

## **DESHI PROGRAM**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Deshi Program is to allow a dedicated student to achieve accelerated growth through total immersion in the practice of Aikido during a specific time period.

“Deshi” means apprentice or personal student. A Deshi is traditionally a student who learns by shadowing the teacher in all activities. Traditionally, these students live in the same house as the teacher or in the dojo and serve the teacher and the dojo. The form of Deshi program described here is a variant of the traditional concept and has been modified to be more compatible to western culture and modern life.

The intent of the Program is to prepare serious students to become instructors and ultimately dojo-cho.

### **II. LEVELS IN THE PROGRAM**

The Program has two levels:

1. Basic Level: intended for first-time Deshi.
2. Graduate Level: intended for Deshi who have graduated from the Basic Level.

### **III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible to apply for the Deshi Program a person must satisfy all of the following requirements:

1. Be a member in good standing of Aikido Institute Davis for the past three months. Student of another Iwama-ryu Dojo or a Dojo affiliated with the Takemusu Aikido Association or California Aikido Association must have been practicing Aikido for at least one year and present a letter of introduction from the Dojo-cho.
2. Demonstrate willingness to take the uchi Deshi vows and live by them.
3. Be ready to commit for an uninterrupted period of study of six months up to two years. Shorter time frame is permissible for students from non-local dojos and for Graduate Program.
4. Have adequate medical insurance during the committed period.
5. Have adequate financial resources to allow for uninterrupted study.
6. Applicants to the Graduate Level must have graduated from the Basic Level.

### **IV. DESHI VOWS**

Before acceptance as a Deshi an applicant must take the following vows in front of the Dojo shomen, witnessed by O Sensei, the Sensei and fellow students:

1. *I always look, listen and learn.*

2. *I bow with humility to receive from O Sensei, the Sensei and my fellow students.*
3. *I do my best, share and persevere in my practice.*
4. *My daily life is my practice.*

The first three vows constitute the Dojo Motto that all members of the Aikido Institute subscribe to; the fourth vow is that of a Deshi. At the end of the committed period, this last vow is released to become "*My daily life has been my practice*".

Short-term Deshi from non-local dojos are exempted from taking the vows formally but must abide by the underlying principles during their stay.

## **V. DESHI RESPONSIBILITIES**

To fulfill these vows the Deshi must carry out the following responsibilities:

### **1. FOCUS PERSONAL LIFE ON AIKIDO TRAINING.**

Prior to becoming Deshi a student must have decided that Aikido training is a high priority in her personal life. The student then should rearrange her personal life to reduce the interference from activities outside of the Dojo. This may mean restructuring work life or going part-time, resigning from certain social responsibilities, minimizing involvement with family and friends and following a specific exercise or diet to prepare for the rigors of Deshi training.

### **2. PARTICIPATE DILIGENTLY AND ACTIVELY IN ALL CLASSES AND DOJO ACTIVITIES.**

A Deshi is expected to participate diligently and actively in all classes, workshops, seminars and activities sponsored by the Dojo or in which Sensei is involved. Diligent participation means making his best effort to be there every time. Active participation means taking part in the preparation of the event, the event itself and proper closure. More than any one else, a Deshi should persevere through the difficulty of a demanding training schedule and show impeccable attendance.

At the minimum, during his commitment period, a Deshi should achieve the TRAINING GOALS listed in section IV.

### **3. HELP THE SENSEI, SEMPAI AND FELLOW STUDENTS IN ALL AIKIDO ENDEAVORS.**

The Deshi is a personal student of the Sensei and as such should always be in tune with the Sensei in order to help him in his endeavors. To do so the Deshi should make every attempt to be at the side of the Sensei and act as his personal attendant at all classes, workshop, seminars and activities. In this process, any experience with the Sensei should be regarded as a learning experience.

This attitude of humility should be further carried into the Dojo in regard to any experience with the sempai and fellow students.

In return, the Sensei, sempai and fellow students acknowledge this dedication by matching an equal gift of energy to that of the Deshi.

#### 4. HELP TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THE DOJO.

By definition, a Deshi is at the core of the Dojo next to the Sensei and sempai; by taking the Deshi vows, the Deshi has adopted the Dojo mission as his or her own mission. Thus, anything that furthers the goals of the Dojo also furthers the goals of the Deshi and vice versa. In this regard, taking care of the Dojo and making improvements in the Dojo has the same effect on both the Dojo and the Deshi.

Therefore, the Deshi should always strive to take care of, and make improvements to, the Dojo as if to himself or herself. Such effort includes taking direct responsibilities for daily Dojo operations such as opening and closing the Dojo for classes, keeping the Dojo clean, enrolling new students, answering telephone, etc. . . .; it includes helping the Sensei with administrative tasks related to Dojo business; it also includes initiating and getting involved in various projects to enhance Dojo facilities such as maintaining the mat in good condition, repairing broken equipment and fixtures.

Since the Dojo and the Deshi are on the same path, the condition of the Dojo reflects the impeccability of the Deshi. Thus, if he leaves the Dojo in better condition than when he started, the Deshi has grown.

## VI. TRAINING GOALS

By the end of her Deshi period the Deshi should have achieved the following goals:

### A. Deshi – Basic Level

1. Become a skilled uke sought by all instructors in the Dojo.
2. Achieved higher levels of physical stamina (100 rolls) and flexibility than the average student in the same rank.
3. Be able to conduct classes (10 students) in the Children Program.
4. Be able to demonstrate the basic buki waza curriculum: suburi, kata and kumi.
5. Completed successfully the Beginning Tai Chi Course.
6. Achieved rank promotions in half the normal time.
7. Learned a meditation practice.
8. Be familiar with the basic operations of the Dojo (Daily, weekly, monthly & quarterly routines)
9. Made an improvement to the Dojo.
10. Be regarded by all in the Dojo as an exemplary student.

### B. Deshi – Graduate Level

1. Be able to demonstrate the complete buki waza curriculum.
2. Be able to make an effective 5-minute presentation about Aikido to an uninformed audience.
3. Be able to lead an Aikido Adult class.
4. Completed successfully the Intermediate Tai Chi Course.
5. Completed a major Dojo project assigned by Sensei.
6. Achieved rank promotions in half the normal time.

7. Acquired leadership and organizational skills indicative of Dojo-cho potential.
8. Be regarded by all instructors as an exemplary Deshi, exemplifying the Dojo Motto: awareness, humility and perseverance.

## VII. GRADUATION

Graduation from the Program requires the following:

1. Achievement of the Training Goals.
2. Passing a test to demonstrate achievement of Training Goals.
3. Submission of an essay (500-1000 words) on an Aikido-related subject.

## VIII. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before the Deshi Period:

- Take time to review personal goals and decide to make a commitment.
- Prepare the body for sustained physical hardship: have a physical check-up; start a physical conditioning program; choose a healthy diet.
- Make arrangement to reduce involvement in social activities.

During the Deshi Period:

- Take periodic short breaks: one complete weekend off per month; one week off after six months, etc. . .
- Reduce training intensity gradually to normal in the last month.

After the Deshi Period:

- Continue to train regularly.
- Allow time for adjustment before reconnecting with previous social life.

## IX. APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

I have read and understand the description of the Deshi Program described above. I agree to the requirements and hereby apply to be admitted to the Program at the \_\_\_\_\_ Level, for the period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted by Sensei:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_