Your Campus Group

SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to keep your conservative organization surviving & thriving on campus
So, you want to lead a successful conservative or libertarian student group on your campus. Perhaps you already lead one.

It will be your responsibility to lead your group to success, including long-term organizational survival. You must expand your leadership, grow your membership, and train good successors to build your legacy. This manual will teach you how.

You’ll learn about key topics, including how to:

- Set up a systematic, ongoing program to recruit large numbers of new members
- Conduct programs which educate other students
- Deepen your own philosophical education
- Establish working ties with conservative and libertarian leaders and organizations at the local, state, and national levels
- Raise sufficient funds for your activities
- Earn favorable publicity for your groups and projects
- Identify and work with local conservative or libertarian faculty
- Prepare worthy successors to replace yourself next year
- Remain involved in your group as a mentor and ally after you graduate

I expect you to succeed. You’re already smart. You’re already committed to your principles. Your training from the Leadership Institute, in this manual and at LI events, will teach you a lot. You will learn more through your experience in the months to come.

What you do on campus will change people’s lives, including your own.
From my own career, I can promise you that, years from now, you will look back on this period of your life as one of your most interesting and valuable experiences.

Students you recruit and develop as future leaders this year will build on the skills they learn from campus activities. Many will develop someday into highly effective leaders in government, politics, and the media.

Much more good will be done than you will ever be able to measure. When you launch people in the right direction, they’ll do good things you may never see or hear about.

Morton C. Blackwell
LEADERSHIP

Leadership Qualities

A great campus group leader is:

- Philosophically solid
- Technique-oriented
- Courageous
- Persistent
- Prudent about making commitments
- Scrupulous about keeping commitments
- Skilled in verbal and written communication
- Good with numbers and in handling money

A group leader must also demonstrate sustained enthusiasm – and commitment – to the organization. You set the tone and the expectations for your club with your behavior.

If you’re an able leader, you’ll keep your group focused on the organization’s mission and ready to tackle new projects and new programs on your campus.

A group leader’s responsibilities include the ability to:

- Recruit new members for the organization
- Dedicate time to the group
- Motivate and direct the rest of the group
- Be level-headed and effective in a crisis
- Identify and train new leaders

By no means does every effective member have the skills to become a group leader.
Every successful group includes deeply committed people who can maximize their effectiveness by working with others. There’s nothing wrong with that. It’s a high calling.

Leadership Training

One of the best predictors of sustained group success is well-trained leaders.

You and your group members can learn about leadership through trial and error. But it’s much quicker, practical, and fun to get top-notch training in effective techniques and apply them to gain valuable personal experience.

Youth Leadership School

The Leadership Institute’s Youth Leadership School (YLS) – known as the “boot camp of politics” – will teach you how to increase the effectiveness of your group and be a competent youth leader for candidates and causes.

In this two-day, comprehensive training, you’ll learn how to:

- Increase the size and effectiveness of your group
- Motivate group members with exciting projects
- Host successful speaker events
- Gain media coverage

You and your group members will bring proven tools and techniques back to your campus – and you’ll build motivation and camaraderie, too.

Many campus groups send their membership. Some go further: the Young Americans for Liberty (YAL) chapter at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette requires all group members to attend the YLS in their group constitution.
The YLS is held across the country on weekends throughout the year.

You can find the most up-to-date calendar on the Leadership Institute’s website (leadershipinstitute.org/training) or by contacting the YLS staff (YLS@leadershipinstitute.org or 703-247-2000).

“The Leadership Institute’s Youth Leadership School has transformed the way my chapter of Young Americans for Liberty operates on campus. I believe that requiring all executive board members to take a Youth Leadership School directly contributed to our chapter becoming the 2018 YAL Chapter of the Year. The YLS brought us from a few friends to a community of over 100 dedicated pro-liberty activists.”

— Kaleb Moore, Young Americans for Liberty, University of Louisiana-Lafayette

Student Activism Conference

The Leadership Institute’s Student Activism Conference (SAC) brings together the best conservative and libertarian student activists in the country each year.

You could be among them.

Conference attendees receive advanced training in building a network of student leaders, and get hands-on experience in skills like conducting media interviews.

At the SAC, you’ll learn how to:

- Expand group membership
- Build coalitions on campus
- Raise funds
- Earn media attention
- Deliver a message on camera
- Host successful events and programs
- Develop a leadership succession plan
- Expose liberal bias and abuse
Contact your LI Regional Field Coordinator (visit leadershipinstitute.org/campus/map.cfm to find the coordinator serving your state) to learn about the next Student Activism Conference. If you’re chosen to attend, your travel, hotel, and meals will all be covered thanks to generous Leadership Institute donors.

Expand the Leadership

It does you and your group no good to centralize all the power around you as the group leader.

You must expand the leadership. Delegate responsibilities. Give group members a stake in the group’s future (essentially: “give ‘em a title and get ‘em involved”).

Encourage your members to develop their own skills as activists and leaders. The success and survival of your group depends on it.

The Young Americans for Freedom Chapter at the University of Florida has developed a broad leadership structure: 15 leadership spots – and they’re willing to create more as needed. New members quickly become involved and invested. Returning members keep their enthusiasm high as they can move up in the group’s ranks.

“The Leadership Institute training taught me that it is important to ‘give ‘em a title and get ‘em involved.’ I began creating position for my YAF chapter and getting as many people involved as possible. If we see a need, we don’t hesitate to create a new position.”

— Daniel Weldon, Young Americans for Freedom at the University of Florida
Leadership Transition

The hallmark of your effectiveness as a leader is setting your group up for years of success.

Too often, student leaders graduate and their group falls apart. The leaders may congratulate themselves for being the glue that held the group together. All they’ve demonstrated, however, is their own failure in leadership. They let down their group – and themselves.

The final test of leadership comes in the year after you step down. Does your group continue to flourish, or does it dwindle or die off? You can control the outcome today.

Commit to constantly identifying and developing promising new leaders. Then make and enact a plan to transition power to them.

You might also consider beginning the tradition of electing a junior as your chapter president. The junior president should then promptly identify a talented sophomore to train as the next leader throughout the year.

The former chapter president, a senior, can then serve as a senior advisor to the group. In this role, the former president assists in the decision-making process and offers advice to the new president as requested.

The Students for Gun Rights group at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, has its senior president train and ensure they are ready to take the group over once he graduates. By using

Students for Gun Rights at Liberty keeps its leadership continuity by having a junior lead the group.
this system, this chapter has been sustainable for over six years and continues to grow and train new leaders on campus.

Faculty Advisors

If you can find one who is sympathetic to your cause, a faculty advisor can be a valuable resource for your campus group.

The majority of faculty are long-term university employees. They can help to maintain the longevity of your group as seniors graduate and freshmen arrive.

The Hawaii Pacific University Laissez-Faire Society has a faculty advisor who helps to identify and support new group leaders. The group has been around since 2006 – more than 10 years – because of the advisor’s work to keep the group active.

An advisor can help you:

- Properly host meetings and plan events
- Navigate your school’s bureaucracy to achieve your goals
- Find faculty who will offer extra credit to their classes to attend your public programs
- Become recognized as an official student organization, which will help you reserve campus space and receive funding
Conservative or libertarian faculty members and staff are your best bet. Look carefully through the faculty of the Economics and Business departments in particular. You can also ask your LI Regional Field Coordinator for assistance.

Sometimes you just can’t find a conservative or libertarian professor in any liberal arts field who is willing to serve as your club’s faculty advisor.

Search elsewhere. Often engineering professors or others in the “hard sciences” share your political philosophy and make great faculty advisors.

Try to find an advisor who wants to be involved in your group. It’s best if your advisor is willing to attend meetings, support activism events and public programs, and help to hold your group (and you!) accountable.
RECRUITMENT

You must set up a systematic, ongoing program to recruit large numbers of new members.

Whether you’re at a four-year or two-year school, you’ll see a constant churn of students each year. Freshmen and transfer students arrive on campus, seniors graduate, and others spend time off-campus for study abroad programs or internships.

The numbers can be staggering. At a school like the University of California-Los Angeles, which has about 31,000 undergraduate students enrolled, there is almost a completely new set of 31,000 students … every four years.

As a bonus, an effective recruitment program will also keep your existing members active and involved with your group’s growth.

Tabling

Tabling is the number-one way to find new members and keep your existing members involved in your group. Plan to do it at least once a week.

Remember: you don’t have to lead an officially recognized campus group to begin tabling. Don’t be afraid to table on behalf of a group you’d like to form – but haven’t formed yet.

Unfortunately, most students don’t know how to table correctly. They sit behind the table, make limited eye contact and conversation with passersby, and finish their tabling shifts without finding any new members.
To combat this, instruct your members to stand in front of the table and ask clever, provocative questions of students passing by. For example, you might ask, “Do you support freedom of speech? or ‘Are you pro-life?’

Opening with a personal question about political views is a stronger recruitment tactic than asking whether people have time to talk. (Hint: students you want to talk to will always say “no.”)

It’s recommended that you schedule shifts with at least one guy and one girl. Your group members should dress like normal college students. Don’t ever wear business clothing while tabling; this will just deter other students.

The goal of tabling is to invite potential members to get involved. Quickly steer your conversation to your group and its mission. Ask the person you’re speaking with to join and attend a meeting.

Once a student has agreed to sign up, ask for his or her phone number. Phone numbers are far more valuable than emails.

Before your group’s next event – even a regularly scheduled membership meeting – text the potential member and invite them to attend.

“Tabling is the way to keep growing constantly and find the future leaders of the organization. If we are not growing, we are dying.”

— Tahmineh Dehbozorgi, Young Americans for Liberty at the University of California-Los Angeles
Organization Fairs

Student organization or involvement fairs are often held at the beginning of the academic year or semester. Check your school’s calendar to find when yours are scheduled.

These fairs are a valuable opportunity to identify potential group members. After all, students go to organization fairs with the goal of finding clubs and activities to join. That means they’ll require far less convincing to sign up for your group or consider attending a meeting.

If you cannot access a table, distribute clipboards to your group members and sign up students that way. If you’re asked to leave by university officials, explain that you wanted to do the organization fair “right” (i.e. with a table) … but you also didn’t want to miss the opportunity to find members for your club.

“The student org fair is the most important recruitment opportunity because it’s the beginning of the semester when students are feeling lonely, overwhelmed, and they need to connect with like-minded people.”

— Brooke Paz, Students for Life of America at California State University, Fullerton

Social Media

Social media is not a replacement for tabling. But it can support your group’s efforts to attract and communicate with new members.
For example, you can use Facebook’s search to find students who have “liked” conservative and libertarian politicians, celebrities, groups, and causes. Look for currently enrolled students who have mutual friends with you.

Send a brief, relatable Facebook message (e.g. “I saw you liked Rand Paul and were friends with John Doe--do you still attend State Tech?”) and ask them to join your group. Your goal is to follow up with a phone call so you can establish a relationship – and stay in touch for future events. Quickly fold in new members to your existing group; add them to your Facebook group or group chat.

Create social media accounts dedicated to your group, based on what platforms are most popular at your school and what you can reasonably manage. Foster a social media environment that is both work and play to help maintain members’ involvement and communication.

Make sure the transition of social media account information is part of your leadership transition each year. You don’t want to discover a student studying abroad or a graduate now working out of state is the only person who can reset your Instagram password.

You can also join social media groups for coalitions, whether specific to your campus or at a state or national level. If you’re in a chapter for a national organization, it’s highly likely the organization has groups for you to join.
Follow-Up

No matter how you identify a potential group member – tabling, an organization fair, social media, or a personal conversation – you must follow up with each person.

Call each potential member the day you meet and invite him or her to your next event. Be confident and professional, but don’t be too formal. Encourage conversation and ask if there are any questions about the group that you can answer.

If you wait even a few days, students who might otherwise join your group will commit themselves to other organizations – and will not have time for yours.

Also be sure to call potential and inactive members shortly before your events.

The Students for Life chapter at California State University-Fullerton struggled to attract students to its meetings. An officer started calling through a list of students who had signed up for the club shortly before the meetings began. With 10 minutes of phone calls, three students showed up last minute.

Imagine the outcome if the officer had started calling earlier.
Your goal in planning may seem contradictory: plan ... but be flexible.

Thorough planning will help you and your group capitalize on every event, stay one step ahead of your opposition, and promote your ideas effectively. But flexibility will help you stay on course when a hot-button issue pops up, bad weather threatens an outdoor event, or a last-minute logistics change threatens to derail your event.

A successful group leader must balance both.

### Planning

- Check your school’s schedule before you plan major events then coordinate with your group members. Avoid exams, big home games, or days off.

- Set goals that you’re confident you can achieve with the resources your group actually has, not the resources you wish to have. Unrealistic expectations will demoralize your group members.
• Make sure you host one event, meeting, or social each week to keep your members engaged. Don’t go overboard though. The more events you host, the greater the chance that members’ excitement for them will diminish.
• Make group meetings exciting. The Young Americans for Liberty chapter at Florida State University plans new content for each meeting so members have an incentive to come.
• Whether it’s a debate or presentation, always have a plan.

Flexibility
• Develop a back-up plan for all events you hold. What’s your plan for inclement weather? Can a group member be on-call for A/V problems? Do you have pen and paper sign in sheets if the Wi-Fi fails?
• Control as many factors as you can so you increase your ability to respond to unexpected events. For example:
  ■ Reserve your meeting space for the entire semester early
  ■ Own your own table for recruitment events
  ■ Know and remain up to date on school policies that affect your activities
• Follow the news. Hot-button issues may pop up quickly. They’re more likely to generate a reaction on campus – and help keep your group relevant.

Embrace Controversy

Controversy – while you maintain your civility and commitment to your principles – can be a good thing. Don’t avoid it.

Not all your group members will be comfortable with confrontation, so assign members to roles at events that play to their strengths. Members comfortable in the spotlight (but able to keep their cool!) can take a leading role. Other members can be given important tasks to support the event, even from behind the scenes.
Your goal is to draw attention to your group, to have your message heard by a large audience, and to elicit a reaction from leftist students, faculty, and administrators.

Do not be an agitator to elicit a response. Your ideas, presented civilly, will do that for you.

No matter the event you host on campus as a libertarian or conservative student, you will face opposition from students, faculty, and administrators who are hostile toward your ideas. This is normal.

It is important for your members to understand that they will encounter this opposition. They should not feel discouraged. There is a nationwide network of groups ready to support them.

University faculty and administrators may either stand by and allow leftist students to violate your rights or to take an action themselves that violates your rights.

Contact the leadership Institute’s Campus Reform to highlight your case in the court of public opinion, and your Regional Field Coordinator to connect you with a legal group to defend your rights in the court of law.

Know Your Rights

As a conservative student group you CAN do the following:

- Get registered student organization (RSO) status
- Table on campus
- Reserve rooms
- Get funding for events

Always be on the lookout for leftists that break laws when confronting your group. The laws will work in your favor if such incidents occur.

Liberal students will often try to rile up your group, obstruct events, and destroy your recruitment/activism materials. Don’t engage
with them. Instead, assign students to video record the protestors’ actions. Then contact your Leadership Institute Regional Field Coordinator for assistance.

When students like you stand up for their rights on campus, they usually win. In addition, they have the opportunity to:

- Frame the national narrative
- Change campus policies
- Create a “win psychology”

- Give their group victories to build upon
- Send a message to other campuses
- Leave a legacy on campus

Activism

Activism events can be among your most important and valuable events of the year – if you plan and implement them correctly.

With well-developed activism events, you can:

- Defeat bad or unconstitutional anti-speech policies at your school
- Expose bias and abuse
- Change your campus culture
- Inspire other like-minded students on your campus
- Gain media attention and raise your group’s profile
- Increase group camaraderie, enthusiasm, and cohesion
- Identify new group members and future leaders
- Have a lot of fun

Consider tailoring your events to the calendar (i.e., do a Halloween-themed event around Halloween). A graveyard of civil liberties protest event, filled with gravestones and skeletons, would be a perfect fit for the holiday.
The Rutgers Conservative Union at Rutgers University-New Brunswick staged a clever activism event in response to mandatory student funding of the school’s liberal newspaper. The group taught students how to get their money back from the student newspaper. It shrank the liberal paper’s budget – and helped students reclaim $2,800 in fees.

Public Programs

A consistent schedule of public programs will help you build your group membership and gain momentum on your campus.

Hosting a public program will help you:

- Attract new members and motivate existing ones
- Earn credibility with faculty and professors
- Build your name recognition on campus
- Develop your members’ leadership skills
- Build a network in the movement
- Meet interesting, high-profile people

Plan to host at least two major public programs and as many simple programs as possible each semester. Create a budget and schedule these at least two weeks out. Popular, in-demand speakers may fill their calendars with speaking engagements weeks or months in advance.
Be realistic and honest with yourself about how much time your group can devote to fundraising and advertising – and how many people are regularly active in your club. It’s better to do a few events very well than many events poorly.

**Meetings**

You can invite local guest speakers to your regular meetings. The Young Americans for Liberty chapter at Liberty University hosted Nick Freitas, a Virginia state legislator, for a club meeting.

**Speaker Programs**

You also should plan major public programs that are open to your campus or community.

Harvard’s Right to Life chapter drew 100 attendees when they hosted Lila Rose of Live Action. The Christians United for Israel chapter at the University of Florida had more than 600 people attend an event with Irving Roth, a Holocaust survivor.

Before you host a major speaker event or public program, read Morton Blackwell’s Guide to Presenting a Public Program (leadershipinstitute.org/img/writings/HowtoPresentaPublicProgram2015.pdf). This free guide will teach you, step-by-step, how to host an event on your campus.

Your LI Regional Field Coordinator can also provide valuable resources, personal advice, and on-the-ground support.
Debates

A proven way to build excitement among your group members – and across your campus – is to hold a debate with other groups on campus, specifically liberal groups.

Keep an eye on national issues. If one is relevant to your group, seize the moment. Reach out to the leaders of other groups at your school and invite them to participate in the debate. The more groups involved, the more excitement and the greater the potential turnout.

A debate is a relatively easy and inexpensive type of public program. You don’t need to bring in a speaker from outside your campus, and the event is entirely managed by your group members.

You can promote the message of your group to other students on your campus, and your members will enjoy the chance to beat the other group. Plus, you can identify future leaders and potential spokespeople – and provide your group members with valued and appreciated training in public speaking and debate.

You should follow key guidelines to prep for the debate:

- Develop and agree to an overall message that your team will present. It should be positive (i.e. what you’re for, not just what you’re against) and easy to remember.
- Thoroughly research the topic so you have statistics, illustrative examples, and data to advance your point of view.
- Plan for your opponents’ arguments and agree on the responses. You don’t have to accept your opponents’ premise for the topic. Advance your own.
Conferences

State or national conferences can be exciting, rewarding opportunities for you and your group. They can be a good recruitment incentive, and it gives your members something to look forward to throughout the year.

Conferences offer you the opportunity to:

- Sharpen campus leadership skills
- Build friendships with other student leaders
- Network with other national organizations
- Learn best practices from others
- Develop your philosophical understanding of important issues

Take advantage of conferences that interest you – especially since many offer full or partial scholarships for students.

You might consider:

- Leadership trips to LI's Student Activism Conference
- Group trips to major conferences like CPAC, March for Life, Freedom Fest or your national organization’s annual meeting
- Regional conferences hosted by other groups like Young Americans for Liberty, Turning Point USA, or the Love and Fidelity Network
Social Gatherings

Social gatherings are a fun and informal way to help you strengthen relationships within your group. They can also be used to celebrate campus victories or the success of major events.

You might consider debate-watching parties, pizza parties, moving screenings, or just getting together to watch your school’s team play.

Off-campus, you can host alumni reunions, organize community service events, or take part in get-togethers with like-minded groups at your campus or nearby schools. The Network of Enlightened Women chapter at Georgetown hosts a quarterly brunch and invites leaders from other D.C.-area schools to join.

You can also get creative, depending on the interests of your group members. Libertarian student groups in the southeast organize an annual camping trip called the Rothbard Woodser. It typically draws 35 to 40 attendees.
FUNDRAISING

A consistent source of independent funds will help your group accomplish its goals and remain active on campus. After all, you can’t save the world if you can’t pay the rent.

Regular fundraising will help you to:

- Make your group self-sufficient ... and thus free of reliance on school funds, often controlled by leftist students or administrators
- Bring in more well-known speakers
- Host better socials and meetings
- Send large groups to conferences

You can learn how to raise funds for your group, even if you don’t have any previous experience. The Leadership Institute will teach you. To start, read Morton Blackwell’s Famous Foolproof Fundraising Formula (leadershipinstitute.org/Writings/?ID=28). Then contact your LI Regional Field Coordinator to learn about upcoming trainings.
COALITIONS

One of the most effective ways to build your network, get your message out, and take back your campus is to form a coalition with like-minded groups at your school or at neighboring schools.

The greater the number of causes represented by students in the coalition and the greater the number of well-led groups working comfortably together, the more effective your coalition will be. But that does not mean that all the students in each group will agree on the issues important to all other allied groups.

Ideally, heads of the student groups in your coalition will be personally solid on the issues important to the other groups in the coalition. But to be successful, leaders must focus their separate groups’ efforts on activities clearly within their respective missions.

Seek out other conservative and libertarian groups on your campus to form coalitions. Identify the issues on which you have common ground. Then start organizing activism projects and public programs together that focus on these issues.
At Colorado State University (CSU), a broad coalition formed, dubbed the Conservative Interest Group. The coalition included chapters of Students for Life, Turning Point USA, and Young Americans for Liberty. It also became a caucus for conservative and libertarian student senators involved in student government.

From its first event – a giant free speech wall – the coalition was a success. The event drew involvement from more than 200 students on campus, and it became a major story on the Leadership Institute’s Campus Reform.

“What I would say is that we are in one of the biggest battles for conservative values on campus right now and forming coalitions is the only way we will overcome that battle. At CSU, not only was it was refreshing to have a coalition with like-minded people fighting for the same things, but it also felt like we were really making change on our campus. And we did it as a team which made it even sweeter.”

— Emily Faulkner, former President of the CSU chapter of Students for Life, and Vice Chair of the Conservative Interest Group Coalition

“Their activism efforts were more centralized. Single-issue students would become multi-issue students, because they would benefit in the long run from a larger pool of volunteers. Pro-gun students would help pro-life students because they knew pro-life students would return the support in the future. Instead of YAL and TPUSA having 3 different speech projects in one week, they could have a large one with a stronger media impact.

“CIG caucus was essential to building a group of student leaders and representatives in student government. Before the CIG Caucus, there were probably two conservatives in student government. By the time CIG was operating, we had 14 representatives from different
Over time, your coalition will strengthen as ties – and a history of successes – among the groups increase. An effective coalition will help leadership transitions in all member groups, and it will help each group in the coalition remain more active.

You can also find supportive organizations and resources off-campus. Many conservative and libertarian groups offer programs and services of interest to you, including training, resources, funding, physical assistance, consultation, and legal counsel.

You will find many organizations willing to help you on the national, state, and local levels. Your Leadership Institute Regional Field Coordinator can assist you in composing a list of such groups and reaching out to them. Many likely work with LI on other projects already.
Receive Free Resources for Your Group
Join the Campus Leadership Program and Learn to Win

You have a moral obligation to study how to win.

Being right in the sense of being correct is not sufficient to win. The winner in a political contest is determined over time the number and effectiveness of the activists on the respective sides. Successful organizations focus on their longevity with sound structure and leadership training.

If you intend to lead a conservative group on campus, get in touch with a Leadership Institute Regional Field Coordinator today to begin setting your group up for long-term success.

LI-affiliated groups are eligible for the following resources:

- On-campus support
- Exclusive training
- Access to special events
- Fundraising training
- Activism grants
- Professional media training and planning
- Exposure to other conservative organizations
- Career counseling and job opportunities

LeadershipInstitute.org/Campus