

presence

Student Leader  
Programming  
Handbook



# Congratulations, Student Leader!

As a student leader myself, I know that you have a lot to juggle — between managing logistics, going to meetings, and responding to emails — not to mention being a student, maintaining other relationships, and working other jobs.

But as hectic as it can be, I promise the work you do will be super rewarding and an opportunity to learn many new skills. You'll do amazing things to build your campus community and help students get engaged on campus.

The main way you'll do this is likely through programming. Not to be confused with computer science, programming is all about throwing events that are inclusive, structured, engaging, and growth-inspiring. It takes coordination, strategy, dedication, and skill.

Whether you're just getting started or are ready to take your campus programs to the next level, this e-book is for you.

*Sara Friend*

Class of 2019

New College of Florida

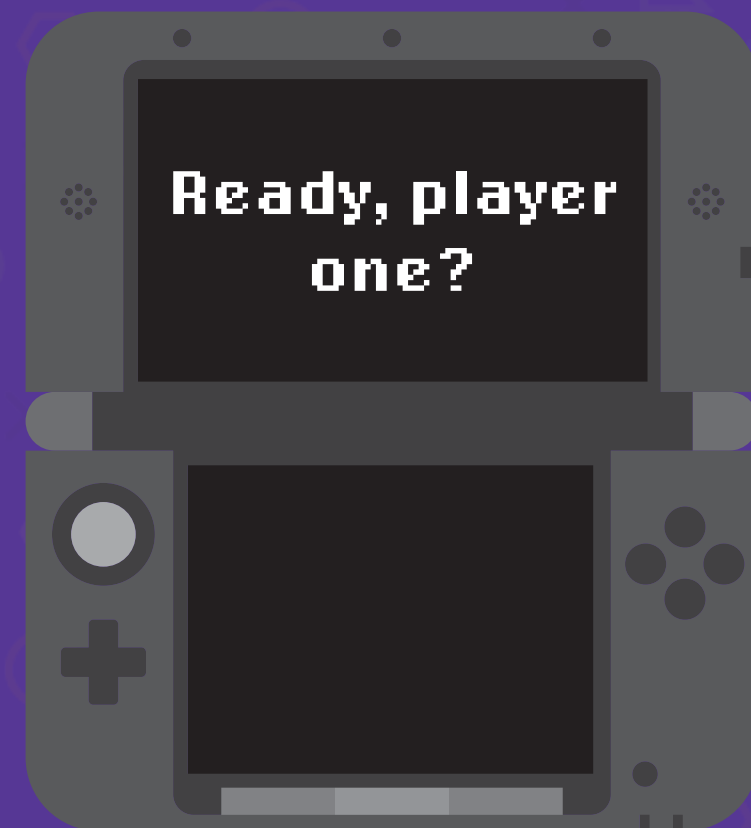
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# What's Your Motivation?

Whether it's your first or your fifth time serving in a student leadership position, it's important to recognize why you're here and what your organization or group needs. You probably began this role with some big aspirations, but when it comes time to actually assume your responsibilities, those dreams and goals can get lost in the shuffle.

Dedicating some intentional time to thinking about why you're here and what your goals are will help you center yourself so you can do amazing things!

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

## Level 1

### Discover Your Destiny

#### Organizational Mission

#### Personal Mission

\_\_\_\_\_ motivates me to be involved

The skills I want to grow are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

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This organization is important to me because \_\_\_\_\_

The personal, professional, and social needs this role fulfills are \_\_\_\_\_

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The purpose this organizations serves is \_\_\_\_\_

The services of this organization are \_\_\_\_\_

To help make this organization ideas become a reality, I role \_\_\_\_\_

Success would look like \_\_\_\_\_ for this organization

This organization could achieve its goals if we ran \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ events

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# The Sky's the Limit

When you began this role, what ideas did you have about how the organization could improve or about how you could engage students? You probably had a lot.

Starting out with ideas is great, but if you're not careful, you can develop tunnel vision and overlook potentially powerful programs.

That's why it's great to brainstorm with the other members of your group or with your advisor. Effective brainstorms should respond to a specific prompt or problem like "What are all of the things we could do to teach students about money management?"

If you have multiple goals or themes you want to address, set aside dedicated times to focus on each of those.

**Pro-tip:** Before each brainstorming session, start out with something playful to help warm up everyone's minds. Here at Presence, we often use: "What are all of the ways to get an elephant out of a bathtub?"

It's silly; I know. But the silliness helps us relax and get into the mindset we need to be in.



## Principles of Effective Brainstorming

### Reserve Judgment

Judgment is the enemy of ideas, whether it's positive or negative judgment.

Hear me out. Positive judgment tacitly encourages the group to continue along that same line of thinking, which limits the types of ideas that you end up generating. Negative judgment does the opposite; it shuts down individuals' creative thinking. By letting everyone's ideas flow without snaps, claps, or verbal cues, and you're more likely to get an authentic pool of ideas.

### Start Out Wild

Have you ever tried to expand an existing idea or program? You've probably found it pretty hard to think beyond the constraints of what was already in place. So, when you're brainstorming, let your ideas get as wild and fanciful as you'd like. You can pare them down later.

## More Is Better

Building out a full semester's programming calendar with only a handful of ideas basically guarantees that you'll eventually end up with stale events.

While brainstorming, intentionally try to get more ideas than you know you'll need or use. You might end up bookmarking them for later, and the bigger pool will help you decide which ones are clear winners.

## Think Ahead

Setting a calendar event that just says "Group Brainstorm" is fine, but your members likely won't show up energized if they don't know why they're there. Give them some advance notice and let them know what the theme or topic is so that they can warm up before diving in. This will also help introverts, quiet ideators, and people who think by writing to contribute ideas more easily.

# Level 2

## Choose Your Own Adventure



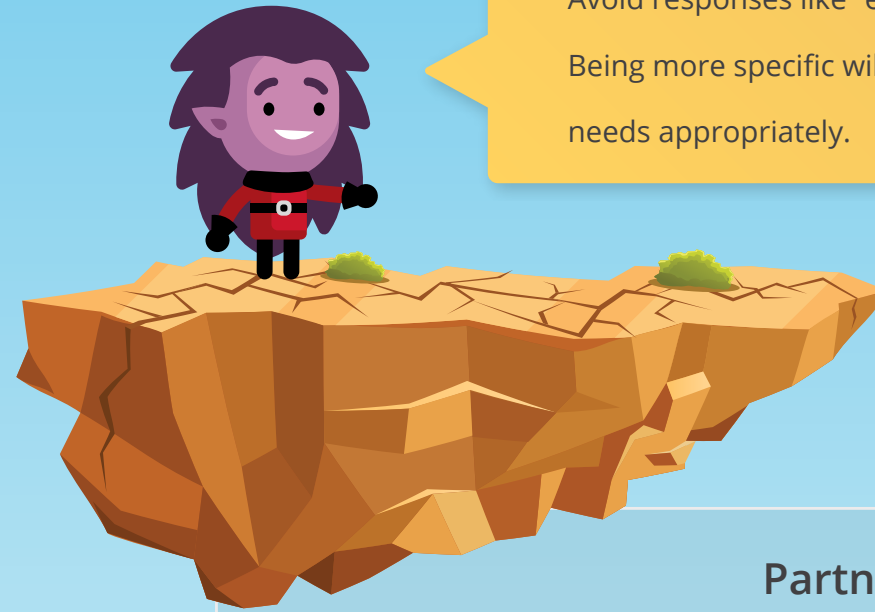
# Choose Your Own Adventure

Now that you've gathered tons of ideas in your brainstorming session, it's time to make decisions! Going from possibilities that are up in the clouds to ones that are more realistic takes a lot of consideration. Think back to your earlier mission-focused brainstorms and see which ideas align with those goals and aspirations.

If you're struggling with the decision-making process, let the questions below guide you:

## Hint:

Avoid responses like "everyone!" or "as many students as possible."  
Being more specific will help you tailor the rest of your program's needs appropriately.



## Audience

- ◇ Who do you want to reach?
- ◇ How many people do you want to reach?
- ◇ Who have you reached in the past?
- ◇ Who have you struggled to reach in the past, whom you want to reach?

## Partnerships

- ◇ Which faculty members or academic departments could you work with?
- ◇ Which staff members could contribute knowledge or support?
- ◇ Which other student organizations could you work with?
- ◇ Are there community organizations that you can partner with?
- ◇ Who could help you advertise?

## Program Goals

- ◇ What are your organization's goals, short and long-term, for the program?
- ◇ What might be some of your attendees' reasons for attending?
- ◇ How will you measure your success?
- ◇ How can your goals align (or be aligned) with another organization's goals?
- ◇ What will your learning outcomes be?

## Formatting

- ◇ Is your anticipated audience a smaller or larger group?
- ◇ Will your group benefit from discussion?
- ◇ Is your event intended to build skills? Learn new material? Or is it just for fun?
- ◇ What formats have you not tried before?



# Choose Your Own Adventure

Once you've answered the big picture questions about what you want your program to involve, it's time to think about its format.

There are many possibilities, so picking the best one is all about understanding what suits your goals, the theme, your audience, and who you're working with.



## Roundtable Discussions

This format works best for small groups to share their personal experiences. Discussions are topic-focused and usually incorporate time for debriefing.



## Lectures

This especially works well with educational topics. It involves someone sharing their research with a crowd, often followed by a question and answer session.



## Workshops

These work well when skill-building is the focus. Workshops are usually a mixture of lectures, reflective activities, and partner or group activities that give attendees key takeaways.



## Panel Discussions

This format works well for taking a multi-perspective, interactive approach for educating on complex topics. Panelists bring their expertise and respond to audience members' questions.



## Celebrations

Everyone loves a good party! These can be a great way to celebrate holidays and cultures, and enjoy a great experience together.





### **Service Opportunities**

These are great ways for smaller groups to engage with a meaningful project. Service opportunities instill a sense of purpose and create important connections between participants and the wider community.



### **Passive Activities**

These are great for engaging students as they shuffle from one thing to the next. You can give out educational pamphlets and swag items that your peers can take home and appreciate later.



### **Series**

If your concept is really expansive, you can chop it up into several smaller programs that fit the same theme. This gives students several opportunities to engage with the topic on various levels.

# Level 3

## Making It Happen





# Making It Happen

Once you've imagined your perfect program, it's time to put it into action. This takes thoughtful planning, organization, and above all, communication.

Bringing an awesome program to life can be a lot of hard work, but it's totally worth it! If (or when) things get rough, remember your motivation for developing it, then keep on keepin' on!

No matter the scale of your program, there are sure to be a lot of moving pieces that you can't afford to miss. Here's how to make sure you never take your eye off the ball.

## Timeline

The amount of time you need to complete each of these things will depend on your institution and the event itself. We've already covered brainstorming and program design in the earlier sections, so let's jump into budgeting.

**Brainstorming**



**Designing**



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## Budgeting

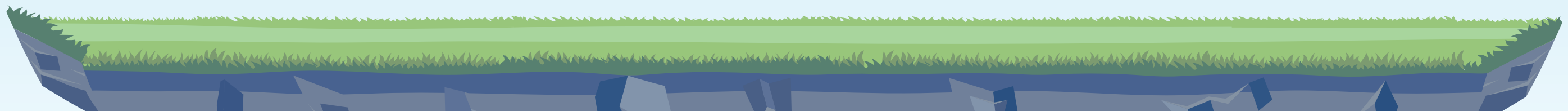
Once you've determined your event's purpose and format, you can start to plan for how much money you'll spend and on what. If you plan to have a keynote speaker or performer, do you know their fee? Does it include travel and accommodations, or is that separate? If you're having food, do you know how much it will cost? What about other things like giveaways, eating utensils, or advertising? Plan for these (plus some wiggle room) so that you can stay on track.

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## Event Requests and Approvals

To move forward with the process, you've got to get your institution's stamp of approval. There's likely a students affairs professional you can reach out to help you figure out where to start. It's pretty standard practice to fill out an online program proposal form.

In that, you'll convince professionals, students, and the community why your idea is worth investing in. You'll likely be asked to share your preliminary vision, an approximate pricing breakdown, and an outline for how you plan to carry it all out.



## Securing Funding

Before you can start any heavy lifting, you'll need to know how you're paying for that budget you just planned. Look to your institution's processes to learn which offices or departments may be able to offer funding (and what their requirements are). Some institutions may require you to reserve your event space before you can apply for funds, so keep that in mind and adjust this timeline as appropriate.

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### Space Reservations

When planning for the space you want, make sure to consider its physical accessibility. Are there elevators that students with mobility aids can use? Is it far away from most residence halls? Also consider the number of bathrooms and their proximity, if you're allowed to have food or drinks, and if attendees will need their ID cards for entry.

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**Hint:** Look up funding requirements in advance and make sure your application is as thorough as possible to avoid running into requests for edits and updates.



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### Gathering Supplies

Once you've made your list of what you need, it's important to know that you can't shop anywhere you want. Your institution has a specific (and usually growing!) list of approved vendors, so make sure to check that when you're considering the options.

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### Advertising

Consider how you're presenting your event by keeping it visually appealing and consistent with the vibe you're going for. You can then decide where to display these materials, such as on monitors around campus, social media, posters, banners, or emails.

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### Food

Make sure to have a plan for food. A lot of catering companies offer free delivery, but if you do have to make a trip to the store be sure to block out plenty of time. Consider if you'll have a fridge to store cold items, or a way to keep hot items warm.

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### Being a Great Host

Once the event has started, the fun's just begun! Depending on the event, you'll likely still have stuff to do, like making sure people sign in, mingling with attendees, monitoring the food, and much more. You'll want to work with your other student leaders to create a plan for who will be doing what. If it's a longer event, you can have shifts or just assigned roles. It's all about enjoying the experience and making sure everything's going as planned.

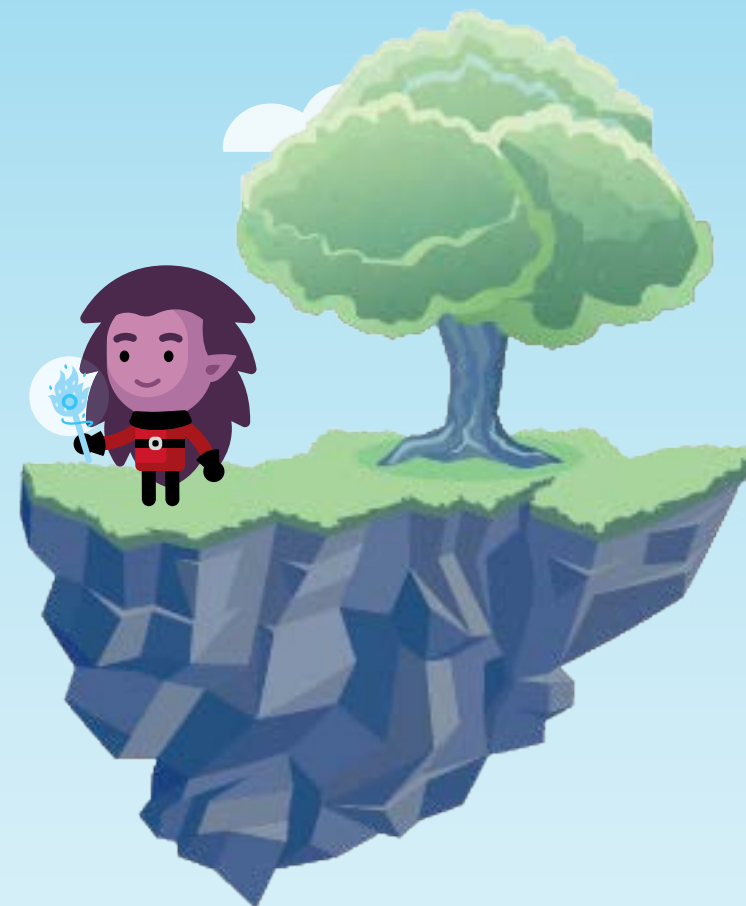
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### Evaluation

Once everyone's left and the space is cleaned up, there's still just a bit more to do. It's important to reflect on the success of the event. You can do this in many ways, such as by collecting feedback from attendees, performing a financial analysis, and evaluating how you performed as a team. This helps you be able to make this event's outcomes even better in the future.

# Bonus Round

## The Final Challenge



# The Final Challenge

Even when you feel confident creating amazing programs, there's always more to learn! Get out of your comfort zone and see what you can achieve by working to level up your program-planning skills.

You might be comfortable doing what you're already doing, but that doesn't help you become a more imaginative, insightful leader.

Here are some things you can examine in order to shake up your thinking and view program planning in a new light.



## New Role

What role do you usually play on a team? If, for example, you're typically in charge of marketing, try catering. Swapping roles can help you better understand the challenges your teammates face.



## New Focus

Which of your members' needs does your current programming miss? Or, what strategy has been unsuccessful? You might stray away from certain ideas because you think they won't work well or because you've heard that similar programs failed in the past. Consider programs that differ from those concepts, but still meet your peers' interests or needs.

## New Format

What formats haven't you tried before? As I mentioned earlier, format tends to go hand-in-hand with topic. So knowing what hasn't been done much format-wise can also help you determine what topics haven't been explored (and vice versa).

## New Partnerships

Partnering with an off-campus organization or a relevant student organization can build long-lasting and reciprocal relationships. Consider, too, how you might mentor new members of your organization to strengthen their contributions.



## New Methods

Trying new things can be challenging, and that's the point! Consider your usual approach and then think about how you can mix it up.

### Space

What are some spaces you haven't tried? Perhaps outdoors, weather permitted. Remember to keep accessibility in mind as you try new things.



### Supplies

How can you lower your budget to conserve financial resources? Or, on the flip side, how can you utilize your program budget so you can come away from the event with high-quality, reusable items?

### Advertising

Maximizing student engagement with the program is #1 so it's important to get people excited about what's to come. Consider using sidewalk chalk, easels, or even making a quick video!



### Refreshments and Takeaways

Get a new vendor that your org could use in the future. Or, if you have the budget, consider getting custom swag items that your attendees will love.

### Assessment

To keep making bigger and better events, it's important to be reflective about the strengths and weaknesses, as well as to stay in touch with what data indicates about the program. Tracking your progress in this way can make your work more meaningful.





# presence

We have the tools you need to create game-changing campus experiences.

## Track Student Involvement

Integrate with your student information system to understand which students are showing up on campus, and which aren't. Never guesstimate the success of your programs again.

## Engage More Students

Don't hide your engagement opportunities. Reach students where they are with your centralized campus dashboards. These event announcements go wherever you go.

## Simplify Your Processes

Don't worry about losing track of important documents during organization transitions. Digitize every process, from event requests to finance management to approval workflows.



Get in touch with our team to learn more about how Presence can help you improve the student experience.

[Learn More](#)

