

# Recruiting and Retaining Members

Whether it is the beginning of the year or the middle of the year, now is the time to recruit!! An organization can always use new ideas and energy!

## **Before beginning the recruitment process**

Before beginning the recruitment process, your organization must identify the needs of the people you are trying to recruit and identify why those students might want to join (one way to do this is by asking current members why they joined). Keep in mind what current group members need while you attempt to earn the loyalty, commitment and energy of new members. Your organization also needs to look at what type of person your organization needs and begin recruiting people who will help make your organization the best it can be.

### **Group members need:**

- to have a sense of belonging – the feeling that they are sincerely welcome and needed.
- to share in planning the group's objectives.
- to know that the goals are obtainable and make sense.
- to feel that what they are doing has real purpose and contributes to a greater good.
- to feel that the organization is making a difference.
- to feel that the value of their contributions extends beyond personal gain and the group itself.
- to see that progress is being made toward goals.
- to share in making the ground rules by which the group can live and work toward its goals.
- to know what is expected of them and to be kept informed.
- to have some responsibilities that challenge and contribute toward reaching the goals.
- to have confidence in the organization leaders to lead the organization well, treat members consistently and fairly, recognize member accomplishments and trust the members.

Adapted from *Basic Needs of People in Groups* included in an Organizational Recruitment presentation by Jackie Caventer and Jeff Lauber (March 1982), Campus Activities and Programs, NU.

### **Reasons that students get involved**

An important component of a student organization is to understand why their members or possible members will want to join their group.

For some, the choice is based on academic concerns. People will join groups representing their fields of study because they will be able to create networks, which they will later be able to use in their respective job areas.

Another major reason individuals will join a group is to expand their circle of friends and acquaintances. Particularly at the college level, stu-

dents often face losing most of their friends from high school and even earlier, and will seek to make new friendships and get to know new people to make up for those losses caused by graduation.

Yet another reason individuals will join a group is to experience new things and broaden their minds.

The only way an organization can get a good understanding of what draws people to their group is to ask current and former members. By doing some research, an organization can find the most effective methods of promoting their group.

### **Benefits and opportunities**

Make a list of the benefits and opportunities that new members will receive for their involvement (i.e., input in bringing entertainment to campus, free admission to your organization's events, meeting people, skill enhancement in areas of publicity and advertising...).

### **Define the kind of member you want to recruit**

List the qualifications that you are looking for in the new blood of your organization. For example: enthusiasm, skills, ability, motivation, commitment to the organization, interest in the organization's goals and objectives. After you have decided all of this, you are ready to begin your recruitment campaign! This involves everyone in your organization!

## **Recruitment techniques**

### **Personal contact/word of mouth**

People are much more likely to get involved if a friend or neighbor personally asks them to get involved.

- Introduce yourself and describe your organization and its goals.
- Answer questions about the organization.
- Have a list of the benefits and a sample of what your organization does. Attach the date and time of your next meeting and invite them.
- Get their names and phone numbers so you can call and remind them of the meeting.
- Offer to walk with them to the next meeting.

### **Announcements**

Get the word out! Send information to your target population with a tear-off on the bottom to send back with their names and phone numbers. Include the purpose of your organization, goals, upcoming events, benefits of joining, and your meeting date, time and location. Use posters, radio announcements and campus newspaper classified ads.

### **At your next event**

Have an information table with a sign-up sheet for potential members. Have someone there to answer questions.

### **Recruit within the publicity of your event**

On the advertisement for your event, recruit new members with a simple "If you are interested in helping plan our next event call..."

### **Interactive technology**

If your group has a homepage or website, make sure to add a section detailing how to join your organization. If your group does not have either, make every effort to create one. With the rise of the internet and computers, nearly every campus has "wired" itself to better provide for their students. With these developments, your organization can reach thousands of students with a simple point and click.

### **Work with other groups**

One of the great ways to get your group's name out is to co-sponsor events with other student groups. Not only can your combined resources lead to a more successful event, but members from both groups will work together and allow for a better understanding of each other. Students will often belong to more than one student organization, so it can only help your group to try to recruit members of other groups.

### **Be available**

One of the most important things to make sure of whenever you're looking to recruit new members is to be available to answer questions or help new members join. All your publicity may be ineffective if interested individuals are unable to contact someone from your organization. You may even create the position of Head Recruiter or create a recruiting committee to facilitate making sure new members can get in touch with your organization.

## **New member orientation**

Once you have recruited new members, a solid orientation is the first step in keeping them!

### **Training Topics**

- constitution and bylaws
- organizational structure
- budget
- organization files and office space
- past successes of the organization

### **Methods**

- training from veteran members
- icebreakers/socials for all members
- a "meet the new members" meeting
- a list of their names in a newsletter or minutes of a meeting
- invitation to a board/executive council meeting

### **Growth**

- learning new skills in leadership management, programming, and inter-personal relations
- accepting responsibility

### **Recognition**

- special benefits and privileges
- recognition from others
- personal satisfaction

### **Achievement**

- seeing the achievement of a goal
- developing personally
- building a strong resume
- satisfaction of having impact on the environment

### **Participation**

- applying new skills
- managing groups
- being involved in program production

### **Enjoyment**

- new friends
- fun
- for a job well done
- having satisfaction in serving others