

InterVarsity Camps Questions and Answers | March 2019

What has InterVarsity's Board of Trustees decided about InterVarsity's three camps?

At their February 2019 meeting, the InterVarsity Board affirmed the importance of camping experiences for students and the need to give more students in our fellowships the opportunity to retreat and receive discipleship training. To that end they approved the following resolution:

With our desire to lower barriers for participation and provide camping experiences for more students, we authorize and empower the Administration to actively explore the disposition of the ownership and/or operations of the Retreat and Training Centers and take necessary next steps toward that end.

How will releasing ownership of the camps lower barriers and provide camping experiences for more students?

Though the *value* for camping ministry is as much at the heart of InterVarsity as it is for other ministries like Young Life and InterVarsity Canada, the ownership of camps themselves has never made up a similar (significant) percentage of ministry for us as it does for these others. Our scale is much, much smaller, and always has been. Among other things, this has meant that it costs more for a student to attend one of our camps than it does for them to attend a retreat at a camp where their chapter has rented space. More and more, when faced with the higher costs and higher travel times needed to get to our camps, students are simply choosing not to come to retreats and Chapter Focus Weeks at all. Releasing ownership of the camps frees chapters up to utilize camps closer to their campuses, which will decrease costs and increase the number of students who are able to attend.

What happens next?

We will begin the process at each of our three camps beginning with Cedar Campus, then Campus by the Sea, and finally Toah Nipi. As each camp situation is unique, the steps we will take for each camp will be slightly different.

For **Cedar Campus**, our first step was to notify the Taylor family, whose Christian Workers Foundation (and now also the Taylor Christian Foundation) donated Cedar Campus to InterVarsity. We will be partnering with the family and their trusts to identify a ministry to take InterVarsity's place—one that will commit to preserving the unique beauty of Cedar Campus and operating it as a Christian camp for the benefit of students, churches, families, and ministries. Upon the original donation of the camp, and memorialized in our Board documents, the family stipulated that Cedar Campus remain a place set apart as a Christian camp.

InterVarsity intends to continue operating Cedar Campus at least through the summer of 2020.

For **Campus by the Sea**, our first step is to see if we can identify an individual or group who will take on ownership of CBS, ideally to run it as a Christian camp. Since the land that CBS is on is leased, any process to release ownership or change the ownership structure of CBS could take



some time. We're praying that God would make the way before us clear. InterVarsity intends to continue operating CBS through the terms of the lease, December 2021.

Toah Nipi is a bit different, due to the fact that it may be the closest and most cost-effective camping option for several chapters in the New England region. As a result, we will evaluate it last, likely once the region's new leader is in place and able to assess the possibilities and options for Toah Nipi with InterVarsity's leadership. As with the other two camps, we're praying that God would make the way before us clear. InterVarsity will likely continue operating Toah Nipi at least through the summer of 2020.

Where does camping fit into InterVarsity's ministry?

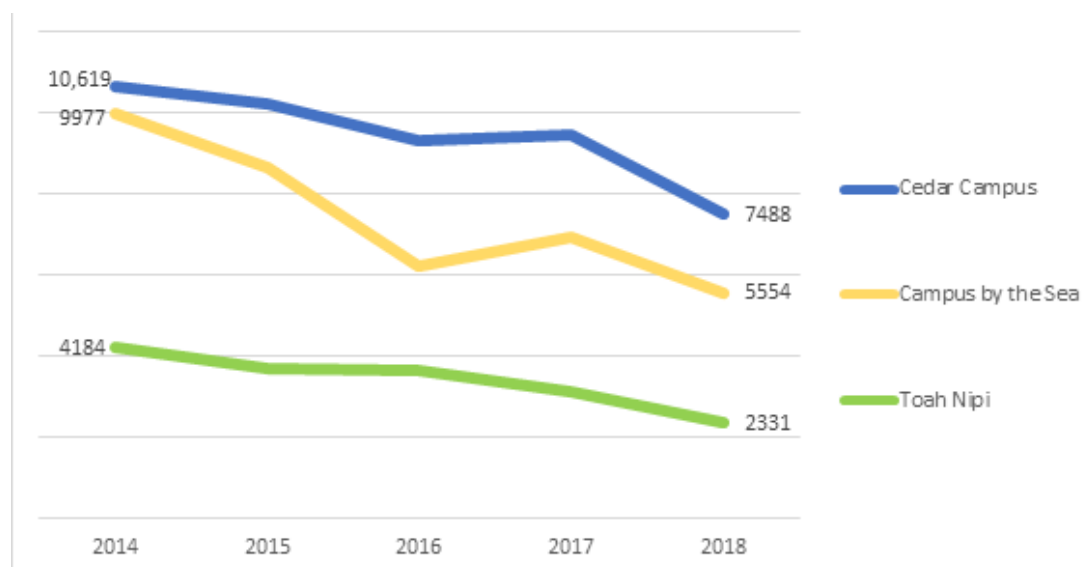
For most InterVarsity staff, bringing students to camp is a critical component in the life of their ministry. These times away from campus in the beauty of God's creation provide a place to celebrate all that God has done throughout the year in the lives of students. It's a time for staff to thank God and remember his work in and through them. And, through concerted time spent in prayer and Scripture, camp is often where God shapes how the chapter will live out InterVarsity's mission the following year. It's where students and staff dream and plan together. Stories about camp are told throughout the year, and active recruitment for camp starts in January.

What's the current reality at our camps?

Of InterVarsity chapters who do camping, 95 percent of them take their students to camps that InterVarsity does not own. InterVarsity took students to 102 other camps in the last three years.

Our three camps serve only about 5 percent of all the InterVarsity chapters that we are taking to camp each year.

What's the attendance trend? *Measured in camper days (1 overnight stay + 3 meals).*





Overall, the number of InterVarsity student participants at InterVarsity-owned camps has decreased each of the past five years, even as the costs of operating our camps have increased. Our camps track attendance in “camper days,” which equals one overnight stay + 3 meals. This graph shows the number in camper days that our camps serviced to InterVarsity students over the past five years (2014 through 2018).

Cedar Campus’s remote location in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula continues to be cited as a barrier to students and staff from places like the Dakotas, Ohio, and West Virginia.

Because of this reality, a change in one important aspect of Cedar Campus’s ministry, Chapter Focus Week—a joint endeavor between three InterVarsity regions—was already being planned for the summer of 2021 and beyond. Within the Lakes and Plains region (Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas), InterVarsity staff are looking for camp options closer to the Dakotas in order to alleviate the 18-hour drive for many students. Likewise, InterVarsity staff in West Virginia, western Pennsylvania, and Ohio also desire to find camps closer to their student populations. In recent years, many staff in these parts of the country have only been able to recruit a few students to join them at Cedar Campus. They are expecting many more will make it to Chapter Focus Week if they don’t need two additional travel days to make the trip. Michigan schools will most likely still use Cedar.

Campus by the Sea attendance is down. Students face a greater financial burden with registration plus the \$66 boat fare to travel to Catalina Island. CBS also has space constraints that make it challenging to accommodate all of the schools’ spring break schedules when planning for Mark Camp.

Toah Nipi is our smallest camp, with the fewest number of beds, which currently limits growth. However, we believe the outlook for future attendance at Toah Nipi is good, given its proximity to the many campuses in the Boston area. The undergrad region will resume Chapter Camps in 2019, which will help turn the attendance numbers around.

How would InterVarsity replace the community that has formed over decades at our camps?

Students and families will still experience deep community at camps. These interactions will happen at camps that InterVarsity does not own. As for our camps, the communities that have developed around Cedar Campus, Campus by the Sea, and Toah Nipi are irreplaceable. From the staff, to family campers, to students and alumni, Cedar, CBS, and Toah Nipi are always going to be special places for thousands of people. And we hope God will bring the right person and/or ministries to continue those legacies, and that they will continue to be places where guests will encounter God in deep ways for decades to come.

Have you thought this through?

Absolutely. Our leadership loves our camps. Each member of our Executive Leadership Team (and many of their families!) has spent time at our camps. Many of them have been deeply impacted by time at our camps as students and as staff. The InterVarsity Board holds their annual retreat and meetings at one of our camps every other year. In addition, an army of



leaders and friends of the camps have been praying and discerning with our leaders regarding this decision. It was not taken lightly.

Has InterVarsity's ministry on campuses declined?

InterVarsity is growing in many areas! We've declined in some areas over the past three years, which was expected during organizational and leadership transition. Here's a snapshot from the 2017–2018 school year:

- Over 35,000 students were regularly involved with their campus fellowships.
- InterVarsity is now on 695 campuses.
- We have 1,025 chapters!
- Over 25,000 students were part of a small group Bible study.
- We saw over 4,000 become new believers (plus 220 became Christians at Urbana 18!).

You can see a more vivid picture of what's happening in InterVarsity in this video: <https://intervarsity.org/2030>.

InterVarsity is focusing its ministry to reach 2,500 campuses by the year 2030. Is InterVarsity changing its mission?

InterVarsity *has not changed* its purpose or mission or core values.

- The 2030 Calling is about reaching more campuses.
- And, at every campus we reach, we're going to challenge students and faculty with the gospel, and engage them in serious inductive Bible study in community.
- InterVarsity is going to continue to lead in areas of multiethnicity and ethnic-specific ministry, forming communities of students and faculty who reflect the beauty and diversity of God's people from every ethnicity and culture.
- We are going to continue to cultivate deep discipleship and spiritual disciplines that students can carry with them for the rest of their lives.
- Embedded in our 2030 Calling is partnership with others, including alumni, churches, and other ministries. And while we know partnership and collaboration are hard, we believe reaching more students and faculty is a goal that's worth collaborating with other ministries to accomplish.
- One of our first major partnerships is with Cru on the EveryCampus initiative to establish a gospel movement on every campus without one (see <https://everycampus.com/>).