How to Build a Retreat

1. Pick an organizer and create a committee for the retreat.
   a. Creating a committee for the retreat will give an opportunity for leadership in the chapter that may not be available.
   b. The committee will give insight to what the chapter needs in the retreat.

2. Identify the purpose of the retreat.
   a. Do not have a retreat without a reason. It is best to focus the retreat on areas that need attention in the chapter.
   b. These retreats focus on building relationships with one another. For example, new members retreats, executive board retreats, and all chapter retreats.

3. Build a budget.
   a. What is the chapter going to need for this retreat? Build a budget that identifies what items the chapter will need to pay for. Common items that are needed for retreats are venue costs, supplies for ice breakers or workshops, and refreshments.
   b. Make sure the budget follows the larger budget of the semester. If there has been $300 dollars delegated to this event, make sure not to go over that amount. This is necessary to keep the overall budget of the chapter on track.

4. Plan a time, date and length for the retreat well in advance.
   a. Remember that the participants of the chapter also have other obligations. The earlier a date is set, the earlier the participants of the chapter can put it on their calendars. This will help get as many participants as possible to attend.
   b. A suggested time line for setting a date is no less than 60 days in advance.
   c. Determine how long the retreat will last. It can last a couple hours, over night or several days.

5. Reserve a space for the retreat in advance.
   a. Reserving the space the chapter needs early will insure your spot.
   b. If the retreat is held outside, also reserve a rain location.
   c. Make sure that the space is big enough for all participant attending the retreat and any activities that you may need to do.

   a. There are many useful resources on campus that the chapter can use as presenters on campus.
b. Student Leadership Development provides different workshops that can be incorporated into any retreat. Contact them through this link

7. Plan an agenda for the retreat.
   a. A good retreat should have set times for activities.
   b. Retreats should also have learning outcomes. Is the retreat focused on building friendships? Make sure that the activities are built around that learning outcome.

8. If the retreat is going to be more than five hours, plan for at least one meal time for the participants.
   a. Meal times will help participants focus and give a nice mental break for the participants.
   b. If a meal is not in the budget, make sure the participants know to bring their own meal or give them options of where they can buy meals nearby in advance.

9. Make sure to include breaks.
   a. Make sure to plan for the participants needs. Participants needs may vary from the planners needs.
   b. Schedule them in if necessary. Similar to studying, these frequent, short breaks for snacks or the restroom will help participants recharge for the next item on the agenda.
   c. For example, one meal break in an eight hour period is not enough. Schedule at least three to four more short breaks into the schedule.

10. Plan for the evaluation of the retreat.
    a. To find out what could be done better for the next time a retreat is held, ask participants to fill out a survey online or on paper.
    b. Strongly encourage all participants who attended the retreat to finish the survey so the retreat can constantly be improved.
    c. If you want to give treats or prizes for finishing the survey, here are some options for the chapter to use. Examples are as follows:
       i. Candy
       ii. Raffle off an item
       iii. Dollar items

11. Send out Thank You cards.
    a. If there was presenters at the retreat, make sure to not only thank them in the closing remarks, but to also send them a Thank You card.
    b. If any advisors had a part in planning or were present at the retreat, make sure to send them a Thank You card.
c. Sending out Thank You cards also helps the chapter build stronger connections on campus and in the community. The presenters may be able to connect the chapter with other partners.

Below is an example of a half day retreat agenda. This example was developed to give some insight as to how a retreat can be organized. The chapter’s agenda does not have to follow this example or format in any way.

1. Opening Description – 15 Minutes
   a. Talk about the point of the retreat.
   b. Purpose or welcome of the retreat.
   c. Overview of the day and introduction of any presenters.

2. Opening Activity – 30 Minutes
   a. Have a little fun! Get everyone up and moving and the energy high.
   b. This activity can be an ice breaker and a way to get to know each other a little more.
   c. Refer to the list of ice breakers that is located on the resource page of Sorority & Fraternity Life’s website.

3. Break – 5 Minutes

4. Business – 45 Minutes
   a. This time can range from round table discussions that are focused on goal setting to friendship building activities. This area should pertain to the goal of the retreat.
   b. The time can be broken up into as many workshops as the chapter needs.

5. Break – 15 minutes
   a. This can be a snack, meal, or a bathroom break for participants.
   b. If you are serving meals or snacks for the participants, make sure there is enough for everyone in attendance. Also, offer refreshments to any invited presenters and advisors that are present.

6. Business – 45 Minutes
   a. Review the Business section located above.

7. Break – 5 Minutes

8. Business – 30 Minutes
   a. Review the Business section located above.

9. Closing Activity – 15 Minutes
   a. Make this a fun activity. Everyone is probably tired so make sure its short and not too much running or jumping.
b. Team builders are a great resource for this time.

10. Closing Remarks – 15 Minutes
   a. Thank the presenters, if any, and participants for attending and participating fully.