

Davis & Elkins College
Student Activist Handbook

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Introduction

So, you want to enact change but don't know where to begin? Picking up this handbook is a great start in the process of trying to create change on the college campus. The authors of this handbook are students of Davis & Elkins College, and it is intended for students who are passionate about social issues and want to mobilize others on campus. With the help of research and student leaders around campus, this handbook is a guide for you to use to help you achieve your goals and to enact the change you want to see.

The structure of the handbook is simple: it is set up like a checklist that shows you the steps you should take to start an organization or become an activist. Chapter 1 discusses how to define the issue that you want to change within the college community and then develop a strategy to use to promote your cause. Then in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, the handbook provides information to help you with organizing a group, recruiting new members, and running meetings. Once you have the issue defined and the members you need for your club, you will need to start fundraising and promoting your cause, which can be found in Chapters 5 and 6. Finally, in Chapter 7 the handbook defines and gives examples of direct action, including safe and effective methods of social protest. Using this structure, the authors hope to see you enact change within the campus community.

Chapter 1

Defining Issues and Planning Strategy

Abstract

When you think about an issue, you get excited and want to pursue it. But passion alone does not create a movement. You will need to have a specific issue that matters to you and your community to give others the same feeling you have over the issue. Focusing on a particular issue and planning a strategy will start your movement on the path to success and possibly bring change to your community.

This chapter describes how to choose and frame your issue and the message; identify your primary and secondary targets; set your goals; and develop strategies.

Chapter 1

Defining Issue and Planning Strategies

DEFINING THE ISSUE

In order to have a successful movement, it is important to define certain terms such as your issue, message, and many others that make a movement successful due to its organization.

Choosing an Issue

It might seem obvious, but in order to start the movement, you need to select your issue. Most successful issues are driven by their perceived importance within the community.

1. Look around your community by providing surveys and having informal conversations to see what issues relate to those around you. You don't want to focus on a topic that is not very popular and end up with no participants!
2. Set a strategy that can achieve your target. In your strategy, consider time, energy, and money that you and your participants will invest in this organization.
3. Set a message and make it clear so you can promote it to others and educate them about your issue and organization.
4. Set a target and define it. Make it clear whether it is a person that holds power over this issue or a specific organization. An unclear target can make the movement lose focus (also called "mission drift").
5. Find your leaders! Leadership is crucial during the college years because leaders hold positions for a limited time. Try to find long-term leadership through an advisor; they can convey a consistent message over time and teach new leaders about your organization.

Define Your Message

Organizations need to have a clear message. For example, the POLIS Club (a non-partisan political science club) invites every person to become involved in it and does not judge political views. Your message should also have clear reasoning and goals for the short and long term. Use your message to attract people who share your values and passion for similar issues.

Don't forget about:

- your mission
- your vision
- your values and standards
- your expectations

Example

The POLIS Club establishes its message with its mission and vision for the club. For example, the mission is to educate people on the different sides of politics. The vision focuses on making students better at analyzing politics and providing a safe space for other opinions. The POLIS Club expects members to respect everyone's political views, and the club wants to be accessible and enjoyable while also showing dedication to politics and having integrity for every member.

A clear issue and mission will help to deliver your message with more success and attract others to join you!

PLANNING STRATEGY

Strategic planning is when an organization has to take directions and make decisions on the resources to be used in the strategy. This process is part of student organization activism because it helps to address the initiatives and lays out short-term and long-term goals for the organization.

Keep in mind . . .

1. Strategic planning changes over time due to the needs of the students; some priorities may change from year to year.
2. It is important to engage members and show how effective your plan is regarding your organization's vision, purpose, and goals, to take you to your long-term goals.

Define Your Target



About Setting Targets

The primary and secondary targets are people that you will focus your campaign on. That doesn't mean you should harass individuals; rather, having targets helps your group direct its energy to those who actually have the ability to make change. These targets should know your group exists, has concerns, and wants change—win your target's support or put pressure on them through direct action to meet your goals (see Chapter 7).

Focusing on people rather than institutions is more manageable; changing a person's mind is simpler than amending institutional policy.

Set your goals

Whenever you think about goals and objectives for your organization, keep in mind the different types of goals. For example, the International Student Organization Club has the overall goal of promoting diversity on campus and making international students feel welcome in America. To achieve the level of success that the ISO has, you need to set a variety of goals, which include:

1. Immediate: takes place or can be accomplished without delay
2. Short-term: is a goal that you can achieve in 12 months or less
3. Long-term: this is the ultimate goal that your organization wants to accomplish

Tactics

The steps to carry your plan and make your organization is your overall goal. There will be allies that will help your organization to be successful—such as other groups on campus or faculty and local leaders—and it is important to have put pressure on targets to keep your movement relevant.

To achieve your goals, you should apply **tactical activism** to your strategy. Tactical activism is a set of proactive strategies to address an issue before the issue becomes more prominent. According to Richard Shaw, “tactical activism can transform a defensive battle into a springboard toward accomplishing a significant goal.” For example, rather than waiting for policies to be put in place on campus and fighting them afterward, stay up to date on current issues, attend assembly meetings, and plan ahead.

To facilitate activism, you should consider how to use passive and active members to prepare members for different roles and to distribute your resources most effectively.

Passive Members

Students who desire to be a member, but do not want to be physically present in the movement.

Active Members

Students who participate in physical and non-physical events that the organization hosts.

For specific examples . . .

- about recruiting allies, members, and leadership, see Chapter 3.
- about raising funds and gathering resources, see Chapter 5.
- about direct action, see Chapter 7.

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Chapter 2

Organizational Structure

Abstract

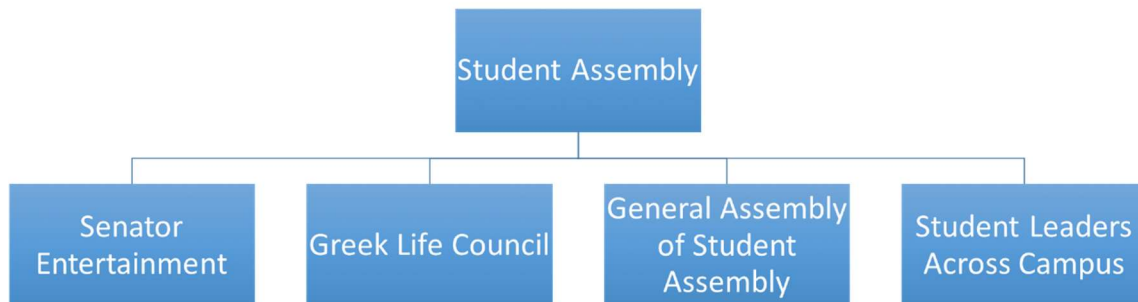
Now that you have defined your issue and have strategized a plan, the next thing to do is figure out how you would like to structure your organization. It will be most beneficial to you if you understand the structure of Student Assembly. This chapter will also provide you with the information that you need to start your organization or club, the things to do after you have started it, and the chain of command for future use.

Chapter 2

Organizational Structure

Structure of Student Assembly

Figuring out where to start can be difficult when creating any club or doing activism. The first thing to understand is the structure of the Student Assembly (Figure 1). Student Assembly has four different sections: Senator Entertainment, Greek Life Council (referred to as IFC), General Assembly of Student Assembly (referred to as Class Senators), and Student Leaders Across Campus (referred to as SLAC).



- Senator Entertainment
 - ◆ Plans all of the activities on campus
- Greek Life Council (IFC)
 - ◆ Handles everything with Greek life organizations on campus, which are the following:
 - Zeta Kappa Xi, Sigma Phi Epsilon, Phi Omega Mu, and Alpha Sigma Phi.
- General Assembly of Student Assembly
 - ◆ Is made up of 20 students and there are 5 representatives per class
 - at least 1 must be an international student and 1 must be a commuter
- Student Leaders Across Campus
 - ◆ 1 representative from every club or organization.

How to Start a Club/Activist Group

After understanding the format of student assembly, next you can start your club or activist group. To do this you have to complete the following:

1. You must have an advisor who is either a faculty or staff member and 8 students that show interest. Of those 8 students, you must have an executive board that consists of at least 4 positions; President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.
 - a. An Executive Board (e-board) is a group of people who jointly supervise the activities of an organization. The e-board roles are typically the following:
 - i. President - This role consists of setting goals, running the meetings, delegating tasks, helping with recruiting, and regulating responsibilities.
 - ii. Vice President - This role helps the president with the above tasks.
 - iii. Treasurer - This role consists of creating the budget for each semester, attending budget meetings for SLAC, filling out check requests, and reimbursement forms.
 - iv. Secretary - This role consists of helping to maintain the organization, keeping records of meetings and events, and helping with communication.
2. Next, you have to submit a New Student Organization Request, which consists of the following:
 - a. Proposed constitution and bylaws
 - i. Bylaws - rules made by your organization to help control the actions of every member
 - b. Description of how the student organization will benefit students on campus and the community
 - c. Names and contact information of 8 dedicated members
 - d. Name and contact information for the advisor
3. Finally, Student Assembly will either approve or reject the organization

After Your Organization is Formed

Once your organization has been approved, you should begin hosting meetings with the current members that you currently have. In the first couple of meetings you should plan ways of doing outreach and getting more members. The best way to help your organization run efficiently is by keeping meeting times and days consistent.

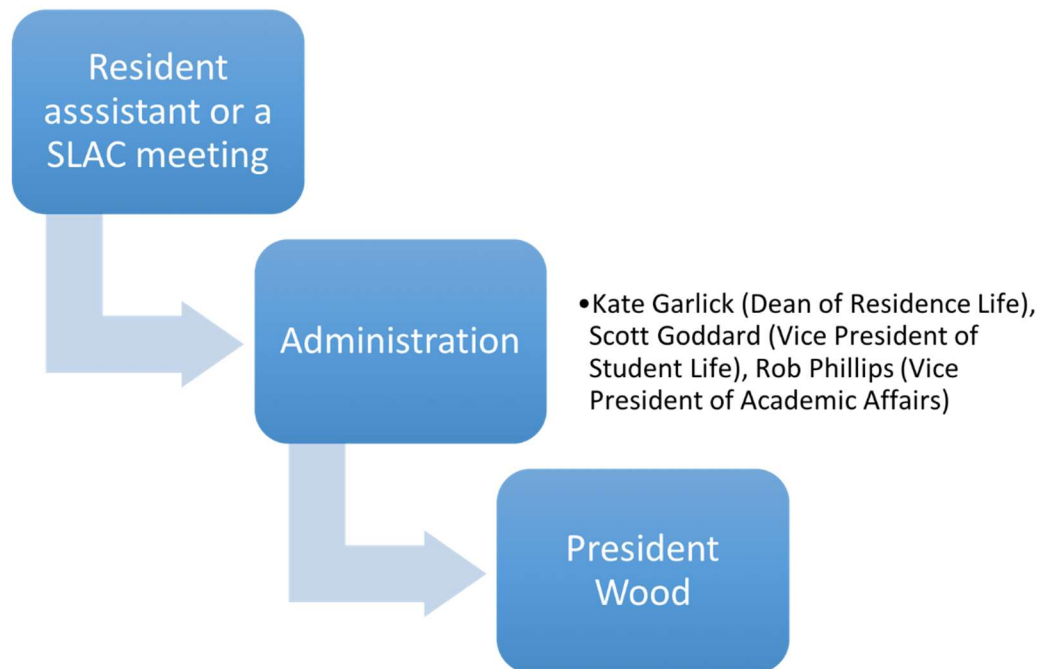
How to Change Your E-board

Towards the end of the school year, your organization will typically change their e-board positions by voting for new leaders. This will vary from organization to organization, but it is typically done in the following manner:

1. Explain the responsibilities of each position.
2. Have nominees explain why they would like to hold that position to other members of the organization.
3. Hold a vote to decide who will be the next e-board.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

When you have an issue on campus, the following chain of command shows who you should contact in order.



1. Depending on the issue, you can start by asking for assistance with your Resident Assistant or bringing it up at a SLAC meeting.
2. If the issue is not fixed after that, you can talk to Kate Garlick (Dean of Residence Life), Scott Goddard (Vice President of Student Life), or Rob Phillips (Vice President of Academic Affairs).
3. If the issue is not fixed or in the process of being fixed, you can then email President Wood and CC the people that you had spoken to before about it.

Chapter 3

Leadership and Recruitment

Abstract

Since you have chosen a campus issue to focus on, strategized, and considered your organizational structure, the next step comes down to discussing the importance of having a strong leadership team. Before thinking of recruiting new students for your club, it is important to first establish leadership skills and learn effective ways of serving as a team and a mentor. At the end of this chapter, you will also learn effective ways to recruit new members.

Chapter 3

Leadership and Recruitment

LEADERSHIP

Whether it be a small informal club or a large, prestigious organization, having a firm and sound leadership team can provide a structure to be followed in years to come. By having this structure, it will allow members of your organization to have an outline of what is expected and what is to be accomplished throughout each semester.

Here are the main qualities that effective leadership structures obtain (“7 skills of effective team leaders” 2):



With healthy and effective **communication**, all members can feel more comfortable pitching new ideas to enhance the club. As a person who holds a position of leadership, you also serve as a mentor, so if members of club are not comfortable enough to bring up potential issues among their peers, they can reach out to the leadership team.

Mentorship and leadership go hand in hand because the ultimate purpose of both is to inspire members to strive to make a difference based on the qualities that are shown to the members by the mentors/leaders.

What Leadership Looks Like on Campus

Cheyenna Jones, secretary of the Black Student Union at Davis & Elkins College, speaks about how her activism club leadership functions:

“So what we do whenever we have an assignment or an event, the e-board will split people up into groups or assign them to certain tasks to ensure that everyone has a part in it. We also have mentees as an e-board so we have them come to meetings and watch what we do in our specific positions and help them learn.”

The advice that Jones gives sums up the idea of **carrying on legacy**. Once the upperclassmen embark on their lives after graduating, the question that arises is who will take on the responsibility of the club? If you want your legacy to live on properly, you must teach the mentees properly. They will need to be established to have the opportunity to observe proper leadership qualities and what it looks like for an e-board to run smoothly and efficiently.

Splitting members into groups helps them see what different e-board positions do so they do not always have to stay in the same group. This will set up a stable learning environment so that they can build upon those skills later. When the time comes for them to assume positions on the board, they will already have prior knowledge to build on.

RECRUITMENT

In order for recruitment to take place, you must identify the kinds of individuals you want to be involved in your club.



When it comes to planning, which is the first step you should take, you should organize events that appeal to your campus peers. Orienting recruitment toward a specific type of individual and telling them what they will get out of joining an activist club will also be beneficial. Some of the benefits include bolstering your resume: joining an activist club and partaking in the activities involves organizing events and participating in protests for a particular cause. Whether someone joins an activist club for their own benefit or for the to make their campus a better place, you can use both of these tactics to orient recruitment, advertise, and reach out to potential members.

Looking at the social motivations for going to college and joining a club, you will see that there are two major reasons that college students get involved with activism.

1. Personal Gain
2. Societal Gain

Those who are interested in their personal gain are focused on potential improvement of careers and overall quality of life. On the other hand, those who focus on societal gain hope to learn the value of citizenship and participate in the process of healthy change. Both those who are interested in personal and societal gain are the types of people that you should target to recruit, but you may need to advertise the advantages of joining your group differently (Miller and Tolliver 3-5).

Also, it is important to remember to interact with the community as well as other activist organizations on campus. Establishing strong allies helps the overall mission of your club or organization, which is to promote change in a healthy and safe environment for speaking out against a particular problem.

Recruitment Strategies on Campus

Cheyenna Jones, secretary of the Black Student Union at Davis & Elkins College, speaks about how her activist club goes about the process of recruitment.

“I think we do tend to gravitate towards our Black students on campus just so that they know they have a space where they feel safe. But of course everyone is welcome to join!”

“For recruitment for new activism clubs I would just say make it know that it is a safe space. While activism is an amazing thing, it can be a very scary thing to do. Knowing that you can fight for what you believe in while having a group of people by your side is important.”

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- Miller, Michael, and David Tolliver. *Student Activism as a Vehicle for Change on College Campuses: Emerging Research and Opportunities*. IGI Global, 2017.

Chapter 4

Running Meetings

Abstract

Once you recruit who you need for your organization, knowing how to run your meetings is key. This chapter discusses the three main types of meetings, which are relative to population size and times constraints. Next, the chapter details the differences between formal and informal meetings, and which will work for the type of organization you plan to create. Then, once you understand all of that, the chapter discusses what should go into a meeting and how to properly close one.

Chapter 4

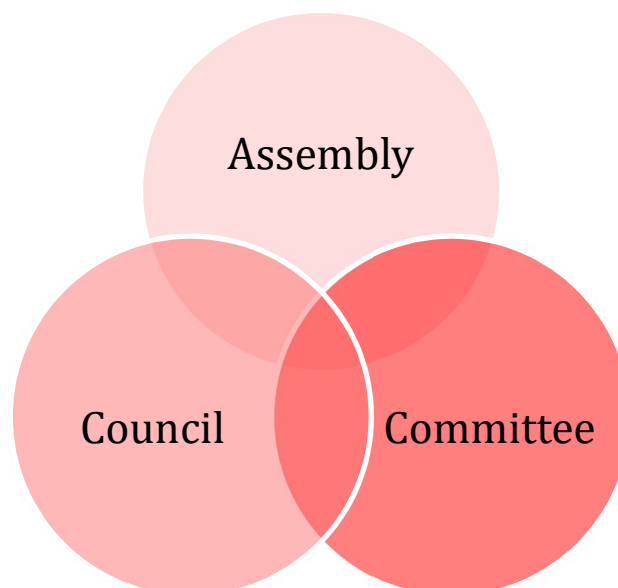
Running Meetings

A successful meeting is important because it lets every member know the goals of their group.

The Three Types of Meetings

There are three types of meetings that can be used: assembly, council, and committee.

- **Assembly** - used for a group of people 100 or more. There are so many people in this type of meeting that they are expected to do little talking and just listen to the President or speaker. Assemblies are usually reserved for places with a lot of people, like big universities. At Davis & Elkins College, we have a Student Assembly that includes one or two of every student.
- **Council** - consists half that of an assembly (40 to 50 people) and are also meant to sit and listen to the speaker. The only difference here is that the council can interject with questions and comments anytime they see fit.
- **Committee** - up to 10 to 12 people who have equal speaking in meetings. The committee is so small that not one person can do everything, so it is wise to split the work among the members. You can do this by having task forces or an ad hoc committee (Jay).
 - *Task Force* – a sub-committee formed by an already existing committee to tackle small issues or topics and then dissolve.
 - *Ad Hoc Committee* - are one-off, unplanned gatherings that focus on a specific topic or discussion.



The Three Basic Meeting Times

Setting the right time to meet can make a difference on how well the team performs.

There are three meeting times that organizations will choose from based on their group and their availabilities. Different meeting times will work best with different kinds of organizations. The chart below will help you decide which is best.

Daily Meetings

- 10 - 20 minutes
- One-on-ones
- Check Progress, Ask Questions

Weekly/Monthly Meetings

- 30 - 90 minutes
- One-on-ones
- Leadership and Project Teams

Irregular/Occasional Meetings

- Up to 3 hours
- Boards
- Committees
- Use time wisely. Long hours can easily bore the attendees.

Informal vs. Formal Meetings

Informal

Not mandatory to have an agenda, but a good idea.

Take Notes

Formal

Mandatory Agenda

Supporting Documents

Take Minutes

Defined Roles

Procedure for Formal Meetings

Most formal meetings use **parliamentary procedure**, which ensures that the agenda is arrived at democratically. Below is a basic overview of some parliamentary procedures:

1. Each decision should be presented as a motion or a resolution
 - a. E.g., an amendment to bylaws should be presented as a motion
 - b. Motions should be “seconded” if it requires action from the assembly
2. There should be a debate of motions or resolutions, which is begun by the person bringing the motion to the floor.
 - a. Only relevant information should be considered for debates
3. Typically, motions must be introduced in one meeting and voted on in the next
 - a. This ensures members have time to consider the motion before voting
4. “Call the Question” (vote) or “table” the motion for another meeting

This is a limited overview of procedures. For more information, consult *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

After Every Meeting

Ending your meeting should be just as important as starting it. You, as the leader, should always end a meeting with an **action plan**. This discussion should include who is responsible for what and what the deadlines are. Otherwise, all the time you spent on the meeting would be for nothing. For example, the leader should make sure the secretary knows to send out the meeting minutes to everyone in the group. By making it clear, there will be no confusion for the next meeting (&Meetings Ltd).

Next Steps

In order for your meetings to be productive and for people to follow through with plans, you need a source of income. This way, people will not be forced to pay out of pocket for work and they will be more likely to participate during meetings. Chapter 5 will then show you how to obtain the amount of money you need through fundraising.

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Chapter 5

Getting Money and Fundraising

Abstract

There are some realistic, easy, and even fun ways to get funding for groups, organizations, and events. This chapter will cover the most basic obstacles of fundraising, who you should contact, differences between allocated funds and fundraisers, the process of getting allocated funds from student assembly, and steps to hold a fundraiser. The more people you have and activities you want to do means you'll have to work hard for the funding, but there's nothing in the bylaws that say you can't have fun while doing it.

Chapter 5

Getting Money and Fundraising

Understanding the difficulties of raising funds for any group or event will set you up for success. Getting over the fear of asking for money is the first step. Finding a designee or volunteer to head the process who isn't hesitant to inquire for donations helps the process go a bit more smoothly. Regardless, no more than two people should be in charge of the project, as it will cut down on confusion and infighting; however, this is not to say suggestions and ideas are not to be heard by all within the group.

Fundraising Takes Time

Raise money well before you need it, as the process of getting funding can be long. When first meeting with club or organization members, the treasurer should address the amount of funds and compare it to how much resources for future events will cost. The fundraiser should be held a minimum of one month prior to the event, as the need to purchase and collect items either around town or by mail will be a high possibility. Starting early will allow for a greater window of success that is also less stressful for those involved. Make a plan and implement with plenty of time to spare.

Budgeting Pays Off

Knowing how much money you need for an event or materials is vital to your success. The easiest way to accomplish this is to research pricing and outline a budget on your findings. This way when you request the funding, you'll know precisely how much money you will need to meet your required goal. It will also show those you're approaching for funds that you're mission-oriented, organized, and responsible.

Item:	Price:
Paper plates, bowls, plastic cups, utensils, napkins (50)	\$30
Pizza (20)	\$100
Drinks: soda and water	\$50
Total:	\$180.00

Make Connections

Actively participating in the community will assist you with networking before funding is needed. People have a harder time saying 'no' to those they know. You can ignore a call, an e-mail, or a text, but it's hard to ignore a person who is standing right in front of you. Also, knowing which companies and businesses that are more likely to donate versus those who aren't will save you time and effort better focused elsewhere.

The ‘mom and pop’ shops in town have deep ties in the community and are more likely to donate, as they want to support those in their community. This said, their funding isn’t as vast as large corporations. The large businesses have a strong protocol set in red tape so researching their donation requirements will be beneficial to know what is going to be allowed before asking. If research isn’t appealing, then there’s no harm in asking and leaving it up to chance. Just ensure to keep the frustration at bay and keep short- and long-term goals in sight.

People to ask for funding:

- Small, local businesses, including shops and bakeries
 - Also consider “in-kind” donations, which are non-monetary
- Local grocery store chains
- Bars and restaurants (e.g., consider a charity night at a local bar)
- Faculty and other community members

It is important to tell donors if your club or organization DOES NOT have 501c3 non-profit status and will not be tax deductible. Some donors may assume they can write-off donations, so you should be up front about your organization’s status.

It is also important to note that when an individual, business, or company donates money to your group it is imperative to the relationship formed to send a form of thank you. Ensure the appreciation is sent promptly after receiving the donation. The most common ways are to either:

- Provide a certificate of appreciation
- Add their name to your activity, ‘made possible by...’
- Send a thank you basket (best for smaller businesses)
- Send a thank you card signed by all the club/organization members

Money from Other Means

Allocating funds is simply the process of setting aside, or budgeting, money for a specific use. For example, a youth who saves money to buy books is allocating their funds as a means to purchase a precise item. Fundraising is a means of raising funds to further financially support a cause or event. Each club and organization are permitted to hold fundraisers as a means to raise money for their individual group. The money obtained from such an event will be held in a sub-account of said club and will only be accessed by them, not Student Assembly Treasurer.

PURCHASE ORDER**\$250+**

FILL OUT FORM

GET FORM SIGNED
BY SA TREASURERGET FORM SIGNED
BY ADVISORTURN INTO ADMIN
ASSISTANTVP APPROVES AND
GIVES PURCHASE
ORDER**CHECK REQUEST****UNDER \$250**

FILL OUT FORM

GET FORM SIGNED
BY SA TREASURERGET FORM SIGNED
BY ADVISORTURN INTO ADMIN
ASSISTANTVP APPROVES AND
GRANTS REQUEST***NOTE:**

- All funding requests need to be filled out 2 weeks before money is needed
- Checks are only cut on Tuesday and Thursday

Chapter 6

Social Media & Publicity

Abstract

Social media and publicity are useful tools in your repertoire to utilize for your organization's efforts, as social media in particular is highly relevant to today's society. However, if it isn't used effectively, it will not benefit your organization, which is why it is important to use specific strategies to make your efforts worthwhile. This chapter discusses how to use social media on the D&E campus, and it includes an interview with Cheyenna Jones, the secretary of the Black Student Union.

Chapter 6

Social Media & Publicity in Activism

In the last twenty years, social media has become more prevalent. Nearly everyone, ranging from teenagers to older adults, has a social media presence of some sort. With social media has come an increase in communication across the globe, allowing individuals to have access to news from anywhere in the world. As social media is commonly used by teenagers and young adults, it is a great tool to utilize on a college campus.

Publicity Tools

For any public event, you should have a **sound bite** to describe the purpose of your campaign. For example, a local fundraiser might include a sound bite about raising money for a good cause, or a small protest should advertise a social issue.

Tips for sound bites:

- Short and concise
- Rhymes, metaphors, and acronyms are highly effective
- Using triplets can also be memorable

Example: “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” John F. Kennedy’s famous sound bite uses a rhetorical figure known as a *chiasmus*, a type of linguistic reversal.

You should also consider writing a **press release** for any upcoming event that you can distribute to print and online media. A press release should include:

- a suggested headline
- a note on when it should be published (“for immediate release”)
- info about the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How
- facts and figures (e.g., number of people at the event)
- a focus on *action* not necessarily ideological beliefs
- a concise summary (no more than 1 page) and contact info

Groups and leaders should also consider writing **letters to the editor**, which most local and school newspapers will accept. Having multiple members write letters with the same message makes it more likely one will be published.

Black Student Union's Use of Media

The Black Student Union is active on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Jones tells me their posts revolve primarily around spreading knowledge and information about their organization and its values.

“For example, for Black History Month we posted pictures and facts about historical black figures [every day],” Jones says, which celebrates the legacy left behind by influential Black individuals. Social media posts also include photos and information about members of the organization to celebrate their achievements, for example the ‘senior spotlight’ posts that highlight senior students and their work at D&E.

The organization also posts information regarding events they hold on campus, which encourages students to attend. Jones believes that social media is beneficial to the organization and its mission as “it allows us to educate others on a platform that majority of students use, share our excellence with those who support us, and [makes it] easy to reach new members.”

Tips to Create an Effective Social Media Presence



Utilize every form of social media--Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.



Have a cohesive, recognizable theme for posts.



Post relevant information regularly.

While social media may be more prevalent today, that does not mean other forms of media such as the news and radio stations are not effective in your activism efforts. Reaching out to local news and radio stations may be helpful when hosting events or fundraisers for your agenda. With D&E being in such a small town like Elkins, reaching out to the community and asking for their involvement in campus life may be beneficial to your cause.

Improve Publicity about Your Activism Efforts

Utilize communication methods such as **email** to reach out to students and local residents of Elkins regarding your cause.

- Before sending emails to the entire college body, consider orienting your efforts to groups that might be interested.
 - Other similar clubs
 - Departments and faculty
 - Local action groups
- Contact individuals you know. This is more effective than cold-calling—start by reaching out to your network.

Reach out to local news channels and radio stations to advertise events and fundraisers that are open to both students and the community.

- Seek **media-related donations**, as donors are more likely to give money if they see results

Hanging up posters, handing out flyers, and setting up informational stands in high-traffic areas around campus (cafeteria, dorms, classrooms, etc.) can help get the word out about your organization and recruit new members.

- Classroom presentations can be highly effective, but you'll need permission from instructors before visiting a class.
- Attempt to present information about your organization at the beginning or end of classes when possible.

The best method of getting the word out about your organization is through **word of mouth**. Spread the word about the issue, actions, goals, etc. of your organization among social groups and circles—anyone who will listen will help share that information around campus.

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Chapter 7

Direct Action

Abstract

Within this chapter, you will find explanations about how direct action is properly applied to a cause of an organization. Direct action is known to be one of the strongest forms of promoting and spreading a message or an organizational cause. With an easy question-guided focus, this chapter explains the purposes and reasons behind using direct action.

Chapter 7

Direct Action

What is “direct action”?

- **Direct Action** - the use of student-based work/club strikes, demonstrations, or other public forms of protest rather than negotiation to achieve one's demands.
- **Nonviolent Resistance** –the practice of achieving goals such as social change through symbolic civil student protests, civil disobedience, economic (boycotting the cafeteria), or political noncooperation (walkouts), and other methods on campus, while being nonviolent.
- **Protest** - a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something, such as a sit-in to protest policies of discrimination, campus safety, and so forth (Merriam-Webster).

Direct Action: What’s the point?

What makes you want to move towards direct action? Direct action is a public scenario to bring light to a matter, cause, or organization after all else has failed. When given an opportunity of spreading a message for your organization, you are tasked with many obligations to its cause. In order to convey your message to the public, your strongest form of action is direct action. Direct action is put into place to engage, agitate, instigate, and educate the public about your issue. An example of the effective use of direct action would safely and nonviolently protesting after an organization on campus has tried to make a change by appealing to the administration. Direct action should often be the last resort for activists.

Let’s Break it Down

Listed are questions to ask your organization to find the best form of direct action.

- What is fueling your fire? – this question allows the organization to understand and find the meaning of what is making your organization want to cause a change.
- What is your message that calls for justification? (i.e., a cause or a situation that you want to bring to light on campus – athletic/commuter disadvantages / sorority/fraternity expanding)
- Who does this affect? – this question grants the basis of your goal and provides you with your focus (i.e., student body, athletes, commuters, etc.).
- Who does it start with? Who do you need involved/address for change?

Who is being held accountable? – the set of questions provides you with an idea of your targets (primary and secondary – see Chapter 1)

- Who is your audience? – This question leads you with who you are wanting to see and hear your cause. It provides you with the initial idea of where to start (i.e., a professor, student body, the President, etc.)

APPLYING DIRECT ACTION

Educating others—this is your main form of spreading your message for your cause. You as an organization want to inform and teach others of where you stand as an organization and what your cause is (i.e., student-held public displays, forms of social media, etc.).

Voicing the Cause

When promoting your message, you want to keep it as simple and short as you can. You want to use your voice and all of its power. In today's world, young voices make a loud impact on the world. Draw on your outside knowledge and keep your message relatable.

- ➔ The Occupy Wall Street Movement developed the “We are the 99%” message, which quickly and effectively conveyed their ideas.

What can make or break it?

Listed are questions to ask your organization to guide your overall goal.

- What is going on around you? Locally, nationally, internationally?
- Why keep it short and simple? People can retain information in small sections, leading to long-lasting impact.
- How can we keep this peaceful? You don't want or need a negative light brought to your organization for its message or cause.

Forms of Direct Action

- Marches
- Sit-Ins or “Die-Ins”
- Informative speaking (e.g., campus-wide email, campus displays)
- “Letter-writing campaigns” (often done by email)
- Boycotting
- Community literacy campaigns (e.g., activist newspapers and magazines, slam poetry)
- Getting the public involved (e.g., public interactions, social media)

Decorum

Activists often struggle to present themselves and their issues in ways that can't be misconstrued by their opponents or the media. **Mannerisms** inform you present yourself, including how you dress, speak, and conduct business.

When presenting yourself on behalf of an organization, you need to remain passionate yet distant while trying to portray your message across. Be quick and concise, leaving an impression within your issues of the organization to show importance. Every face, voice, and all actions taken in promotion of your cause affects it as a whole.

You don't have to sacrifice your personality to be effective, but keep in mind that effective rhetoric considers audience and social context above all else.

- ➔ For example, the Civil Rights Activists of 1968 intentionally wore suits to reflect mainstream values and avoid any criticism that they were merely "thugs."

How has this been done in the past?

Below is a case study showing effective direct action.



Localize Issues

Student activists are more successful when they **focus on issues happening around campus**. For example, instead of protesting systemic racism in the United States, your student group might protest specific college policies, hiring patterns, or practices.

As with the example above from Seattle University, students were mobilized by the national Black Lives Matter movement, yet they focused their demands on a more diverse curriculum in the humanities. The group recorded their efforts to address racism on campus—which failed when administrators ignored student concerns—and then protested with localized issues and demands that made it difficult for the university to do nothing.

Localizing issues:

- Focus on things the college can actually do
- Bring national conversations to your community
- Have concrete demands with a set timeline
- Be prepared to negotiate—and reach out to allies if necessary (local union leaders, community leaders, etc.)

What now?

Given that if your message or organizational cause was successful in change, what can you do from this point to further your message/cause? Listed below are ideas of how to show a continuous effect of your organization.

- Advocacy
- Increase and expand your organization
- Social Media/Public speaking
- Recruitment

Works Cited

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