

PLANNING A RETREAT

A retreat is a great opportunity for your organization to work together away from the campus environment.

WHY HAVE A RETREAT?

- to provide informational workshop sessions for your members
- to motivate your members for the new year or semester
- to set goals
- to build your team
- to evaluate the progress of long-term goals and objectives
- to introduce new members
- to resolve group conflicts
- to get to know each other
- to have FUN!

WHEN SHOULD AN ORGANIZATION HAVE A RETREAT?

There really is no specific time or date that a group should have a retreat. Here are a few suggestions for times that might be helpful. You may choose to hold your retreat on a date that fits a specific occasion for your group.

- at the beginning of a year or semester
- at mid-semester for evaluation
- at mid-year for a refresher
- anytime as a one-day retreat or an overnight retreat
- before a new officer installation
- before a major program

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE AND WHO SHOULD FACILITATE?

Participants

- members
- officers
- advisors
- workshop presenters
- resource persons

Facilitators

- professional consultants
- experienced members or advisors
- consult the Student Activities and Leadership Center in Surbeck Student Center for references

WHERE CAN YOU HAVE A RETREAT?

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You can have a retreat just about anywhere. You could stay on campus (e.g., a room in Surbeck Student Center) or off-campus (e.g., at a city park). Find a place where your group will best be able to achieve its goals for the retreat.

RETREAT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Decide on a date.
- ☐ Begin the event planning process at University Scheduling Center in Surbeck Student Center.
- ☐ Reserve the retreat site.
- ☐ Delegate tasks to committee members.
- ☐ Determine retreat format and information.
- ☐ Contact retreat facilitators or presenters (whether from within or from outside of the organization).
- ☐ Send letters to members with information on costs, traveling and sleeping arrangements, tentative agendas, lists of what to bring, etc.
- ☐ Create handout materials (agenda, maps, tip sheets, retreat evaluation forms, etc.) and find equipment (overhead projectors, VCRs, televisions, etc.).
- ☐ Make meal arrangements if the organization is providing food.
- ☐ Confirm reservation at retreat site.
- ☐ Hold a final committee meeting to discuss responsibilities for the retreat.
- ☐ Make a checklist of who should bring what to the retreat.
- ☐ Present the retreat!
- ☐ Distribute thank-you notes to appropriate people, including retreat facilitators and presenters and others who deserve recognition for a job well done.
- ☐ Remember to thank members for their attendance.
- ☐ Document the retreat experiences, along with information from the evaluation and tips for planning future retreats.

HOW DO YOU PLAN A RETREAT?

First, set some goals

Include your members in setting goals so they will have an investment in the retreat. One way to include their ideas and address their needs is to implement a pre-retreat survey or do a pre-retreat skills assessment of the group members. Goals for having the retreat could include:

- gathering new ideas for programs or activities
- planning a specific program

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- solving problems
- team building
- addressing specific issues needed to help the organization to become more successful

Budget

Determine the organization's budget for the retreat. Expenses may include:

- ☐ retreat site rental
- ☐ transportation (university or private)
- ☐ travel insurance (available at a reasonable cost through the University, see the Business Office in O'Harra for more details)
- ☐ workshop materials (pens, paper, markers, etc.)
- ☐ fee for an outside consultant or retreat facilitator
- ☐ cooking or camping equipment rental
- ☐ food

Decide on the agenda

- ☐ Remember to give participants break time and some free time to get refreshed.
- ☐ Determine who will present the sessions. You can use the skills, talents and abilities of some of the organization's members or outside resources.
- ☐ Don't try to cover too much material.
- ☐ Vary the presentation method to maximize the attention of the participants. For example, presenting in all lectures or in all physical activities might become repetitive or boring.
- ☐ Give the participants a chance to practice new skills.
- ☐ Allow plenty of time for meals and sleep.
- ☐ Be sure everyone gets a copy of the agenda.
- ☐ Stay focused on your retreat goals.
- ☐ Some ideas for group activities can be found in the Student Activities and Leadership Center in Surbeck Student Center.

Plan your meals

Some retreat sites offer meals with the rental price. If you plan to cook, delegate tasks to committee members. Include menu planning, buying food, cooking and cleaning up. If your organization has the money and is near the facilities, you might want to have the retreat meals catered.



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Develop a post-retreat evaluation

This evaluation should be given to all participants and facilitators. These responses will help the organization's leadership to successfully plan the next retreat. Also, evaluate your retreat budget. Were you able to follow it? This information will also be helpful to future retreat planners.