



NETWORKING

What is Networking?

Networking is the process of creating a system of supporters, allies, and advocates by establishing relationships with key people and groups. These people and groups often share the same or similar goals as your organization.

Why is Networking Important?

Networking is important because it allows an organization to have valuable resources of support and advocacy that contribute to the success of your organization. Support and advocacy can come in the form of human resources, financial resources, or material resources in addition to moral support, advice, collaborations, and partnerships.

Networking Basics

Who Should We Network With?

Your network depends on your organization's mission and goals as well as audience. The following is a general list of possible people and groups to network with:

- * Administrators
- * Faculty
- * Graduate students
- * Alumni
- * Other student organizations on campus
- * Other student organizations at other colleges and universities
- * Professional organizations and associations (local, regional, national, etc)
- * Media (student newspaper, campus publications, etc)

Keys to Strong Networks

- * **Mutual benefits:** One thing to ask when determining if a particular person or group is worth networking with is whether that person or group has something to offer that can contribute to the success of your organization and whether your organization has something to offer that can contribute to the success of that person or group.
- * **Communication:** Like communication within an organization, communication between organizations is important in order to keep both parties informed and give them opportunities to share their ideas and voice their concerns.
- * **Active participation:** A network consists of two or more entities and is most effective when all parties are active in maintaining the relationship with one another. Passive or weak relationships result in the inability to maximize the potential that each party has for contributing to the success of the other.

Networking Strategies

Conversations

Networking can be as simple as a conversation with another student, administrator, faculty member, alumnus, or professional. Professionalism is highly recommended when conversing as a form of networking. Simply introduce yourself and briefly mention what organization you represent. Then use conversational cues and prompts to talk further about your organization.

Social Activities

Social activities are venues that encourage conversations because of the relaxed atmosphere. Other

programs that are non-social also provide opportunities for conversations but the program agenda may be tightly structured as to not allow significant time to talk with others.

Letter Campaigns

Letter campaigns to professional organizations and associations are suitable methods to introducing your organization to others outside of the university. In addition to an introduction to your organization, letters can also include other information such as your vision of how your organization can work with a particular professional organization or association to build a partnership.

Letter campaigns to alumni are suitable as well to update those former students who used to be leaders and/or members of your organization. Alumni of student organizations are potential sources of funds via donations or other contributions.

Any letter that is sent out should be followed up by another letter, phone call, or email. Sometimes a letter campaign is comprised of a series of letters sent out over a certain period of time. Each letter and/or series of letters should have a distinct purpose.

Appointments

Appointments with administrators and faculty are appropriate to introduce yourself to key university figures who your organization foresees as being able to contribute to the success of your organization. Follow-up appointments are recommended in order to maintain regular communication and provide updates.

Presentations

Presentations are a tool you can use during appointments to give a detailed overview of your organization or outline a proposal for a program or initiative. Presentations should be detailed, concise, and polished. Visual aids as well as handouts are useful.

Press Kits

Press kits are sets of material that provide an overview of your organization. Kits may include a letter, brochure, newsletter, information sheets, sample marketing material, and other items. Although press kits are usually designed for the media, kits can be sent to anyone who you wish to network with.

Networking Issues

Maintenance

Once you start a network with a person or group, it is critical to maintain a strong ongoing relationship in order for the network to be most effective. For more information on keys to a strong network, [click here](#).

Tracking

Generally, it is encouraged to network with as many people and groups as it takes to create organizational success. With the multitude of networks your organization may have, it would be useful to have a system of tracking that monitors who you have networks with and what the nature of those networks are. Other information to track is contact information, notes, and transacted material. Without a tracking system, it may be difficult to remember who is in your network and who isn't.