Planning a Retreat

Why have a retreat?
- To provide informational workshops for members
- To motivate members for the year or semester
- To set goals
- To build an effective team
- To evaluate the progress of long-term goals and objectives
- To introduce and orient new members
- To resolve group conflicts
- To have fun!

When should an organization have a retreat?
Retreats can be useful anytime! Here are some ideas:
- At the beginning of the year or semester (form a team, train new members)
- Before an important program (set goals, evaluate progress)
- After an important program (celebrate and assess)
- In the middle of the semester or year (re-focus and motivate)
- Before officer transition (share pertinent information)

Who can help plan or facilitate a retreat?
- Any Student Activities staff member
- Professional consultants
- Experienced members
- Your advisor
- Student leaders from other organizations

Where can you have a retreat?
On-campus:
- Neuhoff Catholic Center (Contact Cindy Dixon: cdixon@smu.edu, 214-987-0044)
- Hughes-Trigg Student Center
- Dedman Center

Off-campus
- There are a variety of lodges/camps/retreat centers in the area: Google “Dallas retreat location” for many ideas!
- Reserve a local park
- Utilize the meeting space/clubhouse at a member’s apartment building
- Remember to register your travel on Orgs@SMU!

Retreat Planning Guidelines
A. First, set some goals. Common goals for a retreat are:
   a. Gathering new ideas for programs or activities
   b. Planning a specific program
   c. Solving problems
   d. Teambuilding
   e. Learning more about the organization or leadership development

B. Know your budget. Expenses may include:
   a. Retreat site fees
   b. Transportation (Students’ Association vans)
   c. Travel insurance
   d. Materials (copies, AV equipment, etc.)
   e. Meals
   f. Fee for professional facilitator or consultant
C. Make an agenda.
   a. Remember that participants will need a bit of free time
   b. Determine who will present which sessions
   c. Don’t try to cover too much material. Prioritize!
   d. Vary the presentation method to keep it interesting
   e. Make sure you have enough material to fill the time, but don’t worry if you have to make last-minute changes to the schedule
   f. Stay focused on your retreat goals

D. Plan your meals.
   a. Does the retreat site offer meals?
   b. Is there a kitchen? Is cooking an option?
   c. Can members provide a meal for themselves?

E. Develop a post-retreat evaluation. Ask for feedback on:
   a. The location, agenda, and facilitators
   b. Evaluate your budget. Were there unexpected costs?
   c. Make a report with the pertinent info for next year’s retreat planner