Team-Building: Improving Group Members' Commitments in Student Diversity Affair Committee

Peilin Ye, EDLD 655

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Introduction

Student Diversity Affair Committee (SDAC)

SDAC is a student run organization devoted to bringing to light issues of diversity for students, faculty, and staff in the College of Education. SDAC works to plan and organize educational opportunities to spread awareness to students, faculty, and staff of ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds, international students, veterans, non-traditional students, students with disabilities, and the LGBTQ population among others. SDAC strives to promote the strengths within the diverse student body among programs in the College of Education and in the community.

Activities include social, presentation, panel session, and co-organize with other student groups which aim at supporting diversity population all around the campus.

Events

Student Diversity Affairs Committee Social
Oct 29, 2010
1-3 pm at Pegasus Pizza. The Student Diversity Affairs Committee will be holding their first social of the year! Come to support our organization, hear about future events, chat with the leadership team and other students, and enjoy free pizza!!!

SDAC Social with CHiXapkaid
Jan 20, 2011
5:30-7:30 pm in Hedco Room 220. We are happy to welcome back UO professor in Education Studies, CHiXapkaid! Student Diversity Affairs Committee will be kicking off the Winter term with a social gathering and a welcoming atmosphere to hear CHiXapkaid speak about Native American culture.

SDAC Disability Panel Presentation
Feb 18, 2011
1:00-2:30pm in Lokey 276. This is an event that discusses what life is like for someone with a disability. Specifically, it is a panel of students within the College of Education who identify as having a disability. The panel members will also be discussing different skills service providers should possess when working with someone who has a disability, and will provide some examples of different micro-aggressions and intersectionality. Food will be provided!!!

Funding and Staffing

The funding of the organization came from Dean's Office in College of Education. The coordinator estimated the budget for the activity every time and reported to the dean in order to get the funding.
The Leadership-Team members come from different department in College of Education. However, most of the team members were referred by faculty which might compromise their commitments to the organization.

The Essential Issue in SDAC

Due to the fact that most of the Leadership-Team members are referred by certain faculties, their commitments to the organization are low, which can be reflected in the following aspects:

1. In the first term, only two people out of other eight leadership team members can ensure showing up in the weekly meeting throughout the whole term.
2. Email seemed to be the most effective way in communicating between group members. However, with the time being, it gradually became the dominate communication tools which even, to some extent, substitute the weekly meeting.
3. All the members in SDAC are not familiar with each other. Some of them never showed up in the SDAC event for even once.
4. Until the second term, less people are interested in responding to the SDAC coordinator's events discussion emails.
5. Class announcements used to be the most useful marketing tools for publicizing up-coming events in SDAC. Since the group members' commitments drop, less people were willing to invite more students in COE to join our events.
6. In the second term, due to the fact that only two people can show up in the meeting every week, the coordinator cancelled the weekly basis meeting. Instead, more emails are used to communicate. By doing this, the team members felt more disconnected to the SDAC.

Reasons which Might Cause the Issue

1. Most of the group members are referred instead of volunteering to join the SDAC.
2. Schedule conflicting. Graduate students' schedules are super busy. Most of the members have a GTF position while they also need to take care of their study. It's hard to find a shared time for everyone to attend the weekly meeting and for them to response to the email efficiently.
3. SDAC coordinator should work hard to improve the atmosphere within the team. For instance, marketing the support she need from the other team members and emphasizing the purpose of establishing this organization.
4. Team-building activity can also be organized within SDAC from time to time. It is a way for the team members to know each other and a flexible way to discuss some of the potential events.
5. The Leadership-team is not built in an amply diverse bases. Though each team member represents at least one kind of diversities under their backgrounds, their passion of advocating for the diverse issue are not strong enough for them to make the commitment. In a sentence, they don't have a strong reason to devote themselves to be a part of the team.

Contact Information

For further information, or sources contact Peilin Ye at peiliny@uoregon.edu.

The SDAC Coordinator Face the Dilemma

The situation putted the SDAC coordinator into a dilemma:

- It is impossible to force team members to devote to the SDAC activity if they are not responding. Since it is a voluntary-based student organization, the only thing the coordinator can do is to encourage more team members to be involved. If they still fence with other excuses, being indifferent or even have no response, the coordinator doesn't have the right to dispel them from the SDAC.

- The coordinator felt isolated from the other members. It is impossible to run a student organization in the effort of only one to two people. The ideal pattern of running a student organization is to take the advantage of each team member. Different people should be responsible for separate aspects according to their strengths in the organization in order to increase the working efficiency.

What Do Other Sources Say Helped to deal with the Current Situation?

Prepare for a Crucial Conversation

Principle	Skills
Start with Heart	-Focus on what you really want. -Refuse the sucker's choice.
Learn to Look	-Look for when the conversation becomes crucial. -Look for safety problems. -Look for our our style under stress.
Make it Safe	-Apologize when appropriate. -Contrast to fix misunderstanding. -CRIB to get to mutual purpose.
Master My Stories	-Retrace my path to action. -Separate fact from story. -Tell the rest of the story.
State My Path	Share ur facts -> Tell ur story -> Ask for others' paths -> Talk tentatively -> Encourage testing
Explore Others' Paths	Ask. Mirror. Paraphrase. Prime. Agree. Build. Compare.
Move to Action	Decide how you'll decide. Document decisions and follow up.

Five Leadership Skills that Increase Engagement:

1. Building trust
   We build trust by trusting others. This requires a basic belief in people, a belief that people are essentially trustworthy.
2. Mentoring
   Effective leaders need to give and receive feedback and to coach and counsel employees in a way that increases engagement and commitment.
3. Inclusion
   Effective leaders know that everyone on their team has strengths the team needs.
4. Alignment
   Engaged employees feel aligned with their organisation's Purpose, Values and Vision.
5. Team Development
   Effective leaders understand the potential for significant increases in performance through high performing teams.
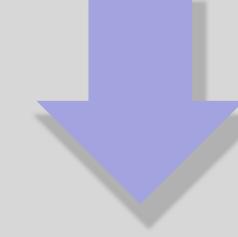
Proposed Improvements for the Leadership team

1. Exclude redundant members while recruit new passionate staff. Coordinator may have conversation with all the leadership team members to see their intentions to stay.

2. Increase team building opportunities. Certain social activities can be arranged within SDAC leadership team in order to enhance alignment, trust and relationship among the group members.

3. Set up more approaches other than Emails for team members to communicate or exchange their ideas. For instance, create a blog for people to write whenever and whatever.

4. Arrange the team as a whole when brainstorming or planning new events; assign people with different tasks when their expertise match separate theme of the event. Take advantage of each member's strength would enhance SDAC efficiency.

5. Make team members feel aligned with the organisation's purpose, values and vision. Leader should make members' work meaningful to them because its leader's ability to help them see the connection between what they do and the success of the organisation which might benefit the whole college.

Short-term / Long-term Objectives

Short-term Objectives

- Have more students in COE know SDAC

- All the members in SDAC know each other well as well as be passionate and devoted to the group

- More diversity issues been brought out; More students feel that they are supported in COE

Long-term Objectives

- SDAC became college wide known

- Students are willing to join the leadership team which increase the diversity and efficiency of the group

- Students in COE tolerant and understand more of the diverse population with less bias and prejudices

Sources:
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