

## Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers and Creating Succession Plans

In recruiting and retaining your volunteers you want to find the right person for each job, with the right skills for the right time. Volunteering is a two-way street: it must meet the needs of your organization and meet the needs of your volunteers so it is a WIN WIN for everyone.

This session was hosted by Dr. Judith Millesen, Associate Professor, Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. She was truly an engaging speaker and hands had the best suggestions to offer therefore will likely return again in the future. Following are suggested tips outlined in her session:

### Step 1

- Define the position(s) needed
- Explain reason why volunteers are needed:
  - to help spread the work among members
  - to keep the organization alive
  - for new ideas
  - to get the work done

### Step 2

- Assign job descriptions to each position. This step clarifies, for all those involved, the expectations and requirements of the volunteer position. It will give volunteers an idea of the part they play in the total picture of the organization. A complete volunteer job description should include:
  - **Title**  
This will be the volunteer's identification. Give this as much prestige as possible.
  - **Purpose**  
A general statement that identifies what the job is and why it is necessary.
  - **Responsibilities**  
List each duty and responsibility of the job. Be as specific as possible.
  - **Qualifications**  
List the skills, knowledge and attitudes you seek. Be careful not to over-qualify the position - you could lose some excellent volunteers.
  - **Relationships**  
Who the volunteer reports or is accountable to.
  - **Time Commitment**  
Expectations regarding time demands of the job. Be specific! i.e., weekly, monthly, long-term basis, flexible, self-determined.
  - **Benefits**  
What's in it for the volunteer? What is to be gained personally by doing the job?
- Remember: Recruiting volunteers before you define the job to be done and qualifications needed, is like trying to square dance before the caller begins!

### Step 3

- Now that you understand what the job is and what sort of person is required to do it, you need to list potential candidates who may be able to do the job.
- Contact past event attendees as well as past volunteers
- Attendees are more likely to volunteer if they are personally asked.
- Plan a special recruiting event that is social and interactive
  - It is a good idea to have volunteers complete the "volunteer survey" (**attachment**) to ascertain their involvement abilities, season, times, and interests. Volunteers might be passionate and have sporting connections so engage them in their interest.

### Step 4

- To ensure both parties understand, summarize any decisions and actions that have been agreed upon. Once volunteers have said Yes, shake their hand and congratulate them on their decision.
- Have them complete the volunteer contract (**attachment**)
- Update your bylaws and roster, your chapter website and notify OUAA
  1. It may be necessary to:
  2. Have a formalized agreement, signatures, swearing-in.
  3. Offer additional training.
  4. Provide the volunteer with tools for doing the job (i.e., by-laws, meeting minutes, director's manual).

Once volunteers have agreed to take on positions, you will want to keep them. You can do so through additional training, reward and recognition, cooperation, and innovative programming.

### Step 5

- Once they have accepted it is important to set up training which should include background and goals of the organization as well as past meeting minutes.

### General Notes:

- Never ask someone to help and not utilize them
- ALWAYS offer recognition of volunteers and reward them
- Get everyone involved in thinking up new ways to recruit and pool them together
- Think about how you personally would like to be engaged
- People are attracted to programs that utilize positive, honest, enthusiastic appeals.
- Be interested in your members, not only as volunteers but as individuals.
- Don't over-recruit. Volunteers will lose interest if they have signed up to help and there isn't a job for them.

- Involve volunteers in decision making. Make certain they feel they are an important part of the organization.
- Example of a good way to approach perspective volunteers: I approach Dawn Werry and mention we have our new student reception coming up in a few months and that we'll be needing people to call prospective students and invite them to the event. Dawn says, "I'm not interested in making phone calls." I say "oh, thank you for letting me know" make a note for future reference, and then ask if she knows someone who would be willing to help with this task. I then ask if she would take on another task like making a welcome banner, picking up food, etc. until I can get tasks on my list complete AND find something for her to assist with. Each time she says YES or NO to a task I make a note for future reference to be more effective and make the volunteer know I've listened to their likes/dislikes and/or abilities.
- Offer the benefits of volunteer
  - Meet alumni from around the world and develop lasting friendships;
  - Help shape current and future life at the OHIO University with insider access to the administration;
  - Gain or enhance your leadership, communication, problem-solving, consensus, and team-building skills—skills that can help your professional career;
  - Get valuable training opportunities by attending the annual Alumni Leaders Conference;
  - Get in touch with current OHIO students and their energy, enthusiasm, and fresh ideas;
  - Utilize great tools and updates online, via e-mail, and in print;
  - Build your career opportunities as you are challenged with new roles or opportunities;
  - Get satisfaction from giving back and making a real difference;
  - Promote OHIO;
  - Have lots of fun!