

The University of Cincinnati Women's Center presents...

The 2010-2011

Student Activist Guide

A guide for
everything you
need to make
change here at
UC.

Resources for students,
made by students.

—Activism—

In our culture activists have gotten a bit of a bad reputation. When you hear the word “activist” you think of angry mobs, boycotts, yelling, and protesting, but activism can encompass a broad range of activities. According to Wikipedia, “activism, is intentional action to bring about social, political, economic or environmental change.”

By this definition anything can arguably be activism, correcting someone who is using a racial slur, holding an educational program, using your Facebook status to bring attention to an issue, blogging, sending in a letter to the editor, or emailing your legislator. Many of us do activism everyday just in our daily activities.

There are numerous theoretical arguments about the best way to make change through activism. One of the greatest of these debates is over whether change should be made within existing institutions and structures or if those structures and institutions need to be destroyed before any sort of valuable change can happen. This guide will provide student activists at UC with information and resources that may be helpful in any activist work here, ranging from radical activism to more mainstream. This guide presents student activists with necessary rules and regulations and it is up to the individual to decide whether they want to follow these offered suggestions.

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Grassroots Organizing

The word grassroots refers to a movement that comes from the ground up as opposed to from the top down, as many traditional power structures are set up. The term implies that the creation of the movement and the group supporting it are natural and spontaneous. One of the most important aspects of grassroots organizing is recruiting people to support your cause. Campus Camp Wellstone defines organizing as building meaningful relationships and once those relationships are built one can mobilize those people to work on a specific cause.

Where do you find these people? Start with the people that you know and already have a relationship with. Many people think that you have to start by recruiting strangers for your cause, but the people closest to you will often be willing to act because of the relationship that you share with them.

Principles of Grassroots Organizing

- Strong relationships are the basis for effective organizing
- Relationships are more motivating than information
- Relationships + interest = ability to mobilize

A helpful tool for developing these relationships and mobilizing people is a *one-on-one*. A one-on-one is an intentional conversation that you have with a person to find out:

1. The **issues** important to them
2. The **values** that motivate those issues
3. What **contributions** they would be willing and interested in making
4. What motivates their personal **interest** in these issues
5. What other **commitments** they have

One-on-ones should usually last at least a half hour and are a great way to gather information and form a relationship. Here are some things to keep in mind during a one-on-one:

- Let the other person do most of the talking- you should only spend 25% of the time talking.
- Ask a lot of “why” questions that can’t be answered with one word.
- Try to be probing not prying, you don’t want it to feel like an interview.
- You’re goal is to figure out their interests so that you can see how they can best help your activist project.
- Try not to talk about yourself or even your organization at least until the end.

Student Organizations

Creating a student organization for your interest, cause, or activist topic is probably the easiest way to recruit students, reserve space at UC, legally post fliers, advertise through University means, and most importantly receive funding.

Student organizations are run out of the office of Student Activities and Leadership Development (SALD), located in the Steger Student Life Center on the 4th floor. The [Student Organization Handbook](#) provides all the details for creating and maintaining a student organization.

Highlights and Helpful Hints from the Student Organization Handbook:

- **Registration Documents:** The Handbook outline all of the documents needed to fill out the online registration form for new student organizations.
 - ◇ When writing your organization's **purpose statement**, try not to make it too specific because your organization's funded activities will always have to match the purpose of the group. You want it to be broad enough so that your group has room to participate in a wide range of activities and form alliances and co-sponsorships but specific enough that gives your organization a clear purpose.
 - ◇ Research other organization's **purpose statements** prior to writing yours to ensure that yours is not too similar to that of another organization because that could result in your organization not being approved.
 - **Registration Approval:** The guide outlines the guidelines upon which the Student Activities Board (SAB) will approve student organizations; it would be helpful to look these over prior to submitting the online registration form. Also it is best if someone from your group attends the SAB meeting when your group will be reviewed so that you can answer any questions SAB may have.
 - **Advisor Roles:** All student organizations are required to have an advisor. Prior to selecting an advisor you may want to consider how involved you expect and want your advisor to be, the Handbook outlines some of those concerns.
- ★ The most important thing to remember when going through the processes to have your student organization approved and eligible for funding is to stay in contact with SALD, the Student Activities Board (SAB), and the University Funding Board (UFB). Make sure to ask lots of clarifying questions and continually follow up with each organization as you go through the processes.

The University Funding Board (UFB)

UFB is responsible for providing funding to most undergraduate student organizations. Each student organization that is eligible for funding through UFB can receive up to \$7000 in funding each year (and an additional \$300 operating expenses. (These amounts are subject to change on a yearly basis). To access that \$7000 dollars student groups must prepare a Funding Request Form with all the appropriate documents.

UFB Treasurer's Workshops are held several times throughout each school year and it is required that at least one member of your organization attend this workshop prior to being eligible for UFB funding. At this workshop each student organization receives the University Funding Board, Funding Facts Packet which can also be found [online at this website](#). This packet will lay out all the rules and guidelines necessary for making a funding request.

Highlights and Tips for UFB Funding Requests:

- All prices must be documented. So make sure to bring in **documentation** for the prices of ALL items, even something as little as paper plates, or as large as hotel rooms or van rental.
- Starting on Page 10 the guide provides a step by step outline for creating a Funding Request.
- Make sure to go and **meet with a member** during of UFB during their office hours before 3pm on the day of their meeting. It is best if you meet with a member a few days in advance so that you have time to fix any problems they find in your request.

Rallies, tabling and, educational events, discussions, performance, sit-ins,

Holding an On-Campus Event

flash mobs, demonstrations; these sorts of on-campus events are all great ways to promote your cause or your activist project on campus. For most events it is important that you reserve a space on campus to ensure that you will not be forced to leave your location.

Mainstreet Operations is responsible for campus scheduling and anyone who wishes to reserve a space on campus must utilize the online form found at www.uc.edu/mainstreet. To utilize this form you must log in using your UC username and password, and you must be affiliated with an SAB approved student organization or an on campus office, and therefore will be expected to follow all rules and regulations.

If you do not have a student organization or an on-campus office to affiliate with, you can not utilize this same online form and are then considered a **Non-University Affiliated Group**, regardless of your student status. As a Non-University Affiliated Group, you can still reserve a space on-campus by contacting Campus Scheduling at campusscheduling@uc.edu or calling 556-2442. Non-University Affiliated Groups will incur a charge for utilizing campus space.

Each year Mainstreet provides an [Event Guide for Student Organizations](#), which can be found on their website. The guide lists all of the rules and regulations regarding scheduling and utilizing spaces on campus. The [Student Organization Handbook](#) also provides details on how to reserve space and plan for an event through a student group starting on page 41. Page 44 outlines the exact steps for using the online form to reserve a space on campus. The [Use of Facilities Policy Manual](#) may also be helpful when looking into using campus spaces.

Holding a Campus Event without Reserving Space

For shorter events or surprise events such as quick rallies, sit-ins, or flash mobs, reserving a space may prove to be counterintuitive to the event itself. In these cases it you must be prepared to deal with the consequences such as being asked to leave or even having campus police called.

Remember when holding such events:

- When asked to leave be willing to do so without arguing.
- Do not tie the name of a university office, group or student organization to the event so that they cannot be penalized and instead make sure it is promoted as unaffiliated students coming together for an important cause.
- Try not to do anything that can disrupt the University's regular functioning.
- Consider the implications, impact, and retributions that can occur as a result of the event. Look over the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and greatly consider before taking part in any activity that could get you in trouble with the Office of Judicial Affairs or Public Safety.

Helpful UC Resources and Referrals

African American Cultural Research Center (AACRC)

Sanders Complex 513-556-1177

Counseling Center

316 Dyer Hall, 513-556-0648

Ethnic Programs and Services (EPS)

Steger 555, 513-556-6008

Office of the University Ombuds

607 Swift, 513-556-5956

Student Activities and Leadership Development (SALD)

455 Steger, 513-556-6115

Student Government

Steger 655

Student Activities Board (SAB)

Steger 655

University Funding Board (UFB)

Steger 655

Racial Awareness Pilot Program (RAPP)

Steger 669, 513-556-6119

UC Wellness Center

675 Steger, 513-556-6124

UC Women's Center

Steger 571, Steger 513-556-4401

Reclaim Program

Steger 565, 24-hour helpline 513-218-9531

LGBTQ Office

Steger 681, 513-556-4329

How to Voice Concerns

Is there something occurring on campus that you do not think is right? There are many different ways of voicing your concerns here at UC and utilizing some of the offices found in the UC Resources and Referrals section of this guide may be good starting points.

Different ways to voice your concerns:

1. **UC is Listening-** www.feedback.uc.edu

- This is an online form for members of the UC Community to share any concerns, questions, compliments, or suggestions.
- It's great to use if you do not know who to contact about a certain issue, because you will be directed to the appropriate person.
- It is required that someone from UC respond to anything submitted using this online form, so it guarantees that someone will hear your concern.

2. **Administrator Meetings**

- An administrator meeting is a meeting you set up with a UC employee to discuss a specific policy, proposal, or an area that you believe needs improvement.

Administrator Meetings FAQs:

- ◇ **Who do I meet with?** You may not know who to meet with about a certain topic, but you can often call a related office and they should be able to refer you to the appropriate person. You may be referred several times before meeting with the appropriate person, so don't give up after one try.
- ◇ **How should I contact the administrator?** Many students would prefer to utilize the Internet for most communication, and while email has its advantages, in some cases it may be more advantageous to communicate in more direct ways such as in person or via phone call. If you call an office you may be able to express your concern more easily and then it may be helpful to follow up a call with an email.
- ◇ **What should I tell them I want to meet about?** Wording your concern can be tricky, depending on the type of concern. Sometimes it may be ideal to keep the topic of discussion somewhat vague while at other times you may want to explain your exact request. Put some thought into how much you want the administrator to know prior to meeting with you, if you want them to be able to do some research on their own prior to your meeting, you may want to explain your concern very clearly, but if you want to avoid the administrator talking to other people and getting "back up" or "reinforcement" prior to the meeting you may not want to be too direct.

- ◇ **What if the administrator doesn't want to meet?** UC is a university therefore it is here for the students, and voicing concerns is very important for the University to meet the needs of the students. If the person that you want to meet with will not meet with you, then ask who you can meet with. Sometimes you may have to meet with a few people before you finally meet with the person who can make the change that you want.
- ◇ **What do I say at the meeting?** Meeting with an administrator may seem scary or overwhelming, here are a few tips that may help:
 - ✓ **Be friendly**- go into the meeting with a positive attitude and a hope for change, be polite, friendly and courteous so that you can foster a positive relationship with this administrator which can work in your favor for the future.
 - ✓ **Bring someone with you**- bring someone else from your group or someone else who cares about this cause or issue, it is fine to have more than one person at a meeting and it can be helpful to have two people to help facilitate the discussion.
 - ✓ **Talk to allies**- seek out other, possibly "lower down" administrators who may support your cause and ask for resources and suggestions for the meeting and for addressing that specific administrator.
 - ✓ **Do some research**- research the policies of other colleges and universities surrounding this issue, and come with resources to help back up your points.

Get Your Message Out

No matter your activist cause it is necessary to get your message out whether it be to recruit members to your student organization, to bring awareness to a certain topic or area of concern or to advertise an event. There are many options for getting your information out there.

1. **Flyering**- There are bulletin boards all over campus where students can post fliers. Flyering is a great way to get students' attention and attract students to your organization.

Some tips for fliers:

- print on colored paper- it will be bright and grab students' attention.
- use an eye-catching image or slogan.
- keep in mind your audience- average students will be looking at these fliers so you want to use words that appear inviting and interesting.
- [The Student Organization Handbook](#) lists the rules and regulations for flyering on campus starting on page 62 . Do note that student groups are required to take down their flier 3 days after an event, page 63 outlines the penalties for violating these rules.

2. Media Contact

- Utilizing the media is a great way to bring attention to an important issue. You can use press releases to notify the media about an event, write letters to the editor, or even offer to do an interview.
- There are many resources on the internet for **writing a press release** <http://www.rapidpressrelease.com/Writing+A+Press+Release/?mtc=HowToWriting&gclid=CO6YwZylh6ACFQcMDQodxUXhBw> this link provides specific steps on how to format and write your media release.

Media to Contact:

The News Record

- This is the independent student newspaper of the University of Cincinnati.
- Their website has a handy “contact us” link on it which provides the email addresses of all the paper editors.
- You can buy an ad in the News Record and you can even use student group funding for it!

The Enquirer

- This link provides you with the contact information for The Enquirer. [Link Here](#)
- Note, there is a person who specifically covers higher education news, and they may be the best person to contact for something involving the University of Cincinnati.

City Beat- a free Cincinnati newspaper that covers news, public issues, arts and entertainment of interests.

- <http://www.citybeat.com/cincinnati/flex-105-contact.html> this link provides with you the contact information for City Beat where you can provide them with media releases and letters to the editor.

Local Television- all television channels will have news tips, email address, as well as other contact information:

- **WKRC Local 12**
http://www.local12.com/content/contact_information/default.aspx
- **WLWT News 5**
<http://www.wlwt.com/station/5086804/detail.html>
- **WCPO HD 9**
http://www.wcpo.com/subindex/about_us/contact_us

Electronic Media:

- **Facebook**– Utilizing fan pages and groups are great ways to get information out to a large amount of people. You can also get members of your organization and allies to update their statuses to get out information or links to petition sites etc.

- **Twitter**– This is a great way to share links and information, as well as to find out about up and coming news .
- **Google groups**– you can utilize Google groups to create a listserve for your organization so that all members can effectively communicate.
- **Doodle**– www.doodle.com is a free service that can be used for scheduling an event or making a decision electronically as a group.
- **Free petition sites**– there are a multitude of free online petition sites that take an electronic signature and can be circulated via email, facebook, twitter etc.
- **Action Alerts**– an action alert is an online form that people can fill out that will quickly and easily send a message to a legislator or otherwise specified decision maker. The [Amplify](#) blog site allows you to make your own action alerts for free .
- **Blogging**– You can either start your own blog, become a contributing writer on another blog, or provide your information to a popular blogger and ask them to post it to their blog.

Helpful Tips About Messaging

When putting your message out there you want to make sure that it is a good message that is easily understood and gets the point across. Campus Camp Wellstone suggests that you follow the following guidelines, nicknamed **CCRC**:

Credible– does it pass the test of skepticism

Concise– easy to understand quickly

Relevant– should connect with someone’s interests or values (consider your target audience)

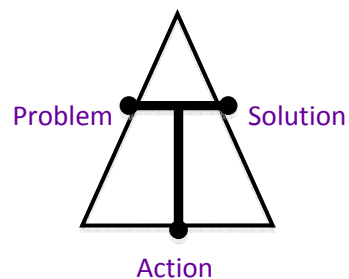
Compelling– it should push someone to act

This **PSA triangle** represents what should always be clearly identifiable within your message. Here is an example:

Problem: Teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates are on the rise

Solution: Comprehensive sex education would provide young people with the information they need to keep themselves safe

Action: So call your legislator and ask them to stand up for comprehensive sex education



—A Note From the Editor—

This guide was created for you in the 2009-2010 school year by E. Kimmins Southard, a third year student with activist experience here at UC. The goal of this guide was to put all of the necessary information for student activists in one place for easy access. So often students are stuck going from one office to the next trying to find the answers to their questions and hopefully this guide will put all of the information in one place and be able to direct you to the appropriate offices when necessary. Much of the information in this guide is time sensitive and the links need to be updated every year, the UC Women's Center will do their best to keep this updated for your use, but feel free to contact them if anything is unclear or if you have any questions.

I hope this helps you to achieve all of your activist goals here at UC to make UC a better place for all students. Good luck in your activist pursuits!

-Kimmins S.



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