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Campus Feature Assignment

Feature Writing & In-Depth Reporting

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Article Synopsis

This article spotlights the University of Cincinnati's Mountaineering Club. Included are facts about the club, interviews with both leadership and members, and reasons as to why UC students should check the club out.

The University of Cincinnati's Mountaineering Club

Clinging to a rope suspended far above the heads of their classmates may seem like a nightmare to some people, but to the University of Cincinnati's Mountaineering Club, that's just Tuesday. Mountaineering Club, primarily known as UCMC, is every bearcat's premier access to the great outdoors.

Established in 1971, UCMC is both one of the oldest and one of the largest organizations on campus. The goal of the club is to educate people on the outside world and train them in any and all outdoorsy skills. Their motto being "anything and everything outside" is no exaggeration. UCMC proudly features opportunities to experience any outdoor activity you can think of. In addition to the opportunities, they also provides the tools it takes to make these activities happen. For just \$20 a semester or \$30 for the entire school year (if you manage to catch the deal at the beginning of the Fall semester), all members of the organization gain access to what they call the

Gear Cave, a space in Clifton Court Garage that houses exactly what anyone needs for their next hiking trip, kayaking journey, fishing weekend, or anything else you could possibly think of to do in the great outdoors.

UCMC is not just a gear rental service though, within the club are opportunities to join in on or even lead a trip to pretty much anywhere a car can take you. From camping in subzero weather in northern North Dakota to blazing hot treks through the deserts of Utah, this club has seen it all. UCMC offers trips throughout the year, but their most notable trip is always their spring break journey. Last year's spring break saw UCMC travel to Washington, Utah, and Colorado, and this year's trip featured both Utah and Arizona.

None of what UCMC is able to accomplish every year would be possible without the leadership of their executive board. Lead by co-presidents Alyssa Polito and Deyer Graffice, the hard working leaders of UCMC meet once a week with their executive board to plan out their general body meetings for that week, as well as make decisions and plans for the semester. Alyssa and Deyer have both been with UCMC since they began their days at UC. They have both held multiple other leadership roles in the club before working their way up to co-presidents and each have dedicated so much of their time in college towards this club. Neither of them has any regrets, though, Alyssa even goes as far as to describe UCMC as "one of the best things that has ever happened to me" and "the most rewarding part of my college experience." The devotion does not stop with them though; Ian Wright, treasurer, and Cody Kisner, gear cave manager, both feel very strongly about UCMC as well. Cody's passion lies in teaching people about the outdoors and getting people involved, especially in college where people struggle to get outdoors or make friends, and he says that one of his favorite parts about being a leader for the club is "getting to pass along that experience." Ian, who's been all over the United States with UCMC,

can pretty easily say the best trip he's ever been on is one he's taken with the club, a mind-numbingly cold camping trip up in North Dakota. Both of them, along with four other members of the club's executive board, aid Alyssa and Deyer in providing a wholly unique and special opportunity for anyone at UC who is interested in the outdoors.

The passion definitely does not stop at the top. Grace Abdelnour, long-time member of UCMC and self-proclaimed nature lover, is a massive fan of the club. With them, she has gone to so many places all over the country, her favorite being either the Adirondack Mountains in New York or Big Bend National Park in Texas. When asked about how UCMC has impacted her time at UC, Grace said "UCMC has impacted my life in general. From whom I am hanging out with to what I want to do after I graduate, I can attribute it all to this club. my love for the outdoors and the way that I foster that has definitely been impacted and I have had experiences that I would not have dreamed of my freshman year. living out of a car and jumping off of cliffs kind of regularly are just two examples." She also had advice for people interested in the club, saying to "do it! Expand your comfort zone and know that you can get so much out of it. This club is so unique because it opens up so much potential for learning things that you wouldn't in a classroom and being part of a culture full of rad people doing rad things." Similarly, Ana Hartinger, UCMC member since August of 2021, shares in Grace's passion for the outdoors. Ana tells me that the club has simply made her life healthier. Yes, the exercise and fresh air helped, but the club fostered a healthy balance in her life and gave her motivation to work hard in school. She found herself procrastinating less and studying harder to free up time for the club. She cannot recommend enough that you just show up to a meeting and introduce yourself to all the friendly faces at UCMC.

For anyone interested in UCMC, do not hesitate to join and try your hand in being outdoorsy. Past experience with these extreme activities is not a requirement at all, in fact Alyssa likes to share that she could not even rock climb before she joined, and now she attributes all she knows to UCMC. Show up to a weekly meeting, join them for their post-meeting socials at Mac's, or even sign up for the email list off of CampusLink and keep an eye out for all the cool opportunities UCMC has to offer. Just watch how fast you'll make new friends and try things you didn't even know existed before you joined the University of Cincinnati's Mountaineering Club.

Sources

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