

USD CASA

Center for Awareness, Service, and Action

Restarting An Organization

Whether your organization began working together winter or fall term, the beginning of your second semester is a new start. Many successful organizations are characterized by the leadership and members learning from their past mistakes and their willingness to make a new start. A "restart" retreat might be just what the organization doctor ordered for your group!

Restart retreats offer an opportunity for everyone to share activities over break and visit with one another before classes really begin. The meeting should be a cause for celebration and a time to evaluate and revise how your organization has been working.

Celebrate

Celebrate your successes. You wouldn't have made it to this term if you weren't successful last term. Recognize the leadership and membership who assisted the organization. Recognize the barriers you had to overcome and the resources you utilized. Many USD students wish to only receive constructive criticism which they use as a means to learn. Although it is imperative to continue improving, you must celebrate what you have done well.

Evaluate

Take the opportunity to evaluate how you are doing and what areas need improvement. This will also provide you with an ideal opportunity to garner group support for new projects or resolve sticky situations. Many groups discuss the following at restart retreats:

- Goals--where are we? what needs to be revised? what has been accomplished?
- How do we work together?
- How do we resolve conflict?
- Recurring or current conflicts
- Organizational meetings
- Time frame and responsibilities for term
- Election/selection of officers

As well, you can...

- Plan motivators or end of year celebration
- Orient new members to the group
- Continue training on any issues
- Start on transition notebooks (if you haven't yet, start by distributing an outline of what is needed and giving members 30 minutes or so to start writing down their thoughts)
- Continue Teambuilding

A Sample Retreat Design

1. Revisit a teambuilding activity that the majority of group members enjoyed from last term.
2. Continue teambuilding

3. Evaluate, determine what areas need to be discussed and revisited. A successful method to gather information is to form small groups. Ask each group to discuss the issue at hand (giving specific questions is helpful) and make recommendations for improvement. For example, if you wish to generally evaluate the organization, the questions each group would discuss might be: what have we done well so far? what can we improve on? what would you like for us to continue doing? what would you like for us to do differently? Be specific about your ideas!

4. Motivate. By now, most of your members have been involved in an activity and have had many of their questions answered by experience. This term, they will probably be motivated by a intrinsic need to succeed and improve on their responsibilities. However, it is your responsibility to motivate them to continue. Occasionally pass out candy at a meeting, give members an opportunity to stand up and thank someone in the group, celebrate everyone's birthday in one evening.

5. Celebrate. A restart retreat is not meant to disparage the organization or certain members. It is meant to be an opportunity to identify and solve problems. Be sure to leave on a productive and positive note.