

Themes

Involvement

Students usually join student organizations to get involved. That means they want something to do! An organization that doesn't need any help from members is not likely to get many members coming back. Find ways to get your membership involved and contributing to the mission of your organization right away.

Ownership

Not only do students want to be involved, but they also want to put their own mark on what they are doing. People want to make a contribution. By feeling a sense of ownership in the organization and its activities, members will be motivated to continue coming back and participating in the organization.

Benefits

Another way to entice members is with benefits of membership. Think about what being a member entails and how it can be helpful to the individual. It could mean access to particular programs or services, a way to make friends easily, or the opportunity to make a difference on campus.

Additional Resources

Motivating the Middle: Fighting Apathy in College Student Organizations by T.J. Sullivan

Campus Talk Blog: The 5 Rs of Club Membership Retention

<http://www.campustalkblog.com/the-5-rs-of-club-membership-retention/>

MEMBER RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT

In This Brochure

Strategies for your organization to keep members interested and involved



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Does your organization struggle with keeping members? Do you have loads of people at your first meeting but then nobody returns? Here are some ideas for what you can do to keep your members coming back!

Engage

ELEVATE

Explore

From the Beginning

- **Get organized.** New members generally want to know that the organization they are joining is competent and able to make things happen. Appearing organized right from the beginning reinforces that belief and fosters trust in the leadership.
- **Be welcoming.** New members are more likely to return if they feel a sense of belonging from the very beginning. Ask members—both new and returning—to introduce themselves. Do an icebreaker or team-building activity. Review your procedures and discussions to make sure they can be easily understood by new members, and explain anything that might be unclear. And continue fostering a welcoming atmosphere beyond just your first meeting.
- **Get the new members involved immediately.** People like to feel needed, and new members are no exception. A person who comes to a meeting and learns about the organization but walks away with the sense that there is little room to contribute is unlikely to return. Ask for their help right away—in providing ideas, contributing to discussion, and taking on tasks. Trust that those who volunteer will complete their assigned tasks.

Ongoing

- **Communicate clearly and frequently.** Members want to know what's going on with the organization, so make sure you keep them in the loop!
- **Respect their time.** Recognize that your members care about your organization, but it may not be their top priority, and so they don't want it to take all their time. Be honest and communicative about time commitments. A simple step: start and end meetings on time. This builds trust in leaders.
- **Let them determine their commitment.** One way to retain members is to provide flexibility in their level of involvement. If every single meeting and event is mandatory, it's a big commitment, which might be off-putting. Think critically about what really needs to be mandatory. Let individuals be involved in the activities and initiatives they enjoy, but skip out on the ones they don't. Provide opportunities for members to contribute ideas without an expectation of action on their part, and you may find them more willing to participate.
- **Ask for help on specific, time-limited tasks.** Many members want to get more involved in organizations but don't feel able to commit to a year-long officer position. Provide

opportunities for members to help out in ways that are more time-limited, such as coordinating a particular event or assisting an officer for a few days.

- **Make it meaningful.** Find out why your members were interested in or joined your organization in the first place, and try to provide that experience. If the organization is helping them accomplish their goals, they are likely to be invested and involved.

Questions to Ask

- What first attracted you to this organization?
 - What is one thing you think we could be doing that would make this group stronger?
- **Make it fun!** As an out-of-class activity, if it's not fun, they probably won't continue to participate! Get to know your members as people, not just as members. Meet individually with them to show you care about who they are and their individual experience in your organization. Include opportunities to socialize. Consider inviting friends or significant others of members to some of your activities so members don't feel pressure to choose between the organization and their social relationships. Make sure members are building relationships within the group.