

Helping Your RSO Run Effective Meetings

A meeting should not be an end in itself, but a vehicle to help your RSO reach their goal. Meetings help a group determine courses of action. 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 your RSO make their meetings successful, productive, and fun:

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
 - Think about why you or your RSO wants/needs to have the meeting. Are they wanting to give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives and develop courses of action? Do they want to provide opportunities for the group to communicate and promote group cohesion, or brainstorm ideas? Maybe they just want to keep members in the loop on current events. Is there a problem that needs to be solved? Think through the purpose. You may determine that they don't need to call a meeting at all, but rather send out an email or message to relay information.

- Meeting Preparation
 - If your group decides they need to have a meeting, putting a little bit of planning into it can go a long way. Some things to think about while planning:
 - Physical Setting - Remember to reserve a room, arrange for any special equipment and have a plan for putting the room back in order after the meeting is finished.
 - Agenda - Defines the purpose of the meeting. The agenda should not be overly ambitious, but should address all items necessary for the meeting.
 - Distribution - Distribute the agenda and any other pertinent other information (e.g., articles or relevant policies) to members prior to the meeting (perhaps by e-mail) so they can review and be prepared to discuss items. Also, make sure members know where and when the meeting is to take place.

- During the Meeting
 - Attitude
 - As a leader, be a role model. Be professional and courteous. Greet members and make them feel welcome. Listen, show interest, appreciation and confidence in members. Respect people's feelings and acknowledge constructive contributions.

 - Atmosphere
 - Encourage group discussion and feedback on all discussion topics. You will have better decisions and highly motivated members that help shape the organization and the activities if they have participated in the process.
 - Keep conversations focused. As gently and tactfully as possible, help end discussions when they are unproductive or becoming detrimental.

- Recognize or congratulate members who have done something great in the organization, on campus or elsewhere. Celebrate significant holidays, birthdays, organizational accomplishments, etc.
- Agenda
 - Appoint someone to keep minutes of the meeting for future reference.
 - Get done what you need to get done, but try to work for consensus.
 - Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a positive note by asking members to express things they thought were good or successful.
- Adjourn
 - Make sure a date, time and place for the next meeting is set and any sign-in/sign-up sheets are collected.
 - Close the meeting with a strong positive statement. Thank the group and acknowledge their efforts.
- After the Meeting
 - Write up and distribute minutes within the next few days. Discuss any problems from the meeting with your officers, and work on solutions and implement them at future meetings.