

So, You Wanna Start a Club?

Step 1: Collegiate 4-H, A New Beginning!

Now that you have decided to have Collegiate 4-H at your campus, it's time to bring others in on the idea. Besides those 4-H'ers you know on campus, contact nearby county agents for names, and don't forget to invite your friends who were never before part of 4-H. It is never too late for 4-H!

Bring everyone together for an informal organizational meeting, to set some initial goals and decide the direction and purpose of your group. Focus on what all of you want the club to be at the end of the year, or next year, or in ten years. While these decisions would not be set in stone, prospective members will find the Collegiate 4-H much more desirable if they can visualize in their minds what the group is about.

How do we decide on a direction? Purpose? Goals?

First, there is a direction that the national organization emphasizes and promotes for Collegiate 4-H: A resource for the 4-H program and all youth. By providing our talents to serve as effective trainers for all ages, and as role models for youth, we are living up to our motto, "Continuing to Serve, Serving to Continue."

The National Organization provides training on specific programs, which Collegiate 4-H'ers can adjust to their own needs and apply to youth and adults in their area. The training for these programs occurs at regional and national conferences. An example of proper, utilization of this training is a program developed at the University of Missouri Collegiate 4-H.

They developed a Project TRY (Teens Reaching Youth) curriculum, which was used to train teens on self-esteem, decision making, peer pressure and other concerns of to day's young people. They also provided materials for the teens to teach other young people the same program.

However, every club will have other goals that they need to develop. An important step is to get as many people as possible involved in setting these goals, and include everyone's input. There are purposes that your members would probably want to include besides just service to 4-H, such as:

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES*SCHOLARSHIP***CAREER TRAINING
SOCIAL ISSUES***NON 4-H COMMUNITY SERVICE***FUN!**

Step 2: Rules, Rules, Rules

Chances are, your university or college will have certain rules for forming a campus based organization. They are usually not too hard to follow and might include:

- A minimum number of members, usually around five.
- A constitution, of which your school can provide some guidelines.
- An advisor who is an employee of the school (discussed on the next page).
- A description of your purpose and a list of officers and contact persons.

At most schools, you can consult with a staff member in charge of campus organizations. The rules vary from campus to campus, but you will want to get a list of these rules before you go on to the next step.

Step 3: Finding the Best Advisor

This is one of the most important steps in forming your new club. After current members who started the club are graduated, it is the advisor who will be there to keep the club on track towards its original goals. An advisor will be the one who remembers past successes and failures, and who knows what resources are available for a club to use.

Where do we find our advisor?

Universities and colleges require that the official advisor be an employee of the university. Past advisors have included anyone from a professor to an administrator to a secretary. At land-grant universities, or a branch campus, it is suggested that you find an advisor among the state 4-H staff. However, most schools do not have professional 4-H staff on their faculty.

It is possible to have a faculty member as the "official" advisor, and a local 4-H agent as a co-advisor. Of course, if you have a faculty member who is enthusiastic and committed to the organization, a 4-H staff person is not necessary. Many Collegiate 4-H'ers like to have a person with a 4-H background, though.

Again, the most important step is finding an advisor who is committed to the Collegiate 4-H movement. Remind any prospective advisor that there is supporting material and that he/she will not go into the position without any help. There are plenty of students and advisors on the regional/national level to help them in any way possible.

Step 4: The First Meeting

You have now set a date, time, and place for the first Collegiate 4-H meeting on your campus, and you want it to be a success. What do you need to do?

1. Publicity, publicity, publicity!

In order to keep members in any college organization, it is important to give them a feeling of involvement. Therefore, it is important to get as many people involved on the ground level, when the club is just taking off. Advertise as much as possible, using as many methods as possible. Advertise in the campus newspaper, call prospective members (whose names you have received by calling county agents), place posters all over campus (not just in the agriculture and home economics buildings), set up booths during the first weeks of classes, etc.

2. Come to the first meeting organized, smooth, and knowledgeable.

Even if you don't know anyone there, or if you still don't know the direction your new club is taking, stay calm and collected. Many of the people there won't know what is going on, so the organizers better.

3. At either the first or second meeting, you will want to elect officers.

Your university may have rules as to what offices must be established, but the national organization requires only two: President and Regional Communications Coordinator. As to descriptions of other possible offices, consult the Collegiate 4-H Handbook.

Step 5: Other Resources

There are two groups of people that any Collegiate 4-H Organization should get to know:

1. Meet with local 4-H agents and volunteers.

Tell them who you are and what you're about. Any 4-H agent/leader worth their weight would love nothing better than a group of volunteers who have as much experience and talent than do Collegiate 4-H'ers! If you are not at a land-grant university school, let your state 4-H office know your there too.

2. Keep in touch with Regional Officers!

The regional and national organizations have a lot to offer the clubs, but it is up to the club leaders to network with the regional officers. There are important (but not lengthy!) forms to be completed, newsletters to go out, and conferences to be held. All of these are to help clubs grow, but the regional officers can't accomplish their jobs without QUALITY COMMUNICATION with individual clubs.

Step 6: Making the Commitment

Now that you have gone through five of the most vital steps in putting your Collegiate 4-H organization together, it is time for the members and advisor to commit themselves to making this club work. Most every new club starts out differently. Some just explode on to the scene and immediately become a very successful club. Others take some time to grow and need more elbow grease in the beginning. With either scenario, all of the new members are going to have to do what they can to make this club everything it can be.

The more work that is put into the club at its conception, the smaller the amount of work one individual will have to do later in the year(s). Once a club is going and has attracted a good number of members, the work will be spread out without taking up the time of just a few individuals.

Finally, it is important to remember why each of us is at our prospective college or university. It is to learn and grow as people. Your first priority is schoolwork, and no activity should ever take a student away from their studies. However, college is also a time for personal growth and discovery - to try new things outside of the classroom. A Collegiate 4-H program will expand your mind and teach you subjects not taught at your desk or in the lab.

The National Collegiate 4-H Organization wishes you luck, and any help we can offer in starting your new Collegiate 4-H Club. The best thing we can say is to remember:

"IF IT IS TO BE, IT IS UP TO ME"