Sharing What Works Best: Best Practices of Collegiate Agricultural Student Organizations

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Collegiate Student Organizations

- Important aspect of college experience across the nation
- Opportunity for social engagement and networking
- Discipline specific and college-wide clubs
  - Dairy Club
  - Country Western Dance Club
- Local and nationally affiliated organizations
  - Collegiate FFA
  - Crops Club
- Generally part of larger Ag Council, Associated Students
Faculty Advisor Role

• Teaching and/or research responsibilities, service, extension.
• Only source of continuity in club program.
• Challenge of an ever changing student population.
• How do we remain effective and relevant to our field?
Our Study: What do clubs do well and how can we share?

Specifically,

• What best practices exist among collegiate clubs and organizations across various campuses?

• How can we share best practices within a single university setting? What are they?

• How do best practices within and among various universities differ?
Overview

• Present a methodology for conducting a best practices workshop/focus group

• Present findings from two focus groups:
  • National Collegiate FFA Focus Group (Inter-college)
  • Oregon State University Clubs (intra-college)

• Discuss events and recommendations

• Provide handout of results AND focus group facilitation tips
Conducting the Focus Groups: Our Methodology
National FFA Convention, Collegiate FFA Focus Group

- Over 30 Students attended voluntary workshop to share best practices and participate in needs assessment
- Represented 5 institutions, leaders or officers in club
- 2 facilitators
- National FFA Convention, October 2012, Indianapolis, IN
- 90 Minutes in length, best practices 20 - 50 minutes
Facilitation

- Ice breaker activity
- Break students into equally sized, heterogeneous groups (not all from same institution)
- Carousel/jigsaw style sharing
  - Poster topics posted, students move over time
  - All groups visit each poster, use different pen, add check marks
  - Last group at poster summarizes
- Group discussion, explanation
Poster Prompts

• What are some best practices or activities that are conducted by your chapter?
• What are some ways you motivate members to be active?
• How do you recruit your members?
• What challenges are you currently facing?
Results: Five Themes Emerged

• Ways to keep members active
• Best or most effective “coolest” events
• Recruitment Strategies
• Effective Fundraising
• Academics and/or ties to industry (discipline specific ideas)
Our Next Steps: Using the themes to conduct college specific focus group

• Second focus group held at Oregon State University
• Similar jigsaw focus group format
• 1 facilitator
• Club officers/representatives from each of college’s 27 student clubs
• 60 Students total
• Themes from national focus group used as poster prompts
• Both focus groups showed similar results (results combined)
Ways to Keep Members Active

- Food
  - Tailgaters, pizza, subway, etc.
- Service Learning
- Industry and “Fun” Trips
- Speakers
- Athletic Events
  - Golf outings, football, ag olympics, etc.
- Meeting Raffles/Drawings
- Point System
- National Trips
Best, Most Effective Events

• New Member Campout
• “Alpha Gamma Rho-deo”
• Barn Dance
• “Hoof-ing it for Ag” 5K
• Octoberfest
• Mud football
• Behind the Scene Tours
Recruitment Strategies

- Blast Emails (list serves)
- Swag Wear
- Talk to Classes (College, Department, Core Classes, Professors)
- Booths at College Events (open house)
- Free Food, Free Stuff
- Flash Mob
- Social Media
- Unique Marketing
- Athletic Events
- “We make Beer, Cheese and Chocolate”
Effective Fundraising

- Food (football, quad, Thursdays, at own events)
- Club Brews, Spices, Christmas Wreaths
- Grants and Scholarships (College and External Funding)
- Business and Industry Partnerships
- Plant Sales, Sell Steers, Cattle, cheese (specific to club discipline)
- Sell Materials To FFA (seed ID kits)
- Sell Items at State FFA Convention
- Golf Tournaments
- Social Event Admission (dances, etc.)
Academics and Ties to Industry

• Industry Tours
• Guest Speakers, Businesses
• Internship Opportunities
• Prep. for Graduate School
• Attend Industry Conferences
• Research Symposium/Mini-conferences
• Affiliate with National Professional Organization (Institute of Food Technologists, Association of Nurserymen)
Summary

- Many club events specific to their own discipline, but can be modified and shared across the campus.
- Best practices were similar at national and college level.
- Focus group jigsaw activity easy, effective way to share ideas and elicit student thinking and discussions about improving their clubs.
Opportunities

• Activities generated cross-club discussions
• Could be used to develop college wide activities involving multiple clubs
• Clubs could co-sponsor events and work together
  • Social and Service to community and college
• Helps give college leaders a snapshot of events and activities
Questions?

Thank You.