

UCLA Summer Institutes

Activity Planning

Activity Ideas

Roommate Contracting

Set the tone for an open channel of communication and agreed upon boundaries between students by holding a gathering to develop and sign roommate contracts at the start of the summer institute. This activity could begin with a discussion on what constitutes a roommate relationship, and RAs/counselors could share examples of potential roommate challenges and how to craft a sustainable and respectful roommate agreement that serves all parties.

Movie Night

Plan a group screening of a fun movie. Bonus points for finding a film that lines up with the topic of your program. Ex. *Moneyball* would be a great movie to show on the topic of statistics. (Please keep age restrictions in mind.)

Toastmaster

A public speaking opportunity! Give students a silly topic and ask them to improv a speech. The goal is to get the students in front of a crowd and the fun topic helps ensure it's not too stressful.

Time Capsule

The ultimate in future nostalgia! Give students a few prompts to write about in a letter, such as their goals for the summer institute, details about their current day-to-day lives, questions about their understanding of how the topic of the summer institute functions in the world. This "capsule" can be collected and then distributed back to students at the end of the summer and opened.

Amazing Race Scavenger Hunt

Organize students into teams/groups and prompt them to find items or take photos of items related to their programs. Or, plant a series of clues around campus for the students to follow. Winning group gets a prize and/or bragging rights!

Vision Boarding	An arts and crafts project where students are asked to visually imagine their future (perhaps as it relates to the topic of the institute) using collage, drawing, etc. (You'll likely need supplies such as magazines, printed images, paper/poster board, markers, pens/pencil, tape, glue, etc.)
Conflict Resolution Workshop	Conflict can take many shapes and sizes. But how can we effectively resolve a disagreement, confrontation, or situation of high tension? Holding a workshop for your students to discuss the topic of conflict resolution and role-play various scenarios will not only provide them with important life skills but could also set the stage for a more respectful, peaceful program environment throughout the summer.
Museum Trip	Visit Hammer Museum in Westwood, Fowler Museum on campus, or one of the many museums around the greater Los Angeles area, such as the Getty Museum just west of campus.
Paint, Snack, & Socialize	Host a night of painting with materials and snacks provided. Students can follow along with an instructor or an online tutorial projected onto a screen, or sketch their own ideas.
Building Towers with Teamwork	Learning how to communicate with others is a life skill that everyone can benefit from! This activity requires splitting students into various groups and providing them with spaghetti, marshmallows, and tape. Each group will have 10 minutes to create the tallest tower. By communicating with each other, trying and testing various ideas, and possibly failing along the way, students will learn some valuable life skills about team work and hopefully bond with those they are put in a group with!
Succulent Decorating	Students receive a small succulent and paint supplies to decorate their plant's pot. This fun activity is something that often takes place at UCLA during the academic year and would give students a succulent to commemorate their time at UCLA during the summer.
Picnic in the Sculpture Garden	Visit UCLA's famous Sculpture Garden for a picnic on the grass. Or even combine this idea with a drawing or painting activity in the garden.
Karaoke Night	A beloved activity by many summer institutes! Book a space with a screen or set up a creative backdrop, and don't forget to request a microphone from AV. YouTube has tons of free karaoke songs that students can pick out.
Study Night	Open a lounge area with study music, snacks, and supplies like notecards, highlighters, and pens.

Trivia	Test out your students' knowledge in a fun way! Divide the students into groups and design a set of trivia questions around a theme related to the institute, UCLA, or beyond. Maybe even mix-and-match academic questions with silly ones or pop culture to keep students on their toes.
Bingo	There are lots of creative ways to make bingo interactive. For example, create a series of bingo card prompts that serve as ice-breakers for students, such as prompting students to find a peer who "Has been to more than three countries," "Is a middle child," "Plays in the school band," etc. Or, fill your bingo cards with words related to your summer institute and draw the words one by one from a bowl.
Mindful Meditation	Lead a group meditation break outside on campus or in a quiet indoor space. The UCLA Mindful Awareness Resource Center (MARC) offers free recordings of guided meditations that can be played out loud to groups. If outside, be mindful of the location and time of day to ensure the space you've decided on isn't too noisy. UCLA also holds free drop-in meditation sessions virtually and in-person (typically at the Billy Wilder Theater at the Hammer Museum).
Dining Hall Recipe Share	Ask students to share a favorite simple recipe or meal combo that they've devised in the dining hall. They could each give a short explanation of their creation to the group or write their recipe/combo down on notecards that are swapped around the room and shared out loud by someone else. Example: vanilla soft-serve ice cream in a mug of hot chocolate or an unexpected salad bar combo.
Recreation	Don't forget, you can reserve recreation spaces for your students through UCLA Recreation. Spaces available for rentals include Sunset Canyon Recreation, fields, pools, the rock wall, and more. Make sure to explore the options available and reserve spaces early.
Beach Trip	Plan a visit to one of LA's nearby beaches for a fun group outing in the sun. Please remember, you'll need to plan and book transportation for any outing off of the UCLA Campus. You may also want to bring items for activities such as beachballs, frisbees, etc. Please also ensure that students stay within your supervision during the entirety of any off-campus group excursion.
Faculty-led Field Trips	Invite a faculty member to lead a field trip that ties into the topic of the summer institute. Drawing upon faculty expertise and extending the classroom beyond the traditional four walls could be an excellent way to build links between coursework and the real world for students and can engage departmental faculty in valuable new ways.

Important Reminders

- Group activities indoors will likely require you to book a space. This could include lounge spaces in the dorms or conference rooms/auditoriums on campus. Make sure to reach out to UCLA Conference Services well in advance of the Summer quarter if you need to book spaces: <https://conferences.ucla.edu/meeting-event-spaces/>
- If you plan to reserve any type of space or facility (indoor or outdoor) for activities—from an intramural field to a residential hall study lounge, you must do so early. Summer is a busy time for the university in terms of use of space, so please make all of your reservations (incl. any AV or catering requests) well before Summer Quarter begins. Even if your summer institute begins in July or August, please make your reservations before Summer Quarter. UCLA Recreation can be contacted at reserve@recreation.ucla.edu. Additionally, [click here for instructions on how to reserve space](#).
- If your group discovers an empty lounge in a residence hall and would like to use it, please check with UCLA Housing to determine whether that space is actually available or if it has been booked by another group during the time block in question. It can be challenging to navigate a situation where one group has set up shop in a space that another group has already booked, so please be courteous to all of your fellow Summer Sessions peers by confirming that an empty lounge is indeed available before using it.
- If you need AV equipment for an activity, such as a microphone and speakers for a karaoke night or a screen to project a movie, please connect with your Conference Services representative to ensure that those items are ordered and delivered to the space you have booked.
- While students should be engaged in activities that you have planned during the hours or required programming, situations could arise where a student needs to be excused from an activity for reasons such as feeling ill. In these cases, any student excused from an activity must still be supervised. We recommend program coordinators, counselors, and/or RAs have a plan in place to supervise students who are unable to participate in a group activity.

Students should not be permitted to opt-out of required programming for reasons other than sick-leave or a serious circumstance.

- Please be mindful of other groups, including other UCLA summer institutes, when holding activities in outdoor or indoor spaces during Summer Quarter. Summer Sessions students and program staff should treat others on campus with respect and courtesy.
- A key reminder for RAs and counselors is to ensure students are engaged in activities planned by your program and feel comfortable in participating. For example, if a sports activity is planned such as a soccer game, it would be recommended for the RAs to create teams and encourage everyone to participate, rather than leave the students to pick which peers play and which stay on the sidelines.
- If traveling off-campus for an activity, please remember that students under the age of 18 are not permitted to use rideshare services such as Lyft and Uber unless accompanied by an adult over the age of 18. We strongly recommend arranging alternative transportation options such as public transportation or reserving a bus. If rideshare services are absolutely required, please connect with your Summer Sessions analyst to ensure any UCLA policies are adhered to.
- If students will be transported via rented vans, or similar modes of transportation, please note that drivers must be qualified to transport students. For example, unless they have received specialized training, RAs/program counselors are not qualified to transport pre-college students and should not be asked to do so as part of their duties for your program. We strongly recommend bus rentals with a qualified driver as a means of transportation.

