

# HOW YOU CAN JUSTIFY, PREPARE AND PROFIT FROM APCA CONFERENCE COOPERATIVE BUYING!

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## ADMINISTRATIONS WANT TO SEE A RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT!

Expenses **MUST** be justified by a return. Attending an Association For The Promotion Of Campus Activities (APCA ) campus activities conference is a great experience for all concerned. Students enjoy the excitement, administrations appreciate its leadership experiences and educational content,

and advisors get to networking and professional development opportunities. But with a little insight and preparation, you can assure not only an educationally sound experience, but a solid financial return on your investment, visible by your administration. This article is an encouragement for all APCA programmers to attend their APCA campus life programming conferences with a game plan in place!

**KNOW WHY YOU GO!** Our goal at SUNY Cobleskill in attending our APCA conference is to save money by building the next semester's calendar onsite. Cooperative Buying is one of the most important aspects of that plan. At SUNY Cobleskill, we are proud that our savings through co-op buying equaled the cost of attending the conference for 8 students! Additionally, the talent level we achieve by participating is much better than what we can do through fielding cold calls from agents representing unseen acts.

Even if the savings were not as significant, the efficiency of building our events calendar on site is far greater than if we were to do it via phone and email after the fact. How many back and forth calls and emails does it take to do line up things that would take a mere 2 minutes at co-op?

## APCA MONITORS FOR UNETHICAL PRACTICES BY ITS VENDORS.

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## COOPERATIVE BUYING: A LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE!

The process of cooperating and collaborating with other schools through the co-op buying process has taught my students a valuable life skill. We try to create win-win scenarios on our campus whenever possible, and the co-oping process is a great example of that concept on a higher level.

When students are part of building a significant block, you can easily see how proud they are of their accomplishment. It's not uncommon for those in the room to clap or cheer after a big block has formed. It's like being on the trading floor on Wall Street, but nobody gets hurt!

In fact, the APCA conference experience has become such an integrated part of the overall programming board experience that we've had to develop a point system to determine who will be allowed to go to the conferences (I'm not sure that this is appropriate for you campus situation, but if you can use it, it's a real incentive!). Connecting with other schools through cooperative buying has resulted in some very positive relationships between my students and other peers in the market. I try to include as many students as possible in the process do develop the next generation of student leaders.

**HOW TO DO IT!** At the APCA cooperative buying meetings, the room is divided into cooperative buying areas, but the most successful APCA co-op experiences have been when the students and I work the whole room, not just the folks assigned to our region. In fact, each group of our student programmers has tried to out-perform the previous group attending their regional. Discounted prices for arranging two dates in a three-day tour of our cooperative partner schools are no longer a big deal to them. My last group was disappointed that they only had 3 maximum pricing discounts for setting up tours of five schools in seven days!

It's a simple process to make your cooperative buying experience a smashing success: **HAVE A PLAN!**

The purpose of this (or any) programming conference is to learn new techniques and strategies for programming board efforts and to reduce the cost of your school's programming by routing talent utilizing the APCA cooperative buying system. With a little preparation and some onsite elbow grease, you can turn this year's APCA regional into a productive, learning experience that both you and your school can really benefit from! Before the conference, learn about APCA cooperative buying! You can get all the details about co-op buying of talent in this publication or at:

[www.apca.com/cooperative\\_buying.php](http://www.apca.com/cooperative_buying.php)

**LET'S GET IT STARTED!** To get started, have a meeting with your program board to discuss your entertainment needs for the upcoming year. It's very helpful to budget out what amounts you want to spend on which events, and bring a copy of that programming budget for the coming year with you to the conference.

Review the acts that will be showcasing at the conference by going to [www.apca.com](http://www.apca.com), and use the conference schedule to make plans on which delegates will attend which events.

**BE SURE** to assign students to attend **EVERY** showcase, because you never know which acts will be the perfect fit for any given event.

Assigning different students to attend different showcases also allows more flexibility for your board to relax and share the burden of conference responsibilities. Definitely set up times during the conference for your delegation to meet and plan your programming purchases. It helps to bring a planning calendar containing all your major events, current contracted events, holidays, vacations, etc.

**BEFORE YOU LEAVE!** Approximately one week before the conference, you will receive a pdf of the APCA pre-conference guide. You'll want to check out the APCA pre-conference guide to contact nearby schools on cooperative buying maps and determine which ones might have cooperative buying partnership potential. Make plans to meet at the conference and to work together on cooperatively booking acts and reducing costs. You might also want to identify open programming dates and tentatively reserve facilities.

**KNOW WHAT YOU CAN COMMIT TO!** You may want to discuss the advantages of making cooperative buying commitments onsite at the conference with your administration. You should only commit to what you are authorized to do by your administration, but remember that the more definite you can make your commitments onsite, the more discounts may be available to you!

For example, if you hold a date with an attraction interest form, (AI) only, the price is subject to whether the block holds together and all schools dates go to contract. If a school pulls out or cannot go to contract, then the artist price could go up not only for you but for all the schools in the block.

If all schools work together and can sign commitment to block or request contract forms, the savings are locked in for all schools in the block. Additionally, some discounts like the full time enrollment (FTE) or onsite commitment discounts are also eligible to schools that can commit onsite. Your administration may require you to check in with them before making such commitments, so be prepared to call any needed parties at your institution by bringing phone #s, emails, class schedules, etc. of any programming board members or administrators you will need to contact to authorize purchases.

**AT THE APCA CONFERENCE,** Check the conference program for showcase, cooperative buying meetings and ed session times and reconfirm which delegates will attend which events! Again, make sure to assign showcases to specific delegates to ensure that you are represented at every showcase. Remember that the entertainers showcasing at the conference help to make these business and educational opportunities available to you through their sponsorship. As you program your year's activities at the conference, please consider using them as resources to enhance your events.

Have your cooperative buyer (usually an advisor, but often a delegate leader chosen by the board) attend the Cooperative Buying Caucuses. These caucuses are pre co-op meeting discussions held in the co-op room to determine who has interest in which acts. All the details of APCA cooperative buying will be discussed there. Speak during co-op caucuses and at meals with your board and the surrounding school buyers about cooperatively booking acts.

**GET YOUR DISCOUNTS!** Check with the registration staff to see if you are eligible for an FTE discount card. FTE cards allow additional discounts to smaller schools of 10,000 students or less who have arranged for the ability to book attractions on site. Many associates also allow 10% discounts to any size school who books onsite, so don't be concerned if you do not meet the FTE cutoff size of 10,000 students or less. Discuss with your administration to see if you can commit to dates onsite at the conference.

**TOUR SCHEDULING SHOULD HAPPEN IN EXHIBIT HALLS!** This is the most common mistake of conference buying participation! When you have interest in an act, you should go to the booth in the exhibit hall representing that artist and save your dates with a co-op form. I have seen **SO MANY** dates for schools lost because they did not simply go to the booth in the exhibit hall and fill out a co-op buying form. You don't even have to necessarily commit to the date, just holding it with a non binding interest co-op form is enough. Yet often people wait until they get to cooperative buying meeting to do it, and then lose the date because someone else raises their hand to book it first. Make it a point to fill out your forms and plan your tour **IN THE EXHIBIT HALL** so that you can secure the dates you are interested in.

Remember that cooperative buying only works when all the schools participate as a block, so make encourage the other buyers interested in blocking an act with you fill out their co-op forms to get the best price for all of you, and file all co-op forms with the cooperative buying center!

**AFTER THE CONFERENCE...** Bring the education you have received at your ed sessions back home with you, and contact the artists' agencies to finalize the contract details of the blocks you are involved in. As you make preparations for your events, hold mini ed sessions taught by the people who attended the production and promotion sessions at the regional conference to utilize the programming education you received at the conference.

**THAT'S HOW YOU DO IT!** As a side note, I would bring some extra spending money, comfortable walking shoes with gel insoles and a sense of enthusiasm! Have a great time and we look forward to seeing you there!

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of Campus Activities  
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