

Effective Meetings

The ability to run a meeting effectively will make or break a leader. If those you're leading think that a meeting just drags on for no reason or does not have a set purpose, they will lose their respect of you. It's important that you work with your adviser to make sure that your skills in running meetings becomes a strength. You can always improve your abilities; sometimes it's just asking feedback from others on your executive board or general membership. Ask for honest answers, and know that sometimes the answers we don't want to hear are the ones that are most important to improve our skills.

The Secret to Having a Good Meeting

- A. Have a well-defined purpose for holding a meeting.
- B. Identify your objectives.
- C. Allow sufficient time to notify participants in advance.
- D. Determine how the meeting will be recorded and by whom.
- E. Keep detailed minutes or records of the meeting (i.e. presiding officers, attendance numbers, motions proposed, discussed and voted on, major arguments, referrals, postponements, etc.)
- F. Have an enthusiastic attitude.
- G. Arrange the room so everyone can be seen and heard.
- H. Develop an introduction to the meeting.
- I. Develop and follow an agenda (including acknowledgements, previous minutes, committee reports, new and old business, announcements, etc.).
- J. Think ahead. Put an outline of your proposals down on paper.
- K. Encourage all members to participate. Make members feel welcome (i.e., call individuals by name, reward efforts, have group discussions, etc.).
- L. Be conscious of time. Stick to the announced starting and ending times.
- M. Maintain control of the meeting. Expect to hear opposition to ideas. If you have an opponent, treat and debate him/her fairly. Don't let a hot dialogue steal the rest of the membership's time or sidetrack the purpose of the meeting. Keep the groups of the meeting in mind.
- N. Final five steps of the meeting. (Review all important decisions made—Restate all task assignments and completion dates—If possible, indicate the agenda of the next meeting—Set a time and place for the next meeting—Thank participants for attendance and participation).

When You Should Have a Meeting

- When you want information or advice from the group.
- When you want to involve your group in solving a problem or making a decision.
- When there is an issue that needs to be clarified.
- When you have concerns that you want to share with the group as a whole.
- When the group itself wants a meeting.
- When there is a problem that involves people from different groups.
- When there is a problem and it's not clear what it is or who is responsible for dealing with it.

What to Watch Out for in Meetings

- No clear, agreed upon agenda.
- Leaving the process of the meeting to “fate.”
- Mixing purposes.
- Jumping in too soon without a solution.
- Shifting focus.
- Unclear or incomplete action items or decisions.
- Lack of visual helpers.
- Meeting being dominated by one or two people.
- Not taking time to assure mutual understanding.
- Uneven preparation: varying levels of understanding.

Members of the Office of Student Engagement (OSE) staff are available to assist you with any questions you have regarding leadership issues. The OSE is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m.—5 p.m. For more information, please contact the office at 410.337.6124.