

Healthy Collaborations

What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is the “coming together” of two or more parties who will work collectively and cooperatively for the purpose of a common goal.

Why Collaborate?

Collaboration is a beneficial process when you are:

- Looking for additional support – moral or financial
- Seeking special talents or resources currently not offered in the group
- Looking for new ideas
- Seeking additional human resources
- Making a decision that will have an impact beyond the organization
- Seeking feedback outside of the organization

Who to Invite to Collaborate?

There are many potential partners on campus that you can invite to collaborate at given times. Below are four possible groups to consider inviting to collaborate, but do not let this list limit you. Spend a few minutes at your next group meeting and brainstorm all the potential partners you have on campus.

Campus Offices and Organizations: They know the campus like you do and have an invested interest in contributing to campus life. Plus, they might gain some extra publicity in the process.

Alumni: They will often come back to the college/university or a specific group they were a part of in their day, offering to lend their insight, time, and/or money.

Local Businesses: Whether you seek them out or they come to you, they can bring a whole new dimension to your group. Be sure to talk with your advisor before partnering up as there may be policies or past history to consider.

Faculty and Staff: There are wonderful professional resources on campus that would gladly be involved in your efforts if just asked.



...when collaboration makes sense. Not everything that you do needs to be collaborative. Sometimes col-

laboration takes longer than a decision or project calls for. Be intentional about choosing a collaborative process and know why collaboration will be more beneficial and efficient than doing it solo.

How Can I Be a Healthy Collaborative Leader?

- Facilitate and communicate a shared purpose from the beginning. Why have you invited people to join you? What is their role? What are the goals and expectations of this particular collaboration?
- Identify and recruit the collaborators that will both give to and gain from the collaboration.
- Value participants' time. Being invited to collaborate is often an “extra” and, if not managed efficiently, can become something people just can't fit in. Set a timeline, meeting schedule, and deadlines and stick to them.
- Make sure that participants know what is expected of them and what their specific roles and responsibilities are. This is a balancing act – you don't want to ask a lot of those who are volunteering their time and resources, however, you want to make their involvement meaningful.

How to Avoid Collaboration Chaos

- Stick to a regular meeting schedule and location.
- Communicate the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the collaborative process.
- Have *dissolution deadline*—a goal for when the collaborative process will be completed and the group will dissolve.
- Regularly recognize participants for their contributions.
- Be open to feedback, suggestions, and ideas.
- Identify and communicate the mutual benefits of collaboration.