Building Coalitions with Faculty & Staff

Brett Bruner
Director of Student Life
2010 NACA Student Government West Institute
Overview

• Outcomes & goals of presentation
• Identifying the “FTA” Attitude
• 10 Mistakes of Student Government Leaders
• Collaboration
• Rebuilding Bridges
• Personal Relationships
• 10 Positive Strategies to Building Coalitions
• The Coalition Building Challenge!
• It Starts with YOU!
Outcomes & Goals

• Delegates will:
  • Identify common mistakes that student leaders make with the “FTA” attitude
  • Discuss techniques that foster positive collaboration
  • Analyze ways to help rebuild burnt bridges and strong personal relationships with administrators
  • Describe positive strategies to build coalitions
  • Apply skills to a practical situation
Identifying the “FTA” Attitude

Find a partner from a different institution & share a story about a time when you & your SGA butted heads with campus administration.

• What was the issue?
• What was the administration’s response?
• What did you in response to their response/action?
Identifying the “FTA” Attitude

FTA =

F***
The Administration!

How many of us have had an “FTA” attitude?
What are the drawbacks to using an “FTA” attitude?
Is it the best approach to representing student concerns?
10 Mistakes of Student Government Leaders

10. We only know half of the story.
9. We speak in generalities.
8. We dwell on the negatives.
7. We assume.
6. We rarely initiate contact.
5. We pass anecdotal evidence off as the truth.
4. We are reluctant to communicate.
3. We refuse to collaborate.
2. We are unable to articulate the students’ voice
1. We perpetuate the “us vs. them” (or FTA) attitude.
Collaboration is Key!

“Open & regular communication between the leadership of student government & members of the administration is critical. Problems & misunderstandings occur when both are operating & making decisions independent of one another. Administrators want to know Student Government’s top priorities, so we can assist in addressing them as well as incorporate them into our work & planning.”

— Senior Student Affairs Officer
Collaboration is Key!

Techniques that Foster Positive Collaboration

• Take initiative
• Share your vision
• Engage administrators with your agenda
• Find common ground
• Don’t just identify problems – provide solutions
• Keep the conversation going
• Use date to support your initiative
Collaboration is Key!

“Fixing a strained relationship between student government & university administration does not happen overnight; however, with positive communication, mutual respect & a shared dedication for working toward the advancement of the university, positive change will occur.”

– Senior Student Affairs Officer
Collaboration is Key!

*Techniques that Help Rebuild Burnt Bridges*
- Recognize & understand the problem
- Engage in constructive conversations
- Learn both sides of an issue
- Take personal emotions out of the equation
- Respect
- Don’t dwell on the past
- Work toward a common goal
Collaboration is Key!

“Phone calls & e-mails may be a convenient way to communicate but they are inherently impersonal. Direct face-to-face contact goes a long way to build lasting personal relationships with university administrators.”

– University President

“Get your face out there & initiate relationships.”

– SGA Advisor
Collaboration is Key!

Techniques that Help Build Strong Personal Relationships with Faculty & Staff

• Initiate contact
• Schedule regular meetings
• Be prepared
• Follow up & keep in contact
• Invite administrators to your space
• Connect on something outside of student government
10 Positive Strategies to Building Coalitions

10. We initiate the conversation.
9. We are respectful.
8. We know our facts.
7. We utilize our advisor.
6. We understand & are able to articulate the students’ voice.
5. We establish personal relationships.
4. We provide realistic solutions to problems.
3. We meet regularly.
2. We focus on commonalities in our action plans.
1. We collaborate.
The Coalition Building Challenge!

In a small group, you will be challenged as an SGA Executive Board to deal with a real-life practical application.

Analyze the issues at hand.

Identify the strategies that you will use to:

• Collaborate
• Rebuild a burnt bridge
• Establish a strong personal relationship
Group I: Faculty/Staff
Dependent Tuition Waiver

Three of your Exec Board members (President, Vice-President & Treasurer) are voting members on the University Budget Development & Tuition Committee. The Committee has brought forward a recommendation to increase student tuition for the primary purpose of funding tuition waivers for dependents of faculty & staff.

You are OUTRAGED at this idea & bring the idea to your Exec Board (who’s in agreement with you). You’ve learned you have no allies with the Faculty Senate & Classified Assembly members who sit on the Committee (it was their proposal). What will you do before & at the next meeting where it will be voted on?
Group 2: Impeachment Decision Reversal

Your Student Senate voted to impeach 1 member of your Student Senate due to failure to comply your Student Senate Attendance Policy. Your Exec Board and Student Body President have stood by this decision of the Senators and chosen not to overturn it.

Your Exec Board has been summoned to the University President’s Office & has been told that the President has overturned this impeachment decision on the grounds that the impeached Senator was threatening legal action against the University. Your Vice-President for Student Affairs (& one of your SGA advisors) is in agreement with the University President. What action will you take?
Group 3: Funding of Student Readership Program

Your SGA Exec Board has allocated a significant portion of your budget to fund a student readership program for your students, giving them free access to 3 newspapers (local, state & national). With increasing budget woes university-wide & a declining student enrollment, the Vice-President for Fiscal Affairs has recommended to the University President that this service be eliminated & SGA “donate” this money to the general operating expenses account.

Your Exec Board is visibly upset since this was a platform that you ran on during the election process, and you think that several students use this service. What action will you take?
Group 4: Faculty Senate
Backlash

A primary concern that has been raised among your student body is the lack of absence policy for students missing classes for University-related events & services. Thus, your SGA developed & passed it’s University-Related Student Absence Policy by working closely with the Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Vice-President for Student Affairs.

While your chain of command in bill-passing doesn’t require bills to go through Faculty Senate, your SGA Exec Board, as a courtesy, mentions this in the SGA report at the weekly Faculty Senate meeting. Faculty are OUTRAGED and vow that you (as SGA) don’t have the authority to do this. Thus, they pass a motion not allowing this policy. You are furious at “them!” What action will you take?
It Starts with YOU!

Building allies with administration, faculty & staff is imperative to the effectiveness of your SGA!

Take a few minutes with your campus delegation to:

• Make an action plan for your SGA on how you’ll take that first step to building allies with administration, faculty & staff
• Challenge yourself to establish a new relationship or rebuild a burnt bridge
Resources

NACA Digital Library

• “Building Allies with University Administration” by Jude Butch (2008).