

Planning a Retreat

Advantages of a Retreat versus a Regular Meeting

- Enhances experiences
- Eliminates daily distractions
- Fosters informality (recreation)
- Creates shared experiences
- Motivational impact - it is important enough to take time to do it!
- Maximizes participation

Planning a Retreat

1. What do you want to accomplish?
 - New Member Orientation
 - Teambuilding
 - Goal Setting
 - Problem Solving
2. What is your budget?
 - Length of retreat (one day, overnight, whole weekend – NOTE: football weekends, midterms and finals are not good times)
 - Location (campus, someone's home, camp, hotel)
 - Transportation (car pools, bus)
 - Food / drink (cater banquet style or provide own – need kitchen facility)
 - Recreation (plan for some “free” time) Equipment (notebooks, handouts, overhead, TV/VCR monitor)
 - Who should attend?
 - All members or just officers (remember – people support what they help create!)
 - Advisor or retreat facilitator (sometimes it is helpful to have an outsider facilitate the retreat – it keeps all members on the same level and alleviates the stress of planning workshops and exercises on your own. Organization Consultants and Campus Community Development Staff are available to help you plan a retreat)
4. What is on the agenda?
 - Make sure every minute is planned ahead of time (with some flexibility)
 - Distribute copies of the agenda ahead of time so that members are prepared and know what to expect
5. Who will do what?
 - Form a committee to plan the retreat and divide up the tasks
 - Reserve location, coordinate transportation
 - Purchase food or make food arrangements
 - Set-up and Clean-up Crews
 - Recreation (game) coordinator
 - Workshop facilitators

Qualities of a Good Facilitator

- Perception - ability to clearly assess the situation.
- Listening skills - must be able to listen carefully and remember what she/he has heard
- Interpretation and summarization abilities - should be able to clearly and concisely articulate what has been said by others
- Respect by group
- Concern about group

Timeline for Planning a Retreat

1. At least two months in advance, you should:
 - Decide on the exact date and make sure that there are no major conflicts
 - Inform all retreat participants
 - Reserve your retreat site
 - Appoint committee heads to be in charge of particular parts of the retreat.
2. At least one month in advance, you should:
 - Determine the format of the retreat
 - Contact any outside resource people
3. Two weeks in advance, you should:
 - Send letters to all members giving them necessary information concerning costs, travel arrangements, what to bring, etc.
 - Duplicate agendas, maps, and any other handouts needed
 - Round up any equipment (slide projectors, etc.) or visual aids that you might need
 - Make final arrangements for meals if you're providing your own (who is to buy what, who will cook, etc.)
4. One week in advance, you should:
 - Contact the retreat site to finalize arrangements
 - Have the final committee meetings and be sure all people in charge know what they are responsible for
 - Make a checklist of who is to bring what
5. The day before the retreat, you should:
 - Check with committee heads for last-minute problems
 - Rest, so that you will be fresh and enthusiastic for the retreat!
 - Not always be obvious. For example it may be necessary for an incoming President to meet with the outgoing Treasurer
6. Make a list of the above information (general history, recent activities, goals, procedures, etc.) you might need to know to be successful
7. Try to generate more than one resource for each item that you want to learn about.
8. Make appointments with the key people. Be thorough, this may be your only chance