ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL SETTING

Student organizations often function without consciously developing a set of goals or a list of what they want to accomplish. What may result, at times, is a vague sense of uneasiness that develops within an organization. The officers, and sometimes the members, may feel that they are not doing what they want to do, and may even question the value of the group itself.

Setting goals is frightening to some people. Common concerns include:

- If we set goals, we'll be obligated to carry them out.
- A goal will make us inflexible; there will be no spontaneity.
- Past goals always seemed to be imposed on me by someone. Why should I do that to someone else?

If you know how to set goals, you can make active choices, increase spontaneity, and not be affected by and dependent upon situational circumstances.

GOALS are statements describing what an organization wishes to accomplish. They are the ends toward which your efforts will be directed. Remember, it is very important to review your goals and it is normal to change them from term to term or from year to year. This timing will depend on your organization. When reviewing your goals, keep this in mind:

- Do they fit with the overall purpose of our group?
- What is the status of your membership? Too few? Too many?
- How does the group stand financially?
- What are the "givens" in your group and what new programs can be realistically accomplished?

OBJECTIVES are descriptions of exactly what is to be done in order to meet your goals. They are clear and specific statements of what you plan to accomplish. They are short-term, measurable, and achievable over a specified period of time. It is normal to have several objectives for each goal.

Many leaders wonder why it is important to set goals and objectives. They help define your organization; they give direction and help avoid chaos. They can help motivate members by clarifying and communicating what the organization is striving for. They are also good for membership recruitment by allowing potential members to know what your group is all about. They are time savers by helping members and leaders become aware of problems in time to develop solutions; they help the organization to plan ahead and be prepared. Best of all, they are a basis of recognizing accomplishments and realizing your successes; they are a basis for recognition and celebration.

Steps for Setting Goals and Developing an Action Plan

1. It is best to set goals as a group. This will create many positive results because people support what they help create.
   You can expect:
   * better commitment
   * more motivation among members and officers
   * better understanding of the goals and rationale for selecting them
   * better goals by having more ideas and opinions in the decision process
2. Brainstorm goals as a group (see Brainstorming handout).
3. Choose from the brainstormed list those ideas that you want to work on and prioritize them as a group.
4. Determine objectives for each goal, and plans of action for each objective. An easy way to develop objectives is to state your goal and follow it with "This goal will be accomplished when…..," and write out your measureable objectives.
5. Move into action. Many groups fail to do this step, and their goals are never achieved. You may want to create an action plan or a timeline so you can check your progress.
6. Evaluate your progress on a regular basis. Remember, circumstances change, so be flexible and allow your objectives to change with them.

Once your organization has written its goals and objectives, it is time to take this task one step further by developing an *Action Plan.*

- What is to be done? – Your objective.
- How will it be accomplished?
  What are the resources in terms of people, money, and materials?
- Who is responsible for completing each task?
- When will it be accomplished?
- How will you know when it is accomplished? What will you be measuring by?

Example of an Action Plan:

1. Goal: To improve membership, recruitment, retention, and involvement.

2. An Objective: This will be accomplished when a committee structure has been developed whose purpose is to increase member involvement to at least 40% by next term.

3. How: Brainstorm ideas to increase member involvement. Go over this list and weed out all of those ideas that are impractical or impossible to do.

4. Resources: Members, executive officers, activities center consultants, handouts on recruitment, motivation, and delegation.

5. Who: Executive Board and consultants.

6. When: By next term (try to set a specific date if possible).

7. Results:
   - Acceptable: Membership involvement increases by 40-70%.
   - Unacceptable: Membership involvement increase by less than 40 %.
   - Better than expected: Membership involvement increases by more than 70%.

Source: Dean of Students Office
               California State University, Fullerton (1999)

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