RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Despite what myths may exist, meetings do not have to be boring wastes of time! With preparation and practice, your organization can have timely, effective, FUN meetings.

Before the Meeting

- As a group, decide how frequently you need to meet, how long you need to meet, and where you will meet.
- Decide the purpose of your meetings. Are your meetings primarily for getting information out to members, or are there active conversations happening at your meetings to make group decisions?
- Decide who needs to attend the meeting. Some meetings might be better suited for specific committees or an executive board, rather than having the entire membership in attendance, especially if only a few people are involved in the discussions.
- Decide how your meetings will operate. Will they use parliamentary procedures, or will they be more informal?
- Develop an agenda before the meeting (refer to **Sample Agenda)**. Work with your advisor to confirm what business to discuss.
  Ask other attendees for any items that need to be included on the agenda, and distribute the agenda BEFORE the meeting, usually at least **3 days prior** to the scheduled meeting time.
- Agenda should include: Title (e.g. evaluation meeting), Time (e.g. 8-9:00 a.m.), Date and Location of meeting, Discussion items, Names of persons responsible for each agenda item and time allotted for each item.
- Print out copies of the agenda to distribute at the meeting.

During the Meeting

- **Always start on time.** Plan to arrive early to the meeting so you can get settled and have everything prepared by the schedule start time.
- Be sure someone is appointed to take the official notes (e.g. the secretary)
- Stick to the agenda and allotted time for each discussion item.
- Keep to the subject or topic being discussed. Always steer conversation back to the agenda topic.
- Try to clarify by rewording or repeating what has taken place so that everyone at the meeting understands. This can be helpful during a heated debate.
- At the end of the agenda item, check to make sure the person who wanted a particular agenda item has had an opportunity to speak or contribute to the discussion. Also, check whether anyone is unclear about the status of that agenda item.
- Be aware of the "process" of what is happening to and between members. Pay attention to tone and body language, making sure that people are not frustrated or upset.
- Be objective and impartial. Make sure the discussion is kept at a respectful level and that people feel like the group is hearing them.
- At the end of the meeting move any unfinished business to the next agenda.
- Allow time at the beginning or end of a meeting for members to share thoughts, personal stories, etc.

After the Meeting

- Check with the note-taker (secretary) to see that he/she understands his/her notes
- Transfer left-over agenda items to the agenda for the following meeting
- Type up meeting notes/minutes (refer to **Sample Minutes)** and send them out to members within **24 hours** of meeting. It also helps to either post meeting notes/minutes on an organization website so members have easy access to them.

*Adapted from XCEL Center for Excellence in Student Leadership, Campus Life at Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2010