

Make It Happen!

Smart goal setting for student leaders

By Bev Bachel

Every fall, students start out the school year with high hopes and big dreams, both for themselves and their student organizations.

James Fisher, a graduate student at the University of Central Florida and the student director of Homecoming 2003, had big plans for this year. "I needed to make this Homecoming special to celebrate the 40th anniversary of UCF and the 25th anniversary of our football team," he says. Fisher's early plans included developing a web site to keep students informed of homecoming activities, reaching out to smaller clubs and organizations, involving groups outside the Greek community, and booking R&B and reggae bands to reflect the diversity on UCF's campus.

While some students and organizations such as Fisher and UCF gain momentum and break new ground, others gear up at the beginning of the year only to end it without making much progress.

Why does this happen? It's not lack of leadership, passion, or intelligence that causes student organizations to lose their steam; it's a lack of goal-setting.

Setting goals is essential because it helps leaders track progress, prioritize actions and tasks, and involve other members.

Wise Leaders Set SMART Goals

The most effective student leaders know how to set SMART goals. A SMART goal is: **Savvy**—Easy to understand and meaningful to you.

Measurable—Defines exactly what you want to accomplish.

Active—Tells what action you need to take.

Reachable—Realistic based on your skills and experience.

Timed—Has a clear date when you'll be able to say, "We did it."

Not-so-SMART Goal: Motivate others in the organization to participate.

SMART Goal: Ask two people at each meeting to volunteer to do a specific task.

Not-so-SMART Goal: Increase membership.

SMART Goal: Increase membership from 50 to 100 by January 1.

Not-so-SMART Goal: Take the organization to the next level.

SMART Goal: At the November meeting, discuss the goals for the upcoming year. Agree on one long-range goal, decide what actions to take to accomplish it, and assign a member to be responsible for each action.

Once you've set a SMART goal, create an action plan for getting from where you are today to where you want to be. An action plan makes it easy to track your progress by showing you exactly what steps you need to take and their related deadlines.

Prioritize Goals, Preserve Sanity

Jarrold Ali, a senior and the vice president of finance for Sigma Phi Epsilon at the University of South Florida, says, "The leaders that truly stand out are well-rounded students who are able to balance all that they do."

Ready for Action

Diana Martin, a senior, and founding member and president of Blue Key International Honor Society at UCF, uses an action plan to keep everyone in her organization on track, "so we have something tangible to update and keep us organized."

Action Plan — GOAL: Increase membership from 50 to 100 by January 1.

Deadline	Activity
November 1	Make flyers to increase awareness of organization and its goals.
November 10	Post flyers at 20 bulletin boards in major traffic centers around campus.
November 15	Hold holiday party planning meeting.
December 15	Attend holiday party. Personally speak with everyone at the party to see if they would like to become a member.

Part of goal setting is managing and prioritizing multiple goals. Knowing how to set a goal and follow through on it is one thing, but as a student, leader, and human being, how do you balance everything that's on your plate? Here's some advice from student leaders:

■ **Make decisions.** Set a priority level for school, activities, family, and friends.

Decide what's most important and how much time you'll devote to it.

■ **Start planning.** If you don't have a daily planner, get one. It's a quick and easy way to keep track of assignments, appointments, and activities.

■ **Take 3.** Each day, write down the three most important things you need to get done, and do them!

■ **Keep up.** Don't fall behind on homework. It may seem like a lot to do now, but it'll be even more overwhelming if you put it off until the last minute.

■ **Set limits.** Limit yourself to only the activities and organizations that you're serious about and have time for. Be careful not to get so involved that you don't have time for homework.

Challenge Others in Your Organization

One of the most important skills is being able to inspire others to achieve a common

goal. How do you challenge others in your organization to participate and to come up with creative solutions?

Dr. Kelly Page Werder, assistant professor and faculty advisor for the Public Relations Student Society of America at USF, emphasizes the importance of an inclusive atmosphere in getting all members to participate. "The chapter president's ability to develop relationships with all members is an important factor in effectiveness," Werder says. "In previous years, there was a cliquish atmosphere, which made the less outgoing students feel alienated. This year, all leaders, not just the president, have been open and inclusive in developing relationships with all members."

Creative thinking is important for organizations, especially those with small budgets. As Houda Darwiche, a senior at Florida Southern College and the president of the school's chapter of the American Chemical Society, says, "We

encourage our members to get creative to help us decide on activities for the year and create slogans for our T-shirts. Sometimes it's hard because new members don't speak up. But we're an easygoing and relaxed group, and once the new members realize that, they let loose and share their ideas."

Goal Setting Gets You There

By planning, prioritizing, and goal-setting, you can achieve great things as a leader and make this your organization's most successful year. Remember to develop SMART goals and have an action plan. Prioritizing your goals will not only help you achieve them, but will also keep you calm, cool, and ready to lead. Finally, get creative! Challenge every member in your organization to think in multicolor. Every leader has the potential and motivation to do big things, but the leaders who actually achieve results do so by setting goals. So, get goaling! 🎯

Bev Bachel is the owner of *Idea Girls*, an organization that gives women the tools to reach their goals, a full-time writer, and the author of *What Do You Really Want? How to Set a Goal and Go For It and Idea Girls Guide to Goal Getting*. Contact Bachel at bbachel@qwest.net, or visit www.ideagirls.com.



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