

advocacy guide



a mental health advocacy
guide for students



about

Active Minds is the nation's premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for students. More than 15,000 students each year join an Active Minds chapter located at more than 400 high schools, colleges, and universities nationwide. Through education, advocacy, and outreach, students are empowering a new generation to speak openly about mental health, support each other, get help when needed, and take action for suicide prevention.

Join the Active Minds movement to change the conversation about mental health.

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We encourage the dissemination of this guide. Please provide credit to Active Minds.

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advocacy guide



Transform your
CAMPUS®

a guide for students **on how to create structural and policy change on campus that results in long-term support for mental health.**

Transform Your Campus was developed with a generous grant from Peg's Foundation



preface

Transform Your Campus (TYC) is an Active Minds program that aids students in creating structural and policy change on their campuses. This guide provides a comprehensive set of resources designed to aid college student leaders in creating lasting changes to policies and structures related to mental health on their campuses.

Purpose

The purpose of TYC is to provide student leaders and their supporters with the tools they need to execute successful institutional advocacy campaigns on their campuses. These tools include basic leadership skills such as goal and agenda setting, assessing students' needs and campus climate, building coalitions, writing project plans and proposals, and convening professional meetings.

TYC is designed to equip students with the tools to make change via current campus systems and structures. Although this guide does not rule out exerting external pressure (i.e. media) in certain situations, the first priority is for students to exhaust all internal options (i.e. relationship building) in pursuing their change initiative.

What's inside

These pages contain resources, tips, and templates to help you:

- Select a campaign
- Create a communications plan
- Run effective meetings and talk to administrators
- Facilitate a brainstorming process
- Use facts and statistics to bolster your claims
- Research your own campus
- Identify opponents and engage in constructive discourse
- Write goals as a group
- Effectively communicate the purpose of your campaign
- Divvy up tasks by writing a work plan
- Conduct a needs assessment or program evaluation
- Utilize the power of traditional and social media
- Recruit allies, partners, and mentors
- Write a campaign proposal
- Overcome obstacles
- Leave a legacy on your campus

What's next

This guide provides an overview to the change process on campus and how you can be part of that. We've also created separate guides featuring resources for carrying out specific campaigns. Each of the following campaigns are based on the successes of Active Minds chapters, with ideas for how to carry them out on your campus.

ID Card Campaign

This guide will support your efforts to print mental health crisis numbers on the backs of ID cards.

Orientation/FYE Campaign

This guide will support your efforts to incorporate mental health education into new student orientation or a first year experience course.

Leave of Absence Campaign

This guide will support your efforts to advocate for equity in leave of absence and petition to return policies.

Means Reduction Campaign

This guide will support your efforts to limit access to means of suicide in the campus environment.

Student Fees Campaign

This guide will support your efforts to advocate for student fees that support more mental health services on campus.

Transform your
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introduction



What does a change campaign look like? What's involved?
What can we expect? Where do we start and where are we going?

Your questions: ANSWERED.

ANSWERS

introduction

Transform Your Campus FAQ

Active Minds created Transform Your Campus to aid students in creating structural and policy change on their campuses. The Transform Your Campus toolkit provides a comprehensive set of resources designed to aid college student leaders in creating lasting changes to policies and structures related to mental health on their campuses.

By offering the information necessary to develop the skills required to lead persuasive campus culture, policy, and structural change, Transform Your Campus teaches leadership and advocacy to the next generation of mental health advocates.

This guide seeks to provide all students the opportunity to develop skills for goal-setting, coalition building, research and assessment, proposal writing, action planning, advocacy, and professionalism. Likewise, it introduces strategies for better understanding institutional structure and culture, power dynamics, and leaving a legacy of sustainable change on campus.

Led by the power of student advocates, Transform Your Campus is building momentum on campuses across the country for the idea that any size change can make a big difference for the mental health of college students.

What kinds of student groups should utilize the Transform Your Campus toolkit?

Any student group can access and utilize the Transform Your Campus toolkit. However, groups that have been active on their campuses for at least one full academic year and are relatively well-known to the student body tend to find the greatest support for their proposals. Success with the Transform Your Campus initiative does not require a large number of active group members; rather, the success of the initiative depends on the group's ability to conduct research, write strong proposals and opinion pieces, and recruit collaborators and supporters.

What is policy and structural change?

Policy and structural changes reduce or eliminate barriers in the student's environment for accessing mental health services. These changes may include making services more convenient, accessible, and reflective of the diversity of the student body, including:

- Extending counseling center hours to accommodate more students and their schedules
- Hiring more counselors of color or who identify as LGBTQ available to serve those populations
- Including mental health education in first-year experience courses and student orientation programs
- Including mental health resources on course syllabi where other resources (i.e. academic tutoring, disability services, etc.) may be mentioned

chapter 1

Transform your
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Choose an Issue

ISSUES

choose an issue

These resources will help you brainstorm and narrow down the most important issues facing student mental health on campus, determine which issues you have the most power to influence, and bring a group of motivated leaders to a consensus about your next steps.

Introduction to Brainstorming

Brainstorming methods are like opinions. Everyone has one. So, what is brainstorming? How should you do it? When should you do it? Is it helpful at all?

Brain•storm•ing: A group problem-solving technique that involves the spontaneous contribution of ideas from all members of the group; also: the mulling over of ideas by one or more individuals in an attempt to devise or find a solution to a problem. (Merriam-Webster dictionary)

The first step in choosing an issue to work on is to gather fellow students together and do some brainstorming. There are at least two methods for effective group-thinking: (a) the traditional brainstorm and (b) the “brainswarm.” Learn more about the two methods and pros/cons of each below.

The Traditional Brainstorm

In a traditional brainstorm, one individual facilitates a discussion in which participants are encouraged to share ideas as they occur to them within a certain time limit. The facilitator may use a series of questions to prompt ideas and take notes on a whiteboard or flipchart. This method allows participants to build ideas with one another and can generate a long list of ideas. When it’s done well, the facilitator will ensure everyone has a chance to be heard and prevent any censorship or critiquing of ideas at the beginning stage.

choose an issue

THE TRADITIONAL BRAINSTORM

Need to have a more structured setting to get ideas surfaced? The traditional brainstorm is detailed below from the roles needed to how to proceed after the session is over.

Roles



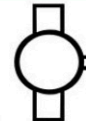
Facilitator

defines the objective, answers questions, sets up the agenda and the guidelines (see below), paraphrases ideas to ensure understanding and encourages participation



Note taker

will not filter ideas, but rather record all of them that have not already been suggested. Also, will keep in mind that people think in a variety of ways and will use visuals (ex. google doc) to keep track of input so that people can both listen to and see the ideas given



Timekeeper

periodically reminds people of how much time is left and lets group know when the brainstorm is over

Helpful Hints

Vary participants

Be aware of the number of participants for the brainstorm

Allow for quantity over quality - some ideas may sound unrealistic, but this is a brainstorm!

Acknowledge each idea - this will show that you are actively listening

Provide refreshments to keep people's minds stimulated

Try running an activity like a free write or ask people to close their eyes and offer them a prompt that will get their ideas flowing and then allow them to share out briefly

choose an issue

The "Brainswarm"

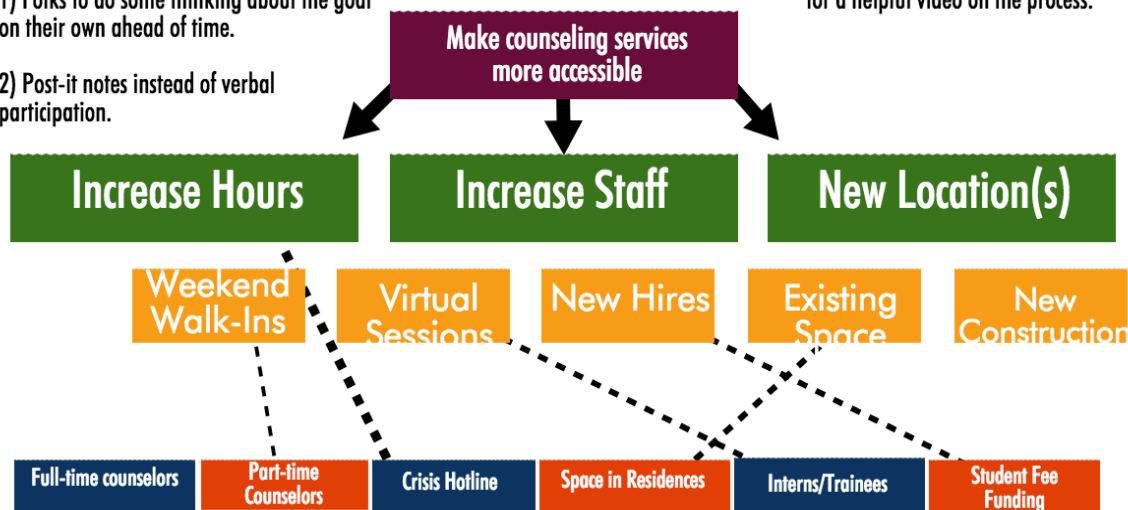
Another method that also works well is called the "Brainswarm." In this method, one person provides a few prompts for participants to consider ahead of a meeting. Then, the participants bring their ideas on post-it notes to a meeting to share with the other participants. Together, the participants group "like" ideas together to create relationships between the ideas as shown in the example below.

The exercise requires:

- 1) Folks to do some thinking about the goal on their own ahead of time.
- 2) Post-it notes instead of verbal participation.

The "Brainswarm"

This concept was adopted from the Harvard Business Review. Click on "The Brainswarm" for a helpful video on the process.



PROS: Enables big-picture and detail-oriented people to work together; relies on written ideas to rule out vocal jockeying; encourages specificity and consideration of resources

CONS: Relies on a fair balance of diverse thinkers; requires "outside the room" thinking on the topic

In brainswarming, everyone has the opportunity to contribute equally to the discussion and the group can more easily avoid "group-think," the way in which groups sometimes limit their own thinking during traditional brainstorming. Brainswarming allows each person to bring a unique idea to the table, unaffected by another person's way of thinking.

When to Brainstorm:

Brainstorming may need to occur at various points in your campaign process and with varying groups. It's important to let folks know in advance that they can expect to be brainstorming during a meeting and let them know what they should be thinking about ahead of time. In terms of timing, you might brainstorm:

- At the very beginning, to isolate a list of possible campaigns.
- Next, with allies to narrow down the specific issues your campaign will address and who might be helpful in solving these problems.
- Later, with decision-makers, mentors, and other people with knowledge of the issue to determine what resources are needed and how they might be obtained.

choose an issue

Allow idea generators to contribute to the norms for the session. Here are some to include:

Respect

Participants should not dismiss, evaluate, or belittle anyone's ideas

Respect the environment
(ex. turn off phones)



Move Up/ Move Back

Remind everyone that their voice is important and that each person should be given opportunities to speak



Parking Lot

If participants think of something while someone else is speaking, they can write it on a sticky pad and place it in the "parking lot" to be revisited



Beginning the Session

Be precise and clear in what the objective is (ex. to find what the issues are on your campus surrounding mental health)

Establish that all ideas are valid (no matter how improbable they initially sound)

Introduce participants and run an icebreaker (optional)

Share the time limit for the session

Establish the order of how ideas will be shared (ex. choose to go in circle or "popcorn" around)

Allow time for clarifying questions before the meeting begins

After the Brainstorm

- Address any issues you want to re-visit.
- Ask participants to place a sticker next to the ideas they most strongly believe in.
- Organize ideas into subgroups
- Recap what has been discussed
- Plan for a follow-up meeting to vote on issues and create action steps

chapter 2

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Research Your Campaign

RESEARCH

research your campaign

These resources will guide you in researching the history of the issue on your campus and others, and will help you understand who to approach for support.

Guide to Researching Your Campus

Find the basic stats.

You can find out a lot in the “About” section of your school’s website. Get the basic facts on enrollment numbers, the % of students who live on and off-campus, a snapshot of the annual budget, and student retention rates. You can also request info on retention and other research by contacting your campus’s Office of Admissions (Enrollment Management) and Office of Institutional Research.

Get info from your health and counseling services.

Health and counseling centers typically keep general statistics about the number of students utilizing their services, for what, and for how long—including the number of crisis calls. You should also ask whether your campus participates in research such as the Healthy Minds Study, Healthy Bodies Study, or National College Health Assessment. All of these are rich with information about health and wellness issues on your campus!

Search campus media.

Has someone tried to do this before? Are there recent events that help your cause? What is campus culture like around this issue? Taking a look at campus media sources will help you find out!

Identify relevant departments and organizations.

Which departments oversee this type of policy or process? Are there similarly interested or affected organizations? Check out your campus’s organizational charts to determine who oversees different departments on campus. Search your student organization database to find other allies.

Find peer institutions.

Find your school’s peer and aspirant institutions. Have those schools made these changes? Have they been successful? Your Office of Institutional Research can tell you who those institutions are and you can choose your template to keep track of what you find out.

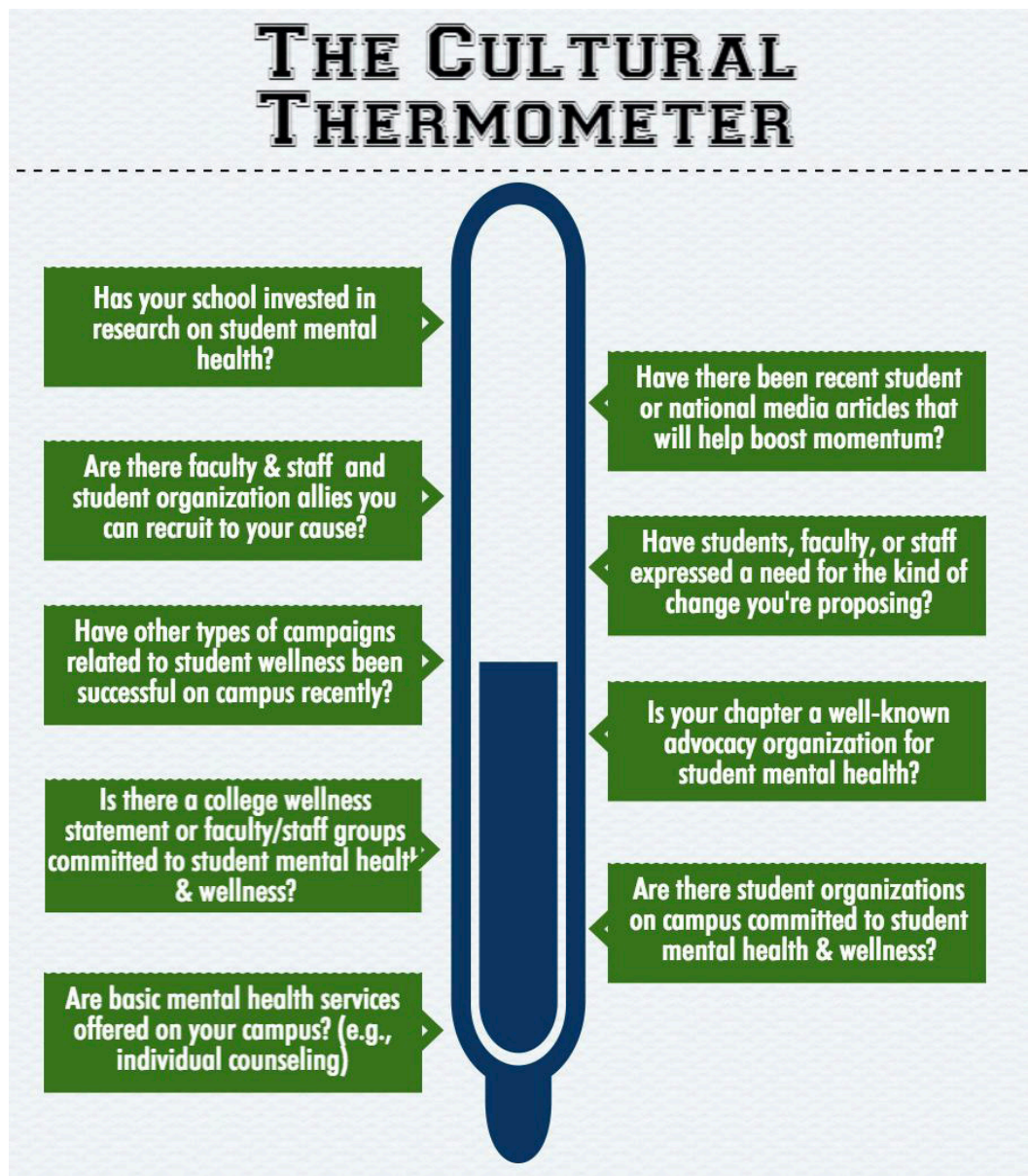
Click through to an interactive tutorial from The Chronicle of Higher Education to [find out who your college think its peers are.](#)

[Click here for a template to keep track of your institutional research.](#)

research your campaign

Reading the Cultural Thermometer

Is your campus ready for the kind of change you're proposing? Has the change been proposed in the past? Is there awareness-raising that needs to be done about the issue first? Use the Cultural Thermometer below to find out.



research your campaign

Compelling Facts and Statistics

Several national studies can help you make your points. Depending on the focus of your campaign, this resource will help you find the stats you need to make a convincing case.

[Click here to arm yourself with useful facts and statistics about the academic impact of anxiety, stress, depression. You'll also find a helpful chart detailing the value of a campus counseling center.](#)

Conducting Effective Needs/Support Assessments

These resources will help you develop, distribute, collect, and analyze what students believe they want and need regarding your campaign and judge their level of support.

Getting started

1. Start with a broad objective or research question.

Let's say your goal is to find out more about the culture around mental health on campus.

2. Come up with a bunch of things you need to learn about your objective or research question.

If you're trying to understand the climate around mental health, you might want to learn more about students' attitudes/stigma, their knowledge of mental health and available resources, and any relevant experiences in social, academic, or other campus settings.

3. Write a question or several questions that can measure each topic.

Not sure what kinds of questions to write or how to do it? Next topic!

research your campaign

Choosing Your Question Format

Closed-ended Questions:

Ordered - These questions are typically simpler and good for measuring degrees of emotions and frequency of behaviors.

Example: Please rate your level of agreement on a scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

Unordered - These questions have options that are not ordered or ranked and can be more tiring to answer. However, they can be really helpful for assessing priorities.

Example: Which of the following programs about mental health would you be most likely to attend? Respond options might include "a concert", "a poetry reading", "a lecture."

Partially closed - These questions permit participants to give you a little bit more information than your response set allows by adding open-ended field.

Example: "If other, please specify."

Open-ended Questions

These questions allow the participant to answer the question in their own words. They are ideal for exploratory surveys for which you do not have much background information or what you would like to collect anecdotes to bolster your case.

*Example: Please describe your last interaction with a member of the counseling center staff.
[provide text box for answer]*

Demographic Questions

Demographic questions ask about individual characteristics like gender/sex and race/ethnicity. When asking about individual characteristics we urge you to be inclusive (i.e., to think about the diversity of gender identities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds on your campus).

research your campaign

Assessing and Evaluating

What are you trying to measure? Behaviors, attitudes, or knowledge?

Behavioral Questions

Questions about what a student has done or experienced.

Example: Have you received support from the counseling center on campus this semester?

Ways to Measure a Behavioral Question

Yes/No: This options is the most obvious and supplies the minimum amount of information on the topic.

Frequency scales: This option gives you information about how many times the participant had engaged in the behavior.

Ex. Change the question to "How many times have you received support..." with options like "0 times," "1 time," etc.

Rates: This option gives you information about how many times the participant has engaged in the behavior in a particular period.

Ex. Change the question to "How often do you receive support..." with options like "Once per day," "Once per week," "2 times per month," etc.

Vague quantifiers: This option gives you a vague assessment of how often the participant engages in the behavior, which is helpful for assessing behaviors that individuals may not necessarily track.

Ex. "How often do you receive support..." paired with options like "often," "sometimes," "rarely," "never," etc.

Ways to Measure a Behavioral Question

Agreement: This scale typically includes the options "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neither agree nor disagree," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree."

Importance: This schale usually ranges from "Very Important," to "Not important."

Ex. "How imporant do you feel student mental health is to administrators on campus?"

Satisfaction: This scale usually ranges from "Very satisfied," to "Not satisfied."

Ex. "How satisfied are you with the quality of counseling services on campus?"

Likelihood: This scale usually ranges from "Very likely," to "Not likely."

Ex. "How likely are you to attend a gatekeeper training on Saturday during this semester?"

Knowledge Questions

Questions that ask about objective knowledge or things that have right or wrong answers.

Ex. True or false - Only women have eating disorders.

Knowledge questions typically have close-ended answers including yes/no, true/false, and "select all that apply" from a list of possible answers.

***Beware of using perceived knowledge questions in the place of real knowledge questions.**

*Ex: "Would you know how to help a friend who was struggling with depression?" only measures whether the participant *thinks* they have the information.*

research your campaign

Writing a Spot-On Survey Question

A few basic tips:

- Choose simple words.
- Use as few words as possible to pose the question.
- Use complete sentences.
- Develop response categories that are mutually exclusive (avoid overlap like: “1 or 2 times” and “2 or 3 times”)
- Test your questions before you conduct a large-scale survey to make sure that respondents understand what you are asking and to ensure that any technical aspects of online surveys are running smoothly.

Example Batch #1

Your chapter wants to measure students’ experiences with and perceptions of the campus counseling center. The questions below might be a sequence within the same survey.

Behavioral question: During your time as an undergraduate at [name of school], have you ever received treatment for depressive symptoms (such as feeling sad) from the [name of counseling center]? Response options: “yes” and “no.”

Attitudinal question: Based on your experience receiving treatment at [name of counseling center], how likely would you be to recommend these services to a friend? Response options: “very likely”, “likely”, “somewhat likely”, and “not likely.”

Knowledge question: To your knowledge, does [name of school] provide free therapy/counseling to students at [name of counseling center]? Response options: “yes”, “no”, and “not sure/I don’t know.”

research your campaign

Example Batch #2

Your chapter wants to determine what activities/programs to run.

Behavioral question: During your time as an undergraduate at [name of school], how often have you attended a program organized by the Active Minds Chapter at [name of school]? Response options: "0 times", "1 time", "2 times", and "3 or more times."

Attitudinal question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?: Students at [name of school] need to know more about the signs and symptoms of eating disorders. Response options: "strongly agree", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree."

Knowledge question: As far as you know, which of the following are common symptoms of depression? (Select all that apply) Response options: "sleep changes (substantial increases or decreases)", "hallucinations or delusions", "appetite changes (substantial increases or decreases)", and "reduced interest in usual activities."

Example Batch #3

Example Batch #3

Your chapter wants to gauge student interest in a peer gatekeeper-training program (e.g., QPR, Mental Health First Aid)

Behavioral question: Over the past year, have you witnessed any of the following situations at [name of school]? (Select all that apply) Response options: "Someone was drinking too much", "Someone was at risk of being sexually assaulted", "Someone was using hurtful language (e.g., bullying, sexist, racist, or homophobic comments)", "Someone was experiencing significant emotional distress or thoughts of suicide", "Other (please specify)", and "No"

Attitudinal question: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?: If a student contemplating suicide does not seek assistance, there is nothing I can do to help. Response options: "strongly agree", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree"

Knowledge question: To which campus resource(s) might you refer a fellow student who appears to be in mental or emotional distress? Response options: a list of campus mental health resources with a few "wrong" answers included (e.g., resources that don't exist or resources that would be inappropriate).

research your campaign

Analyzing Your Survey Data

How to produce and present accurate results.

1. Upload your data.

There are many statistical programs that can be used to analyze survey data, including SPSS, State, SAS, and Microsoft Excel.

2. Clean your data.

To do this you might need to:

- Label variables and response options
 - See if there are any outliers* (respondents who are significantly different from the average).
- *Carefully make adjustments or remove these subjects, documenting your decisions in detail.

3. Calculate the response rate and sample characteristics.

Your response rate is the total number of completed submissions divided by the total number of people you surveyed.

Sample characteristics include demographic factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, and other relevant variables.

4. Review your broad objectives and research goals.

Create a list of variables that are most important to focus on.

Consider how these measures vary across different individual characteristics. (For example: *differences in self-perceived knowledge of campus mental health resources among students living on-campus vs. off-campus.*)

Make a checklist of all the things you want to learn from your data and then follow it like a road map.

5. Different questions = different variables.

Binary: A "yes/no" question becomes a binary variable, or a variable with two categories. For binary variables, you might calculate the percentage of the students who answered "yes."

Categorical: A categorical variable derives from questions like, "From which of the following locations did you receive services," that is then followed by a possible list of locations. These are also often calculated as percentages for each of the answer choices.

Continuous: If you include an open-ended question such as "How many times have you visited the campus counseling center this semester," allowing students to enter a number into a text box, this would yield a continuous variable. For these you will most likely calculate the mean, or average.

Extra Resources: [Creating More Inclusive Demographic Questions](#) • [Data Management Resources](#)

research your campaign

Identifying Opponents and Their Ideas

Sometimes it's hard to know who will come out against your proposal. These resources will help you identify potential opponents, anticipate their objections, and respond productively.

Remember: When you prepare to take on potential opponents and their views, what you're really doing is making your case stronger and ensuring that your change will last longer. It is not always likely that the opponents you identify will become your adversaries. However, by anticipating why they could be against your proposal, you are talking other ideas and perspectives into account and making adaptations that will make your campaign more successful in the long run.

Try not to see the opponents you identify as evil adversaries. Most of the time, they will be folks with different perspectives and interests who are seeking to understand why this issue is important to you.

Click to view each document.

[Who are your opponents?](#)

[What power do they hold?](#)

[How will they react?](#)

[How will you respond?](#)

chapter 3

Transform your
CAMPUS®

Set Goals

GOALS

set goals

Setting Goals

Writing Your Goals

Setting goals is essential to keeping your chapter's mission clear and its drive strong while also keeping members accountable. Below are two effective methods of goal setting that can be used to keep the focus strong.

SMART Goals

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-bound

(Rethinking) SMART Goals

Small, specific, sustainable
Meaningful and memorable
Aims for the agile zone (the zone where you're able to remain flexible)
Relevant to outcome goals
Tweakable

Example Goals:

SMART Goal: By the end of the academic year, we will expand mental health resources available to the campus community by having the crisis hotline number included on the back of student, staff, and faculty identification cards so that our campus is both more prepared to handle emotional distress.

(Rethinking) SMART Goal: We will have meetings with the counseling center and various administrators to discuss ideas about how access to the center could be improved in the interest of working toward extending its services to meet more students' needs.

You don't have to do it on your own!
Check out these worksheets to guide your process.

[SMART goals worksheet](#)

[Rethinking SMART goals worksheet](#)

set goals

Communicating Purpose

Knowing how to communicate your purpose in increasing degrees of specificity is important to folks who want to learn more. Additionally, tools like a written mission, objectives, outcomes, and strategies give you a yardstick against which to measure your campaign's success.

Mission: Clarifies your purpose and what you're doing.

The mission of Students Organizing for Awareness and Access is to expand mental health awareness and access to mental health intervention services among the university student population.

Objectives: Describe your intended effect, broadly.

An objective of SOAA's "A2" campaign is to increase students' access to the counseling and mental health services available on campus.

Outcomes: Describe your intended effect specifically and in terms of outputs.

As a result of the "A2" campaign, students will be able to make and confirm appointments at the university counseling center online via the university's secure server.

As a result of the "A2" campaign, the university counseling center will experience a 5% increase in new student appointment requests.

Strategies: The means you'll use to achieve your outcome.

In order to adjust the university counseling center's appointment management system, SOAA will work with University IT during biweekly meetings to determine the necessary system requirements and resource needs.

In order to adjust the university's counseling center's appointment management system, SOAA will collaborate with the University IT, the university counseling center, the Vice President for Finance from the Division of Student Affairs to create a budget line and recruit the funding for the project.

Tips on outcomes:

(Writing outcomes can be especially challenging, so make em' SMART.)

Specific: use clear and well-defined terms when describing outputs like performance.

Measurable: write outcomes that imply the production of reliable data that can be used to measure success.

Attainable: be realistic about what you can achieve without making the bar so low it'd be impossible not to clear.

Results-oriented: articulate a specific standard that will be achieved.

Time-bound: give yourself a deadline for achieving the outcome.

set goals

Writing a Work Plan

It might be the first time you've done this for a group. It may seem like an extra step. But, there are a lot of advantages to having a work plan in place.

Breaks down your goals into tasks.

A work template (like the ones you can download below) will help you look at the goals you've written and break each down into its tasks, delegate the tasks, and project deadlines.

Demonstrates action-oriented vision.

As you bring allies into your campaign, your action plan communicates that you know where you're going and what it takes to get there. It also gives them something tangible to comment on when you're looking for feedback and advice.

Provides transparency.

A good work plan clearly outlines the group's goals, strategies, who is responsible for contributing specific tasks, and who is responsible for overall goal achievement.

Communicates expectations and drives accountability.

A detailed work plan includes the assignment of specific tasks to be completed by specific deadlines. Having these specifics written down helps group members hold each other accountable for the work that needs to be done because it's all in black and white.

Can be accessed by any member of the group.

A good work plan can be accessed by any member of the group at any time so that they can check on the completion of tasks and refer to deadlines that apply to their projects.

And finally...Did we succeed?

Use the resources on pages 23-28 to take you through all of the steps of writing an evaluation (based on your outcomes) that will not only tell you whether the whole campaign succeeded, but whether particular milestones were victories, too.

chapter 4

Transform your
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Gather Support

SUPPORT

gather support

Gathering Support

Here's where you'll learn how to find mentors, allies, and collaborators, and how to use all media to your greatest advantage.

Attracting Media Attention from Campus Media

Step 1: Identify campus media outlets you can send a pitch to

Make a list of all the newspapers, magazines, radio/TV stations and news websites in your campus community. Depending on the size of your school, there may only be one or two publications on your campus, or you might have multiple outlets to contact. Don't rule out any of them. Campaigns are enhanced by all coverage – from large and small outlets alike!

Step 2: Compile a list of campus media contacts

Scan each publication's contact list for keywords like "news editor" or "campus editor" to determine which staff member is most likely in charge of assigning stories about campus events. If you're still unsure who to contact, write down the names and email addresses of a couple of staff members with promising titles. (Worst case scenario, if you contact the incorrect person, they will forward your email to the appropriate staff member.)

Quick tip: If the publication links to a "news tips" form on its contact page, also submit your pitch there.

Step 3: Brainstorm about your media pitch

Remember that journalists are most concerned with newsworthiness. Before writing a pitch, consider how you can frame your campaigns as timely, intriguing, and relevant to the publication's target audience. Give 'em specifics: Did you just get your proposal approved? Do you have a fundraiser coming up? How is this campus issue related to a national trend? These are the kinds of questions editors will be asking themselves when they read your pitch.

Step 4: Write the pitch

Compile a 200-250 word pitch that includes basic information about your campaign and its newsworthiness. Keep in mind that while you're an expert on this issue you are writing for an audience that may know nothing about this campaign, Active Minds, or mental health. Details and definitions are crucial! Explain how prevalent mental health disorders are, what the scope of the problem is on your campus, and what students are doing to fix it. Finally, remember to maintain an objective tone and imitate a news article so that your media contacts can imagine a similar story appearing in their publications.

gather support

Step 5: Put on the finishing touches

At the end of your pitch, include the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of potential sources for an article about your campaign. Active Minds chapter members, counseling center representatives, and students struggling with their mental health are ideal sources – just make sure you ask for permission to list them as sources.

Step 6: Send the pitch

Write a simple, brief email explaining who you are and what your attached pitch is about. Send it to each media contact individually. Journalists are less likely to respond to a mass email than one that is personally addressed to them. Don't forget to include a short, compelling subject line, too – "Univ. grants \$10K to campus org for awareness campaign," is far more eye-catching than "Active Minds Media Pitch" in a full email inbox.

Step 7: Follow up

If you haven't heard back from a contact in 3-5 days, send a follow-up email. The person may have glanced at your initial message and forgotten to reply. Try to include a piece of new and interesting (but brief) information when you follow-up so you can further make your case that your campaign is worth covering. Don't be afraid to call the newsroom or stop in to meet with the editor. Make yourself known to the news staff and you'll be more likely to get responses when you send pitches

Compile a list of potential questions

Expect the basics:

- Why did you start the campaign?
- Who is involved?
- What are your goals?
- What are next steps, meetings, or events?

Is there a recent campus news story that relates to your campaign or makes it controversial?

Try to anticipate related questions, but know you don't have to answer anything about which you do not know the facts or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Consider asking the reporter their questions in advance.

Some folks have policies against this, but it doesn't hurt to ask.

Brainstorm your answers

Gather compelling statistics and anecdotes.

You know your cause is worthy, but reporters and consumers need compelling information about why they should be interested. Statistics look good in print, but anecdotes from folks who are most affected by the campaign can provoke helpful emotional responses.

Mix in action-oriented language as much as possible.

Folks are most interested in what people are doing, and after you connect with them, they're curious about how they can get involved. Be prepared to describe what your campaign does and a few tips about how consumers can get involved in the campaign.

Rehearse

Tap into your learning style.

Make flashcards from your potential question and answer lists.

Have a friend use the lists to do a mock interview.

Don't bother memorizing your answers. It'll just make you sound stiff, anyway.

Prepare for curve balls.

Have friends who haven't see your question list pepper you with their own questions. You may find there are things you did not anticipate.

Prepare to be recorded.

Reporters often record their interviews, so practice ditching filler words like "um," "uh," "right?" "you know," etc.

Make final preparations

Bring a few notes.







DO write down important stats, dates, names and points you want to make.

DON'T bring and read straight from your "answers" sheet.




Stay hydrated and take your time.

Bring a water bottle to the interview so you can take a sip when you need!



Make Twitter Your Best Friend

-  Twitter enables you to engage students, organizations, and administrators all on the same platform.
-  Come up with a hash tag that will enable you to group all of the tweets associated with the campaign.
 - It might be something like: #mascot4mentalhealth
 - Enables two-way communication and engagement with and among your audience
-  Follow everyone you can think of, especially any campus administrators, relevant faculty and staff, and student organizations.
 - Tag their handles when you tweet out info you'd like them to see!
-  Encourage internal campaign folks, volunteers, supporters, and administrators to tweet with your hash tag.
-  Tweet between 2 and 6 times per day.
 - Definitely tweet campaign updates, but also mix in relevant stats, anecdotes, articles and graphics.
 - Interesting tweets may get retweeted, which may result in more followers for your campaign.
-  Schedule tweets in advance with platforms like Sprout Social and HootSuite.

Create a Facebook Page

-  This is one of the best ways to let people know about the events your campaign is holding.
-  It may have limited organic reach, but for people who "Like" your campaign page, you'll be able to provide them with more expansive content and send reminders.
-  Remind campaign members that they can use a program like Lisvite (www.lisvite.com) to invite all of their friends to an event without having to individually check each friend's name.

Use Other Platforms

-  Instagram has the fastest growing audience of all platforms.
-  Tumblr is a favorite of many college students.

Get Everyone On Board

-  Get everyone in the campaign to invite their friends to your events.

Make your headline irresistible.

You only have one line to work with, which can seem scary, but consider diction carefully to make your headline captivating. Your headline needs to set up your news in just a few words, so choose them wisely to capture the heart of the announcement.

For example, the headline “Student mental health advocates urge university president to increase counseling staff” is much more compelling than “Students meet with administrator.”

Don’t play hard to get.

Get right to the point in the first paragraph. Assume reporters will only read the first sentence and scan the rest. The first paragraph of your release should cover the Who, What, Why, Where, and How of your new launch, update, or development. Reporters don’t have a ton of time to sift through details and fluffy background information – they just need the facts.

Include hard numbers.

Pack your press release with hard numbers that support the significance of your announcement. If you’re claiming a trend, you need proof to back it up. Check the “Research” section of this toolkit for statistics on student mental health.

Offer a tempting quote.

Include quotes whenever possible from someone in the campaign. This can give a human element to the press release, as well as provide a source of information in its own right. The chosen quote should shape your narrative and emphasize the core of the announcement. Offer a quote that reporters can use for context around your announcement and help paint a picture of how your news impacts the community.

Make it grammatically flawless.

Proofread your press release (and let other people proofread it as well) before sending it out. Even a single mistake can dissuade a reporter from taking you seriously.

Include contact information.

Whether you or someone else in your chapter is the point of contact, don’t forget to include a contact name, phone number, and email address (preferably at the top of the page.)

Provide valuable background information.

Provide relevant links to your chapter’s website and/or social media sites, where reporters can learn more about your mission and what you’ve already accomplished. Don’t make writers search on their own.

Fit it all on one page.

As with most good writing, shorter is usually better. Limit yourself to one page. This will force you to condense your most relevant information into a more readable document – something journalists are always looking for.

Submit right before or right after a significant milestone.

Editors always look for a reason why your viewpoint is newsworthy and why they should give it attention right now; highlighting your milestone right before/after it happens will boost the chances of getting your piece published.

Know the word limit.

In general, 700-800 words is the standard, but check the outlet's op-ed submission page to find out their preference. Shorter is usually better for op-eds. They will likely pass over pieces that are over the word limit.

Remember: you don't need to fit everything into a single piece. Be satisfied with making only a few good points clearly and persuasively. Think about the overall message you want your readers to take home – that's the point you should emphasize.

Put your main point up top.

Your first paragraph should draw the reader in by using a dramatic vignette or well-stated argument that explains why they should care. You have no more than 10 seconds to hook a busy reader and convince them that's its worth their time to continue.

Tell readers why they should care.

Put yourself in the place of the busy person looking at your article. At the end of every few paragraphs, ask out loud: "So what? Who cares?" You always need to answer these questions.

Offer specific recommendations.

An op-ed is not a news story that simply describes a situation; it's your opinion about how to improve matters. Don't just analyze the situation; offer specific ways to take action.

Showing is better than discussing.

Illustrations, anecdotes, and personal stories help explain and bring complicated issues to life. We often remember personal stories and colorful details better than dry facts. Great examples and moving stories will help bring your story to life.

Use short sentences and paragraphs.

Look at some stories in most major newspapers and count the number of words per sentence. You'll probably find the sentences quite short. Cut long paragraphs into two or more shorter ones.

Avoid jargon.

If technical detail is not essential to your argument, don't use it. When in doubt, leave it out.

Use active voice.

Don't write: "It is hoped [or: One would hope] that this campaign will..." Active voice is always better. It's easier to read, and it leaves no doubt about who is doing the action. Ex: "This campaign will..."

gather support

Make your ending a winner.

Your final paragraph is as important as your opening paragraph. Be sure to summarize your argument in one strong final paragraph. This would be a good time to offer your readers specific steps to change the situation. Don't be afraid to end with a strong sentence, or "kicker," that leaves the reader with a powerful call to action.

Follow up

If you haven't heard from the editor in a week, you can make a follow-up phone call to ensure they received your piece and ask about its status. If they don't plan on printing your letter, ask if they have any feedback for you. They may also hold it for print, but publish it online. Ask if this is an option.

Identifying Partners and Allies

Answer the questions below to determine who can lend you a hand.

Who would benefit most directly from your change?

- All students?
- The counseling center?
- First year and transfer students?
- Students with non-predominant identities?

No support is so strong as that which appeals to self-interest. The people who stand to benefit most directly have the greatest interest in helping you achieve your goals.

Who works most closely with the people identified above?

- Residence life?
- Faculty?
- Orientation staff?
- Cultural centers or international student services?

You're also likely to gain support from people on campus who succeed when the folks who stand to gain succeed. Think about who would be proud to see the people they care about gain the change they deserve.

Who are the potential student leader/student organization allies?

- Student government?
- Peer educators?
- RAs and orientation leaders?
- Identity-based student organizations?

Students may not hold a lot of decision-making power on campus, but they do hold most of the advocacy power. If higher education is a business, then students are the customer. Rally your peers!

gather support

Who are potential staff/faculty allies?

- Faculty with research interests?
- Student organization advisors?
- Crisis responders?
- Those who have personal experience with the issue?

Faculty and staff have all kinds of reasons to get involved. Some may be conducting research, others may have personal experience with the issue. Either way, talk to your peers and see who they know!

The Elevator Speech

Make it concise. Make it informative. Make it about your audience. One of the most important skills for recruiting support is to be able to communicate about your campaign and its goals in the most direct way possible.

[Download the Elevator Speech Tips PDF >>](#)

Identifying a Mentor

Here are a few pointers on how to find a mentor.

Consider sidestepping the obvious.

Your campaign may have everything to do with mental health, but that doesn't necessarily mean you should go straight for psychology department faculty or a counseling center staff member if you don't already have a strong relationship there. Think about your campaign in the big picture and then zoom in on people who will know the ins and outs of the process or policy you're attempting to change.

Approach those affected.

Are there faculty, staff, or administrators who stand to gain from the success of the campaign? These folks are likely mentors who will be as motivated as you are!

Think strategically.

Staff in lower level positions are often the most in tune with students and their needs while having an excellent grasp on the politics of campus. Consider approaching folks like hall directors, student activities program managers, registrar's office assistants, or staff from the Dean of Students office.

Explore preexisting connections.

You or someone else in your group may already have a mentor on campus. You may not consider them directly attached to the issue, but it never hurts to ask. Your mentor already cares about you and is likely to assist in something you care about.

gather support

Finding Allies among Decision-Makers

It doesn't always make sense to go directly to the top decision-maker at your school (often the President). You'll need to hunt for the department that would be in charge of executing the kind of change you want to make.

Tip #1:

Leverage isn't always at the top. Sometimes your greatest allies are the folks in the positions of assistant director or lower. They are the people that run the business of the department and can give their boss's "first-hand" verification that the change you seek is needed.

Tip #2:

Going lower has its advantages. Sometimes it's the people on the bottom rungs that have the most perspective to offer about their departments. For example, resident assistants and orientation leaders often have great insight into folks within their department who would support your campaign.

Tip #3:

Give respect; receive respect. No matter who you're meeting in a department, make it clear that you are seeking to better understand their work so that you can work within the system to change it. Don't complain without offering solutions; check your language in emails and don't trash unsupportive staff members publicly.

Tip #4:

Staff alliances exist across all departments. Sniff around a bit to find out whether particular members across departments often each lunch together or serve on the same committees. You may be able to get an Assistant VP, the Director of Student Conduct, and the Associate Director of Student Activities on your side all at once.

Tip #5:

Find a mentor. Likely somewhere among these departments, there is someone whose mission or job function can be enhanced by your work or maybe they just admire what you're doing. When you find them, regardless of department, they will give you tons of free advice and assist you in navigating the campus politics.

gather support

Talking to Administrators

How to discuss your idea professionally with campus decision-makers to ensure the greatest odds for your success.

[Be Prepared PDF >>](#)

Scheduling, skills, research, and practice

[The Meeting PDF >>](#)

Professionalism, processes, communication, and documentation

[Follow-up >>](#)

Recapping, appreciation, and reflection

chapter 5

Transform your
CAMPUS®

Advocate

ADVOCATE

advocate

How to Write the Proposal

This is the moment you've been preparing for. Below you'll find downloadable PDFs with information that will help you create proposals, run successful meetings with campus decision-makers, sustain momentum, and come to agreements.

[Compelling Stats >>](#)

Strengthen your case.

[Choosing the Correct Words >>](#)

Communicate effectively with any audience.

[Templates and Samples >>](#)

We curated the best templates and samples you can find.

[Utilizing Campus Culture >>](#)

Are there traditions, slogans, artifacts, or stated obligations your campus has that could help drive home your point?

Meeting with Administrators and Key Stakeholders

How to discuss your idea professionally with campus decision-makers to ensure the greatest odds for your success.

[Be Prepared PDF >>](#)

Scheduling, skills, research, and practice

[The Meeting PDF >>](#)

Professionalism, processes, communication, and documentation

[Follow-up >>](#)

Recapping, appreciation, and reflection

advocate

Getting Unstuck

Are things getting in the way of your progress? Ask yourself the questions in the corresponding section to determine the best way forward.

Identify the Obstacle

An external person or group

Are they willing to meet with you to discuss the issue?

- Likely, the most effective way to discuss possible resolutions is to get everyone into the same room. It's important to be open, cordial, and polite in your invitation and communications. Snacks don't hurt, either.

Can you alleviate their concerns?

- Sometimes opposition arises out of a fundamental misunderstanding of the issue at hand or the change that is being proposed. Whether you're able to sit down with the opposition party, or if you have to do it via email, it's important to explain as clearly and calmly as possible. It's essential to watch your tone in written and verbal communication because folks are already taking an oppositional stance. Present yourself as open and make sure others feel heard. This is the best way to determine whether a simple solution exists.

Is there a compromise to be made?

- Simple explanations and alleviation of concerns cannot clear the way forward. It's important to then determine whether there is a common ground on which to compromise. Does the person or group agree with you on some things and not others? Can you meet them on the issues in which you agree and make progress there?

Are there external allies who could exert pressure on your behalf?

- Getting nowhere? Check with your mentor and other influential allies to see if they are willing to exert some of their institutional capital to try to push the campaign forward.

advocate

It's someone within the group

Have you bitten off more than you can chew?

- Break down the issue into its component parts. Sometimes in our excitement to make change, we lump a lot of similar ideas into the campaign.

Can your campaign be broken up into component parts and taken one at a time?

- Reassess support for the issue. If you have an email list of supporters, but are unsure how to engage them as volunteers, send a short survey out to your email list to see what types of things they would be willing to do and what unique talents they have to support the campaign.
- If you have support, but lack volunteers, consider going back to your supporters and asking them to complete small, defined tasks. Review your goals, objectives, and action plan.

Are folks engaging in mutual decision-making or is the leader exerting unilateral control?

- If you lack support, consider repeating the prioritization process to determine whether there is another issue that might garner more support.

Are you spending more time hashing things out than completing tasks?

- Assess the mindset of the group.
- Review your goals, objectives, and action plan.
- If your internal group is small, mutually construct or update the talking points for the campaign.
- If your internal group is large, consider having the leadership present a full overview of the campaign, including talking points, for consideration by the group.
- Ask yourselves these questions to identify common roadblocks to task completion.

Are folks engaging in mutual decision-making or is the leader exerting unilateral control?

- Is commitment to task completion an issue?
Assess the capacity of the group. Ask yourselves these questions to identify capacity issues:
- Are there too many people weighing in on every single issue?
- Is there too much work for your current group to handle?
- Are there others who can help?

advocate

It's a policy or procedure

Can you refocus your campaign on changing the policy or procedure?

If you're willing and able to take on this new focus, ask yourself:

- Who initially made this policy/process?
- Who currently enforces the policy/process?
- Can the policy/process be changed at all?
If not, consider whether there are workarounds. Rely on your faculty and staff allies for their opinions.
- Can the policy/process be amended to accommodate the change?

Are there external allies who could exert pressure on your behalf?

- Getting nowhere? Check with your mentor and other influential allies to see if they are willing to exert some of their institutional capital to try to push the campaign forward.

It's a funding problem

- How much do you need to make the change? One-time cost or will you need to find sustainable source?
- Where do similar initiatives get their funding?
- Are their grants available?
- Can the change be achieved through a nominal student fee or department budget reallocation?

[Choosing the Correct Words PDF >>](#)

Communicate effectively with any audience.

chapter 6

Transform your
CAMPUS®

Follow up

FOLLOW UP

follow up

Follow Up

Your campaign is over and fatigue is probably starting to set in. Wait! There are still a few things you should do.

Celebrate and Debrief - How to Lead a Debriefing Process

Facilitation Tips

1. Listen twice as much as you speak.

It seems cliché, but a facilitator's role is to keep the conversation moving and participate as passively as possible. Insert any ideas you have that weren't mentioned into the notes after the conversation.

2. Get a note-taker.

Allow yourself to focus on the conversation and allow someone else to write the notes.

3. Manage the group.

Tangents are common in debriefing processes. Cut off tangents as soon as is politely possible and redirect the conversation. Establishing ground rules at the beginning can be helpful with this.

4. Use the "What," "So what," "Now what" method.

[Download this document of sample questions](#) that follow this time tested reflection model.

5. Revisit milestones, goals and outcomes.

Go back to the goals and outcomes you wrote at the beginning of your campaign. How many of them did you achieve? Which were left undone? What could be done in the future? You can also measure up against the milestones we created for you

Say Thank You

It's important to thank all of the people involved in helping you make your change campaign successful.

After a meeting - email

In most cases, you don't need to send a handwritten thank you card after a meeting. In these cases, the best thank you is a prompt email thanking them for attending with the meeting minutes and next steps attached.

After the campaign - handwritten thank you and/or celebration

Sit down with your core group of leaders and handwrite some thank you notes to the following people: Your mentor, key administrators, partner organizations, folks who supplied food/drink/ space, etc.

Planning a celebration for anyone you consider "integral" to the campaign is strongly recommended. A little food, a little drink, and a lot of thank you.

Gifts - If you have the budget for it, consider getting small gifts for your core leadership and mentors. They will appreciate it and be more likely to participate in future campaigns.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Creating an historical trail of your work on campus is almost as important as the work itself. By documenting your steps, cultivating on-going relationships with your partners and contacts, and publicizing your efforts, your chapter will be more likely to succeed in future campaigns and events.

Archive!



Keeping detailed notes on all of the pieces of your process is essential. There's no need to make future leaders reinvent the wheel. Consider compiling the following information for use in future campaigns:

- * Outreach emails
- * Substantive correspondence
- * Actual versus planning timeline
- * Key contact information
- * Common places for finding data
- * List of possible projects-what can your team tackle next

Keep in Touch!

The relationships you build with administrators, other student organizations, faculty, and staff throughout your campaign can be some of the most important of your academic career. Consider staying in touch with them for the following purposes:



- * Keeping up with the implementation and success of your campaign
- * Continuing to assess needs for future campaigns
- * Solidifying them as allies on other events and initiatives
- * Networking opportunities for your chapter or in your career
- * Requesting letters of recommendation or references based on your work

Publicize



Tell the world about your campaign! One of the best ways to build a legacy that your campus and community will remember for years to come is to self-promote. Consider some of these steps to get the word out about your efforts:

- * Write up a press release for your school newspaper
- * Edit your chapter's website to include historical information on your activities
- * Submit an entry to the Active Minds Program Bank
- * Apply for on-campus, community, and regional awards and funding opportunities that spotlight the changes you've made
- * Mark important steps in the implementation process and change anniversaries on your chapter's social media
- * Apply to present at the Active Minds National Conference

Creating an Internal Communications Plan

As important as it is to communicate with outside parties, it is just as important to communicate effectively internally. Use these tips to create a plan for developing and distributing internal campaign messages.

Collect necessary contact information.

This might include emails, phone numbers, and any other information that will be pertinent to the campaign.

What kinds of information will you need to distribute?

Think about how you're going to keep members of the group updated especially if they aren't involved in every campaign component or cannot make it to every meeting.

Who are your different audiences?

You will need different communications for different audiences. Your leadership team may best communicate via group text whereas you'll need a well-organized email format for your extended campaign volunteer staff.

Have a point person.

It's best if all of your internal communications come from the same person. This helps you streamline messages and replies so that all of the information coming in and going out lives in the same place.

Think about timing.

Get folks their information in a timely fashion so that they can act on it. You may also consider when folks are most likely to read your communication.

Keep their attention.

Your communications are at their best when they convey real, actionable ideas. Try to minimize tangential information and get to the point.

Ask for feedback.

Every once in awhile, ask folks if the communication methods are working for them. If not, take their feedback and tweak a little. Then check in again a little later to see if things have improved.

Emails and texts aren't substitutes.

Try to avoid letting your written communications take the place of in-person interactions. Meeting face-to-face is critical, especially when you're trying to motivate, inspire, and persuade.

appendix

TIPS

How to Run Effective Meetings

These campaigns are all about bringing people onto your team and moving forward. Your meetings should reflect that.

Before the meeting:

Send a meeting invitation as far in advance as possible. Make sure to detail a specific time and location.

Distribute an agenda at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting so that people who need to come prepared with thoughts and/or additional materials can plan to do so.

- [Simple Agenda Template](#)
- [Objectives-Based Template](#)
- [Multi-presenter Template](#)

Make sure the room you are using is equipped with all of the materials you'll need (e.g., RGB projector, white boards, etc.) and understand the constraints of the space.

Confirm the attendance of any big decision-makers or critical people of importance 24-48 hours in advance of the meeting.

During the meeting:

Welcome everyone to the meeting and thank them for attending.

Have paper copies of the agenda distributed to each participant or have it posted somewhere that all participants will be able to see and follow along.

If this is the first time many attendees have convened for a meeting together, make sure to do introductions. For a working group of students, it may also be appropriate to lead an icebreaker.

Respect everyone's time. Start on-time and end on-time.

Stick to the agenda, but make sure all of the viewpoints around the table are being expressed.

Designate someone to take notes on the meeting that can be distributed to everyone in attendance. The notes should not reflect the views of the note-taker, but rather the full spectrum of ideas expressed.

At the end, recap any decisions made or major points from the meeting and identify next steps.

After the meeting:

Send out meeting minutes. Be sure delegated tasks and next steps are highlighted, so that attendees can skip to information that is most relevant.

Check-in with attendees to ask for feedback on the meeting, when appropriate.

PROJECT MILESTONES

A big achievement like campus change is made up of many small successes.
Don't forget to pat yourself on the back for these!

1 Identify the issue/problem to be addressed

2 Evaluate the campus culture as it relates to the issue you're addressing

3 Develop goals, objectives, and a work plan for your change campaign

4 Create a coalition of allies interested in your change campaign

5 Research the policies and practices employed by peer and aspirational institutions with regard to the issue/problem

6 Meet with key administrators and stakeholders

7 Make progress on at least one change objective

8 Attract media attention from campus and/or local media outlets for the campaign

9 Achieve your primary campaign goal(s)

10 Recruit more members to your chapter

11 Develop a plan for sustainability of the change you made

12 Evaluate the impact of your change on campus

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changing the conversation
about mental health