



Dartmouth College student instructors sliding their way through a certification exam.

ELI BURAKIAN / DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

TIPS TO ATTRACT, RETAIN, AND DEVELOP THE BEST NEW INSTRUCTORS: FOUR SCHOOLS SHARE THEIR INSIGHTS

By Stephanie Prince Alexander, PSIA-AASI Special Projects Editor

Mammoth Mountain, CA – Listening to Instructors Wants and Needs

Craig Albright, senior director of ski and snowboard schools at Mammoth Mountain, says listening to their instructors is the best way to retain current staff and attract new staff through word of mouth of satisfied employees. “Whether the issue is pay, benefits, training, work assignments, locker room conflicts or their ideas on how to improve our guest experience – we have to foster an open dialogue with our people which allows us to create long term relationships built on mutual respect for individual wants and needs,” said Albright.

Though Albright says meeting everyone’s needs 100 percent of the time isn’t always possible, listening to and understanding

what instructors want and need *is*. Providing a fun environment to work in is also a priority for their ski and ride school. “Delivering a fun and rewarding workplace is paramount to retaining our current staff and attracting new staff. We are only as good as our reputation,” said Albright.

When it comes to developing new instructors, Mammoth begins by establishing and communicating its school’s high standards for the guest experience, professionalism, and instructional skill, and they incentivize behaviors that meet these high standards. They take a partnered approach with staff to reach standards through ongoing training, feedback, coaching, and celebration upon successful execution.

Arapahoe Basin, CO – Cultivating a Family Feel

Arapahoe Basin, or “The Basin,” as it’s known to many, often stays open well into



DAVE CAMARA / ARAPAHOE BASIN SKI AREA

The Arapahoe Basin Kids Center, where children get their start in snowsports.

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Promote your job openings for instructors, supervisors, trainers, senior management, and more on PSIA-AASI's national Career Center. This is your chance to directly connect and pull from a talented pool of more than 32,000 dedicated and ambitious certified instructors who have a passion for the outdoors and serving your guests. Sign up here and start promoting your open positions today.

the Spring – sometimes even until June. Gates Lloyd, The Basin's snowsports director, says their long season helps attract qualified candidates, along with competitive pay, generous benefits, and the family feel and supportive vibe at their ski and ride school. "The mountain's unique history plays a large role in the attraction. Snow pros return to The Basin's snowsports school because of the connection they feel to fellow employees and a supportive management team," says Lloyd.

Taking informal runs with instructors, providing in-house training, and using PSIA-Rocky Mountain Division's Total Training Pass, are some of the ways they develop pros. Arapahoe Basin also offers a Leadership Development Program led by Chief Operating Officer Alan Henceroth.

Snowbird, UT – Making Training Easily Accessible

For some ski and ride schools like Snowbird, having a reputation for stellar terrain and lots of powder brings many interested instructor candidates to their mountain. And once they get there, instructors will find staff dedicated to establishing lasting relationships with them through intensive training opportunities.

"The management team participates as much as possible in training. We try to give instructors what they NEED to survive first, then layer on as the season continues. We try to make training as accessible as possible through online registrations," says Maggie Loring, Snowbird Mountain's school director.

Training is managed by PSIA Alpine Team Coach Rob Sogard, and there are also several divisional clinic leaders on staff, creating great opportunities for further learning and training for instructors.

Aspen Snowmass, CO – Offering Paid Training and PSIA-AASI Link

Aspen Snowmass advertises through job

fairs, PSIA-AASI, word of mouth, and local newspapers to continue bringing in high quality instructors. "We work hard to provide high pay for professional behavior and personal business development. We provide 25 hours of paid training each season for experienced pros, and 40 hours for inexperienced pros in-house to honor their personal and professional growth," says Katie Ertl, managing director of the Aspen Snowmass Ski and Ride Schools.

Aspen Snowmass invests in their instructors' development by providing season-long training that covers certification training, mandatory operational training, elective training (race clinics, Highland Bowl clinics, fundamental movement clinics, kid's fest, etc.), and cross over training.

"We promote and support PSIA-AASI as an avenue of growth for pros, and certification levels are reflected in our pay grid. We believe in getting new instructors involved in PSIA-AASI early on so that they have opportunity to learn from the trainers at Aspen Snowmass, as well as from the excellent clinic leaders and examiners that work for the Rocky Mountain Division," said Ertl.

Dartmouth College Snowsports School, NH – Providing College Credit for PSIA-AASI Certification

This unique snowsports school consists of 50 Dartmouth student snowboard, alpine, telemark, and adaptive instructors who teach a series of seven weekly lessons to 250 of their fellow students at the Dartmouth Skiway. Students who take a snowsports course are awarded a PE (physical education) credit (three are required for graduation), and instructors are awarded a credit for each level of PSIA or AASI certification achieved.

Experienced skiers and riders are recruited to be instructors through campus emails and through word of mouth. Applicants are interviewed and hired by upper class



Instructors at Mammoth Mountain benefit from having management that listens to their wants and needs, so they can focus on teaching awesome lessons like this one.



Instructors at Snowbird benefit from having the PSIA Alpine Team coach manage their training.

student directors/trainers. Instructors are compensated based on experience and PSIA-AASI certification.

Each instructor completes a Level I in-house certification (paid by the college) after satisfactory completion of their first year of training and teaching. Returning instructors are supported in pursuit of Level II, and pay scales reward certification and experience. Dartmouth also offers certified instructors a semester long externship in multi-disciplined snowsports instruction at Snow King resort in Wyoming under the direction of Dartmouth alumnus and PSIA Nordic Team coach J. Scott McGee. 