

5 Tried And Tested Strategies To Attract New College Chapter Members

Collegiate Ad Clubs across the country present their student members with the opportunity to gain hands-on advertising experience, build their resume by engaging in professional development activities, and create an integrated advertising campaign for a major brand by participating in the NSAC competition all before they graduate. In addition to crafting a valuable experience for their students, faculty advisors are instrumental in recruiting new members for their college chapters. We asked a number of professors and student leaders on various campuses to share the strategies they use to not only attract new members but also retain existing ones.



Joan McCain
Associate Instructor
Nicholson School of Comm.
University of Central Florida

PLAN EARLY AND ADVERTISE YOUR ACTIVITIES!

All events for the fall and spring terms were pre-planned through **collaboration between the students and the advisor**. Key activities were reserved for paying members only and were all **advertised on the Ad Club's website**. This allowed prospective members to get a feel for the opportunities available before they signed up and resulted in a dramatic increase in membership from 19 to 106 students in the fall of 2015.

CREATE A RECRUITMENT PLAN

“This year, we created a well-developed plan going into recruitment: to gain maximum exposure, stand out from other clubs, and have great events planned that would encourage members to commit. We signed up for major campus recruiting events and **positioned ourselves as a club focused on professional development and hands-on experience**. Beyond having specific events such as corporate presentations, agency visits, and workshops, we also recognized the importance of grabbing students' attention right away. We **advertised prominent NSAC partners**, and the result has been great growth for the club.”



Katie Song
Student
Ad Club President
University of Michigan



Melodae Morris
Instructor
College of Communications
University of Nebraska Omaha

SENIORS GRADUATE— THINK LONGER TERM

UNO's Ad Club focused on recruiting freshmen, sophomores and juniors so as to avoid having many seniors join, graduate, and leave shortly after. "When I took over, we re-branded the Ad Club and **focused solely on recruitment and promotion**. We recruited heavily in classes by having students speak about the chapter in their classes and by reaching out to the graphic arts, business, marketing, and IT departments. We grew in one year from 3 to 15 paid members and are having great attendance at monthly meetings."

TARGET DIFFERENT MAJORS

"Club membership was made a priority this semester with strategic objectives in place to increase overall participation. We visited classrooms to discuss membership and hand out applications. We also **targeted a list of students in particular majors** that coincided well with the Ad Club to encourage their membership. We have had a great turnout this semester and are looking forward to an extremely fun filled and productive year."



Sarah Yeary
Student
Ad Club VP of Recruitment
Oral Roberts University



Holly Higginbotham
Assistant Professor
School of Journalism
University of Missouri

NUTURE STRONG STUDENT LEADERS

"Our chapter saw great growth from 34 members last year to 110 members today. I've found that having **strong student leadership** in place is essential to growth. The executive board planned for programming to occur once to twice a month— from LinkedIn workshops to guest speakers in person and through Skype. The group has also planned special events, like trips to larger markets to visit ad agencies. To participate in any of these activities, **membership is strongly encouraged and sometimes required**. The promise of getting something for their monetary investment has made students see the value in a paid membership."



AAF college chapters face increasing competition for membership from prominent clubs such as PRSSA, the American Marketing Association, sports teams, or even potential internship or job opportunities. We spoke to Tim Hendrick from San Jose State University and John Verret of Boston University to gain some insight as to how their ad clubs are overcoming these pressures and reaching out to a wider pool of students. Tim stated that one-on-one interaction with potential members generated the best results for him. Visiting intro to ad classes, speaking at freshman orientation, and suggesting Ad Club membership during advising meetings are just some of the ways that Tim directly reaches students and sparks their interest. John Verret explained: “because there are so many other programs to choose from in the College of Communications, we could not seem to reach a critical mass for the Ad Club until we went outside the college to other schools. It is now working like a charm.” Their AAF college chapter membership is now also open to students from the College of Fine Arts and the School of Management and Computer Science, but there is flexibility for exceptions depending on what the club’s current needs are.

We hope that the insights shared above will prove to be helpful in your college chapter’s marketing and recruiting efforts. When shared with students, these strategies may spark other successful ideas for Ad Club growth that you can share with us in the future. Until then, if YOU have any additional strategies or success stories you’d like to share with us, please use the comments or email education@aaf.org.