

BRAINSTORMING

Is your organization stumped for new ideas? Do you do the same activities the same old way, year after year? Do the leaders and maybe a few others do all the talking while others sit there idly? Do you have trouble retaining members? Brainstorming may just be the technique to rejuvenate your organization and get everyone excited and involved. The purpose of this method is to get out as many ideas as possible. The more you have to choose from, the better your final choice will be.

Set the Stage:

- Set a time limit. The time limit should depend on the size of your group. Try 10 minutes for small groups and 20 minutes for larger groups.
- The best group size is 3 - 10 people. If you have more, break into two or more groups and brainstorm simultaneously.
- The question or issue must be one to which all participants can speak. Focus on only one issue.
- Record all of the responses on a blackboard or big sheet of paper so everyone can see them. Do not record the name of the person suggesting. Record only key words and phrases, not word for word.

Explain the Rules before beginning:

- Do not discuss ideas, simply record on your sheet
- Do not criticize, praise, or judge
- Be spontaneous, no hand-raising, just call out
- Have one person record all the ideas
- Repetitions are okay
- Quantity counts, get as many ideas recorded as possible, as quickly as possible
- Build on each other's ideas, "hitch-hiking" or "piggy-backing" is encouraged
- Be comfortable with silence, often the best ideas come out of them
- It is okay to be outrageous, even silly

Make Good Use of Your Members' Creativity

- If several groups brainstormed the same idea, post the lists and let everyone read each other's work.
- Combine ideas into related categories for review.
- Prioritize which ideas are most promising and which can be eliminated.
- Discuss which of the remaining ideas are most promising/ doable.
- Select those with the greatest potential and high-ranking priority for either implementation or refinement by your organization.
- Be sure to utilize the ideas generated. It is extremely demoralizing for a group to invest its time, energy and creativity and have its ideas never followed through with. Seeing your idea come to fruition, however, is extremely rewarding.

This is one of many handouts available to you. Feel free to meet with any Student Activities staff member for more details about this topic or any others related to leadership or your student organization. We also have open advising hours every Wednesday from 3 p.m to 6 p.m. The Office of Student Activities is located in the University Center, on the 2nd floor, or by telephone at (503) 370-6463. Visit our website at www.willamette.edu/dept/osa or email us at wustudentinvolvement@gmail.com. Adapted from the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, University of Michigan.