

COSPONSORSHIP

“One is educated when one knows how to find out what one doesn’t know.”

– Georg Simmel

Most people will agree that running a student organization can be a very demanding and challenging responsibility. One of the most frustrating aspects is creating the program of your dreams only to find you do not have the funding or resources available to carry out the event. But alas, if the money and means are not there, there is not much you can do, right? Wrong! Take a moment to pull out your list of student organizations that are registered with the University of Illinois. Have you ever thought about asking one of them to cosponsor an event?

Cosponsorships between student organizations involves joint participation in the production of a program or event. The benefits associated with cosponsorships are many: additional funding, enhanced creativity, increased credibility, attraction of a more diverse audience, greater promotional capabilities – to name just a few. The following are a few details of the benefits of cosponsorship:

- Staffing. When the work associated with the program can be divided between two or more groups of people, this means less of a burden on everyone. Just think: twice as many people to transport supplies, sell tickets, set up or take down equipment, usher guests and every other aspect of program planning you can generate. Wouldn’t it be nice to sponsor a huge event without letting your homework or social life suffer?
- Diverse programming. With a variety of people on the planning committee, you will be able to develop a more diverse program reaching a larger number of people. By cosponsoring activities with other groups you promote teamwork, develop a sense of community and create programs that will reach a larger portion of the campus population.
- Public image. Cosponsoring allows you to create more programs than if you were to do them alone because you have additional help and resources. By getting your group’s name out more, you are creating a positive image in the campus community. This may help with gaining additional funding, recruiting new members and other side effects that you weren’t even expecting!
- Money. An added benefit of cosponsorships is the opportunity for increased funding. When groups combine funds, the chances of securing a major entertainer or program are increased. This sharing of monetary responsibility also reduces any possible loss by dividing the weight between more than one group.

- Whole better than part. If you're a psychology buff, you might remember the implications of Gestalt psychology: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Applying this to student organizations, it means that groups working together to create programs can lead to better results than if each group worked separately on its own individual programs. Cosponsoring allows you to meet your organizational goals while also promoting the goals of the other group(s). The process can lead to heightened energy and creativity and encourages further growth and development.
- Personal development. Cosponsoring allows the people involved to develop a number of skills that will help them throughout life, such as: delegation, goal setting, motivation, team building and meeting deadlines. This experience can also increase the understanding of cultural backgrounds, gender relations and so forth. While there are a great many benefits involved in cosponsoring events, the process can entail some disadvantages also. Don't let these deter you from cosponsoring events, but rather keep them in mind and prepare for them so you know what to do should they occur.
- Power structure. One group involved in the cosponsored event may have more money or experience than the other(s), which might cause them to assume a position of power. Such situations can result in an atmosphere of resentment or distrust. Before embarking on the cosponsorship journey, consider how you will handle the situation if one group tries to dominate or exhibit an aura of superiority.
- Deciding a program. Each group involved in planning the event may have different goals and objectives for which to strive. As you might guess, your group's goals may be different than your cosponsor's. To avoid tension, hold a meeting at the start to document the goals of all groups involved. Then, make a commitment to each other to work towards achieving all of them.
- Different meanings of cosponsorship. The word "cosponsor" does not have one meaning – there are a variety of meanings depending on the situation. Your interpretation may involve helping in all phases of planning and production, whereas your cosponsor may think it means giving money so it can have its name included in the advertisements. When you meet to decide your goals, discuss your expectations as well and write them down. A brief discussion at the start can save a lot of headaches at the end.

When you begin experimenting with cosponsorships, start with programs that are easy to coordinate. Once you develop an understanding of the process and how other groups operate, you

will be better prepared to tackle larger, more complex programs.

Reference:

Cooper, J.E. & Porter, B.E. (1991). Cosponsorships: Bridging the gap among student organizations. *Campus Activities Programming*, 23, pp. 47-51.

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