



## **Advice for College Book Drive Organizers**

*From Michael Gottfried, who as a student at Penn State formed a club that started over 40 libraries and kept going after his graduation.*

Being recognized as a club by Penn State helped us become successful. You need 10 members and an advisor to start a club (when I started, I put 9 of my friends down to show “membership”, then spent the time recruiting members while we were waiting to become official). To get club members, I went around to the different classes and spoke about the cause (many professors let students come in and talk about different projects, especially if it’s related to the class). We also have an organization fair that advertises all orgs on campus; I sat at that table with some information and a poster I made. Once the word was out there, people became interested and over 70 people signed up to help (however, you have to realize with 900 clubs on campus many students will sign up for something and not stick with it, I usually got 10-20% of the people who signed up to follow through). Once we had a membership, we had to establish a constitution, establish leadership and an executive board, and then determine the role/goals for the leadership and members.

The next biggest task was networking. I reached out to the faculty I knew, as well as e-mailed those I didn’t, explained the project and asked for their support. Many will say no, but you’ll get a few people here and there that buy in and provide tremendous support. For any drive, it’s just a matter of putting the word out there and waiting to see who responds. The more people you contact, the higher the chance of success. We reached out to local schools, other orgs on campus, the community, local businesses, etc. to bring in books/money.

I’ve learned that college students don’t have access to children’s books at the university and it’s likely that most will not remember to bring books back after a break. Our focus for collecting books was then on the surrounding community, as any book drive would be.

The student orgs supported mostly with fundraisers. One huge network to tap into is the athletic programs and Greek life. If you can get publicity and support

from either of these, you've tapped into an even larger network, especially at a big school like Penn State.

The biggest challenges we faced were the storage of books (don't have a perfect answer other than ask housing/professors/deans if there's room in dorms or academic buildings) and also trying to arrange a drop-off location or means to gather all the donated books.

Many college students don't have cars, meaning you have to get creative to meet up and/or transport a lot of books.

Once the system is in place, it's a matter of continuously recruiting the incoming freshmen and current students to maintain enough membership. Drives at universities are extremely successful when utilized effectively and provide years and years of continued success. You're never using up your resources since it's always changing and there's always (hopefully) renewed passion and energy.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions, and good luck with your book drive!

-Mike

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