

# Student Organization Handbook



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Use this handbook as a resource guide for your Student Organization. The valuable information provided in this handbook can be used to help you plan and facilitate programs, as well as to provide resources to effectively manage your organization. The material will hopefully answer most of the immediate questions that leaders of student organization have. To provide feedback or suggestions to improve this handbook, e-mail Natasha Lipscomb at [lipscombn@rowancabarrus.edu](mailto:lipscombn@rowancabarrus.edu).

## GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION

### *Getting started with your group*

- Arrange for an informal meeting and make sure all members understand the time and place of the meeting.
- Get to the meeting early enough to have friendly exchanges with some of the individual group members as they arrive.
- Make sure the members know each other – help them remember each other's names.
- Draw the group into discussion to bring out their desires, expectations, and needs. Try to find out what they want the organization to do for them.
- Examine the established goals and objectives for the group.

### *Establish contact with the group*

- Develop a friendly enough relationship with at least two or three members so that you can ask them after the meetings “how did things go? How could things have gone better?”
- Observe the faces and posture of the members. They can tell you a great deal about the individual's interest and the value of the experience to them.
- Do the members participate enough for you to judge whether they really understand?
- What does attendance tell you about the success in “keeping contact?”
- What you talk about should be partly determined by the expressed needs and interests of the group.
- What happens when the meeting breaks up? Does a “rap session” continue?

### *Help the group grow*

- Encourage members in their discussion to bring out examples from their own experience to tie in with the discussion.
- The group should have more ideas per meeting and raise more questions.
- Encourage members to spontaneously work on problems between meetings.
- Encourage discussion, reading, practice, trying out.
- Encourage group members to raise more intelligent questions and problems.

### *Evaluate yourself as a leader: are you growing as a leader?*

- Do you find it increasingly easy to relax and not feel you have to answer and “let them know I know?”
- Do you find it increasingly easy to say, “I don't know, let's find out about that?”
- Are you finding it more and more fun to throw solutions out at the group rather than “dishing out the answer?”
- Are you thinking more and more about how to draw certain members into the discussion and how to interpret members' remarks to one another?

- Are you finding that your own major problems of leadership are shifting from “having enough” to problems of “getting better participation” and “finding out what they really need?”
- Are you beginning to feel that you “belong” rather than that you are “doing good??”

### *Remember*

It is the responsibility of the leader to recognize how the group is functioning. You cannot overlook the other loyalties and responsibilities of the members. In case of conflict, always try to find an alternate plan which will be mutually satisfying to both demands.

Conflicts within your group are accentuated by misunderstanding. Try to help members understand each other. Make sure everybody has a chance to participate in conversations, planning, etc.

Be alert to the individual’s problems, but help the group members focus on the group’s problems – otherwise there may be no group.

## **RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING**

A successful meeting does not “just happen” with the right people. Further, it is the end result of careful planning, implementation, and evaluation. The amount of time required to initiate the following steps for success vary with the different kinds of meetings. The following brief outline can be directly related to planning your program as well as your meetings.

### *Before your meeting: Planning*

1. Decide the purpose of the meeting:
  - a. Problem solving
  - b. Information Giving
  - c. Committee Function
  - d. Entertainment Planning
  - e. Discussion Group
2. Determine the time and place for the meeting with regards to when the majority of people are available. Schedule the room for the meeting and give notice in advance of the meeting to the members.
3. Be aware of, and ready for, who will be attending.
4. Group comfort: keep the following in mind when making arrangements:
  - a. Arrange seating to allow for face-to-face interactions.
  - b. Provide a blackboard or easel for brain storming or group discussion.
  - c. Provide committee members with paper, writing instruments, and copies of any charts, calendars, or other information that will be helpful.
  - d. Provide a room free from excessive noise or visual distractions.

- e. If needed, provide name tags.
- 5. Plan the meeting!
  - a. Always plan the agenda ahead of time (i.e., what topics are to be covered, in what order will they come, old business or new business, how much discussion time, announcements, etc.)
  - b. Consult resource people before the meeting to know as much as possible before the meeting starts.
  - c. **DON'T MEET JUST FOR THE SAKE OF MEETING!!!** If the agenda is not important enough, postpone the meeting.
- 6. Balance the length of time in order to keep people interested. Adjust the length of your meetings to allow for sufficient discussion of meeting topics, yet not so long as to lose members' interest.
- 7. Decide on the style and attitude that best lends itself to the purpose and topics of the specific meeting (i.e., autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, stern, friendly, direct, indirect, etc.)
- 8. Determine how you are going to keep the members involved in the meeting.
- 9. Make use of publicity if needed, and don't forget the details (i.e., food, set-up, special needs, etc.)

#### *During the meeting*

- 1. Keep pad and pencil on hand to jot down notes, ideas, volunteers, etc. or designate a recording secretary to do this.
- 2. Hints:
  - a. Always be on time.
  - b. Be pleasant.
  - c. Be flexible.
  - d. Be responsive to everyone's suggestions.
  - e. Stay on the subject being discussed.
  - f. Remain patient and tolerant.
  - g. Be aware of individual's expressions, comments, and actions.
  - h. Set a time limit and stick closely to it.
  - i. Remain calm under pressure or when frustrated.
  - j. Give others a chance to express their views by including everyone at the meeting.
- 3. Have other people observe the meeting and be open for criticism, both positive and negative.

#### *After the Meeting: Follow-up*

- 1. Do what you say you will do between meetings – keep your credibility.
- 2. Type up the minutes/notes taken at the meeting and distribute the copies.
- 3. Evaluation:
  - a. Did the meeting accomplish its purpose?

- b. Were the needs of the group satisfied?
- c. What were the strong and weak points of each part of the meeting?
- d. What were suggestions, ideas, or comments from the audience, and how might they be implemented next time?

## **AIDS TO FACILITATING**

Here are examples of comments that promote clear communication and help get the job done:

- “Let’s check that out with the rest of the group.”
- “Do you see it differently?”
- “How do you see the problem?”
- “Sounds like that’s a problem we ought to address?”
- “I still don’t have a handle on the real problem. What is it?”
- “What would you like to be doing?”
- “Oh, your perception is... (describe). That’s how you see the problem?”
- “Sounds like this is a real problem?”
- “What are we doing right now?”
- “Say a little more about that.”
- “What’s the purpose of this presentation?”
- “Hold on. I think we’re talking about two problems, problem \_\_\_\_\_ and problem \_\_\_\_\_. I think they are both important, but let’s talk about them one at a time.”
- It’s a big agenda today. Do you want to get through the whole agenda? (yes) Okay, if I push to hard, let me know.”
- “What do you want to have happen?”

## **GOAL SETTING**

### *Goals*

Goals are statements describing what your organization wishes to accomplish. Goals are the ends towards which your efforts will be directed. Remember to review and change your goals from term to term or year to year, depending on your organization.

### *Why set goals?*

- Gives direction, helps avoid chaos.
- Can help motivate members.
- Clarify and communicate what you are striving for.
- Define your organization.
- Are a basis for recognition, accomplishment, realizing success.
- Saves time and makes the group become more aware of problems in time to develop solutions.

## *Objectives*

Objectives are descriptions of exactly what is to be done and are derived from goals. Objectives are clear, specific statements of measurable tasks that will be accomplished as steps towards reaching goals. They are short-term and have deadlines. You will probably have a number of objectives for each goal.

## *Setting goals*

It is best to set goals as a group. This will create many positive results.

- Better commitment. People support what they create.
- More motivation among members and officers.
- Clarity of goals. Better understanding of goals and the rationale for selecting them.
- Better goals more ideas/opinions in the decision process.

## *Steps for setting and achieving goals*

1. Brainstorming goals with the group.
2. Choose the goals you want to fulfill from the brainstorming list.
3. Prioritize as a group.
4. Determine objectives for each goal, then a plan of action for each objective.
5. Move into action and follow through.
6. Continually evaluate your progress.
7. Be flexible; allow your objectives to change to meet new circumstances.

## *Action planning*

1. What is to be done (your objective)?
2. How is it to be accomplished?
3. What are the resources – people, money, materials?
4. Who will carry it through?
5. When will it be accomplished?
6. What results are expected, and how will they be measured?

## **TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOOD COMMUNICATION**

Every good leader today realizes that communication is the most vital management tool. S/he is aware that s/he not only communicates with words, but through attitude and actions. Communication obviously encompasses all human behavior that results in an exchange of meaning. The following ten commandments of good communication might serve as help to improve a leader's skills of communication with superiors, subordinates, and associates.

1. **Seek to clarify your ideas before communication.**

A prime reason for ineffective communication is the result of the initiator not having a clear concept of what s/he intended to communicate in the first place.

2. **Examine the purpose of each communication.**  
A clear determination must be made of what the communicator really wants to accomplish with his/her message. A good guideline to follow is “Don’t try to accomplish too much with each communication.” The sharper the focus of the message, the greater the chances of success.
3. **Consider the total physical and human setting whenever you communicate.**  
Meaning and intent are conveyed by more than words alone. The circumstance under which a communication is transmitted has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of that communication. The physical setting, the social climate, and past practices will have an impact upon the net results of effective communication.
4. **Consult with others, when appropriate, in planning communications.**  
Such consultation often helps give additional insight and objectivity to the message. Moreover, those who have helped plan the communication will tend to give their active support.
5. **Be mindful, while you communicate, of the overtones, as well as the content of your message.**  
Your tone of voice, expression, and apparent receptiveness to the responses of others all have tremendous impact on those you wish to reach. Although frequently overlooked, these subtleties of communication often affected a listener’s reaction to a message even more than its basic content.
6. **Take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help and value to the receiver.**  
People on the job are most responsive to the leader that values the message of the receiver and are perceived as helpers.
7. **Follow up your communication**  
This can be done by asking questions, be encouraging the receiver to express his/her reactions, by follow up contacts, and by subsequent review of performance. Make certain that every important communication has feedback so that complete understanding and appropriate actions result.
8. **Communicate for tomorrow as well as today.**  
Be sure the long range interests and goals of the organization are taken into consideration.
9. **Be sure your actions support your communications.**  
In final analysis, the most persuasive kind of communication is not what you say, but what you do. When a person’s actions or attitude contradict his/her words, others tend to discount what s/he said.
10. **Seek not only to be understood but to understand. Be a good listener.**  
Listening is one of the most important, most difficult, and most neglected skills in communication. Only when s/he is listening can s/he detect the overtones and hear the feedback of his/her own communication. A person cannot talk and listen at the same time.

## DELEGATION

Part of building a team is getting people involved in the group. If you try to do everything yourself you will not only burn yourself out, but you will find little support for your event or program. There is an old saying “people support what they help to create.” By using delegation everyone takes responsibility for a part of the event and completes the giant puzzle. The following are a few tips about delegation that should help pave your way to a successful program:

### *By delegating you:*

- Allow more people to become involved.
- Distribute the workload.
- Identify talents and interests of other members of your group and give them all the opportunity to shine.
- Help prevent burnout for all concerned.

### *What and when to delegate:*

- Matters that keep repeating themselves.
- Minor decisions made most frequently.
- Details that take large amounts of time.
- When you feel someone has particular qualifications which suit the task.
- When someone expresses an interest in the task.

### *What and when not to delegate:*

- Something you yourself would not be willing to do (the menial work).
- Something involving trust or confidence.
- Emergencies.
- Appraisals (telling someone they did well or poorly).
- Jobs requiring your position.

### *Methods of delegating:*

- Ask for volunteers: interest and belief in something is one of the greatest motivators for success.
- Suggest: someone you feel would be good for the task. Silence in response for a volunteer does not necessarily mean lack of interest. Often someone will not volunteer for a task because s/he lacks self confidence.
- Assign the task to someone. They can always decline.
- Spread the good around: “good jobs” give people status and value. Make sure the same people don’t always get the good tasks.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER

- **Be well prepared** – know leadership takes work as well as practice.
- **Be group minded** – regard yourself as a part of the group. Say “We” instead of “I”; don’t try to run the crowd. Instead be guided by the crowd’s wishes.
- **Like people** - be understanding and friendly.

- **Be poised** - don't let irritations bother you.
- **Have humility** – be confident, but not too cocky. Don't be afraid to reveal that you don't know everything.
- **Be a hard worker** – don't ask anyone to do something you yourself would not be willing to do.
- **Be responsible** – live up to your words and duties.
- **Be cooperative** – know how to work with others and enjoy working with them.
- **Be a fun-lover** – enjoy life...the simple things as well as the big.
- **Have vision** – help the people in your group learn and grow through the activities.
- **Be clear** – be able to express yourself effectively.
- **Be proud** – proud of what you do. Take pride in being a leader; but earn it.
- **Be courteous** – the word “please” and “thank you” pay dividends.
- **Think ahead** – know members' opinions and be ready to meet changing situations.
- **Set goals** – make them high, but be sure they are reachable.
- **Take advice** – but do your own thinking.
- **Get the facts** – analyze them before you draw conclusions.
- **Do your best** – at all times. Plan to make the most effective use of your time.

## COMMON PROBLEMS IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Listed below are five common problems which may be encountered in the groups you lead or of which you are a member. Should any of these be insurmountable or if you would like help in addressing the problems please feel free to stop by the **(insert your office name and location here)**.

### *Lack of participation*

#### Possible causes

- Members may feel insecure.
- More aggressive members may not give others a chance to participate.
- Members may not know how to participate.
- Members may not be interested in activities.

#### Suggested solutions

- Make sure members have a part in developing objectives.
- Make sure members have a part in planning programs and activities.
- Set up programs and activities with a goal of 100% participation of the members.
- Provide chances for younger members to serve on a committee where they can gain experience before giving them a big assignment they might not be able to handle.
- Promote a friendly, helpful group spirit where no one laughs at or ridicules a person who goofs.
- Take the opportunity to seek out timid individuals so they might be encouraged to participate.

### *Failure to accept responsibility*

#### Possible causes

- Members or leaders may feel insecure.
- Members or leaders may have other things to do that are more important to themselves.
- Members may not know what is expected of them.

#### Possible solutions

- Make sure members and leaders have a part in planning the program and that they understand the objectives.
- Make sure leaders and members understand what is expected of them when they are asked to serve.
- Help members or leaders understand the importance of assignments.
- Try to match assignments with members' abilities.
- Give recognition and thanks for work done.

### *Poor standards of operations*

#### Possible causes

- Members may lack interest.
- Members may not know what is right or expected.
- Group may have fallen into bad habits.
- Some members may feel insecure and are trying to gain attention.
- The meeting time may not fit members' other responsibilities.

#### Suggested solutions

- Discuss problems with members. What standards do they want?
- Encourage members to state their expectations.
- Hold workshops for members and leaders for increased knowledge and skills in such areas as parliamentary procedures.
- Change meeting time if it doesn't fit the group.

### *Maintaining involvement*

#### Possible causes

- Some people may not know about the group, what it does, or who may belong.
- Present members may not try to welcome new members.
- The organization may not be of interest to present or prospective members.
- Some members may not have a way to get to meetings.
- Other organization may have more attractive programs.
- The group may have served its purpose and is no longer needed.

#### Suggested solutions

- Try to improve the atmosphere of the group – make it warmer or friendlier.
- Make a list of prospective members and extend friendly, personal invitations.
- Involve members in planning a program that is attractive to them.

- Give members responsibilities so they will have a role in the organization and feel important to the group.
- Give members recognition for what they do.
- Make members feel liked and wanted.

*Members are not interested in the organization*

Possible causes

- Members do not identify their personal objectives with those of the organization.
- Members may have had little part in planning the program.
- Members may not find a satisfying role in carrying out the program.
- The group may have served its purpose and is no longer needed.

Suggested solutions

- Involve members in setting group objectives.
- Involve members in planning the programs they want.
- Involve members in carrying out the program. They should have challenging responsibilities which they can carry out successfully.
- Give members recognition for their contributions.
- Dissolve the organization. No interest, no need.

## **RECRUITING MEMBERS**

Your organization must attract new members in order to survive. The following are suggestions on how you can build your group's membership numbers.

- Tell a friend about your group – invite him/her to a meeting.
- Talk up your group in class, if appropriate. Wear group identification, if available. Let people ask you and be ready with a good description of why they should learn more about your organization.
- Talk about the benefits of membership. Tell people what is in it for them.
- If your purpose is noble, "sell that."
- Put up posters inviting people to the next meeting.
- Identify target students who might be interested in your group. Call them, send them a postcard, or invite them personally to your next meeting.
- Promote group events.
- Get into the campus newspaper (features, briefs, advertisements).
- Be active in your student government, if possible. People like to be associated with leaders.
- Set up a booth in your student center lobby to attract new members.
- Do group service projects that make you visible on campus and in the community.
- Co-sponsor an activity with another student organization.
- Ask for help from the **(insert you position title here)**.

## THE ART OF RELAXATION

The best strategy for avoiding stress is to learn how to relax. Unfortunately, many people try to relax at the same pace that they lead the rest of their lives. For a while, tune out your worries about time, productivity, and “doing right.” You will find satisfaction in just being, without striving. Find activities that give you pleasure and that are good for your mental and physical well-being. Forget about always winning. Focus on relaxation, enjoyment, and health. Be good to yourself.

## SIGNS OF STRESS

- General irritability, hyperactivity, or depression.
- Pounding of the heart.
- Dryness of the throat or mouth.
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability.
- The overpowering urge to cry or run and hide.
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thought, and general disorientation.
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, or dizziness.
- Predisposition to become fatigued.
- “Floating anxiety” or fear without knowing why you are afraid.
- Emotional tension and alertness, feelings of being “keyed-up.”
- Trembling, nervous ticks.
- Tendency to be easily startled.
- High pitch, nervous laughter.
- Stuttering and other speech difficulties.
- Bruxism – grinding of the teeth.
- Insomnia.
- Hypermotility – increased tendency to move about.
- Frequent need to urinate.
- Diarrhea, indigestion, vomiting.
- Migraine headaches.

## PROGRAM PLANNING

The following is a list of things an organization needs to consider when planning a program.

### 1. Leadership

Who will be the central person in charge?

What committees will you need to have involved in the planning?

Has an advisor been contacted about the event?

### 2. Resources

How much will the event cost?

How will it be funded?

Where will the funds come from and how long will it take to get the money?

Who will be in charge of the money?

What other organizations could help you with the event, either with food, prizes, or money?

### **3. Speakers, Materials, and Equipment**

Have you received a contract from the performer?

Have you reserved the performance location?

Have you reserved any special equipment you might need?

Who will check to make sure all the items needed for the program have been reserved?

### **4. Food requests**

Have you ordered food for the event?

Have you ordered any special food requests for your contract performer?

Have you secured needed paper items, such as napkins, plates, and cups?

### **5. Scheduling**

What is the best time to have the event?

Have you checked the college calendar to see if there are any conflicts?

### **6. Advertising**

How do you plan on marketing your event?

What materials will you need for publicity?

Who will create the publicity?

Who will post the publicity?

### **7. Clean-up**

What specific tasks need to be done?

When does the facility need to be cleaned up?

Do you have the equipment to clean it up?

Who will be responsible for making sure the facility gets cleaned?

### **8. Follow-up/Evaluation**

How will you know if the event was a success?

Has all the money been accounted for and receipts turned in?

Have thank-you notes been sent?

Are there records for people in charge next year?

## **PROGRAMMING: THE PITFALLS**

- Not knowing where or how to look for resources. Be patient and persistent.
- Repeated use of the same individuals. The same individuals, though they may be excellent resources, can be overused.
- Know your program and your resources. Meet or talk to your resources and form an impression before making a commitment.
- If your needs and interests are not adequately expressed, you may not get exactly what you want.
- The purpose of programming is defeated if you simply program for the things you personally like. Get to know the interests of other people.
- Bad timing. Some programs are seasonal and thus more appropriate at certain times of the year.

- Insufficient publicity. Spread the news about the program. Don't keep it a secret or act like you have something to hide.
- Unimaginative program, posters, and/or publicity. Get their attention! Be daring!
- Not enough advance notice. Publicize your program in advance so group members can make the time in their schedules.
- Putting your advertising up too far in advance. People forget and posters get torn down. Always re-publicize a day or two before to make sure everyone remembers.
- Waiting until the end of the semester. Packing all of the programs in at the last minute. Those who wait too long run out of time altogether.
- Too limited distribution. A single isolated poster in an obscure location won't do the job.
- Conflicts with other activities and events. Keep up with the calendar of campus and community events. Learn what events your group is likely to attend. Don't try to compete with the big events.
- Unrealistically high expectations for an event. Be honest with yourself and your performer.
- Poor location. You should select a site that is not only acceptable but easy to find, comfortable, and relatively distraction free.
- Don't leave anything to chance. Plan and prepare: be ready.

### **CONTRACTS: A BRIEF CHECKLIST**

As a student organization that provides programming on campus, one of the areas you need to be knowledgeable about is that of contracts. What follows is not intended to be a complete guide to contracts, but a checklist of the more obvious pitfalls in editing a contract or in writing your own contracts.

Remember, all contract are negotiable. You never have to accept a contract the way it is sent to you. A contract is a mutual agreement to reach a goal with benefits for both parties. It should contain as much information as possible and be as straightforward as possible.

Some of the following tips might be helpful to you in negotiating a contract:

1. Know your artist and his/her representative. Deal only with reliable firms. If in doubt, check with the **(insert your position title here)** or someone at another school who may know.
2. Is the artist clearly specified? Check for a clause that permits the substitution of an artist of "equal standing" for good cause. Make sure it is clear that you make the determination of the quality of the substitute, and that it should not be made without your consent.
3. Is it clear that the College is the contracting party, not you? Never allow yourself to take personal liability by signing a contract or being named in one. At **(insert college name here)**, all contracts from a student organization should be reviewed

and signed by the **(insert your position title here)**. Also, always allow your advisor or **(insert your position title here)** to assist you in your contract negotiations.

4. Is the location clearly specified? Date and starting time? If you have more than one group performing, indicate the starting time of the artist you are contracting with. Make sure the date and day match, otherwise you are at the mercy of the contract.
5. Are the duration, frequency, and length of the performance clearly outlined? If you expect the artist to do other things, in addition to the performance, make sure to specify them in the contract.
6. Make sure all “extras” are covered in the contract. Do you need to provide stagehands, when is the sound check, does the artist need any special equipment, what requirements do they have for the dressing rooms? Request to see all riders before the contract is signed. All contract performers must have a social security number or a federal tax ID number included with the contract.

Be aware of verbal contracts. A verbal agreement with an agent or performer can still be a binding contract. Make sure you have thought through all aspects of a program before making any form of verbal agreement.

Once a contract has been fully executed, make alterations only in writing. The letter stating the changes should be signed by both parties. If you have been negotiating a date and, for some reason, choose not to go ahead, telephone the artist’s representative immediately and inform them of your intentions. Follow-up all phone calls with a letter.

## LEADERSHIP SELF-EVALUATION

As a leader in your organization you have a great deal of responsibility for the success of your organization. Your leadership must help your group move through the stages of understanding the group, developing a group philosophy, defining group goals, planning and organizing all phases of group functions and activities, following through on all group projects and commitments, and evaluating your group’s performance.

In the first part of this evaluation, rate your own leadership abilities on a scale of *high – medium – low*. Good use of this evaluation will help you best utilize your strong points and further develop your weaker points.

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. My organization respects me.  | H M L |
| 2. My respect for my organization as a whole.                                      | H M L |
| 3. My respect for individual members of my organization.                           | H M L |
| 4. My ability to influence my organization as a whole.                             | H M L |
| 5. My ability to motivate my organization into action.                             | H M L |
| 6. My ability to stimulate positive discussion.                                    | H M L |
| 7. My ability to involve all members in all phases of the decision making process. | H M L |
| 8. My ability to guide my organization in planning our organizational goals.       | H M L |
| 9. My ability to guide my organization in carrying out its plans.                  | H M L |

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10. My ability to teach the concept of belonging.             | H | M | L |
| 11. My personal ability to lead.                              | H | M | L |
| 12. My ability to be a mediator in disputes.                  | H | M | L |
| 13. My ability to make all members feel important and needed. | H | M | L |

Next, list responses to the following statements:

1. My strongest points of leadership are:
2. My weakest points of leadership are:
3. Things I would like to do in relation to my office:
4. Things I hope my organization will do this year: