

# Student Leadership Strategies

## CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXCEPTIONAL LEADER

- **Proactive vs. Reactive:** An exceptional leader is always thinking three steps ahead and works to master their environment with the goal of avoiding problems before they arise.
- **Flexible/Adaptable:** How one handles oneself in unexpected or uncomfortable situations is very important. An effective leader will adapt to new surroundings and situations and do their best to adjust.
- **A Good Communicator:** As a leader one must be able to listen. A leader must be willing to work to understand the needs and desires of the membership. A good leader asks many questions, considers all options, and leads the organization in the right direction.
- **Respectful:** A leader should show respect to those who elected them to the position. Showing respect will bring respect.
- **Confident:** Be proud of the organization and let the pride ignite others within and outside the group.
- **Enthusiastic:** Excitement is contagious. When a leader is motivated and excited about the organization, the group will follow their lead.
- **Resourceful:** As a leader you must utilize the resources available to you and the organization. Your advisors, the staff in the Office of Engagement, and other members and officers of the FSU community are all here to help you. Use them!
- **Rewarding:** An exceptional leader will recognize the efforts of other officers and members, positively reinforcing their actions. We all enjoy recognition!
- **Well Educated:** Knowledge is power. Work to be the officer who is well educated on the organization, the Office of Student Engagement, campus, and community policies and procedures. Further, your knowledge of issues and information within the organization will only increase your success in leading the group.
- **Open to Change:** A leader will take into account all points of view and will be willing to change a policy, program, or tradition that is outdated, or no longer beneficial to the organization as a whole.
- **Interested in Feedback:** How do your members feel about your performance as a leader? How can you serve the members of the organization better? These are important questions that a leader must consistently ask. It is important not to get defensive if someone offers you feedback, but rather to work to understand and work to better meet everyone's needs.
- **Evaluative:** Evaluation of events and programs is essential for an organization to improve and progress. An exceptional officer will constantly evaluate and change programs and policies that are not working.
- **Consistent:** As an officer you need the confidence and respect of the organization members. Confidence and respect cannot be attained without your leadership being consistent. Members must have confidence that their opinions and thoughts will be heard and taken into consideration.
- **Delegator:** An exceptional leader realizes that they cannot accomplish everything on their own. They will know the talents and interests of their leaders, thus delegating tasks accordingly. Be sure to be inclusive of all members!

# TIME MANAGEMENT

Time Management is important to any person, but particularly to busy student organization members and leaders. Involvement in co-curricular activities means that in addition to classes, homework, jobs, and socializing, a significant amount of time is spent on organizational obligations. This handout is designed to provide you with some suggestions on how to more effectively manage your time, so that your organization runs smoothly and efficiently.

## Plan

- Determine and set on paper exactly what you would like to achieve and how you would like to get there.
- Make your goals realistic, believable, and achievable.
- Evaluate your progress and make necessary changes on a regular basis.

## Assess

- Assess how you are currently using your time by keeping a time log for three days from the time you get up to the time you go to bed. Describe your activities in 15 minute time blocks.
- Prioritize your activities: A-Important to you, B-Important to others, C-Basic human needs.
- Analyze your time log and answer the following questions:
  - Where there any surprises?
  - Would you judge this to be a typical week?
  - What patterns could you identify in your time as a waste? Interruptions?
  - What part of the week would you consider most productive? Least Productive?
  - What time of day do you feel most productive? Least productive?
  - What activities would you like to eliminate totally? What would be the cost of doing so? What is the cost of not eliminating them?
  - Which activities during the week do you deem most rewarding? Would you like to spend more time doing them in the future? What is your plan for doing so?
- Have someone review your time log. An objective observer may be able to point out discrepancies or patterns that you did not see.

## Organize

- Make a list each morning of everything that you need to accomplish for that day. However, do not plan out every minute and do not even think about which task is most important.
- Do not worry if you do not accomplish everything, just include the uncompleted tasks on your next day's list and get them done.

## Prioritize

- After you have recorded these "things to do," go over the list and rewrite with the most important things you need to do at the top and less important tasks at the bottom.
- Keep in mind due dates, commitments you have made, and whether or not tasks involve other people. If the items are for class, it is important to consider how much of the final grade they are worth.
- You must be responsible with your priorities. Review your goals, how do these priorities fit with your goals?

## Schedule

- Take your list and bring to work these "things to do" into your schedule.
- You cannot plan every minute of the day. Leave some room for breaks, socializing, and those unexpected things to pop up. There is no use making a schedule that is impossible to follow.
- Keep a schedule book for the year. Write down your class times, assignment due dates and exams. And other commitments.

# GOAL SETTING

A goal:

- is a desired future condition
- can be long or short term
- is broad in focus
- is expressed in either quantitative or qualitative terms

Why are goals important?

- Goals are guides for action, and it is through group goals that the efforts of group members are planned and executed.
- Conflicts among members are resolved on the basis of what assists the organization in achieving its goals.
- Setting goals gives you an opportunity to review and evaluate what has been done and discuss problems.
- Goals provide a benchmark against which progress can be assessed. • Goals provide targets toward which efforts can be directed.
- Goals are the motivating force in the behavior of group members. Without motivation, the group takes no action to achieve its goals.

“The good goal test”

- Are your goals stated in specific terms?
- Are your goals realistic, attainable and meaningful to your organization?
- Are your goals challenging enough?
- Are your goals task-oriented?
- Are your goals measurable so you know when you’ve accomplished them?
- Was there group participation in setting the goals?

Remember, if the goals are accepted, understood and desired by the organization, they can direct, channel, motivate, coordinate, energize and guide the behavior of group members. Share your goals with others!

## Steps in goal setting:

### A. Brainstorm

- a. Set a time limit (about 5-10 minutes) and ask someone to be a time keeper for the brainstorming session.
- b. Ask someone else to record (on a sheet where all can see) all of the ideas mentioned during the brainstorming time.
- c. Announce to the group that no idea is a bad/dumb idea and this session is really designed to get as many ideas out as possible. Encourage them NOT to take the time to explain things thoroughly/ask questions – there will be time for clarifying later - just get the ideas out during brainstorming.
- d. After the time limit has expired, check-in with the group... is more time needed? Do they feel good about the ideas that are up there? If more time is needed, add a few minutes and repeat the process.
- e. Once your group has a list of ideas, take a few minutes to let people clarify points that might be misunderstood or unexplained. This is the time for questions for further clarification.

### B. Prioritize

- a. Have the group place goals in order of importance – everyone should get an equal vote.
- b. Remember to set goals that are achievable as well as challenging.

### C. Develop a quality action plan

- a. Have the group members identify the steps needed to accomplish the goal and write these down.
- b. Put the steps needed to accomplish the goal in the order they need to be completed.
- c. It is helpful to make sure your goals are incremental and measurable.
- d. Set a deadline for each step to be accomplished and have members volunteer to complete these steps.

## SMART Goals

Goals need to be SMART. They need to be:

S - specific, significant, stretching

M - measurable, meaningful, motivational

A - agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented

R - realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented

T - time-based, timely, tangible, trackable This is one of many handouts available to you.

# EFFECTIVE MEETING STRATEGIES

Do you dread attending meetings because they tend to be dull, unproductive, disorganized and too long? With proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective and enjoyable. If the facilitator starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough follow-up, the meeting will run smoothly. The following are some tips to help you make your next meeting successful, productive and fun.

## Functions of Meetings

- Give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives.
- Keep members updated on current events.
- Provide a chance to communicate and keep the group cohesive.
- Allow the group to pull resources together for decision making.
- Make sure members are aware of their importance in the group. Ask for opinions and ideas.

## Before the Meeting:

- Define the purpose(s) of the meeting with an agenda.
- Sample Agenda Items
  - Approval of Agenda, any additions or retractions
  - Correction and Approval of Minutes (if taken and distributed)
  - Announcements
  - Treasurer's Report
  - Committee Reports
  - Unfinished Business
  - New Business
  - Special Issues/Concerns
  - Adjournment
- Distribute the agenda (e-mail works well) and background material (articles, reviews) that must be read before the meeting.
- Set a reasonable meeting time limit, given the amount of material on the agenda
- Reserve a room through Bronco Advantage or utilize a virtual meeting space
- Be sure to think about room size and arrangement.
- Posters, diagrams, or even a dry erase board/chalk board to display important points or decisions are all examples of easy and productive visual aids.

## During the Meeting:

### ATTITUDE

- Greet members and make them feel welcome, even late members when appropriate.
- As a leader, be a role model. During meetings, listen, appreciate and encourage members, show interest and confidence in members. Do not hold a side conversation, pass notes, check email, Facebook or text.
- Be professional and courteous. Allow everyone the chance to talk.

### ATMOSPHERE

- Serve light refreshments – or even candy – when possible, they are good icebreakers and make people relax.
- Encourage group discussion and feedback on all discussion topics. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members that help shape the activities and the committee.
- Keep conversation focused. Tactfully end discussions when they are unproductive or becoming destructive.

### AGENDA

- Start on time and end on time. Be respectful of other peoples schedules.
- Review the agenda and then stick to it.
- Appoint someone to keep minutes of the meeting to send out after every meeting and for future reference.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a positive note by asking members to express things that they thought were good or successful.

### ADJOURNMENT

- Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.
- Only set a meeting if it is really necessary. Do not set a meeting just for the sake of having one.

## After the Meeting:

### ASSESSMENT

- Write up and distribute minutes by the next day. Quick action reinforces the importance of the meeting and reduces the chance of errors.
- Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers, come up with solutions and implement them at the next meeting.
- Follow-up on delegated tasks. See that all members understand and fulfill his/her responsibilities.
- Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Conduct periodic evaluations of the meetings, either privately or publicly

## **DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY**

As you probably have discovered, you can't do everything. So how does it get done? Well, delegation is the key to a successful organization. Sharing responsibilities keeps members interested and enthusiastic about the group. You might be reluctant to delegate because you want to make sure the job is done right (your way). However, that can make members feel unimportant and become apathetic. Here are several good reasons to delegate:

### **THE GROUP BENEFITS BY HAVING:**

- Members become more actively involved and committed; more projects and activities undertaken; and a greater chance that projects will be completed in a timely fashion
- Increased opportunities for members to develop leadership skills; and more of a chance to fill leadership roles with qualified, experienced people

### **THE LEADER BENEFITS BY:**

- Not being spread too thin, and therefore, being less likely to burn out; gaining satisfaction seeing members grow and develop; acquiring more experience in executive and administrative functions

### **AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO DELEGATE IS WHEN:**

- There is a lot of work to be done or a member has particular qualifications for or interest in a task
- Someone can benefit from the responsibility; and routine matters need attention
- Details take up too much time and have to be divided

### **THE TIME NOT TO DELEGATE IS WHEN:**

- The task is something you yourself would not want to do (menial work) or have not done before yourself in the group
- Someone is under qualified or overqualified for the task or the person isn't interested in, or committed to, the project
- The work is your own specific responsibility (except in emergencies) or the task is too big or is an unsolved problem, issue or matter dealing with the personal feelings of another

### **THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO DELEGATE:**

- Explain the task to see who is interested, then ask for volunteers by a show of hands or passing a sign-up sheet (interest is a great motivational tool). However, this method can be impersonal, and you could be "stuck" if no one volunteers.
- Appoint or suggest someone for the task. Sometimes a member lacks self-confidence and won't volunteer, whereby, appointing them demonstrates your confidence in them. Assign the task through a committee. This takes the pressure off an individual and reinforces organization structure. The most effective method of delegation is the "best fit" approach which involves matching the most qualified or interested person with the appropriate job task. Remember to try to spread the enjoyable and responsible tasks around, thus giving more members status, value, and leadership training opportunities.

### **THERE ARE MANY INEFFECTIVE WAYS TO DELEGATE ALSO:**

- Pleading, threatening, intimidating, excessive flattering, and giving guilt trips are not recommended methods of delegation.

# GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE DELEGATION:

1. Choose the appropriate people by interviewing and placing your members carefully. Consider their time, interest, and capabilities. Specific responsibilities to be delegated to a particular person must be appropriate for the growth of that person at that specific time. Don't delegate tasks that are too challenging or too easy to accomplish.
2. Explain why the person was selected for this task, and why the task is important.
3. Delegate segments or portions that make sense, not just bits and pieces of a task.
4. Discuss the task at hand. Discuss ideas and mutually set goals and objectives. Whenever possible, give those who will be responsible for carrying out the task a voice in the decision-making. Do not lower standards.
5. Clearly define the responsibilities and expectations being delegated to each person. Explain what is expected of the person and what the bounds of authority are. Be sure agreement is reached on areas where the person can function freely. The end result is important, not the various steps involved because everyone accomplishes tasks differently.
6. Give accurate and honest feedback. People want to know how they're doing and they deserve to know as well. This is an opportunity for allowing risk-taking and mistakes, giving satisfaction, and encouraging growth.
7. Train and support your members by sharing resources, information, knowledge, and plans with them. It is incredible how many errors are made simply because of poor communication or lack of information or knowledge of necessary resources.
8. Really delegate. Most responsible people do not appreciate someone looking over their shoulder, or taking back parts of their assignment before they have a chance to do it. As a leader, it can be hard for you to "let go" because you like being the doer. Let them do the job! Delegating does not eliminate work, it simply changes it. As you delegate appropriately, a multiplier effect occurs-the time spent doing one job can be spent enabling several people to do numerous jobs. However, if things aren't getting done, find out why and act upon it.
9. Stress the importance of evaluation. You must not overlook the need to evaluate and measure the extent to which your member's actions confirmed to organizational plans. You should assess if the plans went well, or if the original plans were appropriate and worthwhile. Use appropriate feedback techniques when evaluating. One of your most important roles as a leader is to help your members learn and grow. Remember to share past failures as well as successes with the group so that all group members may benefit from these experiences!
10. Congratulate and thank people for a job well done! Your members are your greatest resource. Let them contribute to their own personal development and the organization by putting their creativity into action!