

Feature



Some Simple Recruitment Tips to Attract Committed Programming Board Members

By Kristin Simpson

In an ideal world, your campus activities board would be filled with completely committed members who had fun at every event they programmed, and every student on campus would be scrambling to join your organization. In the real world, though, there is a great deal of time, work, and dedication required to make a board attractive to potential members. A genuinely great organization does not happen overnight. Never fear, though, if you currently have problems attracting the board members you want; help is here! At Furman University (SC), our Student Activities Board (FUSAB) has enjoyed its share of success in attracting energetic and committed members and we have a few pointers and tips that just might help you do the same.

Weeding the “Uncommitted”

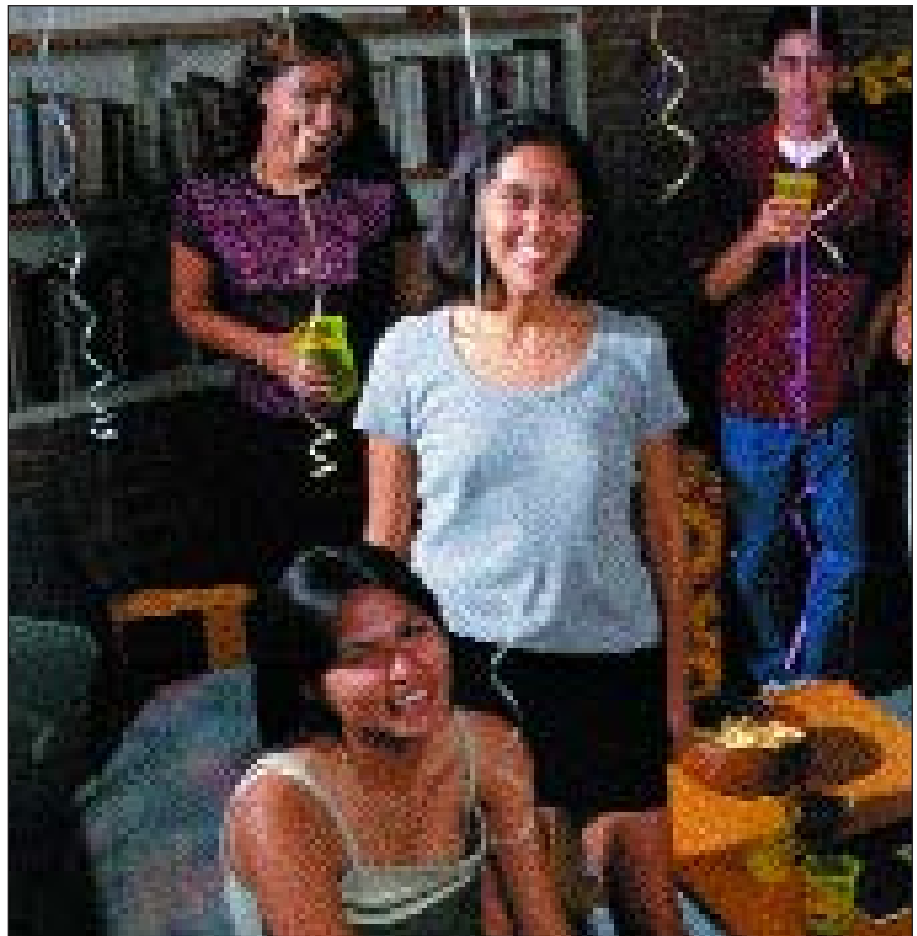
First, members whose commitment to your organization and/or its mission is flagging must be allowed the opportunity to either recommit themselves to the organization or to simply drop out. This may seem harsh at first glance, but no organization has room for those who are not willing to participate fully. The simplest way to “weed” your activities board is either to make an announcement at your first meeting of the year asking members to rededicate themselves or allowing them to leave with no hard feelings if their commitment is flagging, or to set up a system of requirements that board members must fulfill to maintain their membership. Making the announcement at the beginning of the year allows old members to drop off before new members join the organization, which also helps you determine which positions you might need to fill. It is crucial that any new members you attract feel welcomed into a group of fully committed people, rather than one whose members only half-heartedly care about the board and its responsibilities.

Additionally, setting up a requirement system allows your leaders to determine who is actually helping out and who is just on the board to promote their résumé! FUSAB operates on a requirement system that has worked very well for years. The officers and executive board determine at the beginning of each term how many requirements will need to be fulfilled by each member of the organization. Members must fulfill requirements for things such as publicity, security, set-up, or load-out for each event. At the end of a term, members who did not fulfill their requirements are placed on probation with a chance to stay on the board if they fulfill 125% of their requirements for the next term. However, a requirement system should not be so strict that it is impossible for everyone to meet its expectations. The system is merely a guideline to help ensure that members fulfill their share of the organization’s responsibilities.

Strengthening the Board Inside and Out

One of the major ways FUSAB has accomplished recruitment and retention has been through the amount of “fun” time that the leaders and the board members spend together. FUSAB participates in two retreats a year, and also plans a Christmas party and a senior banquet. Members also “hang out” in the FUSAB office at all hours of the day. This reinforces the idea that the organization is more than just a work force—it is also a place to have fun. And fun attracts people.

FUSAB also uses bright shirts and creativity to help promote the idea around cam-



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pus that the organization as a whole is an enjoyable one with which to be involved. If other students on campus notice the members of your activities board are having fun as they plan and attend events, or while hanging out together, then word will spread that being a member of the activities board is something that is very enjoyable. An easy and effective way to help your campus notice your board members while they are having fun as they do their jobs is to have your members wear bold and bright shirts publicizing your organization’s activities and events.

You can also make your organization more appealing by setting aside a specific room or place on your campus to serve as its office—if such a space is not already available. If members of your organization know they have some specific place they can call their own, then chances are that the group will feel more bonded. This, in turn, will help them project a more positive image, which will be more appealing

to your student body. Also, a set “office” area will help students reach your board easily when seeking programming information. This will result in less frustration and aggravation for your student body and will enhance understanding and cooperation between your student body and your activities board.

Timing Is Everything

A critical aspect of board member recruitment involves the time of year that you do it. FUSAB has found that recruiting new members during orientation week allows the freshmen to see our fun and exciting organization in operation while they are still new to the campus. Recruiting at this time also allows upperclassmen to see the organization again while they are not yet swamped by schoolwork. FUSAB works hard to get its name out as much as possible during the first few weeks of school. We sponsor events during orientation, give

away free gifts to the freshmen with the FUSAB schedule of events printed on them, and schedule a big event such as a high profile band performance. All these gimmicks allow the students (new and old) to hear FUSAB's name and see FUSAB at its best. Also, at both the orientation events and the big event, FUSAB members are stationed at tables to answer questions about exactly what FUSAB is and how we operate. FUSAB also gives away applications during this time to people who may want to join the organization. By using this recruitment method, FUSAB publicizes itself while allowing the students to enjoy themselves at a FUSAB-sponsored event. The students remember the event and the fun they had participating in it. This, in turn, encourages them to associate fun with FUSAB, which also results in enhancing their interest in our organization.

The Application Process

After the big fall event, FUSAB engages in a three-part application process for each potential member: completion of an application, a group interview, and an individual interview. Each applicant receives a score in each aspect of the process by eight individuals who serve on the applications committee. When all applicants have completed the entire process, those with the highest scores are accepted for membership on the FUSAB. Through each portion of the application process, individuals are evaluated on creativity, spontaneity, and ability to work with others, ability to work individually, and their ability to follow directions (and also not to follow directions when appropriate!). However, there should be no set mold that a prospective activities board member should have to fit—each person is unique, but should be able to learn how to work as a member of a group.

Now What?

What happens once you have a board full of new, excited, and committed members? You sit back, relax, and enjoy life—right? NO! Now you take your new members, as well as your old members, on a retreat, out to dinner, or to the intramural fields where you play games, learn names, talk, and bond. Then, you bond some more. When you and your board have finally done all the bonding you can stand for the term, then you plan events for your student body and go out onto the campus and show your students how much fun it is to participate in campus activities.

You want to know the secret behind it all? It's like making a big snowball (for all you Southern schools, just pretend you know what snow looks like). If you can convince your campus that your organization is fun, then individuals will want to be a part of your board. And when you begin the recruitment process all over next year, even more students will want to join, and the cycle will continue.

Do not let yourself think that this happens overnight, though, because it doesn't. However, take advantage of these simple pointers and keep working on making your board more attractive little by little. Then before you know it, your organization will be one of the best and brightest on your campus. It happened with FUSAB, and it can happen with your board, too!

About the Author

Kristin Simpson is president of the Furman University Student Activities Board (FUSAB). She is studying biology at Furman and plans to graduate in 2001. On the FUSAB, she has previously served as the Homecoming chair, as well as vice president of administration. In NACA, Simpson has presented an educational session on member recruitment and retention at the National Convention.

