

# XCEL Points

For Leadership Success

Campus Center and Student Activities Department

# Brainstorming

## Creative Ways To Brainstorm

Brainstorming the same way each time can be boring and not enlist as much involvement as one might like from group members. Below are some fun ways to enlist everyone's involvement and provide some creative solutions to the problem at hand:

- **Carousel of Ideas:** Have six or seven sheets of paper around the meeting space with titles or categories on each one. Have everyone circulate around the room going to each paper within a period of time and have them write ideas that connect with that particular category or issue. People ultimately will get to provide their ideas for every issue and then can jump off someone else's idea too!
- **Idea Alphabet:** Everyone in the room takes their time coming up with an idea, theme or program starting with a different letter in the alphabet in order around the room until the entire alphabet has been completed.
- **Trick or Treat:** Grab a bag of candy and bring it to the brainstorming session. Pass the bag around without saying anything and just tell participants to take some. Then inform them after the bag has circulated that they are responsible for providing as many ideas as the number of candy pieces that they took from the bag. Once you have some great ideas, everyone can enjoy the treats!
- **Ask a Friend:** Have all the members go out and ask five friends for one single idea regarding the brainstorming topic. When everyone comes back there will be multiple responses already for members to discuss.

## Things to Remember

1. No idea is a bad idea
2. Brainstorming can be fun and productive
3. Don't let people stray from the task at hand
4. Make sure everyone is included in the exercise
5. Set a time limit and a deadline for a decision
6. Be creative
7. Have fun!



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Brainstorming is an activity used by individuals and groups to come up with creative ideas to achieve goals. In student organizations, many groups brainstorm future events, new ways to advertise, themes for programs, ways to recruit and retain members, and other interesting and creative ways to enhance their organization and strengthen their membership.

As a common technique used by almost everyone at some point in their lives or careers, being familiar with the advantages and challenges of brainstorming is very important. As every individual and group has their own strengths or best practices to solve any issue, trying new and different ideas can sometimes be challenging.

## A Step by Step Process

When most people think of brainstorming, the simple picture of everyone sitting in a room and writing every idea that comes to mind is usually what is brought up and implemented. However there are some strategies that are more efficient and effective to achieve the desired outcome.

### Step One: Define the problem

This will allow for everyone to think of solutions in a focused and creative way.

Example) We need more membership? How do we get people to join our organization?

### Step Two: Set a time limit

This will assist in ensuring that conversations do not stray from what is being discussed.

Example) We have twenty minutes to think of ways to enhance our membership.

### Step Three: Write everything down

There is no bad idea. Laughing is great for morale and should be encouraged, but criticism is not at this stage in the process. This will allow everyone to feel included in the discussion and might assist in creating more ideas from other members.

### Step Four: Pick a select number of ideas

The majority involved in the discussion should agree and pick out a specific number of ideas that came up through discussion that are the most creative and feasible.

Example) Of 20 ideas to recruit new members, the group will choose five.

### Step Five: Find criteria

Find some ways to score each idea (timelines, creativity, budget, etc.).

Example) Each idea will be judged on its ability to cost no more than \$15.00, be creative and be completed by the first day of school.

### Step Six: Grade the criteria

Each of the final ideas should be graded on a scale chosen by the group and the highest scoring idea wins.

*Adapted From <http://www.jpb.com/creative/brainstorming.php>*

