



WIT-NC Best Practices

Educational Sponsors | Student Members

OWIT Chapters can increase membership, recruit volunteers, groom future Board members, be a recruiting resource for and raise funds from Educational Sponsors.

These best practices are from WIT-NC's long-term experience developing Educational Sponsors and Student Memberships. They encapsulate the most important lessons learned from recruiting Educational Sponsors.

- 1) Understand what educational institutions and students want and need from a trade association. They want and need:
 - a. Access to job opportunities.
 - b. Opportunities to enhance student resumes.
 - c. Leadership opportunities for students.
 - d. Speakers for campus events.
 - e. Involvement in and awareness within the local business community.
 - f. Real-world educational content for students.
 - g. An active channel for students to establish connections with local employers.
- 2) Determine whether the Chapter is prepared to deliver on these needs. The Chapter will need:
 - a. A membership base that is engaged and participates in chapter events.
 - b. A volunteer program capable of engaging and incorporating student volunteers into operations.
 - c. An open-minded approach to student involvement such as encouraging them to attend Board meetings, participate on committees and network with regular members.
 - d. Board members who are capable of and willing to participate in campus events.
 - e. To brand the Chapter as a nexus for education and business to benefit from what each has to offer the other.

- f. Develop and deliver program content that enhances a student's educational experience while primarily serving the needs of its industry members.
 - g. Engaging, regular networking opportunities for students to meet and learn from industry members.
 - 3) Identify local graduate and undergraduate programs that match up well with the Chapter's mission and programming.
 - a. This depends on the composition and programming of the Chapter.
 - b. Women in business, international business, international relations, trade policy etc. are some of the possibilities.
 - 4) Reach out to the university staff person responsible for career development in the specific programs that have been targeted. Develop those relationships. Invite that person to a program as your guest. Describe the educational and professional development benefits available to students. Alternately, reach out to a faculty member to speak on a relevant topic to the Chapter. Presentation of compelling research can be an attraction for industry members.
 - 5) Offer an attractive student membership rate.
 - a. \$15 seems to be palatable for most students if they comprehend the benefits.
 - 6) Offer an attractive student rate for program participation.
 - a. \$15 seems to be the sweet spot here as well.
 - b. Student participation may need to be subsidized by a Chapter scholarship fund if \$15 doesn't cover the cost of attendance.
 - 7) Develop a sponsorship level for Educational Sponsors. Benefits can be:
 - a. Website presence.
 - b. Free student membership for the student liaison. Student, faculty and staff liaisons are imperative to spread the word on campus, organize group travel/transportation to Chapter events, have points of contact and keep the educational institution engaged with the Chapter.
 - c. Partial in-kind payment for sponsorship if the institution reciprocates i.e. gives a free table at a career fair for the Chapter to be represented and recruit student members.
 - 8) Explore using speakers from the schools to present programs at the Chapter.
 - a. Student, staff and faculty engagement are the three critical points of contact to make the relationship sustainable and beneficial for all parties.
 - 9) Beware of designing programs for students. Industry members will not participate and the objectives will be defeated. Design programs for industry members without regard to whether students will or will not understand the content.
 - 10) Be patient. Universities can take a while to push a sponsorship through for approval and payment. In the meantime, engage the liaisons, recruit and utilize the student volunteers, encourage students to network with industry at events.