

Engaging Members in Activities, Benefits, Development, and Service Opportunities -- Quadrants 3 & 4

The viability and strength of the Society is in the membership of the chapters. A chapter, therefore, should be a lively, vibrant organization with many enthusiastic and creative members. Since active participation usually is directly linked to interest, energies, and involvement, appropriate and well-conceived activities are of crucial significance to a successfully active chapter. Relevant and exciting programs can help to ensure active participation by members and a full turnout at events and meetings.

Because each chapter is a distinct unit of the Society, there cannot be and should not be one single prescription for a productive, instructive, and exciting set of chapter activities. However, it is possible for chapters to use general guidelines as they fashion their own unique and interesting activities. These guidelines can help chapter officers plan pertinent activities that will challenge members and potential members in pursuing the ideals of the Society and meeting their interests and concerns.

If interest and involvement are keys to a chapter's success, then the prime goal must be activities that produce attendance and participation. One of the best ways of securing membership involvement in chapter activities is by starting a unique chapter event. This event should create visibility for DKG on in the community and provide new members with a great way to get involved and current members to stay involved each year.

The extent of a chapter's activities at any given time is dependent on the commitment of its active members. Using the International projects, *Schools for Africa* or *Support for Early Career Educators* are naturals around which to plan an event. Perhaps your chapter will include service projects that benefit your community or professional development events that benefit your members. Your chapter might even become known for several signature events each year!

Programs should be carefully planned so that they offer a good balance in terms of topics, formats, and participants. A topic should cover diverse experiential, educational, and interest levels. Presentation format can vary from an individual speaker, to a panel, to workshops, to hands-on experiences, etc.

Your audience should be considered when planning the topic. Is the audience mostly elementary or secondary teachers, retired or active professionals? Programs that have appeal for non-members also should be developed and promoted outside of the chapter membership because it is an excellent way to increase membership. A good way to ensure that chapter programs and activities meet the expectations and needs of members is to ask each member to complete the Member Interest Survey

Including fellowship and social aspects often enhances chapter activities. Trying

something for the first time is a great step! Each year, you can tweak the planning to get more members involved, a better turnout, more instructive learning to take place, or whatever else you set for goals.

Remember that there is a whole list of programming ideas in DKG's resources. Many of these ideas come with a basic outline or checklist of what to do. They do not contain the exact steps your chapter will need to take; those little (but oh-so-crucial) things are up to you and your chapter's leadership to handle.

Communicating with members

E-mail is cheap, quick, and easy. Compile a list of e-mail addresses of all active and inactive members. A complete membership roster is available from International. Emails are a great way to get the message out to everyone at once; however, it is impersonal. Also, e-mail can be deleted easily or ignored. You may want to consider using other ways to communicate with members, such as a personal phone call or newsletters.

Web site. International can host your chapter's Web site. Contact Linda Eller at headquarters for full information. The most important aspect of a good chapter Web site is to make sure the information is accurate and updated! An updated Web site can promote events, meetings, provide contact information for officers, and deadlines for scholarships.

Paper (or electronic) newsletter. A newsletter or flyers are traditional ways of promoting events, but still very effective. Paper newsletters give members something they can keep and read. Mailing addresses for all members are available through International. Electronic newsletters are the least expensive method of sending the chapter newsletter to those who have email addresses.

Personal phone call. Though newsletters and e-mails are great, there is nothing like a personal call to provide that personal touch! Personally calling to invite members to an activity will increase your active membership. Divide the list of members to call among the officers. More than likely, at least one person that is called will come to the next meeting. Individual members want to feel valued and welcomed at chapter activities.

"I wish that I had realized that we, as members, can change things in our chapters. Simply because that's 'how it's always been done' doesn't mean you have to keep doing the same old thing. Change it up!"
---past chapter officer

Checklists for Programming

Is our chapter:

- exciting
- instructive
- lively
- productive
- strong
- viable
- vibrant
- full of active members

Programming ideas – available at dkg.org

- awards and recognition
- fund-raising
- leadership training
- professional development
- personal development
- Schools for Africa*
- Support for Early Career Educators*
- service projects
- social events

Does our chapter provide:

- exciting programs
- relevant programs
- opportunities for members to get involved
- professional development
- recognition for member achievements
- service(s) to the community
- a signature event
- fun!