



Student Teams Advocating Realistic Solutions

Campus Organizing Handbook

For STARS Leaders & Committee Members

An insightful guide for successful volunteer organizing, event planning and grassroots advocacy!

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Recruiting Students to Attend: *Tips and Tricks*

College students in the 21st century are not always eager to make voluntary efforts to attend events where they don't see a direct personal benefit. The challenge of recruiting students to attend Higher Education Day is helping them see the importance of their attendance and getting them to actually show up. In working with the campuses, we have learned a lot of tricks and tips for best practices that will ensure campuses reach their attendance goals. Each group that attends will experience a new perspective on government, issues and advocacy.

Tips and Tricks to Get Students There:

- **Require** all SGA Cabinet, Senate, Freshman Forum, and University Ambassadors to attend. These groups alone represent the leadership of your university. It should be known that they must represent the student body of your university at Higher Education Day. This should be viewed as a responsibility that comes with the privilege of serving as a student leader.
- **Greeks**—Award spirit points and/or greek week points to organizations for bringing X number (or percent of their membership) to Higher Education Day. There is nothing wrong with a little healthy competition, here.
- **Political Science/Public Administration Classes**—Talk to instructors in these fields about organizing a class field trip for Higher Education Day. They can plan additional educational activities for their students in Montgomery based around this day. For example, offering extra credit for a report on how the day unfolded and the issues that were expressed during the event.
- **Campus Athletics**—Offer to host a support event or spirit night for various athletic teams if the coach requires/encourages his or her team members to attend Higher Education Day.
- **Organization Visits**—Schedule a time to speak at meetings of key campus organizations to discuss Higher Education Day and the importance of attending, then pass around a sign-up sheet to get contact information from the students who are there. There is no better publicity than in-person meetings!
- **Freshman Classes**—Contact the instructors of freshman courses on campus and ask if you can come by for 10-15 minutes at the beginning of a class to speak about Higher Education Day. Engaging freshmen will show a genuine interest in them and their growth as leaders.

Recruiting Students to Attend: *Nuts and Bolts*

There are a handful of obvious actions that need to be taken in order to achieve optimal results in not only recruiting students to attend, but actually getting them to show up on the day of Higher Education Day. This list dives into the important items that must be taken care of on each campus in order to be successful.

The Nuts and Bolts of Recruitment:

- **Faculty Support**—Regardless of whether your university provides class excuses for Higher Education Day, every university must secure faculty support for the day of Higher Education Day. This means that professors must understand the importance of Higher Education Day and must be agreeable to making it easy for students to attend. By approaching the Faculty Senate and other faculty leaders within departments and divisions of the university, STARS leaders can ask for the following: a light course-load planned for the day of Higher Education Day, no major exams or assignments to be due on the day of Higher Education Day, assistance with reminding students about the importance of Higher Education Day, and encouragement (hopefully in the form of extra credit) for students to attend Higher Education Day.
- **Recruiting Tables**—One of the best ways to get students to commit to something is by asking them in-person. Getting access to many students can be accomplished by setting up a booth or table in high-traffic areas on campus. However, this should be approached strategically with goals in mind. The goal should be to inform students about Higher Education Day and to sign them up to attend. This cannot be done by sitting behind a table. You have to get out in front of the table and approach people, if you want to be successful.
- **Turning-Out Students for Higher Education Day**—So you've signed them up, but how do you know they will actually show up on the day of Higher Education Day? It is your responsibility to not allow students to have an excuse to say: "I forgot," or "I slept too late." In order to do this, you must collect contact information and strategically plan reminders leading up to the day of Higher Education Day. This includes: phone calls, text messages, emails, social media posts, etc. Don't let them tell you they forgot!

Setting Strategic Goals: *Step-by-Step*

No event, activity or program can be successful without goals. Without goals, there is no true way to measure success. Below we outline the step-by-step process for setting strategic goals that will help you maximize your attendance and turn-out for Higher Education Day from your campus. Following this guide will keep you from wondering all year long whether or not your efforts are productive.

The Steps for Setting Your Strategic Goals:

- **Step 1:** Determine the Ambitious, but Attainable Attendance Goal. This goal is the number of students you WILL have at Higher Education Day representing your campus. To calculate this number, consider how many SGA officials you will require to attend and add an educated guess of how many students within various other groups you will convince to attend.
- **Step 2:** Determine the required amount of students that you must sign-up for Higher Education Day in order to actually reach your goal. Our experience has shown that at least 40% of the students who voluntarily sign-up to attend Higher Education Day will not actually show up on the day of the event. Therefore, you MUST sign-up at least double the amount of your Attendance Goal in order to realistically meet that goal.
- **Step 3:** Plan your recruiting events and/or sign-up events with benchmarks for reaching this sign-up goal along the way. Each benchmark should itself be ambitious for the event, but realistic and attainable. This way, you can budget your time and plan your events strategically. Also, this will allow you to keep track of your recruiting progress along the way so you know where you stand in reaching your overall attendance goal at all times.
- **Step 4:** With each event, if you are not meeting your benchmark goals, you must increase your energy and efforts and/or add more events or strategies to ensure you meet your overall attendance goal.

Do not be left guessing how many students MIGHT attend Higher Education Day!

Setting Strategic Goals: *The Example*

1. Ambitious, Attainable Campus Attendance Goal = 300 Students
2. Campus sign-up goal = 500 Students
3. Planning Recruitment Events with Benchmark Goals in Mind:
 - Recruiting Table Event 1 Goal = Sign up 75 Students (Total 75)
 - Recruiting Table Event 2 Goal = Sign up 75 Students (Total 150)
 - Higher Ed Day Rally on Campus Goal = Sign up 100 Students (Total 250)
 - SGA recruit-a-friend drive goal = Sign up 100 Students (Total 350)
 - Organizational Attendance (Greeks, etc) = Sign-up 75 (Total 425)
 - Mass Campus Email Link Signup Goal = Sign up 75 Students (Total 500)
4. If, by 3 weeks before Higher Ed Day, you have not reached a total sign-up goal of at least 425 students, you would then know that you must either add additional recruiting events or add more emphasis on the ones you have scheduled.

There is no excuse for not meeting your goals.

With a little bit of planning and effort, you'll always meet your strategic attendance goals!

REMEMBER:

- 1. Ambitious, Attainable Overall Attendance Goal**
- 2. Double That Number = Minimum Sign-Up Goal**

Planning the Trip: *Need to Know*

Recruiting students to attend is only half the work. There are many logistical questions that need to be answered and plans that must be made in order to pull off a successful event, especially Higher Education Day. As the campus coordinator for your university, it is your responsibility to see to it that all of the items below are arranged for and all of the questions below are answered with specific details.

Planning the Trip:

- **Transportation** - The number one rule for planning for transportation is that you must have at least enough seats to equal your attendance goal. It sounds simple, but you would be surprised how many people would think they should book less buses than they need. The costs may seem steep, but the pay-off is huge if you will go ahead and secure enough buses to transport your entire attendance goal! We've found that if you book it, you can fill it. If you don't book it, you will never fill it. If you have followed the steps in this guide to set strategic goals and benchmarks for recruiting, you will have enough students to fill your bus seats. If you feel you will not make that mark, let us know! We will go to work helping you fill those seats — whatever it takes!
- **Logistical Questions that YOU Must Answer:**
 - Who reserves the buses?
 - Who pays for the buses?
 - Where will the buses pick up the students from campus?
 - What time will the buses leave from campus?
 - What supplies are needed to be loaded onto the bus for Higher Ed Day?
 - Who arranges for those supplies to be placed on the bus?
 - Who actually places them on the bus?
 - How will banners, posters, etc. travel to Montgomery?
 - Who is responsible for all of these items?
 - What will students do on the ride down?
 - Where will the buses pick students up to leave from Montgomery?
 - Which particular groups will be assigned to which particular buses?
 - Which members of my committee will help me oversee this trip?
- **Talking Points, Info Sheets and Chants** - You should have talking points and info sheets ready to provide all students attending Higher Ed Day. This will help in case they are interviewed by a reporter. *Also prepare copies of chants!*

Lobbying the Legislators: *Making USE of the Trip*

So you've met your attendance goal, you've gotten everyone there, you've yelled loudly and proudly at the rally: now what? This is your opportunity to make the most of the Higher Education Day experience for yourself and for the students who attend. By setting up face-to-face meetings with your legislators while you are in Montgomery you can significantly increase the impact of the day.

How to Maximize Your Higher Ed Day Lobbying Experience:

- **Lobbyists** - Work with your University Lobbyists before Higher Education Day to set-up a meeting and/or lunch event with key lawmakers after the rally.
- Whatever you do, **DO NOT** plan for any meetings to take place during the rally!
- Nothing should be schedule before 12:00 p.m. This is your time to contribute to the collective voice of Alabama's students — do not leave the rally early!
- In planning for a lobbying meeting after the rally, you must decide who will meet with the lawmakers. Will your meeting be an intimate setting with only a few key student leaders represented? Or will you invite many students from your campus and give legislators the opportunity to speak to them all as a group?
- You need to have a plan for how the meeting will go — if you don't know what the plan is ask your lobbyist to help you set an agenda. Will it be one legislator? A panel? A speech? Questions and answer?
- You also need to know where the meeting will take place? Will it be in a room inside the State House? In a legislator's office? In another close-by office building? Or will you simply invite those key legislators to gather with your students in a section of the Capitol Lawn?
- Most importantly, you and your leadership team should know what the **GOALS** of this meeting are. Do you just want to hear your legislator's views on higher education funding? Do you wish to educate and inform your legislator about your campus' specific need? Do you want to provide some key statistics and information to your legislator about the statewide impact of higher education? What do you hope to accomplish with this meeting that is meaningful?
- If you don't know the answers to the questions above, your lobbyist will. We can help you get in touch with them if you need us to.

Items to Prepare: *Bring Something Other Than Yourself!*

While the faces of students from your campus is vital to making Higher Education Day impactful, you can add value to the whole experience by preparing a few key items. Know what you need to prepare and having a plan for getting them prepared will help you ease your stress and realize success on the day of Higher Education Day! Be sure to take the time to make a plan for each of the items below, and more!

Make These Things, Answer These Questions:

- **Banners** - Each campus must have at least one sheet sign or banner to lead their university in the parade for Higher Education Day. This banner will serve two purposes: to identify and organize your school in the parade and to add to the messaging that people see during the event. The banner should reflect the year's theme for Higher Education Day and should clearly identify your school's support for more higher education funding. During the rally, these banners will be displayed in key locations (likely on the embankment of the Capitol Lawn) to provide a backdrop for the event. The Higher Education Partnership will post photos of all banners on our Facebook page and whoever receives the most likes will win a fancy trophy (and bragging rights)! Make a plan for the creation of this banner, who will carry it and its message.
- **Posters** - Much like banners, posters are an easy way to make sure our message is not only heard, but is seen too. Each campus should schedule at least one work day for students to make posters and signs displaying the Higher Education message. These posters will be carried by students during the march and the rally to add to the message of increasing funding for universities. Make a plan to have these made!
- **T-shirts** - The Higher Education Partnership will also have a contest for the best Higher Education Day t-shirt design which will be determined by the most Facebook likes. Each campus should make a plan for designing a Higher Ed Day t-shirt that displays the message and theme of Higher Ed Day for that year. Ideally, these shirts will be worn by your students at Higher Ed Day. You must have a plan for the design, ordering, purchasing and delivery of the shirts.

Other Major Items to Consider: *Make a List and Check it Twice!*

We could fill up 100 pages of information about items you must consider and prepare for in order to have the best possible Higher Education Day turnout and experience. Each of the items below are worthy of their own separate chapters. However, we trust that you will make the effort needed to check each of these items off of your strategic planning list for Higher Education Day!

Don't Forget These Items:

- **Lunch Tickets** - You must make a plan to receive enough tickets for your campus' attendees from Brett. Also, have a plan for how/when these tickets will be distributed to your students and by whom.
- **Breakfast** - If you're making your students wake up early and ride a long way to Montgomery, providing them breakfast or a snack is a great way to keep them energized! Will you provide breakfast items or a snack? If so, who will pick/up or deliver the items? Will you order from campus dining or off-campus? Who will pay for the items? How many will you need?
- **Class Excuses** - If you've promised students a university-approved excuse from class, you need to have a plan for getting documentation of that in their hands. Will you provide hard-copies? If so, who will distribute them? And when? Who should you contact about getting hard-copies made and printed?
- **University Lobbyists** - You **MUST** share your plan for Higher Education Day with your university lobbyists, if possible. Keeping them in the loop and seeking their input is vital to a successful Education Day!
- **Publicity** - Tell your story. Have a plan for reaching out to all campus media to promote Higher Education Day on your campus. Also have a plan for following up after Higher Education Day to share your experiences. This includes: student newspaper, university PR office, university website, email system, campus radio, campus TV, outdoor billboards/signs, in-door TVs, bulletin boards, SGA social media, university social media, etc.
- **Database of Attendees** - Who will maintain and upkeep the database/list of students who have signed-up to attend? Have them send all names and info to Brett to add them to your Affiliate Membership roster.
- **Dress Code** - What is the expected dress code for your campus attendees? University colors? T-shirt and jeans? Suit and tie? Who notifies attendees?
- **SGA Advisor** - Always, always, always keep your advisor informed!

SAMPLE Higher Ed Day Plan of Work

This is not comprehensive and is only a sample of what should be done.

August

- Attend SLUAC in Destin, Florida
- Set ambitious, attainable attendance goals
- Determine the doubled Recruitment Goal

September

- Secure faculty support and class excuses from administration
- Organize STARS Committee of at least 5 students
- Contact freshman class teachers about speaking to their classes

October

- Secure funding for Higher Ed Day: transportation, t-shirts, banners, etc.
- Meet with Campus Athletics to partner for athlete attendance at Higher Ed Day
- Develop schedule of recruiting tables and activities for Spring
- Commit the SGA Senators and Freshman Forum members to attend and each bring 2 friends to Higher Ed Day (emphasize leadership by example)!

November

- Have Gordon and Brett come speak to SGA leaders about Higher Ed Day
- Meet with STARS Committee to assign tasks for the Spring
- Determine timeline for publicizing and advertising for Higher Ed Day

December

FINAL EXAMS AND HOLIDAY BREAK

January

- Speak to freshman classes, political science classes, every Greek organization, and political organizations — have a handout/sign-up sheet and provide incentives!
- Host at least 2 major recruiting events (tables, etc)
- Notify ALL SGA officials of mandatory attendance for Higher Ed Day
- Speak to Faculty Senate about supporting Higher Ed Day (no tests, etc)
- Measure your current Sign-Up numbers, determine how many more needed

February

- Have a work day for STARS Committee to make posters, banners, etc.
- Text, call, email all signed-up Higher Ed Day attendees frequent reminders — this should be done daily on the week leading up to Higher Ed Day!
- Have enough buses lined up for Higher Ed Day attendance goal
- Plan meeting with legislators in conjunction with university lobbyist
- Make talking points and info-sheets for students on Higher Ed Day
- HIGHER EDUCATION DAY!!!!!!

Higher Education Day Planning Checklist

- ___ My campus' ambitious, but attainable attendance goal = _____
- ___ My campus' doubled sign-up/recruitment goal = _____
- ___ Scheduled to speak at upcoming Faculty Senate meeting. Date: _____
- ___ Secured university-approved class excuses
- ___ Organized a STARS Committee of at least 5 students
- ___ Contacted freshman class instructors about speaking to their classes
- ___ Secured funding for enough buses to reach the attendance goal
- ___ Secured funding for t-shirts
- ___ Secured funding for breakfast and/or other incentives
- ___ Booked buses for Higher Ed Day
- ___ Ordered t-shirts for Higher Ed Day
- ___ Met with university athletics to partner for having athletes at Higher Ed Day
- ___ Developed a detailed timeline for publicity/advertising for Higher Ed Day
- ___ Had Gordon and Brett come speak to SGA and Freshman Forum/Council
- ___ Developed a schedule of recruiting/tabling events for Spring
- ___ Spoke to key university student organizations about attending
- ___ Spoke to all Greeks about attending
- ___ Offered Greek Week/Spirit points to organizations with most attendance
- ___ Spoke to political science department about attending
- ___ Notified all SGA Officials of mandatory attendance for Higher Ed Day
- ___ Developed strategic sign-up benchmark goals for each recruiting event
- ___ Planned for a work day for students to make signs, posters, and banner
- ___ Assigned STARS Committee to call/text signed-up students
- ___ Met with or updated university lobbyist on plans for Higher Ed Day
- ___ Planned for a lobbying meeting after the rally at Higher Ed Day
- ___ Developed plan and assigned tasks for the day of Higher Ed Day
- ___ Drafted and printed talking points and info-sheets for all attendees
- ___ Printed off university spirit chants for students to practice
- ___ Designed t-shirts and made a plan for distributing them
- ___ Purchased breakfast and/or snack items for student attendees
- ___ Designed and made a banner to lead our campus' parade for Higher Ed Day
- ___ Developed a plan to receive and distribute all lunch tickets to attendees
- ___ Developed a plan for distributing class excuses to attendees
- ___ Developed a database of attendees for reminders and to send to Brett
- ___ Determined dress code for our campus and notified all attendees
- ___ Maintained contact with the SGA Advisor about all Higher Ed Day plans
- ___ MET AND EXCEEDED OUR HIGHER ED DAY ATTENDANCE GOAL!!!

