

You've worked hard talking to potential members, putting flyers up across campus, and holding informational sessions about your organization. You've successfully met your membership recruitment goal! Now that you have members, here's the challenge: How do you keep or retain members in your organization? How do you get members active in events, activities, and programs?

Members' Needs

Ask members why they joined the organization and what they want to get out of their experience. For an accounting organization, members might want to build a network of professionals in the business world. For a sports club, a member's motivation might be to socialize with students who also enjoy participating in the same athletic events. Whatever the motivation for joining your organization is, it is important to understand and consider members' needs when developing programs, activities, and even meetings.

The **GRAPE Principle** lists the **5 most common reasons people join organizations: Growth, Recognition, Achievement, Participation, and Enjoyment**. This method can help you to reflect your organization's current efforts and brainstorm new methods for keeping members active in your organization. With each element of GRAPE, think about the following:

- Why did you and other members join the organization?
- What are reasons you and other members have stayed with the organization?
- What strategies can you use to keep or retain members in your organization?

GROWTH	RECOGNITION	ACHIEVEMENT	PARTICIPATION	ENJOYMENT
Having opportunities to increase your skills and competencies, personal skill development opportunities, becoming more competent, experienced, and confident.	Gaining respect from others you admire, receiving recognition and praise for a job well done, receiving feedback on your work within the organization.	Having the opportunity to solve problems, seeing the result of your efforts, being given meaningful responsibilities, seeing your feedback and ideas become reality.	Planning and scheduling work, given the opportunity and being allowed to make or contribute in important decision making, being "active" not just a member.	Having fun, working as part of a team, feeling a part of something important.

Membership Over the Years

Consider the different priorities, characteristics and commitments that your members may have based on their years in school. Also consider the characteristics that graduate students, transfer students, and adult students bring to your group. Are you meeting the needs of your members based on their student status? If not, how can you better cater to this status?

First-Year Students

- Excited, enthusiastic, eager. Find ways to engage this right away!
- Learning to prioritize time and activities. Make sure that you are supporting them as a student first.
- Exploring options, and possibly taking a broad range of courses- Consider how your organization might help them explore career interests.
- May be sampling a variety of student organizations, activities- How can you ensure they stick with this one?
- May have been very involved in high school, or not involved at all. Encourage them to check our opportunities on campus to develop their leadership.

Sophomores

- Beginning to identify course interests and career paths. Continue to support this.
- Beginning to take on leadership roles in the organization. Do you have a variety of ways for them to try out their leadership skills? It's a great idea to have different levels of positional leadership, including committee chairs.
- May be thinking about internships, study abroad options.
- Encourage them to participate in opportunities to develop their leadership.

Juniors

- Likely have a determined major/path of courses.
- May be taking on more challenging leadership roles. Support them so they don't burn out.
- Exploring internships and other experiences related to major. Know that they may be feeling spread a little thin.
- May be looking to develop professional contacts in their chosen field and cultivate potential recommendations. Does your group provide support with things like this?

Fourth/Fifth Year Students

- Starting to focus on life after college
- Have to make sure they have completed requirements for graduation.
- May be preparing for job search or graduate/professional school.
- Can serve as a role model for fellow members.
- May start to step back from formal leadership roles/wind down membership commitments. Look for ways to keep them connected, but on their terms.
- Celebrate them!

Adapted from: Recruitment and Retention workshop

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WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO TODAY?

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Retention

Best Practices Series



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