

Senior Independent Project (SIP) Handbook 2017

SIP requires:

- Sufficient seriousness, depth, and educational value;
- A challenge to the student in a clearly defined way;
- Work with a mentor who will direct and evaluate the project;
- Thirty to forty hours per week to be spent at a specific site or in specific work;
- A final report to be presented to the community.

To participate in SIP, a student needs to do the following:

- Submit a formal application to the SIP Committee that shows a thoughtful plan with specific goals and a clear indication of a student's readiness for the project;
- Submit a supporting letter from the SIP Mentor that confirms the details of the project;
- Be a student in good standing as determined by a faculty review of attendance, promptness, academic status and behavioral standards;
- Complete all school requirements before leaving for projects.

The nature of SIP requires student initiative and responsibility. Being late to school, late to class, accumulating detentions for behavior, letting grades drop, and/or failing to meet other school responsibilities are signs that a student may not be ready for the independence a project demands. It is up to each student to keep regular attendance, maintain his/her academic record, and uphold all community behavioral standards. Seniors who do not develop a SIP Project are expected to be at school 8:00 A.M. to 3:10 P.M. each day from May 12 to May 31.

Seniors and/parents who have questions about SIP can contact the SIP Coordinator, Toni Vahlsing, at tvahlsing@abingtonfriends.net. Toni is also available in the Faulkner Library for drop-in questions.

SIP Application Process

The Coordinator meets with the class in December to outline the program and to review all requirements. At that point, seniors should begin thinking about what they would like to do for SIP. They should review past SIP Projects, talk to parents, talk to classmates, and meet with their adviser.

The first deadline is **Friday, January 11**. By that day, all seniors who are interested in doing SIP should complete the *Preliminary Application* available in Google classroom.

The planning period for SIP is December through February. During this period, seniors need to focus on particular work or a particular site. The senior should meet with the mentor to outline the details of the project. The senior should ask the mentor to send in a supporting letter. After all the details have been settled, the senior then completes the *Final Application*.

Applications are due by **Friday, March 10**. A senior **MUST** meet this deadline to have his/her application considered by the Senior Advisers. Senior Advisers will review all applications before Spring Break.

The Role of the SIP mentor

Every spring, seniors at Abington Friends School leave campus for three weeks to work, study and learn under the guidance of mentors.

SIP provides a wonderful opportunity for students to define and develop their own learning experiences. Students use SIP to deepen experiences they have already had; to learn skills they have always wanted to learn or develop skills they already have; to try out a career path; to engage in further academic study; or to travel and work in other cities and countries.

This year, SIP will take place from May 12 to May 31.

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The relationship between mentors and students is at the heart of SIP. The mentor's role is to guide and instruct the student, supervise his/her tasks, set hours, and evaluate the student's work. A mentor's responsibility should include all aspects of the student's experience from showing a student a professional dress code for the office to exploring with the student the challenges of the work itself.

The best projects for students are the most "hands on" as possible. Whatever the mentor can do to allow students to be part of the action is welcome: attending meetings, greeting clients, interacting with colleagues, observing operations, and learning the day-to-day routine of the mentor's profession. At the end of three weeks, seniors should have a good sense of the specific work done by the mentor and a rich experience of the world of work.

A mentor who agrees to work with a student should send a letter/email confirming the details of the project:

- days and hours the student will work
- specific tasks the student will perform
- what the student will learn about the work or company
- the method of evaluation of the student's work
- any other relevant details that would help the SIP Committee understand the project

Letters should be sent to
Toni Vahlsing
Abington Friends School
575 Washington Lane
Jenkintown PA 19046

Emails should be sent to tvahlsing@abingtonfriends.net

SIP Timeline

December 7 Coordinator presents SIP information to senior class; seniors begin process of researching sites and planning projects

January 11 Seniors must submit *Preliminary Application* to SIP Committee

February 2 Students must submit *Progress Report* to advisers

March 10 *SIP Final Application* and *Mentor's Confirmation Letter* must be submitted for SIP Committee review

March 12 SIP Committee meets to review all Final SIP Applications

March 20 Seniors notified of acceptance of applications; seniors without projects will be assigned to work on campus

May 12 Seniors leave campus for SIP

June 1 Seniors return to campus for morning assembly

June 5 Seniors present Senior Independent Projects to community

Seniors and/parents who have questions about SIP should contact the SIP Coordinator, [Toni Vahlsing](#). Toni is also available for "drop-in" help in the library.

What makes a good SIP Project?

We encourage you to find projects where you will be learning each day and each week. In our experience with SIP, we have learned much about what projects do and don't work. We will do what we can to help you shape your project.

A good project is one where you can't wait to get to the site, where you're learning each day, where the work is "hands on," and where you are challenged intellectually and emotionally.

Conversely, projects which sound great in theory aren't always practical; for instance, students who want to be psychologists find it difficult to work out a project because of privacy issues for clients; some projects, e.g. working at a doctor's or dentist's office, involve too much watching and not enough doing. You may learn a lot in the first week, but then there's not much new.

Some students use SIP to try out a career path (marketing, advertising, medicine, landscaping, recording engineer, photographer); some students use SIP to learn a skill they've always wanted to learn (cooking, wood turning, photography;) others use SIP to develop a skill they already have (sculpture; reading/research an academic area; tech theater; musical composition) still others use SIP to deepen experiences they have already had (doing community service; writing poetry; working with a national advocacy group.)

Are there sites or jobs that do not qualify for SIP?

There are many projects which can be learning experiences; you could go camping for three weeks and test your mettle; you could travel through France and keep a journal; you could stay at home and read books for three weeks. No one doubts these are learning experiences. BUT...they are not SIP Projects.

SIP is limited to particular experiences where an adult mentor works with you. This does not necessarily mean that the adult mentor is right there by your side as you work. It does mean that the mentor is in frequent contact, is teaching you, and is evaluating your work.

Other limits on SIP:

As you plan your projects, you should be aware of the limits on SIP:

●**The adult mentor may not be an AFS Faculty member or a member of your family or a close family friend.** The objective of SIP is to allow you to develop a skill through work with a knowledgeable adult to challenge you to learn beyond the classroom. Working with a relative or a close family friend or working in an organization where a relative works defeats the spirit. What challenge is that? We want you to work with someone you don't know so that you will be challenged. Family members may be the initial contact; they can help you arrange work with someone outside the family.

●**SIP projects must be completed off campus.** You need to find work spaces away from the AFS campus to complete your Projects.

●**SIP must occur during the dates set aside for it.** Trips or programs that fall outside of those dates do not qualify for SIP. When you research your project, keep the dates in mind. If you play a spring sport and would like to travel after the end of the season, you can do so by combining a week of study and preparation with travel. Speak with Kristine Long if you are thinking of this option.

●**Some work does not qualify** because it falls outside the educational mission of the school or outside defined "educational value" or lacks structure:

- getting an early start on a summer job;
- working in a retail store;
- preparing for a test or certification: (paramedic, stockbroker's, driving, scuba diving, etc.;
- learning a sport;
- working in groups;
- learning to tend bar, working at an adult magazine;
- hiking or camping.

May students work with other students?

Generally, SIP is something you do on your own. One of the goals of SIP is to challenge you to move out of your own "comfort zone" and working with a friend undercuts the challenge.

If you are interested in traveling to another city or another country to do your project, for safety and for financial reasons, you may live with another senior as long as you are each doing a different project.

What happens if a Project falls through?

Sometimes, despite all your efforts, a project falls through. A mentor gets fired. Your mentor gets sick. Your company goes through restructuring which leaves you out. These things do happen. If the problem is beyond your control, you will be given time to develop another project. If the project falls through because of something you did have control of--meeting a deadline, following through on a task, meeting the mentor-- you will not be able to do SIP.

How do I know if an idea for the Project is acceptable?

If you are unsure if your idea falls within the guidelines, talk with the SIP Coordinator or email her. She is in the best position to answer your questions. Contact Kristine at klong@abingtonfriends.net.

What parents should know

- All seniors in good standing are eligible for SIP. Seniors who choose not to do a project or whose projects are not approved are expected to be at school 8:00 A.M. to 3:10 P.M. each day from May 11 to May 31 to work in school offices/classrooms.
- Information about SIP will be presented in class meetings and sent home through the school e-mail. To develop a project and apply for SIP, students must access their school e-mail accounts.
- Information about SIP requirements, limits, and sites and answers to frequently asked questions are available at the SIP web site. Students and parents should check out the site.
- The SIP Coordinator, Toni Vahlsing, is available for help through email at tvahlsing@abingtonfriends.net.