpack, SWAT may be able to provide them for you. There is a space on the application form to indicate if you need either a backpack or a sleeping bag. If accepted, we will send you a detailed equipment list and instructions on how to prepare for your trip.

**Food on the Trip – Vegetarians & Special Dietary Needs:** SWAT’s basic menu uses a limited amount of meat. While meals are prepared as a group, they are easily tailored for vegetarians. SWAT will provide non-meat protein sources such as cheese and peanut butter. If you are vegan or have other special dietary needs, please indicate this on your application.

**Applications:** Trip applications must be postmarked by Tuesday, July 3, 2007. Please complete and return all three pages of the enclosed application. The application provides us with information about your physical condition, your health history, any special needs, and why you’d like to participate. If you need an additional application, you may download a Word version at: www.sccs.swarthmore.edu/org/orcom/2007_SWAT_APP.doc you may also submit your application via email. Just send it to Myles Dakan (by July 3) at: mdakan1@swarthmore.edu.

If accepted, we must receive your signed waiver (the third page of the application) and your $350 (or less, if receiving financial aid) payment and prior to the start of the trip.
**SWAT and Tri-Co:** SWAT and Tri-Co take place at the same time, so it is not possible to participate in both. Entering students may apply to both, but they will need to indicate this on the SWAT application form.

**Space on the trip is limited. Due to the expected popularity of this program, we suggest you submit your application as soon as possible.** We will review your application in early July and notify you as soon as possible so that, if accepted, you may make necessary travel arrangements.

If accepted, a detailed information packet will be mailed to you in early August, with specific information on what items to bring, how to get your room key, and other important information. You will also receive a phone call from one of your trip leaders to go over any questions, etc.

Mail your application (postmarked no later than July 3, 2007) to:

**Myles Dakan**  
Swarthmore College  
500 College Avenue  
Swarthmore, PA 19081

Please be sure to note the following in the appropriate location on your application:

- Health Insurance Provider and policy number
- Date of last medical examination
- Family physician name and phone number
- Date of last Tetanus booster shot
- Your signature and that of your parent or guardian is required.
- Indicate if you are applying for financial aid.
- Application deadline is July 3, 2007.
- Make sure your completed medical forms have been sent to Worth Health Center.

We hope that you will apply for this amazing opportunity! If you have questions about the program, please feel free to contact one of the following SWAT trip leaders (all email addresses are @swarthmore.edu):

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<tr>
<th>Myles Dakan</th>
<th>Anna Grant</th>
<th>Jackson Swearer</th>
<th>Karen Minyety</th>
<th>Rodrigo Luger</th>
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Sincerely,  
The SWAT Committee