

New Member Orientation

Developing and conducting an organizational recruitment campaign is very important. Yet, as we all know, retaining these new members is entirely another matter. All too frequently groups skip any form of orientation and just place their new members directly on committees or organizational projects. Although involvement is crucial to the longevity of the group, understanding the organization and its goals, objectives, structure, norms and taboos is equally as important. By taking the time to orient new members to the privileges and responsibilities of membership, you create a more educated membership and a more productive, cohesive organization – people who can and will make significant contributions to the organization.

Organization Orientation Should Include:

- Organization history, purpose, and structure
- Operating policies and procedures (dues, attendance requirements, etc.)
- Traditions and programs – calendar of events
- The rights and responsibilities of members
- Overview of campus services, activities and programs for student organizations
- Information about any support groups or affiliations - Headquarters, regional directors
- Assimilation of new members into the organization

A retreat, even a one-day retreat on campus, is usually the best forum for Organization Orientation. All members (both old and new) should be present – this is your opportunity to form a cohesive team with a common vision.

Sample Organization Orientation Retreat Schedule

1. Icebreakers and Name Games – help members get acquainted and have fun
2. Organization history, purpose, structure, officer job descriptions, committees – whenever possible use written materials
3. Membership phone and email lists – including new members
4. Teambuilding Exercises – help members build trust and understand the nature of working with others
5. Members rights and responsibilities – have old and new members discuss the expectations they have of each other, and record and refer to during the semester
6. Set goals and objectives for the year – form committees to accomplish these goals
7. End with more Teambuilding and informal bonding time – get people motivated and eager to start the year off on a strong foot.

Adapted for the NJIT Lisa A. Pierce Center for Student Leadership