



Sponsorship of Student Programs

Basic funding sources for student organizations include: fees and admissions, sales (tangible products, services, advertising, etc.), contributions and solicitations, co-sponsorships, university allocations, exchange of goods/services and loans. Although it is recommended that you consider all of these possibilities, there are several choices below available for sponsorship of student programs.

University Sponsorship

There are a variety of offices and departments on campus which are willing to help fund various student organization-sponsored events. Keep in mind that funding requests should be concise, accurate and easy to understand. Also remember that USD funding committees look favorably on organizations who use a variety of fundraising ideas and sources.

Academic Departments, Colleges, Student Governments

Frequently, colleges and academic departments will sponsor student programs involving academic or career issues in their area. Speak with the Dean's Office or faculty members with whom you are familiar to learn of any funding opportunities within that unit.

Corporate Sponsorship

A choice that is becoming increasingly popular with groups is to find an outside sponsor to help underwrite programs. Corporations have found that American college campuses represent a \$16 billion marketplace and that there are approximately 2,000 student activity programs serving 7.2 million students on these campuses. In order to reach college students, many major corporations have found it cost efficient to sponsor campus events.

How to Obtain Sponsorship

Much of the success of obtaining funds rests on doing your homework. Before asking a local or national agency, for money to sponsor your event, there are several important steps you must first take.

1. Determine who or what kind of department and/or corporation would be interested in affiliating with your organization and sponsoring your event. One way to narrow the field is to determine what kind of business or department would be most interested in your target audience. Next, decide if you will concentrate on a University department, organization, local business or local office of a national corporation. Once you have made these

decisions, you can brainstorm a list of possible sponsors and then review and edit this list down to a reasonable size. You might find it helpful to go back with this list to the staff person you had previously talked with and ask for their comments and feedback. The University's Development Office often has either the name of the appropriate corporate person to talk to or the correct office to contact regarding sponsorship.

2. Find out if there are any university restrictions on whom you should or should not approach for sponsorship. You will need to find out the University's stance on alcoholic beverage company sponsorships, whether there are products and/or services not supported, if there are restrictions on giving away or selling products on campus and which, if any, corporations the University Development Office is soliciting for major contributions.

3. It is advisable to make an appointment with an CSL staff member to begin to find out University policies regarding sponsorships and to get referrals for other appropriate staff members regarding information for your particular circumstances. Decide with what type of corporation/group that your organization wants to be affiliated. There may be corporations with which you may not want to be identified. Speak with your organization before sending out proposals.

4. If you choose to approach national corporations through their local offices, it is important to know that they regard sponsorship of student activities in terms of cost-per-thousand. Therefore, they prefer to become involved in programs that reach more than one campus.

To have access to such a sponsor, you may have to go through a promotional-marketing agency specializing in nationwide campus programs. But don't be discouraged. Proceed by giving yourself plenty of time--often a term or more before the scheduled event.

Because the local office will have to check with the regional and national offices, it will expedite matters if you mail a program proposal to all three offices. Along with your proposal, send a cover letter that includes an introduction of yourself and your program, the demographics of the campus, your target audience and any other information that you think will persuade them to sponsor your event. Be sure to include the kind of sponsorship you are seeking. In each of your letters be clear that you have contacted the other offices.

A Final Thought

The sponsorship proposal is very important. Be clear yet flexible about what you are asking. Speak with your CASA Coordinator for advice and assistance in writing your proposal. The potential sponsor may have some beneficial program insights or suggestions. They also may feel that in order to sponsor an event, they have to put their mark on it. Listen to them and carefully consider the pros and cons of any requests. But don't sell yourself or your

organization short. Remember, you are asking a group that doesn't know you to become involved and supportive of your efforts and ideas. You must convince them that you are a good investment!

Reference, National On Campus Report, March 25, 1985, Vol. 12, No. 6

See also the handouts:
Brainstorming
Fundraising Strategy

Modified with permission from documents created by the Student Activities and leadership Office at the University of Michigan.