

Diversified Membership

How will diversity amongst your members (sex, race, creed, ethnic group, etc.) enhance your organization?

BENEFITS OF A DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

1. Some organizations, i.e., governing groups, should be representative of the population they serve. Having a diversified membership helps to ensure all viewpoints are heard and that actions of the group benefit the entire constituency.
2. An organization with diverse members can provide a unique learning experience. Students in these organizations have a setting in which to interact with and learn about people different from themselves. American society is becoming increasingly diverse, and students will need to be able to interact with a variety of people.
3. Involvement in student organizations with diverse members is a good place to gain experience dealing with others.
4. Many groups become stagnant and do the same activities year after year. People who are similar in background and experience tend to think alike. A diverse membership will bring new and different ideas to a group.
5. Some groups wonder why certain people do not attend their activities and meetings. Usually it is because the organization does not reflect diverse interests. Having a diverse membership can attract diverse attendance because various ideas are reflected in the activity or program.
6. Having a diverse membership has a “snowball” effect when trying to recruit new members from a variety of backgrounds. An organization will seem more supportive and friendly to someone if they can identify with current people in the group.

EXAMINE YOUR ORGANIZATION

You must know the product before you can sell it. Knowing the answers to the following questions will help your group define or redefine your recruitment efforts.

1. What is our group’s purpose?
2. What are the group’s future plans?
3. What does our group have to offer to its members?
4. How many people do we realistically want and/or need to constructively function as an organization?

DETERMINE A RECRUIT PROFILE

Who do you want to attract to your group? Answer the following questions to help your group find and identify potential new members.

1. Is academic level important?
2. Is academic major important?
3. Are there any particular skills or talents you are looking for in members?
4. Are you looking for people with a particular interest or hobby?
5. Who are you looking for in order to diversify your membership?

GET THE WORD OUT

Now that you have examined your organization and determined who potential members might be, you need to advertise your organization and position openings. Answer the following questions to help you develop your publicity strategy.

1. What medium will most widely appeal to your potential new member?
2. Is there a certain spot on campus this person is likely to be?
3. What resources (people, time, money) does the organization have to give a publicity campaign?

SELECTION PROCEDURES

Some organizations have a selection process for members and/or officers. It is important that your entire process is fair and consistent. The following are suggestions for a selection process.

1. Establish selection criteria and interview questions that will address each criteria. For example, one criteria may be, "ability to work with others." Interview questions to address this criteria may be, "How do you handle disagreement?" or, "What do you perceive your role to be as a member of this group?" or, "As a leader of this group, how would you make decisions on behalf of our organization?" Interviewers should stick to the established criteria and questions.
2. During interviews, ask the same questions of all candidates.
3. Have a standard evaluation form and rating system (see attached sample). Fill out an evaluation for each candidate. Your group should have written documentation on why it selected certain people over others. Many people dislike the idea of filling out evaluations because they take time and effort, but they are important in a fair selection process.
4. Evaluation forms should be kept in a secure and confidential place by the leader of the group for at least one month after the process is over.
5. Make sure your interview questions are fair and reasonable. Some groups ask questions that can only be answered well by people who have had experience in the organization. These interviews only help keep an organization in- bred. If your group is honestly trying to have a diversified membership, these types of questions will not help.
6. Interviewers should not talk about interviews or candidates outside of the actual interview or selection meeting. Rumors start, spread quickly and can hurt the integrity of your group.

7. Have a training meeting with all members participating in the selection process. Inform members of the procedures and expectations of the selection process.
8. In selecting candidates, decide which qualifications are absolutely necessary for the position and which can be easily acquired through training. Focus on the essential qualifications. If a candidate lacks skills that can easily be learned through training, give the person a chance.

RETAINING YOUR MEMBERS

Your new members, like old members, need to feel like they belong in the group. Get to know the new members and help them get to know you. Do not treat new people as intruders invading your territory. Let them know their contributions are needed and appreciated.

PUBLICITY SUGGESTIONS

If your organization wants to make a sincere effort at recruiting diverse new members, then a combination of the following suggestions should be used. Remember the previous question, “What medium will most likely appeal to your potential new member?” Some groups only put an advertisement for their organization in the newspaper and then wonder why people do not show up. Time and effort are required to make a sincere, strong recruitment campaign.

1. Send letters or flyers promoting your club and position openings to your target population or to people who have contact with your target population.
 - Associated Students, Inc.
 - Campus Governing Groups
 - Academic Advisors
 - Professors
 - Student Housing Directors and Managers
 - Student and Residential Life
2. Post flyers throughout campus.
3. Place advertisements in the newspaper.
4. Attend meetings of other organizations (registered student organizations, governing groups, etc.) and ask if you can make a short presentation / announcement regarding your organization and position openings.
5. Hand out flyers at events that attract your target population
6. Have all current members make personal invitations to all target group people they encounter (in classes, where they work, where they live, etc.). Word-of-mouth and personal invitations are very powerful publicity tools.
7. Make personal phone calls or visits to faculty and staff who have close contact with you target population. Ask them to promote involvement in your organization to the students.