

## THE GRAPE PRINCIPLE

The GRAPE Principle is an acronym for the five most common reasons students join and stay in student organizations. In order to effectively recruit and retain membership, it is important that you understand your member's needs. Be sure to reevaluate your member's needs every year, as they are constantly changing. Below is a description of each of the common member needs, as well as suggestions on how to improve your organization in order to accommodate these needs.

### G – GROWTH

- Definition: Having opportunities to increase your skills and competencies, personal skill development opportunities, becoming more competent, experienced, and confident.
- As your organization grows, get organized and stay organized. Most students will not stick with organizations that appear to have disorganized leaders or members that seem unsure of the plan/direction.
- Make sure everyone involved in your organization is:
  - Aware of and committed to the recruitment process
  - Prepared to answer questions
  - Comfortable talking about the organization to prospective members
- It is the entire organization's responsibility to recruit new members!

### R – RECOGNITION

- Definition: Gaining respect from others you admire, receiving recognition and praise for a job well done, receiving feedback on your work within the organization.
- Recognition is a great way to continue the on-going process of recruitment
  - Examples:
    - If your organization gets involved in Homecoming, that is a recruitment and image development opportunity
    - If you co-sponsor or collaborate on a program with another group or participate in a community service opportunity with other non-members that is a recruitment opportunity
    - Use those opportunities to educate people about your organization
- Work to make your organization's name a positive "household word."



- Remember also, students many times are members of more than one group so the outreach activities you participate in may have positive recruitment affects
- If you are an academic organization, keep in mind that people change their majors
- If you can afford to, making t-shirts is a fun way to get your name out there and expose all of the great things your organization does
  - Have your members wear t-shirts around campus or all together at events to advertise

## **A – ACHIEVEMENT**

- Definition: Having the opportunity to solve problems, seeing the result of your efforts, being given meaningful responsibilities, seeing your feedback and ideas become reality.
  - If you are finding it difficult to recruit and retain members to your organization start by asking “Why?”
    - What is it about the organization that makes it unappealing?
    - Remember to not just look externally for the reasons
      - i.e., “Everyone is too busy” or “he/she needs to spend more time on their studies.”
      - Challenge yourself to take a look INTERNALLY
- Remember, students join motivated organizations with:
  - Goals
  - A vision
  - An action plan
- When is the last time you evaluated your organization?
  - Ask your current members to evaluate your organization in the following areas:
    - A sense of purpose
    - Internal communication
    - Growth and development opportunities
    - Team building – cohesive membership
    - Member participation
    - Recognition



## P – PARTICIPATION

- Definition: Planning and scheduling work, given the opportunity and being allowed to make or contribute in important decision making, being “active”, not just a member.
- Recruitment is not one person’s job – make sure everyone participates!
  - One person may need to coordinate efforts, but EVERYONE should be responsible for maintaining and sustaining membership
- Your recruitment campaign with your members should include:
  - Specific techniques and tasks to be accomplished
  - A timeline
  - An indication of who will be responsible for completing each task

## E – ENJOYMENT

- Definition: Having fun, working as part of a team, feeling a part of something important
- Make sure your group is worth the time to join.
  - As a new member is there something to do that can give that member a sense of accomplishment?
  - Is the only way to actually be “active” in your organization by being an officer? A common complaint heard from younger members is besides going to meetings and putting up fliers there is nothing for general members to do unless you decide to stick with the organization and become an officer
    - Empower your members
    - Give them responsibility
    - Create opportunities to practice their leadership skills
    - This will increase their confidence level and make them more experienced officers in the future
- If applicable, getting alumni from your organization to come in and talk to the general members to show how involvement in the organization can be a great networking opportunity and how the experience carries on after college
- Create a positive and welcoming environment.
  - Know your members names
    - Does your executive board know people’s names?



- Personal contact is key – email is great and it's easy but if you really want to keep your members connected and show that you value them – you must work towards more personal contact
- Structure your meetings so everyone feels comfortable
  - When discussing issues or brainstorming allow for individual reflection and group discussion in order to accommodate the different processing style
  - Be aware of, respect, and understand cultural differences
  - Create an environment where members are secure with sharing their opinion even when it differs from the leadership or with the majority opinion
    - Disagreements and conflicts if handled in a professional and respectful way make organizations stronger
  - Strive to have a very diverse membership base

*Adapted from University of Wisconsin-Madison Student Organization Resource and Policy Guide*

