

Students for Ed Reform



Mobilizing a new
generation of leaders

Recruitment Toolkit

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THE ABCDEF's OF RECRUITMENT

Awareness, Branding, Collaboration, Defining Education, and Finding Members are the main points of recruitment. To remember this, think of the ABCDEFs of recruitment!

Recruitment happens in between raising awareness about education reform on your college campus and making an individual undergraduate into a member of your SFER chapter.

Recruitment is at the heart of SFER's mission because it is the first step in finding a committed group of undergraduates who will mobilize to become the next generation of SFER leaders. It is often viewed in a very narrow sense of finding people to be active members of the chapter, but strong recruitment can accomplish the following goals:

1. Spreading awareness about education inequalities
2. Making your chapter a recognized, well-known brand on your campus
3. Finding other organizations and faculty members with whom you can collaborate
4. Define Students For Education Reform
5. Find new members

AWARENESS

There is a blurry line between awareness and recruitment – if you are making individuals *aware* of the issue, then naturally some will be inspired to join SFER. Part of *recruiting* new members entails making them aware of the issues we discuss. Although the results of the two (*raising awareness* versus *recruiting members*) can overlap, the missions of the two are different and thus should be handled separately. However, it would be silly to run an awareness campaign and not provide access to SFER along with it to those it inspires. All awareness campaigns should be linked to SFER and have some information about how to contact SFER or how to join the group.

EXAMPLE: SFER Princeton had a “people poster” where people were used to graphically represent the high school dropout statistics. At the event members handed out bumper stickers to onlookers that said “Students for Education Reform, Meetings on Monday at 6:30pm in McCosh 60.” The main goal of the event was to have shock value and make the community aware of the high dropout rates, but as soon as someone expressed interest, they were handed a bumper sticker which acted as a recruitment tool.

BRANDING

Branding is an easy way to convey the image of professionalism. Think about your favorite companies or student organizations – chances are that you can call to mind their logo or signature color. Think about how easy it is to identify the Nike Swoosh or the Starbucks green. These are effective uses of branding that are constant reinforcements of the product or service the company provides. You do not even need to read a poster to understand or be reminded of their existence. The SFER logo should function in the same way. All recruitment posters and material should have some version of the logo or the schoolhouse to remind viewers of what SFER is and stands for, and to reinforce our professional image. The more someone sees and recognizes SFER branding, the more likely they are to remember it when thinking about which clubs to get involved in. Additionally, students are drawn to organizations that look professional and well run.

COLLABORATION

Most student organizations are also recruiting during heavy recruitment times – often at the table next to you if you are at an activities fair. Use this time to connect with other student organizations, meet group leaders, and discuss possibilities of collaboration.

Collaboration can be a strong, yet subtle, recruitment opportunity. Partnering with an organization is an opportunity to show its members how professional and well-run SFER is, and to link that group's interest to education in a meaningful way. Often people come to college interested in policy, journalism, science, business, etc. and have never thought about how their primary interest overlaps with education. Collaboration, be it through mixed-group discussions, co-sponsored events, or shared speakers, can highlight the overlap and thus generate interest in SFER. It is important to provide information about how to get involved in SFER to the members of groups you are collaborating with. Even sending a follow-up email after a successful event though the collaborating group's leader can be a driver of recruitment.

EXAMPLE: SFER Princeton co-sponsored with a journalism club a speaker event with education journalist, Elizabeth Green of Gotham Schools. She did a fantastic job highlighting both the challenges in modern journalism and how they effected reporting on education. During the reception afterwards, SFER members engaged with discussion with the journalism club members about what they thought. Several of their members asked to be added to the SFER listserv, one became a regular member, and all involved are enthusiastic about co-sponsoring more education journalist in the future.

DEFINING EDUCATION REFORM AND SFER

What *is* Students for Education Reform? What does SFER *stand for*? What does SFER *do*?

These questions may seem obvious to you as a Chapter Leader, but can you give a 1-minute answer to them on the spot? Can you tailor the answers to the interests of whom you are talking to, whether it is a professor, alumni, student or parent? Can every member of your chapter do it?

Recruitment is a great opportunity to get members young and old involved with a leadership activity and feeling like they are part of the group. Before sending your members into a packed activity fair or into a field full of freshman, make sure they feel comfortable with their pitch and answering some of the most basic questions about what your chapter does. Everyone has their own personal style and approach when talking to strangers, but as a chapter leader you should ensure that members hit the main points in their pitches, and that they are reflective about what is and what is not successful when pitching.

EXAMPLES:

Question: *What is Students for Education Reform?*

Answer: Students for Education Reform, SFER, is a student organization aimed at raising awareness about the inequalities in education in America. Did you know that the average white 9th grader and the average black 12th grader are reading at the same grade level? SFER believes that these inequalities are unjust, undemocratic and un-American. In addition to raising awareness, we engage undergraduates with many of the potential solutions to these problems. We were founded X years ago and we are part of student movement that includes chapters at 20 colleges and universities across the country.

Question: *What does Students for Education Reform stand for?*

Answer: We believe in policies and practices that serve the students first and foremost. We believe that too much of the debate around education focuses on the interest of adults at the cost of ignoring the interest of students. We believe great teachers should be celebrated and rewarded. *(If the person you are talking to has some exposure to the issue they might ask a follow up question- usually about charters or unions- and then you can engage them in discussion. It is important if you start getting deep in discussion you mention that "SFER aims to develop each members personal set of beliefs about education, but YOU think that...")*

Question: *What does SFER do?*

Answer: (This will vary by chapter, but think about what activities you do that are the most attractive to the person you are talking to. Are they a freshman looking for an extracurricular to be involved? Are they someone with lots of tutoring experience? Are they a policy junkie? Administrator? Alumni? Faculty member?)

FINDING MEMBERS

Recruitment is a year-long process that can happen anytime or anywhere. The beginning of the year or semester are obvious times to have highly visible recruitment drives, but overall, it should be seen as a year-long endeavor.

ACTIVITY FAIRS are the perfect opportunity to demonstrate your chapter's energy and enthusiasms, and to stand out among other extra curricular groups. Standing behind a table scattered with candy and a homemade poster will NOT make you stand out among groups! Here are some tips that have proven successful in the past:

- Position members in SFER shirts or with nametags in front of your table ready to approach people passing by.
- Approach potential recruits with a friendly question, like "where are you from?" or "are you interested in education?" and then transfer into the SFER pitch.
- When it comes time to collect someone's email address after the pitch, the most successful way of getting emails was each recruiting member to have a clipboard with a pen. It keeps the interaction more personal and quicker. People are far less likely to give their email if they have to walk over to a table or use a computer.
- Having a colorful handout is a nice takeaway for potential recipients. The handout can include different upcoming events and ways to get involved, as well as facts about the education gap or other shocking statistics.
 - This is an easy way to identify whether a person has already talked to SFER, by whether or not they are holding the colorful handout.

RECRUITMENT POSTERS should be branded and have a purpose. How do you plan to catch the viewer's attention?

With humor, strong design, large words, shocking facts, or a motivational message?

What information do you want the viewer to come away with?

Where is the poster placed – is it in a place that the viewer has time to read it, or do they only have a second to scan it?

A strong recruitment poster not only *catches the viewer's attention* but also is digestible in the amount of time the viewer has, and provides a concrete follow-up action. To the right is an example of how a successful recruitment poster could look.

This semester... be a leader

Come to Students for Education Reform open meeting. Monday, February 7 at 7pm in McCosh 66



www.studentsforedreform.org
or email
emyerson@princeton.edu

QUICK TURNAROUND is key for transferring interest or exposure into recruitment and membership. Have a quick turnaround through the following actions:

- After an activities fair, follow up with the mailing list with an email within the next 24 hours and have an event planned for soon after to keep the energy and excitement up about joining a new group.
- Plan an open meeting aimed at introducing new recruits to education reform, but also to wow them with your well-run and professional meeting. Collect emails of “first-timers” at the meeting and send them an email afterwards thanking them for coming and reminding them of upcoming events.
- Host a social event or mixer so recruits (especially underclassmen) can talk to and get to know some of your older members. At this event, have a short presentation about SFER, chapter goals, etc. so they can ask questions to members and have related conversations.
- Have a template of an email you can quickly send to anyone who emails SFER expressing interest. Add two upcoming events to the template and shoot the email off ASAP to show the person you are interested in them joining.
- If a quick turnaround is not possible (for example, if someone expresses interest two days before Thanksgiving break) make sure to follow up after you return to campus and invite him or her the next event.

CREATIVE RECRUITMENT is another way to make your SFER chapter stand out from other extracurricular groups. SFER Minnesota baked cookies, puppy chow, and rice crispy treats and packaged each with a ribbon threaded with a small card. On the front of the card was a fact about the achievement gap; on the back was information about how to get involved with the SFER Minnesota chapter. They handed them out to student on a busy thoroughfare between classes. What different and unique recruiting tactics could your chapter use to make SFER stand out?

PERSONAL TOUCHES make strangers feel more comfortable coming out to an SFER event for the first time. Personalizing the process can be a great recruitment tool for new students and underclassmen that appreciate the personal attention from upperclassmen. Here are some examples of how to make your recruitment process feel more personal:

- If you meet someone you like or who has previous education reform experience, make a note. When you get back to your computer send them quick email saying how nice it was to meet them and you hope see them at the open meeting.
- Use nametags at social events and try to stop older members from being too cliquey. Remind them it is their job to meet new members and talk about their experience in SFER.
- Learn how to use mail merge so your emails read “Dear Angelica,” instead of “Dear SFER recruit” or “Hey!” Most people don’t understand how mail merge works and thus think you actually personally sent them the email (tricky!). Mail merge uses Microsoft Word and Excel – Google it, learn it, use it, and recruit, recruit, recruit!

- When you know who your serious recruits are, create a table with their picture, name, year, hometown, and other relevant information. Study this and make your best effort to learn names.
- Assign older members to new recruits at a social event and make them responsible for talking to them, getting them a drink, and to ensuring they feel comfortable.
- Keep a detailed log of who comes to recruitment and new member events so it is easy to identify who has expressed ongoing interest.

RETENTION is more important than recruitment. Make sure you have a clear and published pathway to membership so your recruits know the next steps they have to take to become part of the organization.