

Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing

Introduction:

We live on a remarkable planet that holds the extraordinary variety of human society. Unfortunately, human avarice and shortsightedness has led to a global society marred by injustice and destruction: over two billion people live in poverty, 50,000 species go extinct each year, and giant transnational corporations are expanding operations that exploit people and resources for mere short-term profit.

However, there is reason for hope. That reason is, quite simply collective political action.

The last hundred years have shown that campus activism plays a critical role in building power for progressive movements. The great movements of the Twentieth Century - civil rights, anti-war, women's rights, environmental protection - did not begin on campuses, but each got a boost from college activism that was essential to long-term success.

[Let's start with the basics ->](#)

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
- [Planning a Campaign](#)
- [Executing a Campaign](#)
- [Utilizing the Media](#)
- [Coalition Building](#)
- [Fundraising](#)
- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Basics of Organizing

What? You search? You would multiply yourself by ten, by a hundred? You seek followers? Seek zeros! -- Friedrich Nietzsche

There is a mantra among organizers that there are two types of power in the world: money and people. Activists will never have the financial resources that bless giant corporations or flush-with-money political parties - but, we will always have access to the second form of power: people.

So our quest becomes, then, to organize individuals into collective action to counter the entrenched power that is causing so much suffering and destruction.

Hence, as Nietzsche says, our goal is to get zeroes: start with one and turn that to ten, and those ten create a group of 100, and on until even the juggernaut of entrenched corporate power cannot stop us.

The key to this is simple, lies in a single phrase: you as a campus coordinator - or someone at any level of a citizen organization - **must organize yourself out of a job.**

Organize yourself out of a job! Delegate every project and every task to a volunteer, empower and train those volunteers, and sit back and watch - picking up those who fail, giving those who succeed even more responsibility.

The ultimate ideal is to create an organization that runs itself, where others are running major projects, making key decisions, empowering new volunteers. You can create a machine - and watch it work activist magic.

Of course, you will never reach this perfect state. There is always more to do: more volunteers to train, more campaigns to win, more empowerment to spread around. But, the closer you get to not having anything to do as the leader of a vibrant, growing group - the better a job you can know you're doing.

So, building on this fundamental tenet: organize yourself out of a job, there are six basic rules to effective organizing:

1. **Recruitment builds the movement** -

Remember the zeros, it will take a critical mass of students and activists to win, but it only takes you to recruit those individuals.

Menu:

[-Basics of Organizing](#)

[-Building Your Volunteer Base](#)

[-Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)

[-Expanding Your Outreach](#)

[-Running an Effective Meeting](#)

[-Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)

[-Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)

[-Researching Possible Campaigns](#)

[-Planning a Campaign](#)

[-Executing a Campaign](#)

[-Utilizing the Media](#)

[-Coalition Building](#)

[-Fundraising](#)

[-Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

2. Plan or die - What is your goal? Do you have concrete, measurable goals? Who are you targeting in a campaign? Why should they listen to you? How are you actually going to achieve your goals? What is your timeline? If you can address these questions you will have a chance at true success. Then, with those questions answered, you can create a plan. Importantly, you must put your plan down on paper and hold yourself accountable to it. Draw a diagram, make a chart, fill up a calendar - whatever it takes for you to know exactly how to achieve your goals.

3. Resolve to solve - the cards are stacked against us: our opposition has more money and a near-monopoly over positions of political influence. We can only win with clever, tough, creative solutions. You must pull a MacGyver on your opponents: out-think and out-work them, and all the money in the world can't stop you.

4. Pay as you go - You are engaging in the politics of people, not the expensive, big-media, consultancy-driven politics of money - but, you still will need money to run your organization. For one, you will need to pay for photocopies, materials, and transportation - and, second, it is crucial that you pay your chapter dues so that the national network can continue to provide materials, trainings, speakers, the website, and put on conventions (not to mention this manual!). Fundraising is a great way to raise awareness about your group and involve new students and citizens in your efforts - and it is a must for any lasting organization.

5. Build relationships and you build power - organizing is about relationship building, it is a quest to turn connections between individuals into coordinated collective action. It is not easy, but it is perhaps the most rewarding project of human life - and the one way to lasting social change.

6. Organize people "where they're at" - not everyone is going to have as sophisticated an analysis of the political structure as you may. You must keep this discrepancy that in mind. The new, shy volunteer may not want to participate in a direct action - and the sheltered suburban kid who is passionate about the environment may not see the connection to inner-city poverty. Take a while and listen and remember that people are at different places in their understanding of the world. You may have to change the way you talk about issues - but that can only strengthen your understanding of them and help you activate and politicize your classmates.

[Build your volunteer base! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Building Your Volunteer Base

The recruitment process has two distinct phases. Initially (and ideally in the first two weeks of the semester), you must recruit a core group of passionate volunteers that can work to set goals, outreach, and develop campaigns. Through the work of this team will come new recruits, new leadership, and the manpower to meet your goals and to launch and successfully carry out your group's campaigns.

Recruiting your initial volunteer base will demand that you and your friends enthusiastically and personally spread the word about your organization to as many students as possible. Try not to limit yourself to a preconceived notion of your core constituency. Spreading a concrete message of your group may awaken a diverse pool of interest from people you would not have thought shared your common interest.

Focus on where support is likely to be strongest--for example, the membership (and leadership) of other progressive groups, or your classmates in courses that address issues like poverty, labor history, racial justice, or environmental activism. Many professors will allow you to take a few minutes of class time to make announcements if you ask beforehand.

Students are busy and have a lot of demands on their time. You have to compel them to pay attention - and some techniques are more effective than others. The more human and personal the interaction, the better chance you have that someone will join your effort - and that you will win.

You will want to use all of these techniques, but keep in mind their (approximate) order of effectiveness:

- Personal conversation
- Personal phone call
- Announcement in class
- Personal email
- Handouts
- Group email
- Poster

Often it takes a combination of three or four of these methods to convince someone to come to a rally or meeting.

To fight through the cacophony of posters and fliers on your campus you may need to put up hundreds (or even thousands) of sheets to get your message out. Follow the rules of your

Menu:

-[Basics of Organizing](#)

-[Building Your Volunteer Base](#)

-[Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)

-[Expanding Your Outreach](#)

-[Running an Effective Meeting](#)

-[Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)

-[Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)

-[Researching Possible Campaigns](#)

-[Planning a Campaign](#)

-[Executing a Campaign](#)

-[Utilizing the Media](#)

-[Coalition Building](#)

-[Fundraising](#)

-[Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

school, but don't be afraid to blanket the campus.

[Activate your volunteers! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Activating your volunteer base

From the first person who volunteers to help you hand out flyers, to the 1,000 who show up to at your first organized direct action, you and the other members of your group must be vigilant in contacting and activating every single student who indicates a desire to join the group or work for a campaign. If you do not use the volunteers you have, you will not recruit any new ones.

Have regular meetings at a regular location and regular time, each with a specific agenda that ensures that at every meeting something solid is decided and some action is organized. Your group should always be in the process of researching, planning, carrying out, or wrapping up some campaign or event. **You cannot recruit people to an inactive organization, and you cannot improve your campus and community just by talking about it.**

At your first couple of meetings, you should strive to develop a recruitment strategy and to come to a consensus on what the group's mission is to be. Do not allow yourself to personally define the group.

When you see a new face at a meeting or event, make sure that person is immediately incorporated into whatever is happening. Talk to the new person as soon as you can and introduce her/him to the other people that are there. Make every effort to ensure that new volunteers feel welcomed and have a go-around of introductions at the start of every meeting. And don't forget a sign-up sheet!

Call new volunteers within 24 to 48 hours. If people want more information, get it to them within a similar time frame. Avoid the tendency to become too dependent on e-mail for outreach. While e-mail is an excellent way to maintain communication between already active group members, it is overused as an initial outreach tool. The effectiveness of a personal phone call to a potential new member of your organization cannot be overly emphasized.

As soon as your group has two or more members, you should begin distributing responsibility. Everyone, including you, should have certain projects assigned to her, but no one should be overwhelmed. Each person should know her role, should be clear about its beginning and ending, and should know how it fits into the group's larger plans and goals. Find out what each volunteer's personal goals are and how much she can do, and

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
 - [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
 - [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
 - [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
 - [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
 - [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
 - [Planning a Campaign](#)
 - [Executing a Campaign](#)
 - [Utilizing the Media](#)
 - [Coalition Building](#)
 - [Fundraising](#)
 - [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)
-

try to assign tasks accordingly. Never allow someone to think that she is not useful or not needed.

A good way of delegating tasks is to form several working groups led by members of your core group (i.e., coordinators). Coordinators will be responsible for running his or her working group and keeping track of all the members that want to help with that group. By creating more leadership roles within the organization, you create more opportunities for leaders to develop--a primary goal of every successful campaign. And remember, organize yourself out of a job - because then you win.

Once you have a small group of enthusiastic and empowered members, you can much more effectively recruit others. What will draw the most attention, and the most people, are the actual campaigns that your group promotes. Your strategy for recruiting will use the same activities as your strategy for organizing and carrying out a campaign: tabling, canvassing, using the media, etc.

You want to immediately establish activities that will bring in people, use people, and not require a great deal of effort to organize.

[Expand your outreach! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Expanding your outreach

Every student on your campus is a potential member of your group. **We can't challenge apathy to your cause by talking to the same people all the time.** Likewise, your campus organization cannot grow if you don't constantly reach out to non-members.

You should make sure your group is not excluding--intentionally or unintentionally--people of any particular gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, income level, background, or physical ability from your outreach. Ideally, your group should resemble the make-up of your student body.

If your group does not resemble your student body, you should frequently examine your recruitment practices. What is the readership of the newspapers that you invite to cover your events? What is the listenership of the radio stations or programs that you ask to announce your meetings? Where are you placing informational tables--could you relocate them to a location that is more popular for women, minorities, or graduate students? Are your meeting times and locations accessible to everyone? Do the commitment levels of volunteer positions vary so that students with families or jobs can still actively participate?

[Run effective meetings! ->](#)

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
- [Planning a Campaign](#)
- [Executing a Campaign](#)
- [Utilizing the Media](#)
- [Coalition Building](#)
- [Fundraising](#)
- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)



Tools for Democracy

Get Informed

Take Action

Use the Toolbox

SEARCH:



[Tools for Organizing:](#)

[Student/Campus Organizing:](#)

Running an Effective Meeting

http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1153.htm

[Organize your first meeting! ->](#)

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
 - [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
 - [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
 - [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
 - [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
 - [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
 - [Planning a Campaign](#)
 - [Executing a Campaign](#)
 - [Utilizing the Media](#)
 - [Coalition Building](#)
 - [Fundraising](#)
 - [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)
-

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Organizing your first campus-wide meeting

Your first campus-wide meeting should be planned far enough in advance to wallpaper the school with flyers and send an announcement to all available campus media. Furthermore, the agenda should be planned out to the minute and the meeting should be well facilitated. (For suggestions on running effective meetings, see Appendix A of this manual.) You should read a proposed mission statement or platform, then discuss, amend, and adopt a platform; and read over possible events or campaigns for the semester and either vote on one of them or set up committees to research them and propose other ideas. Kick-off meetings are also a great time to bring in a guest speaker - often a well-liked progressive professor will bring more people to an event as well as keeping it interesting.

It is very, very important that at your first meeting you quickly explain the role of your group on your campus, briefly discuss that role, and then accomplish something tangible. Do NOT spend your whole first meeting arguing politics or discussing small portions of a platform. If a discussion goes long, you should immediately create a committee to research the problem and report back, and move on.

Every attendee should leave the first meeting with a good understanding of what the group's purpose is, how they will fit into the group, and with confidence that the group is action-oriented. Some key things to do on the first day:

- Adopt a platform, or establish committees to research and draft a platform to be revised and ratified at the next meeting.
- Establish Working Groups on key projects [e.g. further recruitment, fundraising, media stunt, campaign development, etc.]
- Set committee meeting times and times they will check in with the main group.
- Plan a media stunt to announce your presence on campus
- Set a date and time for your next meeting

Make your first meeting fun--provide food, play a game--but make sure that it is much more than a social event. Afterwards,

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
- [Planning a Campaign](#)
- [Executing a Campaign](#)
- [Utilizing the Media](#)
- [Coalition Building](#)
- [Fundraising](#)
- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

have everyone go to a café or bar to keep talking and facilitate a chance for people to get to know each other. A lot of good potential activists will come back because of someone they met the first night who they would like to see again (for romantic or platonic reasons!).

Remember, organizing is about building relationships.

[Become a recognized student organization! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Becoming a Recognized Student Organization

Although you can run a chapter of your organization without seeking official recognition from your school you will miss out on significant resources. By becoming a recognized student organization (RSO), you will gain access to campus rooms and resources for meetings and events and you may qualify for funding through campus activities funds.

In order to become an RSO, you will need to contact your school's Student Activities Coordinator. (This person is also often called the Student Life Coordinator or other similar name; she should not be difficult to locate.) Ask her what you need to do to become an RSO. Most likely you will have to submit a constitution, a set of by-laws, a budget, or some combination of these things.

A constitution or set of by-laws should clearly lay out the name, purpose, and mission of your group. It should indicate how students become members of the group, how they can run for leadership positions within the group, and how those leadership roles operate. Talk to your school's Activities Coordinator before writing anything; make sure that you are covering all of the specific information that she is looking for.

If your school wants you to draft a budget because they are considering giving your group money, make sure that you are realistic (you probably won't get to start out with thousands of dollars), but ask for as much as you think you may need to spend. Items that you will probably need to purchase include at least \$50 for dues to the national organization (to become a recognized chapter), copies for flyers and literature, materials for signs and banners, food and drinks for meetings and events, and travel money for delegates to statewide and national conferences.

[Research some possible campaigns! ->](#)

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
 - [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
 - [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
 - [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
 - [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
 - [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
 - [Planning a Campaign](#)
 - [Executing a Campaign](#)
 - [Utilizing the Media](#)
 - [Coalition Building](#)
 - [Fundraising](#)
 - [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)
-



Tools for Democracy

Get Informed Take Action Use the Toolbox

SEARCH:



Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Researching possible campaigns

By Shelley Fite

Many of your campaigns will be local--dealing with a campus or community problem or election. Thus, after checking out appropriate web sites and speaking with other student organizations, your group will have to think about and research your community. You should check any local community organizations or find out if any political parties are running any electoral campaigns that could students could boost. You should talk with other progressive organizations in your city to find out if they are doing something locally that you would like to be involved with, or if they are conspicuously ignoring a problem that your group could tackle. You should listen closely to the concerns of students and faculty on your campus to find out what could be done there.

Always make sure that you have all the facts before embarking on any new campaign! The Center for Campus Organizing, at www.cco.org, has great tips on how to research a possible campus campaign. Among other things, they list sources that you will probably need to use:

Source of information about your school	What information you can find
Local County Courthouse	List of lawsuits against your school
City Assessor's Office	Property owned by your school and its staff
Treasurer's Office	Investment portfolio; university budget
Grants and Contracts office	Listing of research contracts on campus
Neighborhood	Activists with long history in

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
- [Planning a Campaign](#)
- [Executing a Campaign](#)
- [Utilizing the Media](#)
- [Coalition Building](#)
- [Fundraising](#)
- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

Groups	the community
Registry of Deeds	Property transactions made by your school
School newspaper Archives	Names of activists on campus 10-30 years ago whom you can invite to speak to your group
Alumni Office	Names of high donors to your school
Internal Revenue Service	Salaries of top university officials
National Center for Money and Politics	Political contributions made by professors

Choosing a campaign

In addition, campaigns that are specific to your campus, town, or state are sometimes even more exciting because you can see results and connections more quickly - whether it's a campaign to get organic food in your cafeteria, a living wage in your town, or better water pollution regulations from your state.

You should think of every campaign as an opportunity to expand membership, build awareness of your organization, and gain momentum for your next campaign. Before making the final decision to go with one campaign over another, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does this campaign have a clear goal that is attainable in a reasonable amount of time?

If group members do not feel like they are getting closer and closer to a defined goal, they may tire of the whole campaign. Furthermore, if group members sense that a campaign is fruitless, they will start to feel like they are wasting their time and energy. For example: consider a campaign to get students to send postcards to a state legislator condemning her poor environmental record after she has already voted - the decisions have been made and your group will miss the empowerment of victory. A better example: getting students to send postcards to school board members, telling them to vote "No" on a new proposed zoning system in your college town that would isolate minorities in substandard schools.

2. Does this campaign impact students on my campus and/or citizens of my community?

Although you will want to take part in national or statewide campaigns, you should aim to make success measurable in your own community. If group members and volunteers cannot see the results of their hard work, they will not be as inclined to work hard - or at all - in the future.

3. Will this campaign broaden my organization's natural base or narrow it?

You should think about the composition of your group and seek a campaign that will help make it as broad as possible. So, if your group is made up entirely of white upper middle class environmentally-conscious students, and is having a difficult time reaching out to other students, maybe you should put off an environmental campaign and instead help to organize the workers on your campus, or elect your city's first black mayor, or fight for a Latino/a Studies Program at your school. If your original group will not temporarily abandon environmental work, you could look into local instances of environmental racism. Do not let yourselves be pigeonholed.

One example of a great possible first campaign that is local, goal-oriented, potentially very popular, and a good learning experience is a campaign to "take over the student government." By helping to elect student government officials who are interested in making your student government more democratic and who are sympathetic to progressive groups on campus, you will make your future campaigns, as well as those of many other organizations, infinitely more effective.

[Plan your campaign! ->](#)

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Tools for Democracy

Get Informed

Take Action

Use the Toolbox

SEARCH:



Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Planning a Campaign

There is a basic structure to campaign planning. Let's start with a few definitions and then use the following three sample campaigns to illustrate these definitions:

- A campaign for a living wage for all of the workers in your town.
- A campaign to take over your student government with a slate of progressive student senators.
- Your state's part of a national campaign to win a key air quality initiative in Congress.

Goal: a concrete, measurable end that you want to reach

There are two kinds of goals:

The first is the final goal.

- Get the City Council to pass a Living Wage Ordinance
- Win a majority of seats in your student government elections
- Have your Senators vote for the air quality initiative

And secondly there are specific, tactical goals.

- Collect 5000 petition signatures to give to your City Council.
- Build a coalition of 20 student groups who will support your progressive slate.
- Get stories on television stations in two cities in your state on the air-quality bill.

All of your planning must be with your final strategic goal in mind - which you (hopefully) accomplish by reaching your tactical goals.

Target: the person, organization, or body that you are

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
- [Planning a Campaign](#)
- [Executing a Campaign](#)
- [Utilizing the Media](#)
- [Coalition Building](#)
- [Fundraising](#)
- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

pressuring

You cannot simply pressure the "powers that be" - there must be a person, body or organization that you are asking to do something concrete.

- If, for example, it is your City Council determines the wages of city workers, you will need to target them. This is a case where you can get even more specific. If there are 7 members of your City Council and you already know that Councilwoman Stanley and Councilman Higgins will vote against any living wage ordinance, and Councilwomen Jones and El-Wafi will vote for it, they shouldn't be your targets. You have to focus your attention on the other three Council members who are undecided and could swing either way. These three members are your targets.
- Here your target is the student population that will be voting on the student government. You can get more specific if, for example, student social groups are powerful on your campus, you may choose to target the leadership of these groups so that they endorse your slate of candidates.
- Obviously, here the target is the Senators from your state. If you already know one will vote for the bill, then the other Senator is your target.

Tactic: a specific mechanism or technique used in a campaign

- Tabling to get petition signatures
- Speaking at the meetings of other campus groups and asking them to join in supporting your slate of candidates
- Holding a press conference talking about how air pollution affects the health of a community

Strategy: a systematic set of tactics arranged to influence a specific target towards a specific goal.

- Demonstrate overwhelming support for a living wage ordinance among citizen voters in your town by running a gigantic petition drive and publicity campaign.
- Systematically lobby student social groups by doing a campus-wide visibility campaign: send speakers to student group meetings and get them to endorse your slate. Then use their power to influence the student body as a whole to vote for your candidates.
- Embarrass your state's Senators and hold them

accountable for air pollution problems in your state by systematically having press conferences covered on local news programs in cities across. Make sure that the coverage ties your state's dirty air with the bill in Congress that could help solve the problem.

Be sure to **think strategically** about your campaign so that your work will actually succeed in reaching the goals you want to see fulfilled.

Once your group has carefully chosen your new campaign, you should choose a special meeting time--different than your normal meeting time because this one may take a while--and spread some butcher paper across the floor to begin mapping your strategy, targets, goals and tactics. Be sure to make a timeline, and make it as down-to-the-day as possible. Your plan is bound to change, so be flexible, but remember that the more detailed it is, the more you'll be able to monitor your progress and hold yourself accountable.

Campaign planning can be among the most interesting and intellectually engaging parts of organizing. Enjoy!

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Executing a Campaign

Each campaign, like each student body, is unique, and requires a different arrangement of tactics. Following are tips on how to effectively execute specific tactics--tabling, canvassing, using the media, and building a coalition. These should be seen merely as tactics, though, to be used after being clearly laid out as a step toward your campaign's final goal(s).

Furthermore, these are only a few very basic tactics; other tactics include creating a website, engaging in some sort of protest or civil disobedience, petitioning in community centers, directly lobbying decision-makers, and registering voters. The possibilities are essentially infinite--be creative, and don't be afraid to try new things!

Tabling

"To table" means to set up a table in a central location, sit there or stand in front of it, and try to entice people to come, look over your information, and hear what you have to say. Tabling can be used as a petition-signing or letter-writing station, as a tool to educate and recruit students unfamiliar with the group or campaign, or as a means to collect donations. It doesn't require a large number of volunteers, but as an ongoing activity it can use many volunteers. It is a great way to involve new volunteers and members--it is easy enough for anyone to pull off and they'll get excited about the group and learn a lot in the process.

- There will probably be other tables around, and you will be competing with other groups for people's attention. You'll need to be active - stand in front of your table, don't slouch behind it. Clipboard in hand, go up to people and get them to sign a petition or give them a handout.

- Don't make the 8 ½ X11 mistake: having a tiny scrap of paper taped to the front of your table with 'your organization' scrawled on it. If a passerby has to squint, you've already lost them. Stitch three sheets together and create a gigantic banner, use cardboard boxes to make a huge prop,

- Location is key. Set up your tabling operation in a high traffic area like outside of cafeterias/snack bars, in the mailroom, or outside the gym.

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)

- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)

- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)

- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)

- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)

- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)

- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)

- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)

- [Planning a Campaign](#)

- [Executing a Campaign](#)

- [Utilizing the Media](#)

- [Coalition Building](#)

- [Fundraising](#)

- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

- Table during times that you know people will pass by. You want to talk to as many people in as little amount of time as possible.
- Get the appropriate permission. The official(s) you need to talk to will vary by school and by location.
- Always have group sign-up sheets ready for anyone that expresses interest. And put one or two names at the top to start out--no one wants to be the first. (Follow this same tactic when collecting money--start out with a few dollars in a transparent jar.)
- Have informational material (e.g., flyers) out. Remember that a large colorful banner will help tell people why you're tabling.
- Work in teams. Arrange your tabling schedule so that you always have between two and three people at your table--ideally one experienced person, and one or two new volunteers. Another effective tabling method is to have one person catching the flow of people and directing them to the table, while another person talks to them in detail, and shows them how to write the letter, sign the petition, etc.
- Be interesting and inviting! Give out candy, condoms, or lemonade, play music, wear costumes relevant to your campaign, be creative.
- Do not pitch two petitions, letters, etc., at once--it may be confusing.
- Don't spend too much time talking to one person, but don't cut people off either. A minute or two should be the longest you talk to any one person. And, don't waste your time arguing politics with people that obviously disagree with you.

Canvassing

Canvassing means going door to door, either on campus or in your community (depending on your campaign and its goals) and pitching a campaign, passing out literature, offering a petition, raising money, or all of the above. If you want to ask for money, you should canvass off campus, and you need to get a permit; contact the town clerk. They have to give you one--canvassing is a form of free speech protected by the Supreme Court.

Canvassing is one of the most fun, active tactics you can use. It will bring a lot of volunteers into your group, but it can also turn some shy people off. - and, importantly, remember that it is essential that whoever is leading the volunteers is very friendly and enthusiastic about canvassing.

Dorm canvassing is a great tool, if used properly, to both recruit and retain volunteers. It gives new volunteers or those bored with tabling or passing out flyers the opportunity to have fun with a large group of enthusiastic people. And it gives those volunteers, properly trained and armed with a clipboard and good informational material, the opportunity to personally reach out to many new people and establish a basis for further contact.

Remember, also, to have other tactics available for volunteers who are nervous about talking to strangers.

In order to successfully canvass your school, your group should make a specific plan, set goals, and train and motivate all involved volunteers. Every canvasser should be courteous and respectful of others' privacy, and they should have a canvassing rap that is concise, informative, upbeat, and receptive to questions and suggestions.

- Gather together a large group of canvassers. With about 10 or 20 people you can cover a large area and have fun.
- Have all canvassers meet at a central location and pair up. Teams of two work best--like tabling, with one experienced member and one new volunteer.
- Create a detailed plan before setting out. Predetermine what dorm(s) you will be covering. Assign canvass "turf" to each team (i.e., the floors or rooms that they will cover).
- Set goals for how many rooms/floors you want each team to canvass. Remind everyone to keep this goal in mind when talking to people.
- Give sign-up sheets, flyers, and other informational material, on clipboards, to each team.
- Make sure everyone knows what they are expected to do and try to motivate everyone before sending them off!
- Spend time talking to people who seem interested in your campaign. Avoid wasting time arguing with people that just want to argue - you're probably not going to convince them and you could be using that time more productively talking to someone that is interested.
- If running an electoral campaign, take down the names, dorm rooms, phone numbers, registration status, and e-mail addresses of those individuals supporting, leaning supporting, and undecided on your candidate.
- While you are talking to them, personally invite all interested students to the next meeting, and

try to get their name and e-mail address, so you can remind them again later.

- Leave information under the door for people who aren't home--be sure that your flyers include information about your next meeting.

- Have everyone meet at a designated time at your central location to wrap up the canvassing effort. Find out what worked and what didn't and pick up extra flyers and sign-up sheets.

[Utilize the media! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Utilizing the media

Using the media is integral to getting your message out and your voice heard. In short, the bulk of American citizens get their information from the mainstream media, and we must get covered there in order to be taken seriously. We must actively pursue media coverage when holding events, executing issue campaigns and running candidates. By communicating consistently with available media outlets, we will gain exposure, increase awareness about your issues and win campaigns.

Your group should create an plan for using the media to make announcements, educate the public and recruit new volunteers, that is tailored to your group and your current semester's campaigns . Whether your campaign is community-centered or campus-centered, you should always contact both your community and campus media outlets with all news.

- Gather contact information for your campus and community newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations, and keep this in some sort of database for easy reference.

- All group members should consistently write letters to the editor, op-eds, and guest columnist pieces for campus or community newspapers, in order to respond to events or negative articles and to pro-actively promote your group and its campaigns. In order to get printed, these pieces should be timely, locally focused, and carefully written and edited. All arguments should be supported with details and hard evidence, and all pieces should contain your group's contact information.

- Contact your newspaper's editors and your radio/TV station's producers at least one week in advance of an event and ask them to assign someone to write a story about it.

- Many media outlets provide free announcements listings. Find out what you have to do to get all of your events listed and do it!

- If you are not planning any events that can be covered in a traditional story, make sure that your campus newspaper editors know that a new organization is thriving at your school. They may

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)

- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)

- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)

- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)

- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)

- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)

- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)

- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)

- [Planning a Campaign](#)

- [Executing a Campaign](#)

- [Utilizing the Media](#)

- [Coalition Building](#)

- [Fundraising](#)

- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

want to run a feature on the group.

- If your campaign gets little or no coverage, use this to your advantage. Raise awareness among students about your biased campus media.

- Everyone that talks to the media should be well versed on the issues involved with your campaign. If a member of your group is asked a question that she/he cannot answer, she/he should simply say "I don't know."

- Develop short statements with quotable lines that plug your group. Don't let your speeches degenerate into sound bites, but be aware of the kind of statements that reporters are looking for.

- Prepare events to suit photographing and videotaping. Have signs and banners with the your name (or [your school], however you refer to yourselves) and/or the name of your current campaign or event prominently displayed. Let editors/producers know beforehand that there will be photo opportunities so that they can have a photographer present.

- A press liaison should be present at all of your events to seek out the reporters, make statements, and direct them to other spokespeople in your organization. You don't want to let a reporter get away without a pocket full of good quotes!

- If TV or radio interviews you, mention your contact information several times throughout the interview. If you are interviewed by print media, ask the reporter if your contact information can be listed at the end of the article. They may say "no," but it doesn't hurt to ask.

[Start a coalition! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Building a coalition

A coalition is an organization of organizations formed to execute a particular campaign. In nearly every campaign that you undertake, your organization will need to develop informal relationships with sympathetic groups. You will want to form a more formal coalition, however, when undertaking a major campaign that will require resources and volunteer numbers that the members of your organization can not possible produce or manage alone.

The biggest potential drawback to forming a coalition is the time, energy, and dedication that it will demand. Once you form a coalition to run a campaign, your surrender control of that campaign and turn it over to the coalition; the coalition leadership should be made up of leaders from each member organization. Coalition meetings may run much longer than your organization's meetings and will require that you compromise with other coalition members. This can be frustrating, but it can also be a great growing and learning experience for your group.

- Find out what organizations are out there. And don't immediately rule out unlikely allies. A conservative group may want to join a coalition to protest the Free Trade Area of the Americas. An organization of law students may want to join a coalition to protect affirmative action on your campus. A Catholic pro-life group may want to join a coalition to halt a scheduled execution.

- Determine which groups you do not know very much about and research them. Find out whether they have specific leaders; if they do, find out who those people are. Also, find out how active an individual group has been on campus. What previous activities has the group been involved with?

- Do not assume that Native American, Chicano, or women's groups are only interested in Native American, Chicano, or women's issues. Most members of progressive issue organizations have a broad progressive platform.

- Get in touch with a group leader or member and ask if your organization can have a representative at their next meeting. Prepare

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)

- [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)

- [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)

- [Expanding Your Outreach](#)

- [Running an Effective Meeting](#)

- [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)

- [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)

- [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)

- [Planning a Campaign](#)

- [Executing a Campaign](#)

- [Utilizing the Media](#)

- [Coalition Building](#)

- [Fundraising](#)

- [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)

some literature to pass out at the meeting and give a short, enthusiastic pitch about the campaign and the potential coalition. And bring visual aids, and food!

- Do not allow any one organization (including yours) to dominate your coalition. One good way to prevent this is to arrange an executive board comprised of a representative from each of member organization.

- Meet weekly as a coalition, and develop working groups independent of member organizations' working groups. Your chapter should, of course, continue to meet weekly in addition to the coalition meeting.

If, in the end, your group decides not to form a coalition, your campaign can still benefit from endorsements and loose alliances with other clubs. You should ask organization leaders if you can table or speak at their meetings, and work to enlist their memberships.

[You'll need some money! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Fundraising

Fundraising is everyone's least favorite part of working for social and economic change. You don't want to beg; you don't want to offend anyone. You don't want to seem too interested in money. However, the fact is that your organization may require a lot of money. Flyers, posters, food, technical support, long distance calls--these things are all very important and cannot be purchased with your enthusiasm. Unless, of course, we use that enthusiasm to raise money!

First, draft a crude budget based on your upcoming campaign or possible campaign. Then, immediately ask your school for money. Most schools have some system in place designed specifically to give money to officially recognized clubs. (To find out how to get recognized, see Becoming an recognized student organization, in Part I: Getting Started.)

As for grassroots fundraising, which should bring in the bulk of your money, the key is to be creative and recognize what works and what doesn't. Your fundraising efforts should reach out to many different kinds of people in many different ways. Even low-income people will donate money to an organization that they care about. Even students.

Collecting Member Dues

Collect dues! Even if your school gives you \$100,000 to use, collect dues! Any organizer can tell you that people are far more likely to invest their time and energy into an organization to which they have given money. Once a student gives \$5, or \$10 to your organization, they are far less likely to drop out of the group later in the semester. When someone feels like they've invested money in something, they'll stick with it.

This is not to say that you shouldn't seriously consider the financial limitations of your student members or create a sliding scale for dues. Asking for a minimum of \$5 is always a good idea--it allows people to give a small amount without feeling bad, but it encourages those with resources to give more. Or you may want to charge a flat \$10 or \$15, but let students know that if they are seriously incapable of giving that amount, the group is flexible.

Another idea is to simply allow the group to decide what the due amount should be. If you set aside a couple of minutes to discuss this at your first meeting, then everyone should feel comfortable with the amount they are finally asked to give.

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
 - [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
 - [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
 - [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
 - [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
 - [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
 - [Planning a Campaign](#)
 - [Executing a Campaign](#)
 - [Utilizing the Media](#)
 - [Coalition Building](#)
 - [Fundraising](#)
 - [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)
-

After collecting the initial dues, it is a good idea to ask the members of your group to voluntarily give donations during campaigns when money gets tight. It is not rude to ask people who are giving a lot of their time to also give money. Rather, these people are the most likely to give because they know the group's financial situation and they know where their money is being spent.

Hosting a benefit event

Benefit events are a great source of money because they are fun to plan and attend, can raise quite a bit of money, and can raise awareness of your campaign as well. When organizing any benefit event, be sure to lay out your goals. Obviously you'll want to set a fundraising goal (\$100, \$500, \$1,000); you should set awareness raising goals, too, and recruiting goals. And try your best to mix different types of music and activities so that your benefit appeals to people of all races and genders.

A benefit event does not need to be complicated or huge in order to be successful. It can be as grand or as simple as you want it to be. One very easy idea is simply to throw a big party in the dorm room or apartment of one of your members. Charge \$5 or \$10 at the door (always ask for a "minimum donation" to encourage larger amounts) and let people know where their money is going. Play some good music, provide food and drinks, decorate the house to complement your organization, place flyers next to the bar, and get as wild as you want!

Another super easy event idea is to just attach yourself to an event that is already being planned. If you know members of a band or hip-hop group that has a scheduled show, ask them if they would donate the proceeds to your organization. Essentially, they are donating their own money, but they probably won't think of it that way. Or simply ask if they would mind you making a quick pitch in the middle of their set and passing a box or two around the crowd. Or, if you have a friend who is throwing a party, ask them if they'd mind you passing a box around there!

If you have the time and resources to actually plan and execute a benefit concert or event, by all means, go for it! You will have creative control; you can set it up to include short speeches as well as musical groups, you can decorate the event location however you like and you can organize the event as cheaply as possible to make the largest possible profit. A comprehensive how-to guide for organizing a benefit concert can be found in this manual under Appendix C: Setting Up a Benefit Show.

Going door-to-door

If you are going to fundraise by knocking on doors, you'll be much more successful if you go off-campus. However, every college is unique and canvassing dorm rooms is more convenient, so if your group wants to try to collect money on-campus, go for it. If it works, great! If it doesn't, you'll know better next time.

If you do decide to raise money off-campus by door-to-door canvassing, just remember to get a permit to do so from your town clerk.

First, carefully target neighborhoods that are likely to give you money. This does not necessarily mean that you should target your town's wealthiest neighborhoods. Rather, it means that you should target neighborhoods where residents are known to be progressive-learning, where they have a good relationship with students on your campus, where they have been particularly affected by corporate abuses, or--best of all--where they will directly benefit from a campaign your group has undertaken or plans to undertake.

Once your group has chosen which neighborhoods to target, make a plan! Read the general tips in the Canvassing section of Part III: Executing a Campaign. Your fundraising canvas will involve most of the same elements--meeting before and after the canvas, building teams, tracking donors, handing out literature, etc.--but will add a fundraising pitch.

Being able to give a good canvas fundraising pitch is a real skill; practice makes perfect. You should make sure to make your pitch a dialogue, rather than a speech. When talking to prospects, introduce yourself and ask for their names. Ask them if they have heard of your organization. Ask them what issues they are particularly concerned with, and tailor your pitch to their concerns. Do not mislead them, but emphasize the parts of your group's platform or campaigns that will affect them the most. And really listen--you'll learn something.

When collecting money door to door, don't waste your time on lost causes. Immediately after you begin your pitch, assess whether the person seems at all interested. If they are not, keep it short, thank them for their time, and move on to the next house.

Getting Creative

Your group's fundraising potential is limited only by your collective creativity. Spend a little time at a meeting with some butcher paper and markers and brainstorm. Design tee-shirts, buttons, or other propaganda for your organization or current campaign, produce them cheaply (but make sure your materials don't come from sweatshops!), and sell them for \$10. Sell services like raking or lawn mowing or car washing. Have a bake sale--get every member to donate a dessert.

One final fundraising idea (although there are infinitely more possibilities) is simply to have every member call or e-mail 10 friends or family members with a request for a specific amount of money that will go toward an important campaign. You'll be surprised how well this works!

[Set up a benefit concert! ->](#)

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Tools for Organizing:

Student/Campus Organizing:

Setting up a Benefit Show

Maybe you enjoy rockin' and rollin'. Maybe you like the whole soul of the independent music community, with its implicit rejection of mainstream culture, and with the entire spirit of rebellion that is so intrinsic to its essence. And maybe you want to mobilize that community, to tie it to the explosion of the progressive movement.

So you want to set up a benefit show for your organization? Bravo. Here's how you can speak up, act up, and lend a hand.

Know Your Budget

The easiest way to do it is to work backwards. How much money do you hope to raise? How much money do you have as a budget? What are the expenses? Add up all the expenses and then project a conservative number of people you expect to attend. For example: if expenses total \$500 and you hope to attract 100 people, then you need to charge at least \$5 per ticket in order to break even. But you don't want to break even. This is a benefit, remember? The whole idea is to make some noise and raise some money. So how much money do you hope to raise? If you wanted to raise \$500, then charge \$10 per ticket. Or try and attract more than 100 people. Duh. For normal shows, people tend to settle around \$7 as a reasonable price to pay for an independent show.

Pick a Hot Date

When do you want to do the show? Gotta know that before you can set anything else in stone. Although, what you can do to accelerate the process is to talk to bands to get a feeling for loose interest in putting on a benefit show. Pick your date strategically, considering your availability and the availability of your staff (more on that later), what nights more people are likely to come, and the dwindling number of days between now and the election.

Gotta Have a Venue

If you don't have a venue, you don't have a show. Fortunately for you, there are more places to play than most people would think. If you don't have the resources to book a show at an established club, try churches or youth centers, or random rooms or halls at college campuses. You'd be surprised how willing most places are to help out pro-active, self-realized kids who want to do something that does not revolve around

Menu:

- [Basics of Organizing](#)
 - [Building Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Activating Your Volunteer Base](#)
 - [Expanding Your Outreach](#)
 - [Running an Effective Meeting](#)
 - [Organizing Your First Campus- Wide Meeting](#)
 - [Becoming a Recognized Student Organization](#)
 - [Researching Possible Campaigns](#)
 - [Planning a Campaign](#)
 - [Executing a Campaign](#)
 - [Utilizing the Media](#)
 - [Coalition Building](#)
 - [Fundraising](#)
 - [Setting up a Benefit Show](#)
-

alcohol. Just tell them what you want to do, that it will be alcohol and drug free, and that you'll take care of the place. Don't forget to ask them if there is a curfew or anything particular you should know, as you don't want to be finding that out for the first time during the night of the show.

Rockin' Like Dokken (or: choosing the band)

If you are not aware of the near infinite number of great bands who would be willing to play for the proverbial peanuts, you might not be the right person to be setting up a show. This is not to say that you need to know them personally. Of course you don't. But the less aware you are of the ocean of music that exists, the more difficult the whole process will be for you. That said, come up with a list of bands that you'd like to see play, and then start digging. Phone numbers and email addresses are not terribly hard to find, if you try hard enough. And what with the whole information superhighway, the wonderful labels that release all the wonderful music of these bands should have their contact info available on their shiny, happy web sites. Most of these independent labels will be very happy to put you in touch with whomever you want to be in touch with. One thing to consider, though, is the drawing size of the band that you want to book. For example, Britney Spears could not play at the local community center for \$6. The building would fall down. Keep the capacity of the venue in the back of your mind, and try to fit a band to it accordingly.

Hey, Mr. Soundman

So you've got your hot date, you've got your venue, and you've got your band(s). Don't forget to hire somebody to do sound for the show! If it's a small show in a small place, you probably only need a small PA that you can rent from various places that can be found in the phone book. General rule of thumb: the larger the show, the larger the sound system that needs to be ready to go. After all, people show up because they want to actually hear the band, rather than just watch them. So go ahead, ask around, and find somebody who can come over and work the show at a reasonable fee that will fit your budget. Or, use your connections to find someone who will donate their equipment and expertise for the show. Just remember that this generous contribution is considered an in-kind donation and must be recorded as such.

Stages are for You and Me

Stages are only essential for really large shows. If you're booking a show that you expect to draw more than a couple hundred people, nobody past the first several rows will be able to see anything if there isn't a stage. And that's no good. Get yourself a stage and spare yourself the beating that you might take after the show from angry fans who paid to watch the back of someone's head. You could either call around, ask the sound guy who he's worked with before (often times sound and stage work together), or, if you are short on funds, build or borrow one yourself.

Volunteers: Get by with a little help from your

friends

You definitely don't want to be the only person working at the show, as you'll be stretched all over the place and too stressed to enjoy what you worked hard to put together. So make sure you have enough people there to help you do everything that needs to be done: watch the front door and take money, crowd monitoring, trash pickup, and to generally be on the prowl, paying attention to the show to make sure it goes smoothly.

Fly, Fly, Flier Away

Almost all of the technical points should have been covered, so now all you have to do is talk it up! Publicize until your arms fall off. Put fliers everywhere. Take out an ad in the city paper. Post about the show on web boards. Send notice out to email lists.

Tonight's the Night

The night of your hot date arrives, and you're a little jittery. But don't worry, all will go fine. Just get there early and stay on your toes. Tell your volunteers exactly what you need them to be doing, and just make sure all the bases are covered. Make sure someone is at the door collecting the dough at all times, make sure there are enough people roaming through the crowd to ensure that everything is safe, and make sure to introduce yourself to the sound, stage, and band folk at the very beginning so that they know who to go to if there are any questions/problems/etc....

There you have it. Be prepared to stay late cleaning up (you'll probably find some rather gross things, but all in the name of democracy, right?), and in general just try to keep cool and have fun.

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