

SDSCA NEWSLETTER FROM THE HILLS

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Dates to Remember:

DECEMBER

- 18 [LEAD DC Conference](#) early-bird registration deadline
- 22 [LEAD DC Conference](#) workshop presenter application deadline

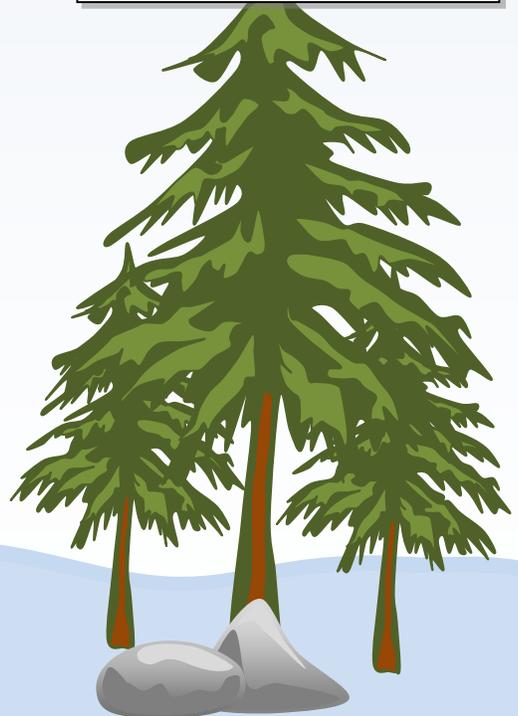
JANUARY

- 5 [LEAD DC Conference](#) regular registration deadline
- 12 [LEAD Chicago](#) early-bird registration deadline
- 19 [LEAD Chicago Conference](#) workshop presenter application deadline
- 26–28 [LEAD DC Conference](#)

FEBRUARY

- 2 [LEAD Chicago](#) regular registration deadline
- 15 [National Council of Excellence](#) application deadline
- 16–18 [LEAD Chicago](#)

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all! My wish for each one of you is to have a well-deserved holiday break where you can enjoy time with family and friends! Then we can welcome 2018 with great expectations and have an awesome convention! Our new board will be looking at our convention schedule and looking for changes that can be made that will benefit everyone!



The Twelve W's of Project Planning

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Planning any activity requires careful thought and preparation. Before stepping into action, be sure that you can answer the following questions:

1. **WHAT** are you planning to do?
2. **WHY** do you want to do this project?
3. **WHEN and WHERE** will the activity take place?
4. **WHO** will benefit from the project?
5. **WHAT** staff members(s) will need to approve the project?
6. **WHAT** funds are needed?
7. **WHEN** will the basic planning be done?
8. **WHAT** committees are necessary?
9. **WHAT** kind of publicity is needed?
10. **WHO** deserves a special thank you?
11. **WAS** the project worthwhile?
12. **WHAT'S next? WHERE** do we go from here?

Fundraising for Charities of Choice

Where it is allowed by their school districts, middle level and high school student councils regularly select and support their charities of choice through fundraising efforts. Because of fluctuations in giving trends nationwide and increasing costs to provide services, the number of organizations competing for student council support. Many of the organizations offer resources to help student groups sponsor events in the name of the charity or cause, and NatStuCo reminds student council advisers to help student leaders understand how to best determine how to choose a group to support.

Before committing funds or fundraising efforts to any unknown group, it is always best practice to verify the position and policies of the school district and to secure principal approval. From there, take time to look into the background of potential groups using consumer websites and by asking groups for references of local businesses, persons, or schools that can vouch for their legitimacy. The Better Business Bureau, a local Chamber of Commerce, and the county government offices are just three possible resources. Other national consumer groups are identified in the tips list that follows.

Student councils that encounter solicitations from unknown groups looking for support should be aware of any signs that might raise questions. An obvious red flag to look out for is any organization that does not respond to inquiries or whose personnel give vague responses or give conflicting information. Reluctance or refusal to provide references is another situation that should alert student leaders and advisers to dig further before signing on to with an organization.

Guiding student leaders through the process of checking organizations' backgrounds includes helping them establish a standard process that helps to ensure a thorough review before a decision is made. Reviewing all findings with the adviser and principal is a 'must do' as part of that process.

NatStuCo has also developed the following list of tips to help members when confronted with solicitations from unknown organizations.

1. A key method for getting people to support a cause is to appeal to either their emotions or their patriotism. Surges in 'new' charities have become a common phenomenon following a natural catastrophe, or a traumatic event having widespread or international impact.

2. Before entering into any agreement with a charitable organization that you are not familiar with, contact one or more consumer service groups to ascertain its validity and record of operation. Good places to start include the Better Business Bureau and your state office of consumer affairs or state attorney general's website.
3. A good habit is to actually call the charity. The call is an excellent way to find out any information that was not included in earlier contacts or mailings from the group. Asking for and checking references are always recommended as well. If the group has representatives in your area, don't hesitate to invite them in to make a presentation to the council. Red Flag: Be wary of organizations if your calls go unanswered, messages are not returned, or if the number is out of service or simply incorrect.
4. If the charity will receive money, find out how much actually goes to the recipients. Some charities may channel funds through a system that results in most of the money going to pay the business expenses or to individuals who run the charity. GuideStar.org list charities that have filed with the IRS. Charity Navigator is another organization that tracks organizations and compiles feedback on their performances from multiple sources, and then assigns ratings and comparisons. Charity Navigator also provides a comprehensive list of free consumer resources and donor tips on their website.
5. There may come a time when your council receives invitations from two groups whose names are almost identical. Be especially prudent in researching both. A tactic for questionable organizations is using a similar name or otherwise creating mailings or webpages that have confusingly similar appearances is a deceptive practice often used by phony groups and those that are not exactly what they appear to be. Do not hesitate to call an organization to verify its name when this circumstance arises.
6. When trying to decide on a charity, remember that some charities feature special events such as walk-a-thons, etc. Such activities usually have expenses associated with them that the charity usually expects the event sponsor to cover. For a student council to host the event without significant additional financial support, the final price tag on the event could wind up being larger than the council's actual donation to the charity. Learn and understand all costs that may be associated with sponsoring any event or activity on behalf of a charity and budget accordingly.
7. Refuse high-pressure solicitations. In their zealous efforts to secure funding, some charity solicitations employ high-pressure tactics to rush student councils into agreements. Be aware that a group being aggressive in soliciting to the student council or trying to rush the council into an agreement is using a technique the Federal Trade Commission has identified as one typically used in scams. If advisers or student leaders encounter such tactics, and the organization won't back off, the best policy is to politely decline and end communications with that group.
8. The Federal Trade Commission advises to always be alert to a charity that offers to send a courier to collect a donation immediately after the fundraising event. Cash and other donations should be deposited in the school's account and then a check written to the charity on behalf of the student council. It is a nice gesture to invite a representative of a charity organization to attend your activity or make arrangements to be visit the school to accept the donation. This is a good PR opportunity for the council, the school, and the charity. If a representative of the charity is able to be present, the council can create an oversized check that will be used as a stage prop to represent the donation in a presentation. It looks better in photos and doesn't compromise the secure process of mailing a check directly to the charity.

Fundraising

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Fundraising: Best Practices

Starting Point: The Principal

The first place to start when planning fundraising is your principal's office. It is important to verify that school policies (at school, from the school board, or from the state) permit your council to engage in fundraising.

- Identify any state restrictions on the types of projects that can be implemented
- Review school board policies governing fundraising in the district. Many of these policies are quite detailed setting forth definitions of fundraising, as well as outlining prohibited practices (e.g., door-to-door canvassing, required participation, etc.) that your council might have been considering.
- Determine if any policies specifically name acceptable purposes for school-related fundraisers or stipulate a requirement for the principal's approval or other prior approval procedures.
- Have the principal review and approve any contract that may be associated with a fundraising activity

Goals and Purposes

- With input from the council members, establish realistic and reasonable-to-achieve financial goals for fundraising
- Use clear, concise writing to state the purpose of the fundraising and identify specifically on what or how the money will be used.

Member Engagement and Expectations

- Ensure that all members are aware of their obligations for council fundraising activities
 - Define special obligations (time commitment, etc.) in the council constitution or bylaws
 - Give members ample notice and time to plan for fundraising commitments and make any adjustments on their personal calendars
- Share information about fundraising commitments with potential council members
- If your council will have a rule about member obligations to fundraise minimum amounts, the rule should be reasonable and feature rewards for success rather than punishment for failure.
 - Incentive-based fundraising practices eliminate messy situations that arise from imposing consequences to a student who has lower fundraising successes.

Handling Money: The School Bookkeeper

- Meet with the bookkeeper prior to the fundraising activity begins
 - Bookkeeper should review money handling procedures
 - Establish a schedule for when the bookkeeper wants funds brought in
 - Ask bookkeeper for or guidance to avoid theft, miscounting, or mishandling of funds

Scheduling a Fundraiser

- Review the master activities calendar before scheduling a fundraising activity
- Avoid dates on or adjacent to other fundraising projects already scheduled
- Check members' academic schedules to avoid dates that conflict with trips, exams, or major class project deadlines

Time Tables and Deadlines

- Fundraising projects should have definitive start and end dates
- Establish a daily/weekly timeline for turning in money (and unsold product if applicable)
 - Identify who the money is turned in to
 - Create a deposit form to track who turned in how much and when
 - Define what form of deposit is accepted. (Some councils ask members to have parents write checks for deposit rather than accepting cash)

Evaluation

- After the fundraiser has concluded, schedule a council session to evaluate the activity
 - Evaluate if the goals were met and identify what strategies or actions contributed to or prevented meeting the goals
 - Were the policies and procedures about the fundraiser clear?
 - Did the officers or project chairs have all the information, help, and resources they needed?
 - What was the level of membership participation?
 - Was this the best time of year for the fundraiser?
 - What can members suggest to improve next year's fundraising activities and what mistakes should be avoided in the future?