Recruitment and Onboarding of New Executive Committee Volunteers
June 2019

An inevitable process year-after-year is the departure of established committee volunteers and the recruitment of new members to the executive. Filling vacant positions often times requires a tap on the shoulder of someone you know, and almost always it feels like you’re having to make an enticing sales pitch to have them agree. It doesn’t always have to be that way. This document is meant to provide some creative ideas on how your executive can approach recruitment strategically and get the right people serving on your board.

Recruitment Step 1: Understand Where Your Gaps Are

1. Chat with your Coordinator to discuss some potential action plans on how to effectively approach this task. They likely will have unique insight and be able to pull in some industry best practices tailored to your group

2. Map out your current board and find your gaps. Consider categorizing your board membership into the following elements: grad years, grad programs, skills and roles they bring to the executive, represented industries or firms, genders, important aspects around student experience or participation, and other relevant indicators of diversity for your particular board.
   ○ Consider what the strategic objectives of the group are and if you are missing representation from that body. ie. If you are greatly interested in providing support to your young alumni population, having a couple members of this demographic on your board to provide their insight is invaluable.

3. Your Coordinator has access to demographic data applications that can provide insight into your alumni population, their participation and affinity to the University, and specific individuals who may be more likely to answer a warm-call ask to participate on the board. Please reach out to your Coordinator to discuss this option. NB: this is easier for academic based groups and may not be as applicable to special interest groups such as Pride, Debate, etc.

Recruitment Step 2: Get Your Tools Ready to Make an Appealing Recruitment Ask

It’s hard to agree to something if you don’t really understand it in the first place. Providing resources can really help in clarifying what your group’s purpose is, how you go about doing your work, as well as what is being asked of the potential volunteer. The Campus Chapters Program has provided the following templates to help you with this.
New Volunteer Onboarding is a template for creating introductory information around the groups’ purpose, structure, and history, to provide appropriate context to the recruit.

Job Descriptions Worksheet provides a simple to use fill-in-the-blank template to clarify what the expectations are of the volunteer who is being asked to fill a particular position. This document can be worked on by the whole executive, with each person filling out their own responsibilities. The Chapter leadership should review the submitted information and discuss inconsistencies.

Recruitment Step 3: Make Recruitment a Constant Discussion and Area of Contribution for the Whole Board.

1. Have recruitment as a standing item on your agenda. Throughout the year, the executive should touch on the subject, be constantly thinking of who they think might be a good fit, and be looking at strategies to build out recruitment to meet diversity and sustainability needs.
   - Assigning recruitment to an individual, or a small committee ensures that there is accountability and regular check-ins about the progress throughout the year.

2. Consider implementing sub-committees in order to develop a talent pool for the executive. Are there strategies that the executive wants to achieve and could make use of the effort of surge volunteering (short term, project based)? Data shows that individuals, particularly 20-40 year olds are much more likely to volunteer with project based work. From there, they tend to build affinity for the organization, and get bought into committing to a longer term role.

Recruitment Step 4: Hit the Low-Hanging Fruit First | Some options might be:

1. Student Council: If your faculty or unit has such a make up, make sure that you have a mutually benefiting relationship with them, and think about ways that you can improve this relationship.
   - Yes, it’s good for a student rep to sit on your board; it’s also great if an alum executive is able to pop into a student group meeting once or twice, or have bi-annual 1:1 meetings with the student leadership team.
   - Ask for lists from your faculty of individuals who were involved in the student council executive however many years out to fill the gaps you’ve identified in Step 1.

2. Call for Interest: Consider different mediums that could get the word out that you’re recruiting (including which positions you’re recruiting for), such as:
   - Your own social media accounts, and those of the related student group, faculty or related industry partners
○ Targeted email or letter campaign to your membership base
○ Faculty e-newsletter or print materials
○ Alumni Insider is the Alumni Association’s monthly program newsletter. We may be able to advertise open recruitment for your Chapter, ideally in concert with an open call with other Chapters as well.
○ Outside publications, professional associations, and community organizations whose communications your alumni may receive often have advertising opportunities available (either free or paid).

3. Utilize the Data Available: The Office of Alumni Relations has some great data available to us that can pull out people who have already shown affinity towards the institution.
   ○ Class Organizers & General Alumni Association Volunteers: These individuals have already demonstrated affinity towards the institution and getting them involved with your Chapter could provide an excellent opportunity for them to deepen their engagement. Ask your Coordinator about the suite of tools available to find people like this.

4. Connect with Key Industry Partners: Maybe you have a high concentration of grads working in a particular field. It’s helpful to have a representative from your group on their steering committees or boards who can provide insight from your membership and bring back those learnings and recruitment connections to your Chapter.

So now you have some new volunteers and you’re wondering, what the heck do I do to get them up to speed?!

**Onboarding Step 1: Create a Comfortable Environment and Orientate Your New Executive Members**

1. Consider developing a plan for new member orientation, so that once you have found new members to sit on your board, you have a plan for keeping them motivated in their role and retain them for years to come. Ways to orient new members include:
   ○ If you have multiple new members, holding a welcome session to discuss your onboarding documents and build relationships can be a great way to make introductions
   ○ Immediately assigning specific duties to new board members helps to get them to be actively involved, communicating with other executive members, and learning about chapter work
Partnering new members with willing and experienced board members in a mentor-mentee relationship can help your recruits feel more comfortable and establish a point person for questions and general assistance.

Scheduling a check-in point (for example via phone call, email, or over coffee) between new members and the President/Chairperson a couple of months into their term ensures their comfort-level is monitored and any concerns are dealt with early on.

Onboarding Step 2: Retaining Your Volunteers

1. Get a clear understanding of what your volunteers are looking for in their experience
   a. Many people join boards for personal growth reasons, as well as to give back. If someone is looking to develop particular skills, or lead a certain project, knowing what those aspirations are allows everyone to reach that point much more efficiently

2. Have semi-annual check ins with each of your executive members
   a. Items to discuss could be: How would you describe experience so far? What would improve this? What are your thoughts for the direction of the group? What are you looking to get out of this experience? If there was something you would change about the group, what would it be?
   b. Casual 1:1, or 1:2 chats offer a more comfortable setting for people to bring forward ideas or concerns they wouldn’t normally do in a boardroom setting.
   c. Consider asking each member to fill out a self-assessment and the end of their term to prepare for this discussion. Your coordinator can recommend appropriate items to ask your volunteers and help you set up a questionnaire.

3. Say thank you, and often!
   a. People appreciate different types of recognition, but the important thing is to recognize the incredible amount of time and dedication they’ve shown
   b. Talk with your Coordinator about the best ways (and budget!) to recognize your volunteers. From thank you cards to complimentary tickets to alumni events, or even professional development courses, your Coordinator has access to an inventory of options you might want to consider.