

GETTING INVOLVED

“Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things, I am tempted to think...there are no little things.”

– Bruce Barton

Getting involved here is not difficult. There are opportunities offered daily which allow you to involve yourself, but most of the time people are looking for something more than just “getting involved.” Most of us prefer to do things that are fun, educational or provide us with some personal benefit. While people may join organizations to build their resumes, they are not likely to stick with them for long if they do not provide opportunities for personal and/or professional development.

Looking for ways to get involved can be like a job search: You can research organizations prior to applying to make sure they offer the benefits you desire. You might just apply everywhere without really paying attention and then decide at the last minute which one you want to pursue. Or you might know someone in the organization who encourages you to join. All three of these methods are utilized quite regularly in the business world as well as the student organization world.

Before you begin your search for the organization(s) that will embrace your talents and time, reflect upon what you truly want from an organization. Are you looking for an organization that:

- Is related to your major?
- Provides a service to the community?
- Is associated with your hobby?
- Will allow you to meet new people and make new friends?
- Keep you in touch with others of a similar background?
- Is associated with a professional organization?
- Will furnish an opportunity to network with people in the business world?
- Focuses on helping others?

When considering these questions, you should have your written long-term goals in front of you (see Goal Setting). Make sure the areas you pursue will help you achieve your goals in some manner.

It is much easier to decide which organization will work best for you if you can narrow your decision down to a particular genre. Once you have determined your general interest, there are several categories of Registered Student Organizations from which to choose:

- Academic
- Athletic/Recreation
- Creative/Performing Arts
- Cultural/Ethnic

- Government
- Political
- Religious
- Rights/Freedom
- ROTC
- Service
- Social

You can obtain a list of all Registered Student Organizations on campus from the Student Organization Complex (Room 280, Illini Union). Remember, there are several hundred organizations listed, so the narrower your focus, the easier your search will be.

When you have found an organization that sounds like something you would like to pursue, take some time to check it out. Call the president and ask about the details of the organization and what purpose it serves. Attend a meeting to see how the group is organized. Talk to current members to discern the pros and cons of the organization. Find out what time commitment you would be expected to give. In other words, do some digging before you commit yourself to a year of participation. Turnover rates for organizations could be much lower if potential members did some investigating prior to joining. If people knew in advance that they were expected to devote 25 hours per week to the group, they might think twice before jumping on board!

This procedure can greatly increase your chances of finding a group that truly meets your needs and one in which you feel positive about contributing your talents and energy. Even with all of this preparation, after a few months of involvement you might find that it just isn't what you thought it would be and decide to move to something else. Don't be too discouraged if this happens. There are many middle-aged professionals making these same decisions! To avoid misunderstandings, make sure your reasons for leaving are clear both to yourself and to your organization. If you tell yourself you are resigning because you don't enjoy the meetings, but really it is the time commitment that is bothering you, you will not be doing yourself any favors by joining another group with the same amount of time commitment expected.

Also, keep in mind that you do not need to be involved in every organization related to your major, hobby or field of interest. Most people will tell you it is much more beneficial – to both the member and the group – to belong to just a few groups in which you can make major contributions, rather than belonging to a large amount and spreading yourself too thin.

With several hundred organizations to choose from, you would assume there is something to fit your needs. Don't be discouraged if there is not, however – you can start your own group! Refer to the Handbook for Registered Organizations, available in the Student Organization Complex, for details on beginning your own organization.

Related Leader Readers: Achieving Balance; Goal Setting; Time Management

[Leader Readers](#) | [Illini Union](#)