

# STEP ONE: GETTING STARTED

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## THE FOUNDATION

Whether the campus is swelling with Democrats or overwhelmingly Republican, the steps to establishing a chapter of College Democrats are the same. The only ingredient required is a hunger for action and a desire to work toward a better America.

### The Core Group

The first goal when organizing a College Democrats chapter is finding a few individuals to form the core group. These individuals must be energetic and committed to the foundation of the College Democrats of America on their campus. This committed group of activists will do the lion's share of the work, drive the organization, and ultimately determine the chapter's success or failure.

Trying to start a chapter by oneself can be very overwhelming. Creating a core group is a great way to distribute the work and share the rewards of organizing a new College Democrats of America chapter.

### Points of Focus

A few pointers to keep in mind when building a new chapter.

**Purpose:** A core group must be small enough to establish a primary sense of purpose for the CDA chapter. A mission statement outlining broad goals for the coming year is essential for focused and active participation of the members.

**Commitment:** It takes a lot of time and effort to build a solid foundation. Commitment and discipline are the key components of a successful organization. Starting a College Democrats chapter and promoting student activism is an excellent way to work for a better community and make a difference in America.

**Creativity:** Be creative in planning events and meetings. Use innovative methods to spark interest in the organization. Students will continue to be active as long as their fire for change is ignited and fed with positive energy.

**Enthusiasm:** Present the chapter with a positive spin and lots of excitement. People will be attracted to an organization or event if the organizers are excited about it.

**Realism:** It is important to be realistic about how much work one person can do. Delegating responsibility to others will reduce the stress while maximizing the efficiency of the organization. It is very important to have a core group that can work together with a united focus on Democratic objectives.

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# STEP TWO: THE ORGANIZATION

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## STRUCTURE

Once the core group of committed activists is formed, the next step is to set up the structure of the organization. The essence of building structure is to establish credibility.

### The Constitution

A constitution will provide the chapter with its basic structure, offer guidelines for operations and elections, and establish some institutional legitimacy for the organization. The constitution should have a mission statement to guide the rest of the articles. Establish the constitution by drafting, debating, and voting on its passage. Due to the small size of the core group, this should be relatively easy. Constitutions can be amended to accommodate the needs of the chapter as it expands. A sample constitution is in the appendix of this manual.

### Executive Board

The next step is to form an Executive Board. A board of officers assumes the responsibilities of the core group. Most often the core group becomes the Executive Board. Here are some suggested guidelines:

**Meet Regularly:** At Wesleyan University, the Executive Board usually met before the general meeting took place for about twenty minutes. During the 1992 campaign, they met weekly for an hour apart from the general meeting. Develop a schedule that works for the individual chapter and stick to it.

**Set Goals:** Short-term and long-term. Outline specific membership, political, and legislative goals for each quarter and each year.

**Submit Progress Reports:** Each board member should give progress reports on each project falling under his/her responsibility. Progress reports keep everyone current and they encourage cooperation and communication between board members by allowing each member to constructively input on each project.

**Maintain Accountability:** Keeping clearly defined roles among broad members encourages responsibility and produces results.

## **Executive Board Responsibilities**

The following configuration of the executive board can be used as a reference. Chapters and states may have different agendas and may require less or different officers.

**President:** The President ensures that the chapter's activities correspond with the overall mission of the organization. The President's responsibilities include:

**Delegating Tasks:** Distributing responsibility to other members of the executive board will increase efficiency while building unity. Ultimately, however, it remains the President's responsibility to ensure that all tasks are completed.

**Official Representative:** The President officially represents the chapter to the school administration, the press and to other student organizations.

**Building Future Leadership:** To ensure the future of the chapter, the President must recruit and train a group of strong leaders who will likely be able to take on executive duties in the following years.

**Secretary:** The Secretary's primary job is to communicate the chapter's message to the college community. The Secretary's responsibilities include:

**Correspondence:** Communication with individual members through mailings and campus e-mail.

**Newsletter:** Producing updates on club activities and writing articles about current issues.

**Record Keeping:** Recording minutes at executive and general meetings.

**Membership Director:** The membership director is responsible for outreach programs, new member recruitment, and maintenance of current membership. Tasks will include:

**Membership Drive:** Innovative programming and widespread publicity on campus to promote membership in CDA.

**Membership Files:** Keep a current listing of phone numbers and addresses of all members and regularly report this information to the state federation and the CDA National Headquarters.

**Encourage Diversity:** Make a strong effort to recruit a diverse membership that accurately reflects the school population.

**Treasurer:** The Treasurer serves as the chapter banker and fundraiser. The Treasurer is responsible for:

**Fundraising:** Chapters raise money through membership dues, alumni donations, fundraising events, selling merchandise, and numerous other creative methods. CDA National Headquarters can assist with innovative fundraising ideas.

**Maintaining Financial Records:** Keep accurate records of ALL monetary transactions to avoid discrepancies with the student activities office. Make procedures and bookkeeping clear to the officers who take over in following years.

**Design Annual Budget:** Plan the annual budget based on school funding and other potential income.

**Communication Director:** Serves as the media contact for College Democrat events, and works with the chapter secretary to produce a regular newsletter. Responsibilities include:

**Chapter Message:** Formulate and communicate the message of the College Democrats and the Democratic Party to the media.

**Press Releases and Advisories:** Write and issue press releases on College Democrat activities and events. A sample press release and additional media information can be found in the appendix.

**Op-ed and Letters to the Editor:** Write and submit Democratic op-ed pieces to local newspapers. Generate letters to the editor from chapter membership to support the organization's pro-student, pro-Democrat goals.

**Events Director:** The job of the Events Director is to make sure that the chapter maintains a full schedule of events for the members and the greater campus community. College Democrat events may include:

**Activist Events:** Campaign rallies, campus-wide petition or letter writing campaigns, lobby days, etc.

**Educational Events:** Speakers, forums, panel discussions, debates, etc.

**Community Service:** Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, environmental clean ups, AIDS Walk, etc.

**Social Director:** The Social Director works with the Executive Board to ensure that all chapter events are enjoyable. Members should enjoy CDA events and celebrate the fruits of their labor.

**Democratic Theme Parties:** "Election Night" and "State of the Union" Watch Parties, etc.

**Other Events:** College Dems vs. College Repubs Softball Game, etc.

**Campaign Director:** During campaign season, the Campaign Director organizes and coordinates student involvement in national, state and local campaigns. On big election years, this function may be shared amongst other members of the board. The Campaign Director is responsible for:

**Liaison:** Act as the liaison between the State Party, Democratic campaign offices and the campus chapter. Update membership on the progress of the candidates. Work with the campaigns' volunteer and campus coordinators to promote student involvement in the process. Coordinate efforts and strategy with the CDA National Student Director of Political Affairs.

**Coordinate Volunteers:** Recruit, organize and schedule volunteers for phone banks, GOTV efforts, dorm lit drops, and other activities.

**GOTV:** Coordinate the on-campus “Get Out the Vote” effort in coordination with the state and national GOTV campaign.

## **Work with CDA**

Remain in contact with the College Democrats of America’s National Headquarters throughout the process of forming and building the chapter. The national headquarters has many resources. For example, they maintain a database of members in individual states who can assist others in their campus organizing efforts. In addition, the headquarters can put campuses in touch with local Democratic Party leaders and CDA alumni in the area.

**Charter with CDA:** It is important to file the chartering application as soon as possible in order to become an active chapter with the national organization. By chartering with the national organization, chapters will receive all CDA publications, administrative support, issue briefs, internship/job opportunities, access to state and national Democratic Party leaders and campaigns, and discounted College Democrats of America and Democratic National Committee merchandise.

**Join or Organize the State Federation:** The College Democrats of America National Headquarters will assist individual chapters to register with or build a state federation. State federations are composed of representatives from all of the College Democrats chapters throughout the state. State federations are active and involved in state and local politics, campaigns and legislative watchdog projects. Association with a state federation elevates the status of the campus chapter and lifts the chapter’s agenda to state and national attention.

## **Campus Activities**

Register with the campus Student Activities Office once the constitution is in place. Most schools have a student activities office that requires student organizations to be officially registered. Many times it will be a valuable resource and can provide substantial institutional support such as funding, office space, and contacts in the local community.

## **Faculty Advisor**

Many chapters have found faculty advisors to be extremely helpful. They are especially good advocates when dealing with school

administration. Faculty advisors can also lend continuity by providing a long-term membership to the chapter. Good places to find faculty advisors are the Government and Legal Studies departments.

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# STEP THREE: GOING PUBLIC

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## **PUBLICITY**

Now that a core group of activists is established with some organizational structure, it is time to let people know that there is an exciting new group on campus - students committed to progressive change and a better America.

## **Outreach Week**

Start a week long outreach campaign directed at attracting students to a first meeting -- this is where purpose, energy, and enthusiasm all come together.

**Place College Democrats Information Tables** on campus walkways, dining halls and the student union. Voter registration is a great way to attract students to the table and distribute materials about membership.

**Design and Distribute Materials** that catch the eye and demonstrate the great work CDA is doing in your state and for America. Obtain a quote from an elected official who will testify to the important work that College Democrats play in the political process. CDA National Headquarters can assist with promotional materials.

**Plaster Posters** all over the campus announcing meetings and events.

**Walk through Dorms** and talk with people while passing out information flyers. Making the personal connection can prove very worthwhile when trying to recruit members.

**Wear CDA T-shirts, Buttons and Hats** on campus. This is free advertising and demonstrates the legitimacy of the organization. Consult the CDA web page or CDA National Headquarters for information on how to obtain logo merchandise in small or large quantities.

**Build Coalitions** with other campus organizations that share a similar political agenda. Co-sponsor meetings and events with students for choice, the African-American and Latin-American student organizations, gay/lesbian organizations, environmental groups, etc.

**Activity Fair:** Don't miss campus activity fairs. These events provide a great forum to recruit new students and reacquaint with old members.

## **Media**

Announce the new chapter in the student newspapers. Invite the press to your meetings and events. Recruit someone from the campus newspaper, radio and television stations to join the chapter. A sample press release and guidelines to working with the media can be found in the appendix.

## **Interactive Media**

More than any other single demographic group, college students choose the Internet as their preferred mode of communication. Taking the chapter on the net is a great way to reach students on campus and build a strong chapter. Here are some key elements to an effective CDA web site:

**Find a Web Editor:** If no members of the core group are proficient, search the computer labs for a new recruit. Designing and managing a web page takes time and considerable dedication.

**Fresh and Timely Content:** Visitors come back to Web sites with constantly changing content. Think of the home page as the front page of a daily newspaper - try to have something new every week.

**Clear and Intuitive Front Page Menu:** Make sure front page buttons are clearly worded and easily navigable. People should quickly understand how to find information on the web site.

**Use the Web to Build E-Mail Lists:** Ask visitors to the web site to subscribe to the chapter e-mail list. Send subscribers legislative and campaign updates and information about upcoming CDA events on campus.

**Highlight a Democratic Message:** A CDA web site must project the pro-student, pro-Democrat message that forms the cornerstone of the organization. Check out the Democratic Party web site at [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org) or CDA's National Headquarters web site at [www.CollegeDems.com](http://www.CollegeDems.com).

**Interesting Links:** There are many Democratic web sites that can provide chapter members instant information on issues on Capitol Hill, the White House and the Democratic Party. See the list of web links in the appendix and include them on the chapter's web

page. Furthermore, contact CDA's National Headquarters to add the chapter web page to CDA's national web page links.

## **Democrat Network**

**State Party:** The state party can be both an ally and a valuable resource as the chapter begins to grow and become a force in regional politics. The state party can be a resource for speakers, funding, internships/jobs, etc. Schedule a meeting or phone conversation with the Executive Director to discuss how to help each other.

**State Delegation:** Just as with the state party, Democratic elected officials can be valuable friends to the chapter. Send local elected officials, state legislators and members of Congress a letter introducing the new College Democrats chapter. Send them quarterly updates of activities and request their presence at an upcoming event. Also, ask for an opportunity to sit down with them and discuss the chapter's goals and their recommendations for campus organizing. CDA National Headquarters can assist with setting up appointments with elected officials.

**Local Democrats:** Send a brief letter to the town and/or county Democratic committee or its equivalent to let them know a chapter of College Democrats is forming and seeking to build a strong coalition between students and residents. This small step is very important and will prove very useful in the future.

The University of Minnesota chapter was able to expand their resources, improve relations between students and city residents, and expose the chapter to a new range of opportunities. Students became involved with elections, general community activities, and gained representation on the local Democratic committee.

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# STEP FOUR: CHAPTER BUILDING

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## EXPANDING MEMBERSHIP

The key to any successful College Democrat chapter is a growing, vital group of activists. It is essential to constantly reach out to new members - the greater the membership, the greater the political influence.

### Consistency

Once the chapter is fully in place, it is important to maintain regularity and consistency. Here are some suggestions:

**Meetings:** Hold weekly or bi-weekly meetings at the same time and location. While discussions may revolve around upcoming campaigns and critical legislative issues, try to have something fun and entertaining to make the meeting enjoyable, as well as informative. Refreshments are definite crowd pleasers.

**Chapter Office:** Establish a chapter office. The student activities office on campus usually provides office space for chartered organizations. Local Democratic Party offices or union halls can also be helpful in obtaining office space and supplies.

**Newsletter:** Publish and distribute a monthly newsletter to the wider campus community to promote awareness and publicity. The newsletter should detail upcoming events on campus and statewide.

**Political Action:** The school newspaper, radio and television stations are the great vehicles to let other students know what the chapter is doing that week or month, provide a forum for Democratic ideals and policies, and challenge the Republicans to a lively, healthy debate.

### Types of Members

There are three types of members in the organization: core, peripheral and occasional members.

**Core Members:** Core members are incredibly dependable and committed. These individuals are campus organizers, itching for a big issue or campaign to focus their efforts. They are the leaders and future leaders of the chapter and play an active role in CDA's regional and national activities.

**Peripheral Members:** Chapter events should focus on the peripheral members because they have strong interest but are not ready to commit unless the organization proves its legitimacy. The peripheral member should be the target of the chapter's commitment, energy, and enthusiasm. The Executive Board should reach out to peripheral members and make sure they are included and excited about the goals and direction of the chapter.

**Occasional Members:** Occasional members are needed because they provide support for rallies, and other campus wide activities. They are the corps of volunteers activated when a campaign comes to campus or a big event takes place in the community. Unfortunately, occasional members are not generally reliable for the day to day operations of the chapter.

## **Retention**

Retaining old members can be difficult, especially when other pressures take over, i.e. midterms, finals, job search, etc. However, social events build friendships and keep members from losing touch with the chapter.

## **Faculty**

Keep the faculty and staff of the campus aware of College Democrat activities. Educators are typically Democrats and will support the chapter if it has credibility. Invite them to rallies, panels, and other appropriate activities. They can be great resources of influence, donations and general operational support.

## **Communication & Organization**

Remember to communicate effectively and remain organized. Set objectives and follow them. Disorganized meetings are a sign that the chapter leaders are not serious about building an active club. Apathy has the tendency to spread among members. More often than not, a lack of communication can break down all organizing efforts. It is also important that general members have access to the Executive Board. Have open Executive Board meetings and save important decisions for the general meetings.

## **Planning for The Future**

Train new members to become future leaders within the organization. Encourage members to get involved in the State Federation and consider running for a regional or national office. Make sure your campus is represented at the annual convention held each year in Washington, D.C. Also, do not forget the alumni. Keep them informed of the chapter's progress. Furthermore,

alumni may be able to provide contacts, internships, donations and other resource assistance.

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# STEP FIVE: CDA ON CAMPUS

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## CHAPTER FOCUS

As an established chapter, the goals of the organization will alter with the political climate. The chapter may focus on electing Democratic candidates, lobbying elected officials, or educating the campus on issues. Here are some ideas and activities to keep in mind as the chapter strengthens and builds:

### Fundraising

Fundraising often determines the degree of success for campus organizations. The more money the chapter can raise, the greater the visibility, publications, and events.

**School Funding:** Many schools provide annual funding to campus organizations based on membership, or certain kinds of events. Talk to the student activities office or student government officials to explore the possibility of securing funding for the chapter. Funding is usually based on individual presentations where groups describe their budget proposals for the upcoming year or individual events. It is very important to be well prepared for the meeting. Go into the presentation with an itemized list of expenditures, cost estimates, and benefits the student body will gain by increasing political awareness and volunteerism in the community.

**Dues:** Probably the quickest and easiest way to raise money to start the chapter is to collect membership dues from the core group. Pass around a collection dish at core group meetings to offset the immediate costs of copying, postage, and advertisement. Once the membership increases and gains credibility, charge a membership fee of \$5 or more. Make sure to stress to potential members all of the benefits they will receive, such as a monthly newsletter, participation in local, state and national campaigns, internship opportunities, legislative updates from the Congress and the White House, and various other fun activities.

**Sell CDA and Campaign Merchandise** to raise money for the group and increase the visibility of the chapter and Democratic candidates. The CDA National Headquarters and campaigns have such items that can be purchased at a bulk rate.

**Direct Mail and Fundraising Events** are great ways to raise money, however both require considerable overhead expenditure. The state party, state federations and CDA National Headquarters

are great resources for chapters planning major fundraising efforts. In addition, consult Ellen Stankiewicz's fundraising plan in the appendix.

**Phone Solicitation** can generate a considerable amount of money if chapters target the correct donors. Approach community and business leaders whose work or interests may relate to youth activism. Speak with local Democratic leaders for suggestions of potential donors.

**CDA National Headquarters:** The national office can help. Call to discuss new ideas, purchase merchandise, or develop a fundraising plan. CDA National Headquarters and the CDA regional organizers will be happy to help develop an organizational budget and discuss any ideas about raising revenue.

## **Voter Registration**

Voter Registration is one of the cornerstones of College Democrats of America. There is no more important issue in this organization than promoting student activism and participation in the political process. Here are seven easy steps to holding a successful voter registration drive.

**Contact the Secretary of State's Office** in the state capitol to obtain registration information and as many voter registration cards as possible.

**Motivate and Strengthen Membership** to launch a major voter registration effort on campus. Conduct a well organized planning meeting to establish reasonable goals and assess manpower. Choose a week for the registration drive that doesn't conflict with other major campus events. Make sure you allow plenty of time to submit the registration forms before the state voter registration deadline. See the state by state voter registration schedule in the appendix.

**Co-Sponsor Registration Drive with Other Campus Organizations.** The more support from campus colleagues, the more successful the voter registration drive.

**Publicize Registration Week** through the local and campus newspaper, radio and television stations. Challenge the College Republicans to debate the issues in a forum open to students and

press. Plaster the school with posters and flyers announcing the upcoming registration drive and infiltrate the e-mail network. Helpful guidelines to working with the media can be found in the appendix.

**Invite an Elected Official to Campus** to kick off the registration drive. While this is not essential, it will generate excitement and stress the importance of voting to the student body.

**Register Students** in the student union, bookstore, sporting events, dining halls and dormitories. As they register, make sure they leave with information on joining College Democrats and details about upcoming events and meetings.

**Follow Up with Registrants** to encourage their involvement in the College Democrats chapter on campus.

## **Get Out The Vote**

The overall goal of a GOTV program is to turn out the greatest percentage of voters that will vote for Democratic candidates on Election Day. Registering voters on campus is easy. Getting the same voters to the polls on Election Day is a whole other battle.

**Contact the Local State Party Headquarters** and discuss a strategy for a successful GOTV effort on campus. The state party is a great resource for supplies, phone banks and materials.

**Mobilize the Chapter** and discuss reasonable goals and individual responsibilities for the GOTV program. Task members of the chapter to find student directories, club membership lists, phone banks, supportive faculty, vans and funding to cover expenses.

**Co-Sponsor GOTV Program** with other campus organizations that share a similar Democratic political agenda (students for choice, the African-American and Latin-American student organizations, gay/lesbian organizations, environmental groups, etc.)

**Plaster Posters and Flyers** throughout the campus urging students to go to the polls. Also, obtain posters and literature from the local Democratic campaigns.

**Ask Local Candidates to Visit Your Campus** and discuss their views on education, the environment, etc. Challenge the College

Republicans to a debate on the issues and invite the campus community and local press.

**Activate the Phones** and remind students to vote. In the days leading up to Election Day, call through the chapter membership list and assign each member a group of students or club that they must contact. Phone banking is a massive effort and should be shared amongst as many members as possible. Remember that the goal of GOTV is to turn out the greatest percentage of voters for Democratic candidates. Target your phone calls at Democrats and persuadable students.

**Get Involved in the Local and Statewide Democratic Party GOTV Effort.** Contact the local state party headquarters and get the chapter involved in the program throughout the state. See the state party contact list in the appendix.

**Contact CDA National Headquarters** for more information or contacts in the state.

## **Community Service**

Answer President Clinton's call to service by organizing a community service project for the chapter. Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and conservation projects are always looking for volunteers and are very accommodating to individual or group schedules. A few things to keep in mind:

**Contact Local Democratic Elected Officials** or the state party headquarters for suggestions. The student activities office may also be a resource for community service contacts. Many elected officials have adopted a service project that he/she may choose to participate in with the chapter.

**Contact the Project and Schedule the Chapter's Visit.**

Discuss the activities in which chapter members will participate and any special provisions (i.e. dress code) that the project may require.

**Issue a Media Advisory** alerting the media to CDA's dedication to community service and the details of the upcoming project. Check with the project coordinator to see if press are welcome at the site. A sample media advisory can be found in the appendix.

**Raise Money to Pay for Transportation and Food** by contacting the state party headquarters or local donors who are likely to support this great cause.

## **Legislative Activity**

College Democrats of America stands committed to representing the interests of young Americans and promoting youth activism at all levels of government. In the last few years, College Democrats throughout the country have organized petitions, letter writing campaigns and meetings with elected officials to voice their support for student aid, equal opportunity, affordable health care, and a cleaner environment. In 1995, College Democrats throughout the country rallied to save student aid from the chopping block of the 104th Republican Congress. Here are a few suggestions on legislative organizing and campus lobbying:

**Follow the Legislative Calendar** and update the chapter on current issues being debated in the State House, Congress and the White House. A list of suggested web sites that provide legislative news and information is in the appendix.

**Inform and Activate the Campus** through an eye catching flyer or web page alert illustrating the impact of current legislation on college students. Suggest ways for students to voice their opinion by providing names, addresses, and phone numbers of legislators and talking points or proposed text to guide students in their communication.

**Organize a Letter Writing Campaign** for students to voice their opinion on issues. Some helpful guidelines for effective letter writing are in the appendix.

**Devise a Lobbying Strategy** and set up appointments with local legislators. Lobbying can be very effective but requires solid, thorough preparation. A guide to lobbying is in the appendix.

## **Captivating the Media**

Media attention is a very persuasive way to advance legislative goals.

**Organize a Press Conference** and announce the chapter's position on the issue. Ask prominent members of the community and other

campus organizations to join in the fight. Helpful hints on organizing press conferences can be found in the appendix.

**Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor** and send it to the campus and local newspapers. Encourage other students to write a letter to the editor or op-ed by setting up a table in the student union and providing the names and addresses of legislators, background on the issue, and proposed text for the letters. Some examples are included in the appendix.

## **Political Campaigns**

Electing Democrats is the cornerstone of College Democrats of America. Every November, College Democrats throughout the country make a difference in countless local, statewide and national campaigns. The CDA chapter is the campus link for students wanting to get involved with Democratic political campaigns. Here's some ideas on getting started:

**Contact the Local State Party Headquarters** and obtain a list of local races and candidates. Speak with the party's volunteer coordinator and find out where manpower is needed.

**Speak with Local Campaign Campus Coordinators** regarding the campaign's strategy to target college students and how the chapter can play a active role. Find out how to obtain campaign paraphernalia for distribution on campus.

**CDA National Headquarters** is a great resource for local campaign contacts and upcoming races in the state.

# APPENDIX

## **SAMPLE CONSTITUTION**

### **Preamble**

In order to promote a better America, with equality, opportunity, and freedom within a just and strong society, we dedicate ourselves to organizing the participation of Democratic college students at \_\_\_\_\_ College. In this mission, we call for full participation of all \_\_\_\_\_ students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, physical handicap, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation.

Understanding the importance of participation in the Democratic Party to the preservation of our values and principles, we, Democratic college students, do hereby associate ourselves and adopt this Constitution as the \_\_\_\_\_ College Democrats.

### **Article 1: Name and Purpose**

A: Name: The name of this organization shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ College Democrats, hereafter referred to in this document as the “College Democrats”.

B: Purpose: The College Democrats pledges itself to support the philosophy and candidates of the Democratic Party. Furthermore, the College Democrats declares its intention to support all efforts to increase the participation of college students in Democratic affairs. To these ends, the College Democrats shall educate and train its members so that they may be better able to:

1. Educate students about the philosophy of the Democratic Party;
2. Assist in the election of local, state, and national Democratic candidates.
3. Affect political change on the local, state, and national level.

### **Article 2: Membership**

A: Members: Membership in the College Democrats shall be open to any college student currently enrolled in \_\_\_\_\_ College who wishes to be known as a College Democrat and who has the best interests of the College Democrats and the Democratic Party at heart, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, physical handicap, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation.

### **Article 3: The Executive Board**

A: Composition: The Executive Board shall be composed of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Communications Director. All positions will be elected once yearly at the General Elections. *[This is only one possible Executive Board composition. Some chapters may prefer larger or smaller ones.]*

B: The Executive Board shall determine the agenda and policy of the College Democrats and coordinate all activities and events.

#### **Article 4: Duties of the Executive Board Positions**

A: All Executive Board members must maintain active involvement in all of the College Democrats activities and endeavors.

B: Duties of the President. The President shall:

- 1: Be the Chief Executive Officer of the College Democrats;
- 2: Define the agenda of the College Democrats during his or her tenure;
- 3: Act as the official representative of the College Democrats to other groups and the media;
- 4: Carry out the mandates, policies, and directives of the Executive Board;
- 5: Preside over all meetings of the College Democrats.

C: Duties of the Vice President. The Vice President shall:

- 1: Assist the President in the performance of his or her duties; including brainstorming ideas and evaluating the progress of the Executive Board and organization as a whole;
- 2: Act as President when the President is unable to perform his or her duties;
- 3: Assume the office of the President upon the President's death, resignation, removal, or inability to perform duties;
- 4: Take on projects of his or her choosing.

D: Duties of the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall:

- 1: Direct fundraising activities and prepare all grants;
- 2: Manage the bank account and budget;
- 3: Perform such duties as the President may assign and take on projects of his or her choosing.

E: Duties of the Communications Director. He or she shall:

- 1: Coordinate all postering and publicity activities;

2: Notify media of all events of the College Democrats in an attempt to ensure media coverage;

3: Perform such duties as the President may assign and take on projects of his or her choosing.

## **Article 5: Elections**

A: Elections shall occur [*Once a year? Once a semester?*].

B: Eligibility to run for a position and vote: [*This depends on the structure of your chapter - dues-paying members?*]

C: Secretive ballots: One vote per person per election. Candidates cannot vote in their own election.

D: Procedure: Candidates are nominated directly before their election.

1. Speech length: Pres - 4min; VP - 3min; Other - 2min

2. Q & A: Pres - 7min; Other - 5min

3. Supporting speakers: Pres - 5; Other - 3. Each supporting speaker has 45 seconds to support his candidate. Order of speakers will alternate among candidates. They are forbidden to make any derogatory statements about any candidate. Candidates are prohibited from the election room during the time of supporting statements.

4. Vote counting and declaration of winner will occur directly after that election.

## **Article 6: Removal**

A: Cause for removal: Cause for removal shall be defined as malfeasance or nonfeasance of duties assigned by the Executive Board or delineated within this document, or as ineligibility for Executive Board membership pursuant to Article 2. Cause for removal shall also include grounds found by 3/4 members of the Executive Board to constitute good and sufficient cause.

B: Process for removal: To begin the process for removal, another member of the Executive Board must charge the officer with the reasons for his or her removal publicly at a meeting of the Executive Board. The officer in question must be offered an opportunity to defend himself or herself at that meeting. After a period of two weeks the issue shall be put to a vote. Three-fourths members of the Executive Board must vote for removal for an officer to be removed.

## **Article 7: Vacancies**

A: Declaration of vacancy: A vacancy shall be declared when a member of the Executive Board dies, resigns, or is removed from office. If the vacancy occurs in an Executive Board position other than the President, the President shall appoint a successor with a 2/3 majority

consent of the remaining Executive Board. If the vacancy is the President, then the Vice-President shall automatically be the replacement.

**Article 8: Amendments**

A: Procedure: The Constitution can be amended by a 2/3 majority vote of the Executive Board with 2/3 approval by the dues-paying membership.

## **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PRESS RELEASES AND MEDIA ADVISORIES**

*The purpose of a media advisory is to alert the press of important news. The purpose of a press release is to communicate a message about an event that has already occurred that the press may have missed.*

1. Both media advisories and press releases have headlines. The headline should be written as it would appear in the newspaper.
2. In the body of the press release, include the who, what, where, when and why. In the media advisory include: the format, the name of the event, the date, the time and the location.
3. Both should be no more than one page.
4. Be sure to have a contact name and phone number in the event the press needs to talk to someone for more information.
5. Don't convey the entire message in the media advisory.
6. Write the press release exactly like the way it should appear in the newspaper.
7. Remember, the press might be reluctant to read the entire release. Make the important information clear and concise, and get to the point right away.
8. Always end the press release or media advisory with either -30- or ####.

## **SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **COLLEGE DEMOCRATS OF AMERICA**

430 South Capitol Street, SE • Washington, DC 2003 • (202) 863-8151  
<http://www.collegedems.com>

#### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**September 25, 1995**

**Contact:      Name  
                         Phone**

#### **COLLEGE DEMOCRATS TO CONVERGE ON SENATE FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL AID DEBATE**

##### ***CDA National President to Attend Labor & Human Resources Hearing***

College Democrats, angered by the senseless cuts proposed by Senate Republicans, will be converging on the Labor & Human resources Committee meeting on Tuesday, September 26, 1995 at 9:00 AM. The hearing will take place in room 438 of Dirksen Senate Office Building.

Students object to the Republican proposal which cuts students financial aid by over \$10 billion to the wealthiest 1% of Americans. The cuts include: a .85% tax on student loans, an increase in the interest rate for working families, a cap on the Direct Student Lending Program, and the elimination of the interest-free grace period for subsidized student loans.

Kevin Geary, President of College Democrats of America, hails from Boston, MA, and would be unable to complete his education without the help of federal student financial aid. He is currently enrolled at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA where he receives subsidized Stafford Loans – loans that are marked for deletion.

Kevin will be available for media comment at 10:30 AM.

EVENT:      CDA President and members to attend student financial aid debate

DATE:        Tuesday, September 26, 1995

TIME:        9:00 AM Hearing begins  
                 10:30 AM CDA President Kevin Geary available for media comment

LOCATION:    438 Dirksen Senate Office Building

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## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: NAME  
TITLE  
PHONE

### **COLLEGE DEMOCRATS INVADE NEW HAMPSHIRE!**

*Representing America's Colleges and Universities, Students Get Active for Clinton*

Students from the Northeast, East Coast, and Midwest will invade the state of New Hampshire to campaign for President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore over the weekend of Saturday, February 17, 1996 to Tuesday, February 20, 1996.

Although the President is not facing a primary opponent, students from as far away as Michigan raised their own funds to travel to New Hampshire. "We are psyched to be going to New Hampshire," said Mark Hanna of Michigan State University's College Democrats. "We've got 25 students traveling almost 12 hours to work for the President. He's been there for us and we'll be there for him."

Students will represent colleges and universities from across the country. Student activists are expected from Brandeis University, Boston College, MIT, Bates College (ME), Colby College (ME), University of Vermont, Brown University (RI), Michigan State University, George Washington University (D.C.), and American University (DC) just to name a few.

"The President has worked for students and now students are working for the President," said College Democrats of America President Kevin Geary. "Of course we're excited about re-electing Bill Clinton. First, he created the Direct Student Loan Program and implemented AmeriCorps, and now he has proposed expanding federal work-study, creating merit-based scholarship programs, and making college tuition tax deductible. President Clinton is a college student's best friend."

The College Democrats of America is the largest student political organization in the country with over 80,000 members on 800 chapters across the nation. Membership in CDA has increased by 45% since January 1995—when Newt Gingrich became Speaker of the House of Representatives.

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## **WRITING AN OP-ED**

*An op-ed gives the writer an opportunity to express their personal views in a well-organized and prepared format. It allows the writer to do adequate research and take a strong position on a legislative issue. Be critical of your work and check your references. Do not be afraid to share personal experiences in the article. Title your op-ed the way you want to see it in print. Contact your local newspaper and identify the appropriate individual to forward your article to. Be sure to send a copy to the CDA National Headquarters so it can be included either in the newsletter or on the web page!*

### **SAMPLE OP-ED LETTER:**

PUBLISHED IN THE WASHINGTON TIMES FORUM, SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1996

In 1980, a grandfatherly Californian won the hearts and votes of most American people with his promises to cut taxes and raise the standard of living. During his eight years as president, he gave Americans the illusion of economic prosperity as the national debt nearly tripled and American business deteriorated from producing and providing to buying and selling. The value of the dollar superseded the value of American workers and their families. His presidency sank America into a recession, undermined family values and reduced the American dream to nothing but a myth for most Americans. That president was Ronald Reagan – and Bob Dole is now pledging to finish what he started.

Mr. Dole's new economic plan is a case in point. Americans know they cannot have their cake and massive tax breaks, too. Substantial cuts in government programs that affect millions of Americans will have to be made in order to continue the deficit reduction the Clinton administration began. Mr. Dole claims he will leave Medicare and Social Security out of these cuts; however, Mr. Dole and the Republican party have an irrefutable record of attacks on Medicare, from its establishment to the present. In fact, the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress has gone after virtually all programs for low-income Americans who worked hard and paid their dues.

If more money were to go into low-income families' pockets, these cuts might be offset. However, Mr. Dole's tax cuts are targeted at the top 10 percent of Americans. Twenty-eight percent of the total tax cuts would go to the top 1 percent of the population, an annual saving of close to \$25,000 and only 25 percent would go to those making under \$50,000 per year. Sounds like trickle-down economics -- Reaganomics -- all over again -- and the American public will not tolerate that empty promise this election year.

Bob Dole stood in the way of raising the minimum wage. Bob Dole stood in the way of enacting legislation that would give working families a little more health care security. Bob Dole led his party in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress in its efforts to cut student financial aid. These are economic boosts for hard-working Americans struggling to get by and make a better life for their children. The American worker will not tolerate more handouts to corporate America and the wealthy at their expense.

Mr. Dole hopes to "finish the job Reagan started." He will come to realize that most Americans think Mr. Reagan has done enough.

*MOLLY MORRISON*

*President, Trinity College Democrats*

*Vice-Chair, D.C. Federation of College Democrats*

## **TIPS FOR ORGANIZING A PRESS CONFERENCE**

### PLANNING THE NEWS CONFERENCE

#### *Participants*

Maximize media attendance at your news conference.

\* Invite at least one high profile spokesperson, either the mayor, city council member, college presidents, the police chief, the Governor, other state-level elected officials or candidates for local, state or national office.

It is helpful to get a cross-section of people to participate in order to demonstrate that the issue is of great concern to everyone. Strive for ethnic and gender diversity among the participants.

#### *Location*

Use a location that is easily accessible, but also visually interesting for the media.

#### *Time*

##### DAY

Try to hold the news conference on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Avoid Mondays and Fridays because it's harder to prepare over the weekend and newspaper readership is lowest on Saturdays.

##### TIME

If possible, hold the event between 10 am and 2 pm. Early morning is difficult for reporters to attend and late afternoon conflicts with preparation for the evening news. 10 am or 11 am are the best times because many noon newscasts will include the event in their broadcasts.

### ADVANCING THE NEWS CONFERENCE

*Alert the Media!! This is the most important step!*

PREPARE a Media Advisory which will serve as your announcement of the event to the press. The advisory should basically include who, what, when, where, and why. Keep it short! Make sure to include a contact name and phone number.

THE Associated Press Daybook is the most important contact. It lists press events for the following day, and goes to virtually every media outlet. By

noon the day before the event, fax the advisory to the Daybook Editor. It is a good idea to call and make sure the event is listed.

THE day before the event, all media outlets in the area should receive the advisory on the news conference. Notify the newspapers (dailies, weeklies, black & Hispanic press), TV stations, radio stations which have news departments, and wire services. It is best to fax the release directly to each outlet early in the morning.

IN the afternoon the day before the event, follow-up by phone with the assignment editors at the news outlets to make sure they know about the event. Talk it up as much as possible to encourage their attendance. Many TV stations do not make their assignments until the day of the event. Thus, it is probably worth calling the TV assignment editors between 8:30 and 9:00 am the day of the event.

### *Follow-up*

IF a news organization is notably absent, follow-up after the event. For example, if a prominent member of the community calls a radio station, the news director will often take a few quotes over the phone for a story. Newspapers will often print a letter to the editor to add or clarify a point in a story written about the event.

### *Set Up*

MAKE sure that you have the correct equipment. If a microphone or podium is necessary, make arrangements and plan ahead. Be sure a power source is nearby if a sound system is needed.

OBTAIN the necessary permits required for the location you have selected.

LOCATE easels for charts or other visual aids being used

BE sure to have a rain contingency plan if you are using an outdoor site.

HAVE all the participants stand together behind the mic or podium so that everyone is in the picture.

POSITION a banner behind the speaker or on the front of the podium.

ASSIGN a member of the chapter to greet media as they arrive.

### *Materials*

HAVE copies of your news release, participants' statements, and a CDA fact sheet available for the press. 10-15 packets should be more than enough.

### *Speaking Order*

DETERMINE the order of speakers in advance. To save time, have each speaker introduce the next member of the program. Make sure each participant begins their statement by introducing themselves.

### *Length*

IT is important for each speaker to keep his or her remarks short. The overall length of the news conference should only be 20-30 minutes (including Q & A period). If there are a lot of speakers, each may only be able to speak for 2 minutes.

NOT all participants need to speak. Groups may opt to send a non-speaking representative to show support for the issue.

ENCOURAGE participating groups to distribute materials on their organizations as well.

## **WHEN TALKING TO A REPORTER**

1. Look confident. Strong eye contact is essential.
2. Assume the mic is on or the tape recorder is running at all times. Nothing is off the record.
3. Be friendly and hospitable to members of the press – TV technical crew support staff, administrative staff.
4. Know your surroundings. If you are going to appear on TV, take a minute to gather your thoughts before going on the air.
5. Talk slowly and use simple phrases and sentences.
6. Relax. Breathe. Enjoy the moment.

## **RADIO**

As college students, we have many avenues to get our voices heard on the radio. We all know Rush Limbaugh, whose nationwide syndicated show is heard nightly. Don't think only staunch conservatives like Rush can call in to his show and talk the talk with the fat man. Make your voice heard. While Rush is nationally syndicated, there are many local opportunities to express your views over the air waves.

Do you have a college radio station? Air a political debate between the College Democrats and the College Republicans. If your station is popular outside your campus, this forum would be an excellent source of visibility.

Each of the avenues listed gives college students the opportunity to get their voices on the radio. If you build up the courage to call Rush or if you just want to talk about issues on the air, the following list gives you some practical tips.

### **TALK RADIO TIPS WHEN ON THE AIR**

1. Make sure the host announces your name and title on the air and what topic you plan to address. Introduce yourself if the host forgot. If your name is difficult to pronounce, make sure the host gets it right.
2. Conversely, know the host's name. Say, "Hi Bob, it's an honor to be on your show."
3. Know how long you are scheduled to be on the air. If the show is going really well, the host or producer may ask you to stay on longer.
4. Keep in mind that you can do a radio show from any telephone. The host can't see you so spread as many notes out on your desk as you like.
5. Use the daily newspaper. Quote pro-Democratic sources. Remember, many Americans do not read the newspaper and only get their news from talk radio. Use the chance to educate them.
6. Make sure you know and support the Democratic position on specific issues. If you are unsure about an issue or a fact, say so and move on or ask for a caller's name and address and offer to send him/her the information requested.
7. Lastly, remember that practice makes perfect. It may take a few shows for you to become comfortable in the talk radio format. You may want to start with a show that isn't nationally syndicated or in a big market. Most of all, have fun!!!

## **FUNDRAISING**

One of the most crucial determinants of your club's success is the amount of money it can raise. The more money you are able to raise, the more you will be able to do – more visibility, more political and legislative action, etc. Costs associated with stationary, copies, advertising and special events add up, so it is important to make fundraising one of your group's main initiatives. While it is not necessary to raise a lot of money to begin with, you will need to raise some money to start with. Once your group has gained credibility and becomes more visible, you will be able to do more fundraising and it will become easier.

### **I. GETTING STARTED: WRITING A PLAN**

Before starting your fundraising efforts, it is important to write a plan. Some basic steps your group may follow include:

#### **SET GOALS**

Determine what your chapter will need. By creating a realistic budget, your group will be able to set realistic goals and establish a yearly time line. For instance, if you know you will need more money in the spring, you can plan for a bigger fundraising effort then.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

Establish a good record keeping system and appoint a responsible treasurer to be as organized as possible and prevent any improprieties.

#### **METHODS OF FUNDRAISING**

Identify prospective donors and look for other methods your chapter will use to raise money.

#### **THE PLAN**

While there is no universal fundraising plan that will work for every chapter, all plans should include: A realistic yearly operating budget, specific proposals for fundraising events, draft prospecting letters and a preliminary list of potential donors.

Once your plan is written, refer to it often and revise it as needed.

This is important for three reasons:

1. You will learn by analyzing your successes and failures.
2. The plan will be important in projecting your income and thus predicting what elements of your program you can afford.
3. It will also be important in creating a record for future officers of your chapter.

By following some simple steps you will be able to raise enough money for your operating costs, big events and money to cover the expenses to send your group to the CDA National Convention.

At all times, it is important to keep in mind that you must be as professional as possible with your fundraising efforts. Remember, you are selling your organization to prospective donors and the more professional you appear, the more likely you will be to receive contributions.

## **II. WAYS TO RAISE MONEY**

### DUES

Probably the quickest and easiest way to raise money is to collect membership dues from your core group of people. One way to do this is to pass around a collection dish at meetings to offset the immediate costs of copying, postage, and advertising.

Once your membership grows and your group begins to gain credibility, you can sell a membership fee for \$10. Make sure you stress to your potential members all the benefits that will be provided to them, such as a monthly newsletter, membership to CDA, fun activities, and other opportunities.

Another possibility for your group is to arrange discounts with local businesses through a membership card. For example, your College Democrats Chapter Membership Card might entitle your members off to \$1.00 off at the local pizzeria or movie theater.

### PROSPECTIVE DONORS

Once you have raised seed money from your membership dues, the most efficient way to increase your account balance is to raise money from prospective groups or individuals. This can include local and state public officials, College Democrats alumni, party activists, labor unions, pro-choice and other Dem-friendly organizations.

Prospect Letters:

Once you have determined who your prospects will be, the first step is to solicit funds with a fundraising letter. The actual appeal you use in your letter is vital. Here are some points to keep in mind:

Keep the letter short and to the point.

Include why you need a contribution, i.e. to send delegates to the CDA Convention or to provide transportation for a volunteer GOTV effort, and include specific dollar amounts that you are requesting.

Indicate how this will not only help your group, but how it will also benefit the Democratic Party and your specific proposal in the long run. For example, here is an appeal you might make to a public official: Your local College Dems group will become more active because the students will have the opportunity to attend workshops on such topics as how to become involved in the political process and, particularly, how to become involved in campaigns. Thus, your chapter will be a greater asset to their campaign thanks to the information you'll learn at the convention.

When appealing to a public official:

Remind them of how you have helped them in the past, i.e. how many of your members have volunteered for their campaigns in the past.

Make sure you use letterhead. This will show you are an established and professional organization. You can easily design letterhead on a computer.

Follow-up

The next step to take is to contact your prospect by telephone or in person. This is always necessary in order to receive a contribution. When making your personal appeal by telephone or in person, make sure to restate the information that was in the letter you sent. When it comes time to ask for the specific amount you want, ask for a contribution on the high end of what you think is reasonable, for example \$200. While your prospect may not give that much, you should be able to keep bargaining until you come up with something respectable as \$50.

Once you receive a pledge for a specific amount, confirm the terms of delivery, i.e. mail pick up, etc. Make sure you continue to follow up on the pledge until you actually receive it.

Upon receiving the contribution, send out a thank you letter. Make sure you note how the money was used, how it benefited your group and how it benefited the Democratic Party and the donor. This is one of the most crucial steps that you can take to ensure future contributions.

Now that you have built your base of donors, make them a part of your club. Send them your newsletter and invite them to your upcoming events. This will serve to reinforce your contributor's belief that you are a viable organization and will make it easier for you to solicit contributions from them in the future. Now you will be able to go back to them every three to six months and ask for a bigger amount each time.

## FUNDRAISERS

A fundraiser is a political event where you invite politicians, corporate givers and students to give money to your club and attend a social event. While setting up a fundraiser entail a lot of work, by following some simple guidelines it can bring in a lot of money and publicity to your group. What follows are some suggestions to help make it a profitable event.

### PLAN EARLY AND PLAN WELL

One of the most essential factors of making your fundraiser a success is to start planning early and to follow a time-line.

### SPONSORS

Try to find a sponsor to cover the expenses of putting on the event or to contribute the setting, entertainment, or food at a wholesale price. This might be a wealthy Democrat in your area, a Democratic law firm, a local labor union, your senator's district organization or the office of a local representative.

### INVITATIONS

Send out personal invitations to those who you want to attend. Make a follow up call or visit to make sure they are planning to attend, or at least to contribute.

### COST CUTTING

Make sure you are going to bring in more money than you spend on the fundraiser. Some clubs have made the mistake of setting the expectations too high, and have not only been disappointed at the turn out, but have also had trouble breaking even on their events. One money saving suggestion is to serve hors d'oeuvres rather than a sit down meal, and a cash bar rather than an open bar.

### BE CREATIVE

Create a theme, or choose a fun location. Try a boat trip, a casino night, a mini-golf night or a happy hour at a local bar. Happy hours can be an easy way to raise money and gain visibility. If you are holding a standard fundraiser, make sure to have some sort of entertainment. Get a student choir, band or orchestra to donate the entertainment.

### MERCHANDISE

Set up a table at your event to sell College Democrats merchandise.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Make sure that you get as many students to your event as possible. By offering a student rate at a high dollar event, you will enable more students to attend. Adults like seeing and meeting the students who are directly benefiting from their financial contributions.

### CANDY SALES

This is a very popular fundraiser, but there are techniques you can use to make it as creative and profitable as possible. Instead of ordering through a mail order candy company, it is often easier and cheaper to buy candy from a wholesale store. You can then make individual members responsible for selling boxes of candy in their dorm or cafeteria. You might also try selling candy targeted at special events on campus such as Halloween or Valentines Day. One idea is to sell candy-grams with personal messages and then deliver them to the person of the sender's choosing. Think of good times and places to sell your candy, like outside of the library or in dorm lounges when you know that people are bound to be studying and looking for a sugar high.

### STUDENT GOVERNMENT FUNDING

One way for new groups and small chapters to get funding is from their student governments. Most schools provide annual funding to campus clubs based on membership, or will provide funding for certain kinds of events. The funding is usually based on individual presentations where groups describe their budget proposals for the upcoming year, or for individual events. It is very important that you are well prepared for the meeting. Go into the presentation with an itemized list of what you expect to spend, estimates of how much things will cost, and how it will benefit the student body as a whole by increasing political awareness and volunteerism in the community. It's a good idea to get your members involved with student government or on the committee that decides the money allocations.

### MERCHANDISE SALES

Selling CDA and campaign items is not only an easy and great way to raise money for your group, but can help increase the visibility of your club or Democratic candidates. The CDA office, and often campaigns, have such items that you can purchase at a bulk rate.

### PARENTS

Parents are a great resource to tap into. Send out a letter to all your members' parents requesting a donation. Another idea is to obtain a list of parents whose children live in the dorms and use it for different fundraising efforts, such as sending out a letter to them selling care packets for their children at finals time. In the package you could include fruit, candy and aspirin and then deliver it to their dorm rooms. This could be a fundraiser you do every quarter or semester.

### SAVING MONEY – CO-SPONSORSHIP

Sponsoring an event with another group is a way you can defray the costs of an event, as well as the amount of energy you must put into an event. Look into other student groups, academic departments or your local county party to help put on a special event, bring in a speaker or participate in a charitable event.

## LAWS AND OTHER PROVISIONS

Since you are a political organization, it is a good idea to check into any measures your club may have to follow in your fundraising efforts to abide by state laws or regulations. While laws vary from state to state on what expenses your club may have to report to the Ethical Practices Board in your state, it is a good idea to become aware of any provisions or steps that need to be taken to ensure that you do not run into any problems in the future.

### **III. PLANNING A FUNDRAISER**

Let's say the local College Democrats decided to do a fundraiser to be held on Halloween weekend, they decided to make it a costume party where the theme will be to dress up as your favorite politician. They also decided that they will apply for a grant from the Student Government to help defray the costs. At their initial fundraising meeting, the members broke up into the following committees and delegated the responsibilities of setting up the fundraiser.

MEDIA COMMITTEE:	In charge of running the ads, working with the press and the design and distribution of the flyers.
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:	Organizes the volunteers for the set up and clean up of the room of the fundraiser. Is also responsible for scheduling volunteers to be at the registration table.
INVITATION COMMITTEE:	Determines who to invite, sends out invitations and follows up on those who were invited to remind them of the event.
ENTERTAINMENT COORDINATOR:	In charge of getting keynote speakers, arranging entertainment and deciding on the decorations.
TREASURER:	Submits proposals to student government to obtain funding, pays off bills and makes sure that costs remain within the budget in order to keep the event profitable.

These local College Dems also put together a budget. Since the event will be held on campus, the room is free, and the entertainment will be provided free of charge by a campus band.

#### Outgoing Expenses

Catering	\$100
Invitations, Advertising, Flyers	100
Decorations	40
Miscellaneous Expenses	40
<hr/>	
EXPENSES	\$280

Incoming Revenue

Ticket Sales 80 @ \$10.00 each	SALES	\$800
	PROFITS	\$520

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**IV. CONCLUSION**

As mentioned earlier, fundraising should be one of your group's main agenda items. Remember to be as creative and organized as possible, but most importantly, have fun! You only stand to learn from your mistakes.

## LETTER WRITING

A personal letter is one of the most effective ways of contacting legislators, whether at the state or national level. The following suggestions will make the letter most effective.

1. Address it properly. Know the legislator's full name and correct spelling. Some examples follow:

U.S. SENATOR

The Honorable (full name)

United States Senator

Address

\*\*\*\*

U.S. Representative

The Honorable (full name)

United States Representative

Address

\*\*\*\*

2. Always include your last name and address on the letter (printed or typed).
3. Use your own words. Avoid form letters and petitions. They tend to be identified as organized pressure campaigns, and are often answered with form replies. However, a petition does let the legislator know that the issue is of concern to a large number of people (addresses carry more weight than 100 form letters or post cards).
4. Time the arrival of your letter. Write to your legislator or the committee chairperson while the bill is still in committee and there is time to take effective action. A letter addressing a bill on the floor of the House or Senate may diminish the impact it could have made if it were received during the bill drafting stage in committee.
5. Know the information on the issue you are addressing. Identify the bill or issue of concern. If you write about a bill, try to give the bill number or describe it by popular title, such as "The Education Bill."
6. Be brief. Many issues are complex, but a single page letter presenting clear and concise opinions, facts, and arguments is preferred and welcomed by most legislators.
7. Give reasons for your positions. Explain how the issue would affect you, your family, business, or profession. Describe the impact of the issue on your community and state.
8. Be constructive with your criticism.
9. Groups and individuals should determine their priority concerns and contact the legislator on those specific issues rather than on every issue. The "pen pal" who writes every few days on every conceivable issue tends to become a nuisance, rather than an effective voice of concern.

10. You may not always receive a long detailed response to your letter. Legislators are very busy and usually cannot respond with long, personal replies to each correspondent.

11. Write a letter of appreciation when you feel a legislator has done a good job. Legislators are human and seldom receive “thank you” letters of encouragement.

*Remember on any one issue, even a few letters to one legislator can have an important impact. A general rule of thumb often used: for every personalized letter from one person who took the time to write, it is believed that there are 100 people who feel the same way who didn't write. That is why a letter with a new perspective or clear cut, persuasive arguments can be a decisive factor in a legislator's decision. If you want to be further involved in the future of a particular bill, keep track of it. You may also want to consider testifying on it before a committee, or commenting on it at a local public hearing.*

## **TIPS ON GRASSROOTS LOBBYING**

### What is grassroots lobbying?

It is simple – Communicating with decision makers about your views and the viewpoint of your organization.

### How do you lobby?

First, think strategically about who exactly has the power to make a decision concerning your views. For example, if you want a grocery store to give a discount to people who use their own bags, it would make sense to start with the store manager or owner, rather than a clerk at the check-out stand. The manager/owner has the most authority to make a change like that. If the store-manager says, “I have to check with so and so,” then ask to be part of that conversation in some way. After you successfully determine your target(s), there are a number of different ways to communicate with them. Here are a few ideas:

- Call the decision maker(s)
- Write letters
- Ask the decision maker(s) to attend one of your meetings
- Write letters to the editor
- Ask others to lobby
- Send out a press release and make follow up calls with reporters to announce your organization’s view
- Meet personally with the decision maker(s):
  1. Make your appointment in advance: Call the legislator’s office and state the time needed for your meeting, who will be present for the meeting, and the topic.
  2. Prepare your presentation and know your issues: Select one person from your group to be the primary spokesperson for each issue. Each person should introduce themselves, state the group they represent (if any), the issue, and what action the legislator is being asked to take in their first sentence.
  3. Do your homework: Research the background of your target legislators. What arguments would appeal to them? What are the legislator’s interests, backers, past votes, district, etc.?
  4. Be concise, brief, and accurate while presenting your case: Present the facts in an orderly manner. Do not present purely emotional arguments. Demonstrate the impact of your issue. Use illustrations, graphs, or charts when possible. Leave a one page fact sheet with the bill number and title, as well as your name, address, and phone number.
  5. Allow time for questions: Encourage questions from the legislator and answer them factually. If you do not know the answer, offer to find the

answer and get back to the legislator. Always follow through with your promises to legislators.

6. Determine your legislator's position: Specifically ask the decision maker(s) for some action or commitment. How will they vote? Will they stand for or against a proposal? Will they make a call on your behalf? Be polite, but persistent.
7. Thank you: Follow-up by writing a thank you note and restate your position.

How is your communication most effective?

- Be understanding, thoughtful, and realistic: Put yourself in the public official's place. Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion. Remember to thank legislators for a job well done. Be sensitive to your legislator's other political necessities.
- Speak from your heart: Use a personal situation to make your point while sticking with the facts.
- Maintain contact: Keep in touch with key legislators year-round through common issues and activities.
- Be polite and personable.