



Sharing What Works Best: Best Practices of Collegiate Agricultural Student Organizations

Kristopher M. Elliott & Misty D. Lambert



Collegiate Student Organizations

- Important aspect of college experience across the nation
- Opportunity for social engagement and networking
- Discipline specific and college-wide clubs
 - *Dairy Club*
 - *Country Western Dance Club*
- Local and nationally affiliated organizations
 - *Collegiate FFA*
 - *Crops Club*
- Generally part of larger Ag Council, Associated Students

Faculty Advisor Role

- Teaching and/or research responsibilities, service, extension.
- Only source of continuity in club program.
- Challenge of an ever changing student population.
- How do we remain effective and relevant to our field?



Our Study: What do clubs do well and how can we share?

Specifically,

- What best practices exist among collegiate clubs and organizations across various campuses?
- How can we share best practices within a single university setting? What are they?
- How do best practices within and among various universities differ?



Overview

- Present a methodology for conducting a best practices workshop/focus group
- Present findings from two focus groups:
 - National Collegiate FFA Focus Group (Inter-college)
 - Oregon State University Clubs (intra-college)
- Discuss events and recommendations
- Provide handout of results AND focus group facilitation tips

Conducting the Focus Groups: *Our Methodology*



National FFA Convention, Collegiate FFA Focus Group

- Over 30 Students attended voluntary workshop to share best practices and participate in needs assessment
- Represented 5 institutions, leaders or officers in club
- 2 facilitators
- National FFA Convention, October 2012, Indianapolis, IN
- 90 Minutes in length, best practices 20 - 50 minutes

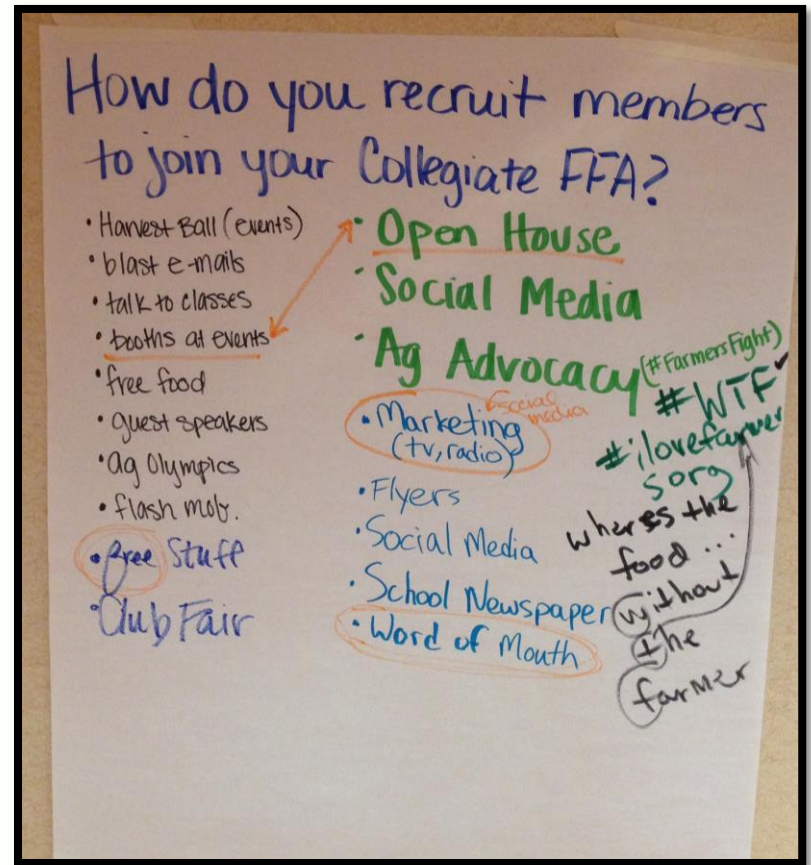
Facilitation

- Ice breaker activity
- Break students into equally sized, heterogeneous groups (not all from same institution)
- Carousel/jigsaw style sharing
 - Poster topics posted, students move over time
 - All groups visit each poster, use different pen, add check marks
 - Last group at poster summarizes
 - Group discussion, explanation



Poster Prompts

- What are some best practices or activities that are conducted by your chapter?
- What are some ways you motivate members to be active?
- How do you recruit your members?
- What challenges are you currently facing?



Results: Five Themes Emerged

- Ways to keep members active
- Best or most effective “coolest” events
- Recruitment Strategies
- Effective Fundraising
- Academics and/or ties to industry (discipline specific ideas)

Our Next Steps: Using the themes to conduct college specific focus group

- Second focus group held at Oregon State University
- Similar jigsaw focus group format
- 1 facilitator
- Club officers/representatives from each of college's 27 student clubs
- 60 Students total
- Themes from national focus group used as poster prompts
- Both focus groups showed similar results (results combined)

Ways to Keep Members Active

- Food
 - Tailgaters, pizza, subway, etc.
- Service Learning
- Industry and “Fun” Trips
- Speakers
- Athletic Events
 - Golf outings, football, ag olympics, etc.
- Meeting Raffles/Drawings
- Point System
- National Trips



Best, Most Effective Events

- New Member Campout
- “Alpha Gamma Rho-deo”
- Barn Dance
- “Hoof-ing it for Ag” 5K
- Octoberfest
- Mud football
- Behind the Scene Tours



Recruitment Strategies

- Blast Emails (list serves)
- Swag Wear
- Talk to Classes (College, Department, Core Classes, Professors)
- Booths at College Events (open house)
- Free Food, Free Stuff
- Flash Mob
- Social Media
- Unique Marketing
- Athletic Events
- “We make Beer, Cheese and Chocolate”

Effective Fundraising

- Food (football, quad, Thursdays, at own events)
- Club Brews, Spices, Christmas Wreaths
- Grants and Scholarships (College and External Funding)
- Business and Industry Partnerships
- Plant Sales, Sell Steers, Cattle, cheese (specific to club discipline)
- Sell Materials To FFA (seed ID kits)
- Sell Items at State FFA Convention
- Golf Tournaments
- Social Event Admission (dances, etc.)

Academics and Ties to Industry

- Industry Tours
- Guest Speakers, Businesses
- Internship Opportunities
- Prep. for Graduate School
- Attend Industry Conferences
- Research Symposium/Mini-conferences
- Affiliate with National Professional Organization (Institute of Food Technologists, Association of Nurserymen)



Summary

- Many club events specific to their own discipline, but can be modified and shared across the campus.
- Best practices were similar at national and college level.
- Focus group jigsaw activity easy, effective way to share ideas and elicit student thinking and discussions about improving their clubs.



Opportunities

- Activities generated cross-club discussions
- Could be used to develop college wide activities involving multiple clubs
- Clubs could co-sponsor events and work together
 - Social and Service to community and college
- Helps give college leaders a snapshot of events and activities





Questions?

Thank You.

