CFA Affiliate Group Organizing Guide

campusfreethoughtalliance

Acknowledgments

This resource has been made possible by the dedication, creativity, and hard work of many people. First and foremost, we are indebted to the Campus Freethought Alliance student members whose experiences provide the purpose, foundation, and substance of the *CFA Affiliate Group Organizing Guide.*

The *Guide* was written and edited by Derek Araujo, Marcia Baczynski, Cori Bazydlo, August Brunsman, Gabriel Carlson, Amanda Chesworth, Austin Dacey, Daniel Farkas, DJ Grothe, Chris Kirchhoff, Jason Loxton, Thanh Ly, Chris Mooney, Melissa Robinson, and Micah White.

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Preface: How to Use this Guide

Welcome to the Campus Freethought Alliance *CFA Affiliate Group Organizing Guide*! The guide incorporates a number of special features designed to make it easy and enjoyable to use. The guide is divided into three main parts, each corresponding to a major milestone along the way to a successful CFA affiliate group. Chapters divide these parts into subjects for closer examination. The Appendices contain a collection of materials that serve as models and inspirations for the materials your group can produce.

In each chapter, you'll find frequent cross-references to other chapters as well to the Appendices. Don't hesitate to stop reading and follow these references. This way, you'll get the most out of the guide.

Finally, watch for the icons below:

This icon indicates a frequently asked or otherwise pertinent question.

Take note! Here you will find a helpful tip or a piece of advice contributed by an experienced group organizer.

Enjoy your *CFA Affiliate Group Organizing Guide!*

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PART I

Welcome to the Campus Freethought Alliance

Chapter 1

What is the Campus Freethought Alliance?

The Campus Freethought Alliance (CFA) is an international not-for-profit umbrella organization uniting freethinking, skeptic, secularist, nontheist, and humanist students and student organizations. Its purposes are:

- To encourage freedom from superstition, irrationalism, and dogma.

- To further the acceptance and application of science, reason, and critical thinking in all areas of human endeavor.

- To challenge misrepresentations of non-religious convictions and lifestyles.

- To create a campus community for freethinkers and skeptics.

- To cultivate in ourselves — and others — a sense of responsibility to, and compassion for, humanity.

- To counter all forms of religious political extremism.

- To defend religious freedom and the separation of church and state.

- To defend individual freedoms and civil liberties for all persons, regardless of race, sex, gender, class, creed, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability.

- To unite freethinkers, skeptics, and humanists and consolidate campus resources to these ends.

In fulfillment of its purposes, the CFA pursues various goals:

- Advancing the public understanding and appreciation of science
- Exposing pseudoscience
- Upholding the separation of church and state in public education
- Investigating claims of the paranormal
- Safeguarding the freedom of expression and opposing censorship
- Defending academic freedom
- Challenging academic fads and orthodoxy
- Debating the philosophy of science, skepticism, and theism
- Stimulating meaningful dialogue among religious and nonreligious students
- Exploring secular and humanist ethics
- Fighting racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and heterosexism
- Constructing positive social networks for those who dissent and question

The Campus Freethought Alliance believes that these goals can often be best pursued by asking some fundamental questions: What are the effects of superstition and dogma on educational environments and on society in general? How can the ideals of freedom of thought and expression be realized in schools and colleges? How can students promote science, critical thinking, and humanistic values in our societies? How can we work to effect positive change in our societies and deal with pressing problems without recourse to a transcendent realm? Can we lead good and fulfilled lives without the belief in the supernatural?

Why the Campus Freethought Alliance?

As a student, you probably receive what seems like an endless amount of information. Sometimes your instructors are cramming so many facts into your cranium that you don't have time to think about what those facts mean and how they might affect the world we live in. It doesn't have to be that way. On college, university, and high school campuses across the world, students are thinking critically about science, religion, global affairs, and social responsibility in the CFA affiliate groups of the Campus Freethought Alliance.

In a given year, a single CFA affiliate group might address issues ranging from theological ethics to the public understanding of science; from the level of belief in the supernatural and paranormal to the social consequences of the human genome project. As a member of the CFA affiliate group on your campus, you'll become involved in deciding what issues to address, how to address them, and how to get others involved.

As a participant in the Campus Freethought Alliance, you'll be part of a global network of concerned people dedicated to critical and constructive inquiry. You will join thousands of other CFA members, alumni of the CFA, and community members who are continually striving towards the goals of skepticism, secularism, and humanism. In addition, you'll be part of a tradition that extends back to ancient Greece and includes such celebrated thinkers and visionaries as Epicurus, Omar Khayyam, David Hume, Thomas Paine, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Bertrand Russell, Margaret Sanger, James Farmer, Ayn Rand, Steve Allen, and Carl Sagan.

The Campus Freethought Alliance is headquartered in Amherst, New York. Our staff is continually working to provide you with resources and advice to make your campus groups the best they can be. This guide is designed to help you with the ins and outs of organizing and running a CFA affiliate group on your campus. Read it carefully and refer to it often.

✍ Your contact: the CFA Coordinator

Remember, if you ever get stuck or have a question, don't hesitate to call the CFA Coordinator at 1-800-446-6198 ext. 220 or e-mail coordinator@campusfreethought.org.

A Brief History of the Campus Freethought Alliance

CFA began in August 1996 at a conference hosted by the Council for Secular Humanism at its Amherst, New York, headquarters, The Center for Inquiry. Freethinking students from Harvard University, the University of Maryland at College Park, the State University of New York at Buffalo, Marshall University, Webster University, and the University of Oregon convened for four days to draft a founding statement, the "Declaration of Necessity," which was released to media and CFA affiliate groups around the world.

As more and more students became involved, CFA's founding event was followed by annual conferences. Here, CFA members met each other, received training and resources for organizing freethought on their campuses, and interacted with world-renowned freethinkers and humanists such as author Richard Dawkins and philosopher Paul Kurtz.

In response to increasing government favoritism towards religion and disrespect of non-religious citizens, the CFA devoted its third annual conference to producing a "Bill of Rights for Unbelievers," which extends the principle of church-state separation to guarantee the equal rights of the non-religious. This historic document was released on July 17, 1998, precisely 150 years after the Declaration of the Rights of Women at Seneca Falls in 1848.

In 1999, the CFA expanded its outreach to high schools. This effort advanced dynamically as co-founder Micah White rose to national notoriety as a spokesperson for young freethinkers.

Today, the CFA has grown to include thousands of student members and supporters, encompassing student organizations worldwide.

Chapter 2

What is a CFA Affiliate Group?

Although the annual conference is a highpoint in the year of the Campus Freethought Alliance, the day-to-day, sustained presence of freethought at schools and colleges is due to the CFA affiliate groups themselves.

A CFA affiliate group is a club or organization on a college, university, or high school campus that addresses the religious, ethical, social, and political questions confronting student atheists, agnostics, skeptics, secularists, and humanists. Over the years the campus groups have done this in a variety of ways. There have been round table discussions, lecture series, film series, field trips, conferences, displays, celebrations, and much more.

Quite honestly, the sky's the limit to what a group can do to address the issues it's concerned with. All campus groups are autonomous but they work together in the alliance to create not only a local but also a national and international voice on issues of concern to student freethinkers.

If you're just beginning a CFA affiliate group, don't fear; you're not alone. The Alliance network extends to numerous college, university, and high school campuses throughout the US and around the world. Group leaders at these other schools are happy to give advice about what events worked for them, how they were able to get official recognition from their school, how they fund their events, and how to keep your group running smoothly. There is also an Executive Council (EC) made up of experienced group members and a Membership Committee of dedicated student volunteers who are willing and able to contribute advice or help to those beginning a group.

In addition, the Campus Freethought Alliance has full-time Coordinators who can be reached by calling 1-800-446-6198 ext. 220 or by e-mailing coordinator@campusfreethought.org. The CFA Coordinators will help you think up ideas for events, inspire you to become more involved in the student freethought movement, discuss any problems your group might be having, send you materials from CFA Headquarters, and, in general, assist you in starting and maintaining a group.

This guide will help you start a group of the Campus Freethought Alliance. Refer to it often. Remember, if you ever get stuck, call the CFA Coordinator at 1-800-446-6198 ext. 220.
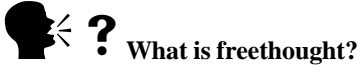
What is freethought?

The concept of "freethought" must be distinguished from the concept of "free thought." Free thought is critical reflection that does not depend on appeals to tradition, authority, or dogmatically held positions. Many reflective people are free thinkers in this sense, including many religious believers. Freethought, however, is a *historical tradition* of thought and discourse that traces primarily back to the Enlightenment and combines free thought with doubt or disbelief regarding supernatural views, particularly traditional religions.

Chapter 3

Why Should Groups Join the Alliance?

Freethought and skepticism are great traditions that have transformed human life and society for the better. By joining the CFA, you will take your place in these traditions and meet others who share your convictions. Freethought can also be of inestimable personal value, as a life of critical inquiry opens up new avenues of individual growth, discovery, and enrichment. Moreover, the CFA offers numerous concrete resources to its affiliate groups.

Human Resources

CFA Coordinator

Your most important human resource is the Coordinator, a full-time staff member who specializes in helping affiliate groups form and thrive. The Coordinator oversees the national and international public relations, membership activities, events, and fieldwork of the CFA staff and student volunteers. This should be the first person you seek out when you contact CFA Headquarters with questions or ideas.

 When should I contact the CFA Coordinator?

Contact the CFA Coordinator whenever you have a question or comment about the CFA or about your CFA affiliate group. The Coordinator is dedicated to making your CFA experience as fulfilling and successful as it can be, so don't hesitate to ask for assistance at 1-800-446-6198 ext. 220 or coordinator@campusfreethought.org.

Allied organizations

By joining the Campus Freethought Alliance, you automatically ally yourself to over a dozen well-established freethought, skeptical, and humanist organizations, including:

The Council for Secular Humanism
The Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies
The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal
African-Americans for Humanism
The Council for Media Integrity
The Society of Humanist Philosophers
The First Amendment Task Force

A Student Government

The CFA's governing body is an Executive Council of students who are elected annually. The Council includes a President, Vice President, and other officers who oversee the CFA's activities on a daily basis. Much of the Executive Council's work is done through working groups of student volunteers, which are entirely open to student participation. Working groups can include:

- Public Relations, concerned with coordinating CFA media strategies and assisting CFA membership with local publicity.

- Intercampus Affairs, devoted to organizing regional events and joint projects among CFA groups, and fostering communication and cooperation among CFA membership.

- Political Affairs, designed to work with political analysts and legal experts, providing CFA members with accurate and timely research into political and legal issues.

- Membership, dedicated to creating and sustaining strong campus groups.

- Internet Affairs, responsible for maintaining the CFA web site (www.campusfreethought.org.) and all of the CFA's other electronic services.

- Publications, dedicated to producing all CFA print and electronic publications.

You're welcome to call upon any of these committees for assistance and advice (or to get involved with them yourself).

Books, Magazines, Newsletters, and Other Print Resources

CFA Affiliate Group Organizing Guide

This guide is itself a tremendous resource. Be sure to refer back to it as your experience with CFA progresses.

The Campus Freethinker

This enlightening and entertaining newsletter keeps you abreast of the latest CFA developments and upcoming events, and alerts you to new benefits and opportunities associated with CFA affiliation, such as the CFA annual conference.

Free Inquiry and *Skeptical Inquirer* magazines

All CFA groups receive a free subscription to *Free Inquiry* and *Skeptical Inquirer*. *Free Inquiry* is the world's foremost intellectual magazine celebrating reason and humanity. Regular departments address politics, science, religion, and ethics. Distinguished contributors include Mikhail Gorbachev, Wole Solyinka, Camille Paglia, Daniel Dennett, and E. O. Wilson. *Skeptical Inquirer* is dedicated to the scientific investigation of claims of the paranormal. Contributors include Martin Gardner, Paul Kurtz, James Randi, and Carl Sagan.

Complimentary books

CFA affiliate groups also receive free selected titles such as:

- *Why the Religious Right is Wrong about Separation of Church and State*, by Rob Boston of Americans United for Separation of Church and State
- *Prescription Medicine: The Goodness of Planned Death*, by Dr. Jack Kevorkian
- *Ethics Without God*, by philosopher Kai Nielsen

Online Resources

The Web Page

The CFA Web page can be found at www.campusfreethought.org. Here you can join in CFA's semesterly campaigns, peruse upcoming conferences, seminars or celebrations, follow links to other CFA chapters, discover freethought and skeptical material online, or add your name to the "Bill of Rights for Unbelievers."

Action Alerts

Are you a freethought or skeptic activist? Visit the CFA web page. Sign on to CFA's action alert network, which coordinates its grassroots social and political campaigns.

Campus Freethought News

This Internet periodical brings you the latest news, features, and opinions relevant to student freethought, as well as CFA updates, announcements, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Listservers

CFA has numerous listservers, on which you can join in the work of committees, receive campaign action alerts, discuss CFA philosophy and politics, or chat with student freethinkers from around the world. To sign up, visit CFA's web page, www.campusfreethought.org.

CFA Grant Program

CFA sets aside limited funds that are made available to its affiliates on a competitive basis for the purpose of underwriting their CFA-related activities such as hosting a lecture or publicizing the organization. To apply for a CFA Grant, contact a CFA Coordinator.

Conferences and Events

Campus Freethought Alliance Annual Conference

Each June, beginning on World Humanist Day, CFA members meet for an exciting four-day conference to discuss science, religion, skepticism, politics, and the future of freethought on school campuses. In addition to talking with invited experts, conference participants engage in useful workshops on organizing campus groups and sponsoring events. Your group should send as many participants as possible.

Semester Campaign

Each semester, CFA launches a national campaign centered on a high-profile issue of concern to student freethinkers. The purpose of the campaign is for students to educate themselves and others about the issue, to stake a claim for student freethinkers in political and cultural debates, and to generally increase public awareness of the movement. For example, the Fall 1999 Campaign, entitled SOS: Save Our Science, Save Our Schools, mobilized a massive response to efforts by creationists to squelch the teaching of evolution and other origins sciences.

Debate Circuit

Throughout the year, debaters affiliated with CFA are brought to campuses and schools to promote secularist, humanist, non-theistic, and rationalist views by engaging others in rational discussion. As a CFA group, you can help to add your school to the circuit.

Speakers Bureau

Interested in bringing a lecture or other presentation to your school? CFA maintains a bureau of experts on church-state separation, science and pseudoscience, Biblical theology, creationism and evolution, atheism and theism, and humanistic philosophy. Check it out at the CFA Web page. By working with the CFA Speakers Bureau, your group can bring a high quality presenter to campus at minimal cost to you.

Other National Events

By providing them with information and resources, CFA assists its groups in hosting other events, such as Darwin Day, Friday the 13th Superstition Bash, and Freethought Month.

PART II

Starting a CFA Affiliate Group

Chapter 4

Attracting Members

The most vital ingredient in any student group is, of course, members. A large membership base is needed to sustain a durable and effective group. New member acquisition should be an ongoing goal of every student group. Since not all members are willing to take the necessary leadership and activist roles in the group, a larger membership base helps to ensure group continuity and efficacy by creating a larger pool from which to draw leaders and activists.

Recruiting Strategies

CFA Headquarters

Ask the CFA Coordinator to check existing databases for faculty or students at your campus who might be interested in joining a group.

Information tables

Set up a table in the student center or other high-visibility area to offer information and collect names and contact information of interested students. Activity fairs, which are usually open to all student groups and held in the beginning of the school year, are especially effective. The school will provide your group with a table, a couple of chairs, and access to almost the entire incoming freshmen class. At that stage in their college careers, students are *actively seeking out groups to join*. Getting people to sign up then will be easier to do than at any other time.

Things to have at your information table:

- Sign-up sheet with blanks for names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses, with the first line filled out by you or a friend. Make clear to people that by signing they are only indicating their interest, not joining the group. (Be sure to turn this list into a database. See Chapter 8).

- Free literature on a variety of topics (for example, brochures provided by the CFA or the Council for Secular Humanism).

- Printed handouts or brochures (see Appendix A) that briefly outline the nature of the group and its contact information (e-mail, URL, phone number, mailing address).

- Flyers on any upcoming events you have planned (see Appendix B). This gives people an idea of what your group actually *does*.

✎ Tabling techniques

When someone approaches your table, make eye contact, smile, and look away (perhaps resume conversation with someone sitting at the table with you); if you sit there and stare at people, they will be intimidated and may not come up to look at your literature. Once they come up to the table, tell them briefly what your group is, what stuff they can take if they are interested, and explain the sign-up sheet. *Never fail to mention the sign-up sheet!*

Public events

Lectures, debates, and other outreach events are great opportunities to get new members. (For information on running these events, see Chapter 10.)

Campus media

Ask your school paper do an article covering the arrival of a CFA group at your school. Make sure that your contact information is included in the article. Also, letters to the editor and op-ed pieces in your campus paper raise your group's visibility, and give people an idea of what issues concern you. (For information on how to write effective letters to the editor and op-ed pieces, see Chapter 12)

Posters

Posters that advertise your group itself are an old standby in new member acquisition. Eye-catching, nice-looking, and perhaps humorous posters with your contact information put up all over campus throughout the year are guaranteed to raise your visibility and thus your membership (examples can be found in Appendix C). (More advice on postering can be found in Chapter 12.)

Sidewalk Chalking

Some groups have found that chalking their meeting times or contact information on sidewalks in public areas is an effective way to get new members. Be sure not to write on anything that may tend to upset the public.

Web page

In today's digital age, a web page is an effective means of publicizing your group. If your school has a web page of student groups, be sure that it has a link to your web page. (For detailed information about web page design, content, and related issues, read Chapter 13, "Using the Internet.")

E-mail

Students may contact student groups by e-mail. Handling these inquiries is an easy way of turning prospects into members, if done properly. Create an account for the group and dedicate a single person to monitoring it. This person should check the account frequently and respond immediately. While use of a form letter is not ideal, it's beneficial to have a general template in your head to follow when answering requests for more information about the group. End initial responses with an invitation to attend upcoming events or to contact group officers for more information.

Targeting Freshmen

Members who have a social investment in a group are far more likely to stay involved, as well as to become more deeply involved. However, there are people who will have no interest in getting deeply involved socially, instead choosing to come only to your large outreach events. These people typically have established social lives, and their needs embrace only the education aspect of the group. Obviously, finding a way to convince such people to make the student group a part of their social lives isn't a realistic option. There is a way, however, to get people involved in such a way that they are quite likely to incorporate your group into their social lives and stick around for a long time. The secret is targeting freshmen.

When your group attracts a student who has just arrived at your school, there are much greater possibilities than when it attracts an upperclassman. Freshmen usually arrive without any social network to plug into; they have not yet made friends, and are actively looking to do so. For this reason, they are much more likely to join organizations than they will be in a year or two, after they have assembled their social network. If new students come to your meetings and enjoy themselves, it's probable that the people they meet will become one of their primary social groups.

It is therefore vital that your group is highly visible on the campus during the early part of the fall quarter/semester. Get involved in the new student orientation fair, flyer heavily, have a high-profile event lined up, set up information tables, provide snacks at your meetings, and just generally go into organizational overdrive. The work will be well worth it when you gain members who might spend the rest of their school careers engaged in the student group.

Creating an Attractive Image

Positivity

Your group won't attract many members if your focus is consistently negative. Many people don't want to get involved with an organization that deals exclusively or primarily with attacking religion. While such critiques are important and interesting, it would be a mistake to simply tear down without building up. It's vital to promote science, freedom, secular ethics, inquiry, and reason as viable and positive alternatives to supernaturalistic and dogmatic systems.

Diversity of topics

There are many different areas of interest within the freethought and skeptic movements, such as humanism, science, skepticism, religion, secularism, and philosophy. Most prospective members will be interested in some areas more than in others. By engaging a wide variety of topics, regardless of which you personally prefer, you'll both advance the goals of the freethought movement and swell the ranks of your membership.

Friendly, professional demeanor

When students express interest in your group, they need to be handled as promptly and professionally as possible. If you wait too long or respond poorly, you'll be losing a potential member, activist, and future officer. When you're manning a table, working an event, or putting up flyers, people will approach you and want to know more about the group. While some will be hostile, others will be potential members ascertaining whether they want to get involved. It's important that you have a good grasp of how you'll answer questions about the necessity, goals, and methods of your group, as well as about more general topics such as rationalism and skepticism. This applies not only to group leaders, but also to all your members, especially those who will be acting as representatives of your organization in any way.

Chapter 5

Getting Recognized

It is crucial that your CFA group gains official school recognition as soon as possible. Official recognition is important for several reasons.

Reasons for Recognition

- Publicity: Official recognition will probably make your group more accessible to students, as recognized clubs are usually listed in school directories and campus guides.
- Facilities: School facilities are often reserved for recognized student organizations.
- Funding: Most schools make official recognition a prerequisite for receiving money from the student government.

Gaining Official Recognition from CFA

Simply complete the application found at the end of this guide and return it to:
CFA; PO Box 664; Amherst, New York; 14226-0664.
Or complete the application online at www.campusfreethought.org/join.

Steps to Gaining Official Recognition from Your School

1. Find out where and how to apply for recognition. The head of student activities should be able to help with this.
2. Hold a meeting of core group members to outline and prepare for the application process.
3. Locate or begin to locate a faculty advisor, if necessary.
4. Be prepared to present the best case for why the school administration should recognize your group. Be able to state the purpose of the organization, explain why it's different from other existing student groups on your campus, report on the group's progress so far and its plans for the year, outline membership criteria and fund-raising plans.

Taking advantage of CFA affiliation

When applying for recognition, highlight the fact that your group is affiliated with an established international organization, the Campus Freethought Alliance. Stress that your group will be a nonpartisan forum for dialogue and education.

Chapter 6

Deciding on an Organizational Structure and Constitution

Student groups often are born from the vision and hard work of an inspired individual. These groups begin as a one-man or one-woman show, with the individual performing all of the group's administrative tasks. This plan isn't feasible in the long run and presents a number of dangers. As the group grows and becomes more active, the number and size of administrative tasks will outgrow the individual's work capacity. There is also the danger that the group will fall into disrepair when the individual graduates since no one who is familiar with the administrative aspect of the group will remain. Therefore, an organizational structure that includes multiple members is essential to every healthy student group.

Officers

At least four official positions are necessary to ensure the flourishing of a campus organization.

The President

The President directs and organizes the group's activities, and typically is the official spokesperson for the group.

The Vice President

This officer is usually an assistant to the President who shares his or her administrative duties. This arrangement is particularly helpful in organizations of students, who are very busy people. By working as a team and helping each other when their schedules are too full, the President and Vice President can prevent academic stress from bringing the group's administration to a temporary halt.

The Secretary

The Secretary often serves the dual role of group archivist and note-taker at administrative meetings.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer keeps track of the group's financial transactions and maintains detailed records for potential auditors. The position of Treasurer is an extremely important one. The Treasurer has the demanding and time-intensive job of making sure the group remains financially stable and ensuring that it won't be penalized for failure to detail its financial records. Many colleges offer training courses for group

treasurers to help them learn the ropes. New treasurers should inquire about such courses.

Alternatively, the positions of Treasurer and Secretary may be combined in the office of Secretary-Treasurer. The positions of President and Vice President are sometimes substituted with two Co-Presidents. Appendix D lists additional job descriptions of officers.

Elections

Elections are most often held at the end of each academic year. It's good practice to ask candidates to submit and make available brief statements about their qualifications and their visions of how to improve the group. Such statements can be delivered in person, distributed on paper to voters, or posted on the group's web page. This will allow voting members to identify good candidates and weed out the less dedicated.

Involving Non-officer Students

It's also important to get many students involved with performing administrative duties. Division of labor helps by making everyone's workload lighter, keeping group members involved, and giving future officers experience with running the group. If your group is large enough, it's advisable to form some sort of an Executive Committee that will share the group's official duties. Members of the Committee may be appointed or elected. It's also possible to create other offices or administrative positions as they become necessary, such as a Publicity Director to handle poster distribution and other advertising for the group (see Appendix D).

The Group Constitution

Every organization should have a constitution outlining its rules, principles, and administrative structure. A good constitution provides a strong foundation for a new organization to work from, and also serves to organize and develop the organization over time. A constitution helps to resolve disputes within an organization, or with the student government, should they arise, and may prevent such disputes from arising in the first place. The remainder of this chapter details and explains the essential elements of a solid constitution.

Constitutions are divided into Articles, which may be further subdivided into Sections. Below are some recommended Articles. It's advisable to consult any student government regulations to make sure that nothing in the constitution contradicts school policy.

Article I: Identity

Outlines the goals and purpose of the group; describes some of the group's common activities; mentions any other organization with which the group is affiliated, including the Campus Freethought Alliance and perhaps the student government.

Article II: Membership

Specifies who is eligible for membership and the process of becoming a member; mentions membership fees if there are any.

Article III: Voting and Bylaws

Outlines eligibility for voting on policy. (Will policy be decided by the President alone, voted on by an Executive Committee, or decided by general votes by the members?) The Article also specifies what sort of issues can be voted on, how meetings are run, and the meetings' rules of procedure. *Robert's Rules of Order* may be appropriate for very formal meetings, though it may be best to avoid them whenever possible in the interest of efficiency.

Article IV: Elections and Officers

Describes the group's officers and how and when they are elected.

Article V: Termination of Office/Membership

Provides means for removing an officer or member for misbehavior or failure to uphold the group's ideals.

Article VI: Finances

Describes how funds are to be raised and spent.

Article VII: Amendments

Specifies how the Constitution may be amended. Most common is to require the vote of two-thirds of the group's eligible voters.

When you set about writing your group's constitution, be sure that no provisions in any of the constitution's articles contradict any school policies. You can find a sample constitution in Appendix E.

Campus Freethought Alliance Minimum Statement

The Campus Freethought Alliance (CFA) includes campus groups and individuals that promote rational thinking, defend and cultivate an individual's right to unbelief, and enhance the presence of freethought, skepticism, science, and secular humanism on campuses worldwide. The CFA respects the personal freedom and affirms the right and responsibility of humans to give meaning and shape to their own lives. The CFA is an inclusive union that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. The CFA reserves the right to withdraw or withhold membership from any group or individual member whose activities or policies undermine CFA principles.

Chapter 7

Running Group Meetings

One of biggest hurdles to forming a new student group is the first meeting. For those who have never done it before, the prospect of facilitating discussion in a room full of people can be intimidating. This chapter aims at making the first meeting easier and suggesting ideas for subsequent meetings.

How to Run a Successful Meeting

Timing

Meetings need to be timed carefully. Have them too early, and people are in class; too late, and they'll run into people's study and bed times. Students can become burned out; they only want to live it up on Fridays, and only want to sleep on Mondays. Successful meetings could be held at 6:30 on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday nights, allowing people to eat dinner before coming over to the meeting and to get home at a reasonable hour.

As a general rule, don't allow the official part of a meeting to extend beyond an hour and a half. Longer meetings make people feel trapped, and once they escape they won't want to return to risk it again. If you feel that the meeting can and should go on longer than an hour and a half, take a 10-15 minute break, telling people that they are free to leave or to stick around for the additional meeting time as they wish.

It's best to meet on a regular basis in a set location and at a standard time, so that people always know when and where there is a meeting without having to check their e-mail.

Notification

Even when your meetings are regular, it's often necessary to send a reminder out via e-mail that includes the time, place, and content of the meeting about two days in advance. Always double-check to make sure you include the time, date, location, and a contact person!

Facilitation

Meetings need to be led, preferably by the group's President. It's the meeting leader's job to initiate discussion, act as a moderator, and solicit and answer questions.

Introductions

When people don't know each other well, or a handful of new people are in attendance, go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves briefly and informally. There are a number of corny, but fun games for this purpose. The better your members know one another, the more likely it is that they will be comfortable at the meetings and come back for more. Make sure that new attendees are greeted, but not in a manner that makes them feel uncomfortable or singled-out in the public eye.

Agenda

The facilitator of the meeting should always have an agenda, no matter how loose, which should be explained briefly at the beginning of the meeting. A good basic structure to follow is to review what has been going on with the group, what projects are being worked on, and what projects and developments lie ahead.

If officers have been working on various projects, they should report their progress to the group. This gives them the recognition they deserve and probably want, informs about the general membership what the officers do, and makes the meeting more interactive and less of a lecture. Be sure that the facilitator gives the officers advanced warning: they'll not be pleased if they are surprised and unable to think of what to say on the spot.

Participation

The facilitator should ask for input from members, and listen carefully when they respond. No one person should be permitted to monopolize a discussion. When there is decision to be made, the facilitator should call a vote. Most people want to be actively involved in meetings, rather than simply to sit there observing the officers' discussion. Furthermore, at a more fundamental level, members will be more satisfied with the group if it's democratic, and they have a voice in important issues.

If you can get a room with a single large table, use it rather than a room set up as a classroom. This really helps to bring everyone into the discussion.

Fun

It's very rare that people will return for another meeting if they're bored to tears at the first one. Use humor! Start meetings by reading a clipping from *The Onion*, for instance, or anything that will start things off with some shared laughter, which facilitates a comfortable, friendly atmosphere. For first meetings, or whenever you think the group needs a bit of a kick in the pants, provide snacks.

Ending on a positive note

As a facilitator, give everyone time and opportunity to share any final thoughts before the conclusion of a meeting. It should be clear at this point what is expected of them before the next meeting. Thank those in attendance, and encourage them about the work that lies ahead. Announce that the official part of the meeting is over and that people are free to socialize. This keeps them from scurrying for the door instantly, and engenders the formation of friendships between members.

All Sorts of In-house Events

The following are some of the types of in-house events that CFA affiliate groups might experiment with. Each works in a different way to satisfy one or more of the differing needs that students expect a campus group to fulfill. Note that while they are split up below, there is no reason why they can't be combined (a video presentation followed by a discussion group, or an organizational meeting followed by a social time) or blended together. Pay close attention to the desires of your group (including those who don't attend meetings: there is probably a reason for this!) in order to determine which types of meetings you should employ.

Organizational

Organizational meetings are for discussing the plans and mechanisms of the student group itself. This is where you'll brainstorm, plan public events, future meetings, elections, group projects, and make other decisions concerning the maintenance of the group. These meetings tend to be rather dry for non-activist members, so be sure to let people know what type of meeting it will be, in order to avoid having a bunch of restless people who only wanted to hang out or tell jokes. Having brainstorming sessions can liven up things. Don't expect a high turnout at organizational meetings, and don't be discouraged if only six people show up. If you do have high turnouts, and find it difficult to operate, split up into small groups, with each group working on a particular issue or problem.

Social

These meetings are characterized by a less structured format. Group members hang out, have fun, and perhaps eat some snacks or watch an amusing (preferably relevant) film. Card and board games such as chess, Sorry, Uno, and checkers are a highly effective way to get people more comfortable with each other and having a good time. It's a good idea to start out with a brief rundown of what the group is up to and any relevant news items before breaking into pure socializing.

Discussion group

Select a topic that interests everyone. It may help to focus the discussion on a short piece of writing that can be distributed in advance. You should have a set time for the discussion to end at; if it's going strong when time is up, take a break to allow those who need to leave to do so. Someone, preferably the President, needs to moderate the discussion by calling on people, keeping discussion on track and moving along, making sure no one monopolizes the discussion, and watching the clock. It might be wise to plan on a social time after the discussion group, so that if focused discussion fizzles out you can fall into socializing.

❓ What is an in-house event?

In-house events are events that are usually not attended by people beyond your student group's membership and/or mailing list; they aren't advertised to the public. In-house events have two extremely important functions: they are occasions for learning and enhancing the group's sense of community.

Mini-debate

These meetings involve inviting the members of a religious or other contrasting student group in to debate an issue in a calm, informal, and civil manner. Good topics include homosexuality, church-state separation, the existence of God, and the infallibility of the Bible. Mini-debates are valuable for the following reasons:

1. They make for a constructive relationship with the local opposition, which is preferable to warfare.
2. They allow the vocal members of your group to polish their debating skills.
3. They allow those who don't know much about the subject to learn the arguments employed by both sides.
4. They are a hell of a lot of fun.

The moderator must ensure that everyone remains respectful, and that each side is accorded equal time. Afterwards, it might be fun to go out with the other group for some food.

Mini-lecture

These meetings are especially valuable for the education of the group's members. You can call up a professor from religious studies, philosophy, anthropology, or some other department who teaches a topic that is of interest to your members (such as human evolution, life after death, or problems with divine command theory ethics). Contact local religious leaders, New Age practitioners, health care providers, politicians, or whoever might be interesting. Ask them if they'd be interested in giving a short (maybe 30 minute) presentation to a small, private group on the topic you've chosen, followed by a discussion/Q&A period of equal length. Be sure to introduce the speakers to the group and conclude by thanking the

speaker. Keep notes on individual speakers that can be used by your group in the future. These meetings are far less work than real lectures, since you don't need to worry about publicizing them, other than being sure that everyone in your group knows that they are happening.

Video presentation

Video presentations are also great educational opportunities, but without the hassle of finding a speaker who is willing and able to speak. CFA Headquarters compiles a video library for use by student groups. If someone in your group has a camcorder, you might want to tape some of your lectures for future generations of your student group to watch, or for the shared CFA library.

Field trips

Round up your members and go somewhere! Field trips should be both social and educational. Science museums, Christian Science reading rooms, various holy places, a creationist rally, or whatever else looks fun and relevant make great targets for a field trip. If the location is off campus, be sure either to get volunteer drivers or plan on using public transportation.

Food outings

Even rationalists have to eat. Meet at a local pizza place and have everyone pitch in for some shared food. If you can afford it, have group funds cover the bill (but only do this rarely, and pass the hat to help soften the blow). This is a great way to bind the group together.

Picnics

At the end of the school year, or possibly at the beginning, have an end-of-the-year picnic for members only. Get a grill, some food, a boombox, and find a nearby park. Have three-legged races, gunny sack races, kickball, a chess tournament, awards, volleyball, badminton, and whatever else strikes your fancy. Award books as prizes to winners of the various contests. These events are a ton of fun, and your members will leave for the summer excited to return and get back into the group.

Sporting events

Another excellent way to have fun as a group and minimize expenses is through sporting activities. These events are usually a big success if you invite the local Campus Crusade for Christ group along to compete against!

PART III

Running a CFA Affiliate Group

Chapter 8

Maintaining an Active Membership

Once a group has formed, what can you do to guarantee that it becomes large, active, and rewarding to its members? The group's leaders must be able to meet the members' often diverse needs and manage the mechanics of keeping members in touch and up to date.

Meeting the needs of your members

Education

One of the most common reasons people join a CFA affiliate group is to learn all that they can about the cluster of topics connected to freethought and skepticism. There are many methods that group leaders can employ to meet this vital need.

1. Outreach events: Outreach events, which are covered in detail in Chapter 10, offer excellent opportunities for members to learn more. At the same time, outreach events enlighten the non-member public.

2. In-house events: Meetings and other in-house events are another highly effective means of providing knowledge to your members. For detailed information on in-house meetings and events, see the previous chapter.

3. Facilitation of information flow: The leadership of a student group is ultimately responsible for making information from sources outside the group both known and easily accessible to the group's membership. To accomplish this, leaders may want to:

    - Alert the membership about upcoming relevant courses being taught.

    - Encourage students to subscribe to national magazines and newsletters such as *Free Inquiry*, *Skeptical Inquirer*, *Church & State*, *Philo*, and *Freethought Today*. (Note: *Free Inquiry* offers a discounted rate for individual CFA members. See www.secularhumanism.org)

    - Maintain a collection of informational resources that can be taken or borrowed by group members; for example, books, periodicals, photocopied articles, recommended reading lists, book catalogues, and Internet addresses.

- Encourage members to take advantage of the many CFA resources; for instance, information services such as the *Campus Freethought News*. A summary of resources is provided in Chapter 3.

- Use books (for example, complimentary books from the CFA) as door prizes at events, as prizes at social events, and as rewards for hard workers.

Community

While some people are interested solely in intellectual dividends from the student group, you'll discover that many are also seeking an opportunity to meet and hang out with like-minded people. Further, it's important to build a sense of community in order to keep your members involved through time. Unless your members feel as though they belong to something, they will be disinclined toward committing their time and energy to it. There are a few basic ways to build the sense of community that is so crucial to operating a successful student group.

1. Membership Status: It is vital to have some way of distinguishing between those who are members of your group, and those who are merely interested in it. A nominal fee ($1 or $2) is recommended as the membership criteria. By investing in the group, members make it partially theirs. Many complications arise in groups with "open" memberships, while the benefits of drawing a distinction between members and non-members are numerous and substantial.

   - A membership classification is essential in voting on important issues and new leaders. Without this division, anyone can show up at a meeting and cast a ballot. Realize that voting, besides being the keystone of a democratic organization, is an excellent way of getting your membership involved in the process of running a group. A member who has the power to vote on important issues will feel far more satisfied with and involved in the group than will a member of a non-voting organization.

   - When you need help with running an event, manning an informational table, fundraising, or any other such sensitive task, you need people truly committed to the ideals of your group since they will be serving as its representatives. Only if you have your members sorted out from the merely interested can you safely send out a mass appeal for assistance.

   - Providing members with benefits not available to everyone encourages others to become members.

2. Social Meetings and Events: Meetings and events that are primarily social in nature play a central role in creating a sense of social belonging in a student group. For detailed information on social meetings and events, refer to Chapter 7.

Activism

Finally, there are people who are interested in going beyond intellectual and personal growth to become active in the group. To leave the energy of a potential activist untapped is to neglect a gold mine. It's important that you recognize these individuals and provide them with tasks or roles that fit both their talents and the needs of the group.

Recognition

Most people want to be recognized for their efforts. It's important to keep this in mind if you're running a group. If people don't feel that their work is valued, they will become discouraged and quit working. There are several simple ways that group leaders can attempt to prevent this.

- Periodically and publicly thanking officers and volunteers.

- Bestowing awards on officers and other hard workers at an end-of-the-year appreciation ceremony.

- Creating official titles for particularly active non-officer volunteers, within the guidelines of the group's bylaws. Giving members an official title lets them know that they are appreciated and often motivates them to put even more thought and effort into the group.

Mechanics of Member Maintenance

In order to do anything as an organization, you'll need to have a system in place to contact and keep track of your members, as well as non-members who want to know about your events and meetings.

Databases

If you don't know how to use simple database programs like Excel, take ten minutes and learn how to do so. The same person who answers e-mail received by the group should maintain the database.

- Keep at least two separate databases; one for your dues-paying members, and one for everyone, both members and non-members who wish to know about your upcoming events and meetings.

- The databases should be coordinated with your sign-up sheets used at events and tables; data fields should include name, phone number, and e-mail address.

- When you receive "I'm interested in your group" e-mails, add the senders to the general e-mailing list; they can easily be removed if they want to be.

- Minimize the risk of people falling through the cracks! When you get new names, transfer them immediately from the sign-up sheet into the database; likewise, when people pay their membership dues (or fulfill whatever membership obligation you've created), immediately enter them into the members database (and the general database, if they were not previously listed).

- Keep the original sign-up sheets on file. If a new addition's e-mail bounces, you can check the original and see if you simply misread their handwriting. Further, in the event of a computer disaster, you'll be able to rebuild your lists.

- Make back-ups of your databases *frequently*. Copy them to disk, and make printed copies. Databases are notorious for killing the data at the most inopportune moments, and computers explode and get stolen all the time. Your lists of members and e-mailing subscribers are invaluable to the organization; treat them as such.

Activating Members

There are many ways to measure a student group's success. The number of events, the size of membership, and the attendance at meetings are all indicators of a group's status. Another very important factor that must be considered is how successful the group is at turning passive members into active members. Without active members, a student organization can't operate or survive. You'll need people to help out with everything from basic tasks such as putting up flyers around campus to officer-level tasks, such as maintaining your web page or serving as Events Coordinator.

Here are some keys to an active membership:

Knowledge

If people are to become active in your group, they must understand what the freethought movement is and why it matters. Different aspects of the movement appeal to different people, which is why it's important to incorporate atheism, scientific skepticism, secular humanism, church-state separation, and other relevant areas into your group's scope.

Task delegation

In a highly active group, responsibility for various tasks is shared among many members. Unless group leaders delegate responsibility effectively, members will become dissatisfied and the organization will lose vitality. Here are some considerations that leaders should bear in mind when seeking to spread work around.

- Be personal. People are far more likely to take on a task if someone individually contacts and recognizes them as right for a particular job than if they're one of dozens who receive a "we need someone" e-mail.

- Make clear to potential activists that they will be working as part of a team, and that they will be assisted in learning the ropes as they go along. People are reluctant to take on too much responsibility.

- Match individuals' skills and personalities to tasks.

- Channel enthusiasm into productive activities. If a volunteer gets excited about a project that isn't in the interests of the group, don't simply turn the volunteer down; rather, see if you can find a way to harness that enthusiasm and turn it in a more productive direction.

Open Leadership

Under a system of open leadership, members know what choices are being made at the administrative level, and why they are being made. Beyond the important effect of making people feel as though they belong to the group, open leadership is important for several reasons related to motivating group members.

- Part of the importance of getting members active is that the group will need new people willing and able to take over when the old ones graduate. The best way for them to learn how to lead a group effectively is to observe and take part in the leadership process. Open leadership essentially mentors everyone in the group as potential leaders, which is important in a democratic organization that elects, not appoints, its primary leaders.

- Constructive criticism of leaders by other group members is an extremely valuable form of group activity. Unless members know what the leadership is doing, and why they are doing it, they will be unable to take part in determining the actions and direction of the group.

- People are more likely to be active in a group if they have confidence in its leaders. Keeping people informed about administrative decisions will foster this kind of confidence, whereas people are naturally somewhat suspicious of leaderships that operate in the shadows.

Aren't leaders the most qualified to make decisions?

This isn't necessarily the case. To find out more about what effective group leadership really demands, consult Chapter 15.

Chapter 9

Communicating

A student group cannot flourish without a well designed communication network through which members and interested non-members can learn about upcoming events, share knowledge relevant to the group's areas of concern, coordinate activities with other members, and engage each other in social and intellectual discussion.

E-mail Updates

Once your databases (discussed in Chapter 8) are operational, you can use them to keep group members and interested others in touch with group affairs.

The members list

Use the list of members to announce important local news, members-only events, calls for assistance, and internal group affairs. Although your members will have a far higher tolerance than non-members, refrain from bombarding them with e-mail. The less you send, the more likely is that people will read it.

The general list

Use this list to announce meetings, lectures, debates, and other items of interest to people both inside and outside your membership. Don't send more than one e-mail a week to the general list. Occasionally remind people of how they can become members and what benefits members enjoy.

Basic how-to

Open your database, highlight and copy the column containing e-mail addresses, and paste them into the "BCC" (blind carbon copy) box on your e-mail program. (In other e-mail programs, you can paste the addresses into the CC box and place parentheses around them, one before the first name and one after the last.) People appreciate the information you're sending them, but they may not appreciate sharing their e-mail address with everyone on your list. Also, when people ask to be taken off the list, take them off immediately and inform them that you did this. If you want to ask them why they want off the list, feel free to do so, but don't demand a reason to let them off the list and don't pressure them to stay on.

If you're having trouble figuring out how to send BCC e-mails, or using your databases to e-mail, ask a technology-oriented friend, a computer lab assistant, or the CFA Internet Affairs Director (admin@campusfreethought.org) for help.

General e-mail etiquette

- Break large blocks of text up into separate paragraphs with white space between them as much as possible. Reading from a screen is tedious; breaking text into small chunks makes it far easier to process.

- Check your spelling! Just as your group would never put up posters with spelling errors, be sure that your e-mails are top-quality. They reflect your organization, and should not be fragmentary and grammatically atrocious.

- When sending out an e-mail that covers multiple topics, work from a quick outline; otherwise you'll forget things and be forced to clutter people's mailboxes with "P.S." letters.

- Sign all your e-mails; people like to hear from people, not faceless computer screens.

- Always include additional contact information, such as a phone number and web page address, and express your willingness to answer questions.

Ask your university for an e-mail address for your group. Having an address that reads freethought@yourschool.edu looks much more professional than just using your own address; it may also feel more comfortable putting this on the group's web page than your own address. Again, approach your student organization service office about who to contact concerning this.

This should go without saying, but in all your correspondences with everyone that communicates with you about the group, be as professional as possible. People have a permanent record of whatever you write to them via e-mail, so don't write anything that can be used against you, and never, ever make personal attacks.

Online Discussion Forums

Online discussion forums can be powerful tools for community building and education. People often feel deeply involved with the discussions they have in discussion forums. In turn, people often feel deeply involved with the other discussants. Setting up some kind of online discussion forum for your group helps it grow and makes people feel more involved than they might otherwise feel. Here we discuss available options and how to manage a forum once it's created.

There are several forum options: listservers, news groups, and web-based solutions. The best technology for this is probably the listserver, which is a kind of e-mail repeater. People subscribe to it and when anyone who is subscribed to the list sends a message to the listserver e-mail address it goes out to all of the subscribers. Listservers are good because people don't have to take extra steps to use them. When they check their e-mail normally, all of the mail from the listserver comes along with it. While some people find this irritating, most seem to really enjoy it.

Schools will often provide groups with a listserver. However, if they won't give you one, you can create them with free services such as eGroups (www.egroups.com).

It's also possible to set up a news group for the discussion of issues related to your group. A news group is a public forum that anyone with access to your group (at least everyone at your school) can post to and read from; you'll definitely need your school's help to create the news group, but most schools are more reluctant to create news groups than listservers. You will also have to rely on people to actively remember to go and read what has been posted at regular intervals. On many levels you're better off with a listserver, but news groups are another option.

There are several web-based scripts to allow for bulletin board-style discussion on web pages. Anyone who's reasonably web savvy can set up one of these. However, you still face the problem of relying on people to remember that the forum is there for their use. Listservers are really the best alternative.

How to run the forum:

No matter what the forum, you want some kind of guidelines about what things are okay to post and what aren't. Once these guidelines are in place, have one person in charge of making sure that everyone follows the rules. Obviously you'll want to say that the forum is for the discussion of issues of interest to freethinkers or something at least that specific. You may want to narrow the topic, but for the most part that should be adequate. You should also set guidelines concerning proper conduct on the list. Here's an example of the rules used on the CFA social discussion list:

Rule #1

 Don't take this list too seriously or too personally. Some moron may keep missing your points again and again and again, and keep telling you that you're full of it. Let it go. It's just not that big of a deal. If you really do feel personally attacked or feel that someone's conduct on the list just isn't cool, tell me (the moderator) and I will deal with it. This will keep things less personal. Such people also may take what I have to say slightly more seriously as I have the power to kick them off the list (albeit I hope I never have to do that).

Rule #2

Be respectful and civil. If you can't be respectful and civil, then I'm afraid we would just rather not have you around. Part of being respectful and civil is making sure that more-or-less everything you post is about the ideas being discussed and not the people discussing them on the list. Don't tell someone they are naïve or stupid even if they are naïve or stupid. Also, try not to get too excited. When you read someone's post, it may make you hopping mad. When you're hopping mad, you may write things that are not all that respectful or civil. If something does make you hopping mad, count to ten or get a glass of water before you respond. And read over your response before you send it. As you read, think to yourself "Hmm . . .

would the list moderator be proud at how respectful and civil I'm being?" If the answer is no, then you might want to rewrite the post.

Rule #3

Quote as little as possible. Some of us have vast e-mail resources that will let us store megs and megs of quoted text we have read ten times, but some of us don't. Please include the minimum amount of quoted text from the message you're replying to in order to have your comments make sense. You don't have to go nuts with this, but don't be too lax.

Rule #4

Read everything before your reply to anything. If you haven't checked your mail for a day or two and you log on it's quite possible that you've gotten 50 messages (or maybe more). In the threads that have come up it's quite possible that someone has already replied to a message with exactly the same point you want to make. Make sure you read all the posts in a thread before you post in it. No need to waste everyone's time seeing the same point twice (or ten times if enough people don't read everything before they reply to anything).

With these four simple rules in place (and enforced when they must be), your discussion forum should run rather smoothly.

Beware the Newsletter Trap!

It has been observed over and over: a student group starts up, and although it has a decent-sized collection of motivated people, it never seems to accomplish anything. Why? All too often, the group has fallen into the Newsletter Trap. This is the trap of devoting most of ones financial and human resources to producing a printed newsletter.

At the campus level, where both financial and human resources are always meager, a newsletter almost always involves far more expenditures than are justified by the results. Producing a newsletter involves a regular cycle of soliciting material, writing articles, formatting, printing, addressing, folding, stapling, stamping, and mailing, not to mention keeping track of students' addresses, which tend to change more frequently than those in any other demographic. Moreover, newsletters are expensive to produce. A group will need to pay for paper, printing/copying, and postage. But there are alternatives to the Newsletter Trap.

The Sensible Alternatives to a Printed Newsletter

E-mail

A diet of regular e-mail updates is vastly superior to a newsletter. Every student today is familiar with e-mail, and gets a free account from their school. E-mail is faster than printed copies, infinitely less expensive, and easier to send out. Also, students' e-mail addresses typically remain constant even when they move.

Existing resources

When students research and write newsletter articles, they are often needlessly duplicating material that has appeared elsewhere. For any non-local issue, there will be a professional who has written about it more expertly than most students could. Simply make copies (observing any copyright constraints) of this material available to group members.

In addition, the CFA offers a number of information services, free of charge to CFA affiliate groups, including an electronic bulletin, a printed newsletter (*The Campus Freethinker*), and numerous listservers. The bulletin and the news listserver in particular are designed to keep students abreast of relevant news items in the US and abroad. Reread Chapter 3 and explore the CFA web page. Find out about the resources that CFA has to offer.

Chapter 10

Creating Outreach Events

In addition to in-house events, such as organizational and social meetings, a successful student group must create outreach events, activities whose target audience extends beyond the group's membership. These public activities are important because they attract attention for the group and the freethought movement in general, thus generating new members. Moreover, a good outreach event has educational value for group members and the general public. This chapter outlines several types of outreach events.

The Lecture

Lectures are the standard outreach event. They consist of a speaker, typically a non-student, delivering a talk and, usually, answering questions. The following are some of the vital components to setting up a lecture (be sure to see the "Mechanics" section below for important information about more general issues).

Choosing a topic

Each academic year, try to hit a variety of topics across the spectrum of freethought interest. Religion, church-state separation, the paranormal, alternative medicine, secular humanism, science, and philosophy are all general areas from which you might draw specific topics. Pick a topic that will be likely to bring in people who aren't already involved in the movement. Controversial topics such as the existence of God, school prayer, creation vs. evolution, and the morality of homosexuality or abortion are usually effective in bringing in good-sized crowds.

Choosing a speaker

Of course, the key to a successful lecture is to select the right speaker. CFA Headquarters maintains a Speakers Bureau, which includes a listing of competent speakers, their credentials, areas of expertise, travel needs, and fee. In most cases, the CFA will provide for the travel, lodging, and fees for these speakers once sources of funding from your school have been exhausted.

If none of these speakers are right for your event, initiate a search. Some good places to look are in local and statewide freethought, skeptical, and humanist groups. If unsure of the groups in your area, CFA Headquarters can put you in touch with them. It's important to check carefully a potential speaker's experience. Not everyone with a Ph.D. is a captivating speaker. Some willing volunteers may have bizarre views waiting to spring on your unsuspecting audience. Try calling the CFA Coordinator, who may be able to offer additional help.

Introducing the speaker

A lecture does not simply begin with the speaker at the podium. Someone in your group, preferably the President, will need to introduce the speaker. This is very simple to do. Wait until about five minutes after the lecture is supposed to have started to allow stragglers to arrive, then get up behind the podium. The introduction can be memorized if you can do it, or read from notes (but be sure to make eye contact). A good introduction roughly follows this basic structure:

1. Welcome
2. Introduce self and group
3. Mention how to get more info
4. Speaker's credentials: awards, books, years in action, etc (get this info from the speaker).
5. Call for welcoming applause (try to save the speaker's name until the very end).

A sample introduction

Welcome to tonight's lecture, "Did Jesus Exist?" I'm Chris Apollonia, President of the Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance. This lecture is the first in this month's three-part series, "Foundations of Christianity." Next week's part two will be "Does God Exist?" and part three, which will be on Thursday the 29th, is titled "Is the Bible Infallible?" If you're interested in hearing more about our organization and about our upcoming events and meetings, please stop by the information tables outside the room on your way out after the lecture. [pause] Our speaker tonight is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies from Dale University, where he taught for fifteen years. He has written ten books on the historical Jesus, including *Jesus: Man or Myth?,* and *The Ethics of Jesus.* He has twice received the prestigious Higher Criticism Award for his groundbreaking work in biblical theology. Would you all please join me in welcoming Dr. Otto Hastig! [applaud and exit stage]

Handling Q & A and ending the lecture

After the speaker has finished lecturing and people have applauded (hopefully), it's time for questions from the audience and answers by the speaker.

- Either stand up and announce that the following 10 or 20 minutes will be time for people to ask questions, or have the speaker do so. (you need to set a time limit or Q & A sessions will drag on painfully)

- You or your officers should have a couple of questions on hand to ask in case people are shy and no one asks any questions at first.

- If the Q & A period is going strong and the time you allotted is running out, evaluate the crowd. If the majority of them seem restless and ready to go, announce that there is only time left for one more question. If they all seem pretty engrossed in the discussion, let it go past time slightly before you cut off the questions.

- When the final question has been answered, thank the speaker for speaking, initiating a final wave of applause.

The Debate

Public debates are among the most popular and successful outreach events that a student group can create. For the benefit of its affiliates the CFA offers a Debate Kit that includes detailed instructions for organizing a debate, as well as a listing of CFA debaters and tips from veteran debater Dr. Robert Price. You can request a print copy of the Debate Kit from the CFA Coordinator.

The Public Discussion Group

Public discussion groups are smaller gatherings in which talk about a predetermined topic, usually around a large table or in a circle of chairs.

Moderator

It's advisable to have someone moderate the discussion. A moderator is not the primary speaker. Rather, the moderator keeps discussion on track and flowing, by posing prepared questions when the stream of conversation begins to dry up, by preventing anyone from dominating the discussion, and by steering the conversation away from unproductive tangents.

When the time is up (an hour is a reasonable amount of time), the moderator offers any concluding remarks, ends the discussion officially, thanks the participants, and, if conversation was still going strong at the end, invites people to take a brief break and continue the discussion if they desire.

Topics

The best topics for discussion groups are narrow enough to be manageable, but wide enough to allow for extended discussion. The topic should also be relatively non-technical, allowing the average student to participate. Controversial topics are obviously easy to discuss and quite interesting; but be sure that the leader will be able to keep order when things get heated.

Here are some sample discussion topics:
- Did Einstein Believe in God?
- Herbal Remedies: Good Medicine?
- Atheists in the Foxhole: Can Nonbelievers be Patriots?
- Scientology: Religion or Publishing Scam?
- Are Psychics for Real?
- Who Knows Why Agnostics Get Up in the Morning?
- Was Mother Teresa a Saint?
- Did a UFO Crash at Roswell?
- What You Don't Know Might Hurt You: The Truth Behind Urban Legends

Dialogue

Discussion groups are an excellent means of dialoguing with other student organizations, as they encourage discussion rather than out-and-out debate. The goal in a discussion group is to increase understanding, not to win. The discussion group format can be employed to foster civil conversations with religious or supernaturalist groups, or to explore common ground between your group and political groups.

The Film Presentation

Choice of film

Public film presentations can be either primarily educational or entertaining, depending on what film is chosen. Educational film screenings serve both to attract new members and to educate the public. While their primary goal is to entertain, they should nonetheless be interesting and relevant to your group's goals. Ask the CFA Coordinator whether CFA Headquarters has films on a particular topic. Some educational films are quite lengthy; you can break them up if they get too long (you should plan in advance to determine where a good place to stop is).

Venue

If you expect a large enough turnout, acquire a theatre-style room at your school; for smaller crowds, a VCR and a good-sized television will work well. Be aware of laws regulating the showing of films; it's illegal to charge admission for movies without permission.

Mechanics of Outreach Events

Publicity

Of course, without effective publicity, an outreach event is pointless. For details on publicity, turn to Chapter 12.

Location

The location of your event is also a crucial factor in its success or failure. Always try to have your events on or near campus. Match the event to the room; lectures, debates, films, and discussion groups all require distinct types of rooms. Try to estimate turnout in advance and choose your room accordingly. A debate on a controversial topic will draw in many more people than will an educational film on an obscure topic. It's better to risk a room that is too full than a room that is barely at one-tenth capacity.

Timing

Never schedule an event during midterms, finals week, or vacations. During the week, evening events are best: students are more likely to be out of class, and non-students are more likely to be off of work. 6:30 or 7:00 PM are good target times: they allow people to get home, eat dinner, attend your event, and be back home again at a reasonable hour. During the weekend, avoid scheduling evening or morning events; students usually seek social activities in the evenings and want to sleep in through the morning. Space your events out; even your most active members will be overwhelmed if you hold three events in a single week.

Making arrangements with speakers

When it's up to your group to contact a speaker to arrange an appearance, follow something like the model below.

- Call #1: Briefly introduce yourself, your group, and why you're calling. When potential speakers decline, thank them politely for their time. When they seem interested, provide them with a range of possible topics, dates and times, and write down those that they are willing to try. Tell them you'll be back in touch after checking to see which times will work out best, and thank them.

- Before the next call, check with other officers, and, if you're using a campus room, with the room rental department, in order to determine which of the potential dates and times are most viable. Determine which topic and angle will be most interesting and appropriate. Brainstorm a few potential titles for the event. They should be as concise and attention-grabbing as possible; remember that they'll be used on flyers and other publicity.

- Call #2: Settle on a date and time, as well as the topic and title of the event. Provide the speaker with the exact location of the event and your contact information. Ask for the speaker's biographical information to use in flyers and the introduction; this will consist of personal details relevant to the event, such as books written, awards received, years in operation, etc. If you plan to use a picture of the speaker on your flyers, ask for one.

- Call #3: Call your speaker a couple of days before the event to confirm the speaker's travel arrangements and answer any questions that may have arisen.

Acquiring new members

Simply putting on lectures and other events isn't enough to expand your membership; you need to have mechanisms in place to turn attendees into members.

- Informational table: The key piece at this table will be a sign-up sheet, which the person manning the table will encourage attendees to sign. Include your group's handout, relevant flyers and pamphlets from national organizations, books for sale, and whatever else is appropriate. If you have other events lined up, have handouts publicizing them at the table. If part of the event involves introducing a speaker, make sure to mention the table and the sign-up sheet during the introduction.

- For larger events, where high numbers of non-members are expected, you might pass a sign-up sheet around the room on a clipboard during the introduction.

Record keeping

Your group will be around long after you've graduated. The records it keeps will be vital to the effectiveness of future leaders. Keep track of who you had speak, their contact information, what they spoke on, how effective they were as speakers, and how many people attended.

Costs

There are several variables that might incur costs at outreach events. There are equipment and room rental fees, and printing expenses for flyers. Some speakers will require an honorarium to speak, and you might need to pay for the flight and accommodations of out-of-town speakers you bring in. While detailed information about fundraising for your group is covered in Chapter 11, there are certain methods to defray event costs that can be built into the event itself.

- If the event includes a published author, sell the books at the event.
- Seek grants specifically for the event from your school.
- Co-sponsor the event with another group: split the work, the credit, and the cost.
- Take advantage of the CFA Speakers Bureau or apply for a CFA Grant

Try to avoid charging admission to outreach events. Free events are attractive even to those who are only mildly interested, and make it clear that your group is about education and activism, not profit. There are far more effective ways to raise funds that don't involve limiting event admission to those willing and able to pay an admission fee. To read about them, continue on to the next chapter.

Chapter 11

Fundraising

This chapter aims to spell out the various fundraising needs of CFA affiliate groups and the different means by which fundraising compliments the other efforts of the movement. While most of the following is common sense, it helps to have it spelled out. Use as much or little as you feel directly applies to your group. Most people conceive of fundraising in terms of bake sales or candy sales or cookie sales, or alternatively as high-powered corporate negotiations for corporate sponsorship. The way your group will fundraise will be neither of these primarily.

On-Campus Funding

If yours is a college student group, your first task is to look on your own campus for funding. This on-campus funding will pay for the maintenance of your group's general operating expenses, which include simple things like refreshments at meetings, honoraria for speakers, the costs of travel to conferences and regional meetings.

Contact your student activity coordinator or follow whatever process is set in place at your school or university for requesting funds. You probably will have to show that there is a financial need based on the activity of your members, so don't expect a lot of funding during the very first year of your group's existence unless you already have a lot of student support that you can marshal in your defense.

Prepare a simple budget for the upcoming year. Your student activity office may provide a template or form for a projected budget. Include any possible expenses you can think of, including traveling expenses for those of your members who can attend the annual CFA conference.

Grassroots Fundraising

Membership fees

Some CFA affiliate groups have found membership fees to be a way to get some financial support, while creating the opportunity for a personal show of commitment to the group.

Donation can

Set this up when you table, making sure it's clearly marked "donations." It won't make you a lot of money but may help.

Merchandising

In addition to producing your own merchandise, CFA affiliate groups can request free or wholesale merchandise for you to resell to your campus community. While raising some funds for your group, these activities also spread the ideas of humanism and skepticism, which is a bonus. Contact the CFA Coordinator for more information.

Admission fees

While charging admission to outreach events should be avoided whenever possible, it can be relied upon to help defray the cost of the event or even to raise funds, provided the event is well attended.

Traditional Fundraising for Non-Profits

While the above methods may be sufficient for groups with large, generous memberships or relatively low expenses, others may be obliged to look elsewhere to fund their activities. One traditionally effective method is to enlist the help of donors.

Types of donors: sponsors and underwriters

Sponsorship and underwriting are at bottom the same thing: funding donated for the support of a CFA project, program, event, or initiative. In general, foundations are identified as underwriters and corporations as sponsors. Individuals can be either, and in most cases, they will be your primary sponsors, aside from allied groups. The amount of publicity and recognition also helps answer the question of whether a donor is an underwriter or a sponsor. The word "sponsor" connotes a higher level of participation and consequently higher visibility than does "underwriter." If one of the benefits a donor seeks in exchange for support is publicity and recognition, then that donor is best identified as a sponsor. In very low visibility situations such as the funding of a position—an executive director, for instance—we would probably refer to the donor as an underwriter, even if the donor were a corporation. Which label you use is up to you, and, more importantly, the donor.

For which group activities should I seek sponsorship?

Nearly any CFA affiliate group endeavor that creates expenses can be presented as something to be sponsored or underwritten. Examples include producing a free public debate and traveling to the annual CFA conference. The only endeavors that aren't suitable for outside sponsorship are those that are excessively controversial. Many donors naturally will be reluctant to support something that may damage their credibility or public image. Besides this, your group shouldn't limit itself.

Appealing to donors

Asking for money isn't something most of us are accustomed to doing. Keep the following points in mind, and appealing to donors will be much easier. Generally the first step in an appeal is to send out a letter. This is true no matter the type of campaign or potential size of gift. Since most of the local campaigns will be funded by small gifts, having it followed up by a telephone call, if at all possible, should be fine. Door-to-door solicitations, for our purposes, are typically unnecessary.

When presenting your group to a potential donor, the following elements are essential.

- Concentrate on shared aspirations and projects (or enemies).
- Demonstrate your group's qualifications and promise for the future.
- Provide a clear outline how the gift would be used, including a rough budget. Develop with each donor a detailed and realistic action plan and calendar with clearly defined responsibilities, both for your group and the donor.
- Explain the benefits of supporting your group in this way, especially any benefits to the donor.
- Request the gift itself, in a precise amount.

Naming opportunities

One time-honored fundraising technique is to offer to name projects or events after donors. This is easy to do, but it also confers on donors the recognition and credit they deserve. When someone mentions a Thanksgiving Day parade, the name "Macy's" does spring to mind. Another option is to advertise the fact that certain programs, efforts, or activities have been made possible because of a donor's support: "This lecture was made possible through a generous grant by . . ."

Planning appeals

There is more to raising money than just asking for it. A great deal of the work goes into preparing to ask and then following up on the answers. A successful appeal depends on the following preparations:

- Examine and record at all times all that you do as an organization that may be of interest to potential donors. This record helps you decide what will appeal to prospective donors. It also creates a track record of your activities that donors will appreciate viewing.

- Identify prospective sponsors and match them to your specific needs according to their interests and abilities.

- Advertise and promote the programs and services you have available for sponsorship and underwriting through personal contacts, newsletters, and other means (additional forms of publicity are discussed in the next chapter).

- Evaluate ongoing and completed sponsorships and underwriting programs, both to satisfy past donors and to perfect models for future proposals and presentations.

Finally, do everything that you say you'll do, right down to last detail!

Cultivating good relationships with donors

Keep track of everyone who has given to your CFA affiliate group over the year. Always personally thank every contributor each and every time you receive a donation (a model letter of thanks is found in Appendix F). You might even throw a party for contributors at the end of the academic year. Call with thanks, or send a thank-you note. It's a good idea to include contributors in a group activity, whether or not they have contributed to that activity specifically. If there is an admission fee, be sure to let donors in for free.

Gifts to the Campus Freethought Alliance

If you meet contributors who wish to make donations not just to your group but to CFA itself, or the Council for Secular Humanism, invite them to get in touch with the CFA Coordinator.

Campus Freethought Alliance Grants

If your group has trouble raising money through the above means, CFA may be able to help more directly. CFA makes limited funds available to qualified affiliate groups in the form of grants. Visit the CFA web site to complete an online application form or contact the CFA Coordinator.

Other Fundraising Opportunities

As a non-profit educational organization, the parent organization of the CFA employs a department of non-profit fundraising professionals, for whom CFA fundraising is a high priority. If you would like to become involved in larger CFA-related fundraising projects, please contact the CFA Coordinator, who can put you in touch with the fundraising department.

General Fundraising Tips

1. There's no shame in asking for money, especially if it's for a worthy cause. The shame is in not asking, when your CFA affiliate could do so much but does not because of lack of funds and initiative.

2. You don't raise money by begging for it; you raise it by selling people on your organization. The student freethought movement has a lot to offer the

community. People will recognize the value of your group if you take the time to show it to them.

3. Prospects and donors are not cash crops waiting to be harvested; treat them as you would customers in a business. When someone gives to your CFA group, they are giving to get something in return. What do they want in return? They want your group to succeed. You are a steward of their money toward the goal of your group's success. No one would give to an enterprise that appears to be destined for failure. Understand that you are selling your vision for the price of the donation.

4. Take "no" for an answer. When people refuse to give, accept their refusals graciously, without discouraging or shaming them. Remember that someone who rejects your proposal is merely declining to support CFA financially at the present time. Don't foreclose the possibility of non-monetary support or monetary support at some future time.

Successful fund-raising isn't magic; it takes time and hard work on the part of people who are thoroughly prepared. Donors often do not give immediately, instead waiting to see what your group accomplishes. But diligent and imaginative application of the lessons presented in this chapter should do the trick.

Chapter 12

Publicity

In order for your CFA affiliate group to continue to grow, to engage and educate others about matters of concern to the community, its activities must be well publicized. Informational tables, sidewalk chalking, and e-mail announcements are three effective publicity mechanisms that were discussed in Chapter 4. Here are some others.

Posters/Fliers

Posters are one of the most important types of publicity you can produce because of the amount of people they reach. Before you poster your campus, be sure to look into the relevant campus or building regulations. Some spots on campus are publicity gold mines, while others are barren wastelands. Remember where the gold mines are and hit them often.

Some choice spots for posters:

- Bulletin boards in departments related to the event's content
- Walls opposite classrooms or stairway doors
- Ends of campus hallways
- Outdoor bulletin boards and kiosks
- Greek houses and residence halls
- Drinking fountains
- Bathrooms (don't pass up a captive audience!)
- Coffee shops, bookstores, and other popular spots in city shopping and entertainment districts (be sure to ask permission first)

Some copy shops have student discounts or other specials. Shopping around can save you a substantial amount of money. Some schools have their own printing services. These are sometimes better than going off campus. For a meeting, 50-100 posters should do nicely. For an event, make it 150-300, depending on the size of the event. Remember: neon colors catch the eye better than plain white. The CFA can often provide free posters and brochures that can be customized with your group's contact information. Contact the CFA Coordinator. For sample posters, see Appendices A-C.

A-Frames/Banners

A-frames and banners are usually put up in the student union and are highly effective because of their size and location in a high-traffic area. To be allowed to put these up, you'll probably have to co-sponsor the event with your Union Program

Council or equivalent organization that shows movies and sponsors events on campus. Before planning any event, visit this organization to see if they'd like to enter a co-sponsorship or joint venture with your group for your event. Chances are, they will. They can help greatly with publicizing your event, including helping make your A-frame and banner, placing ads in the student paper and radio station, posting fliers, chalking sidewalks, and even putting ads on table placards in the union dining area.

Bus cards

Some universities allow advertising in the form of large paperboard cards on the campus buses. You probably will only be able to do this by contacting campus transportation, but it's certainly worth looking into, especially for those of you at large schools with several bus routes.

Handouts

Be sure to have brochures, booklets, bookmarks, or other handy informational items at all of your meetings, events, and information tables. If you've created several different but similar-looking items, print each on a different color of paper so that people will be encouraged to pick up all of them. If it's allowed, put leaflets on people's windshields at your school or entertainment district. Leave materials at your local Unitarian-Universalist fellowship or church. Leave materials with RA's or GA's in the dorms. If it's allowed, pass out materials in the various dining halls around campus.

Everybody needs bookmarks! Make a ton of these and pass them out so that people will remember your group every time they open a book. In front of the library is a good place to pass these out. Also try the student center.

Printing this stuff in bulk will make it much cheaper. Try to assess ahead of time how many of each item you can use in a semester, and print all at once. (But try not to print too much). Also, make sure that these are easy to read and not so full of complex illustration and decoration that the message is lost.

T-Shirts

Sell these to members so that people will know that there are proud rationalists in their midst.

Calendars

A schedule of your group's activities is very important! Pass out calendars at meetings, events, and information tables. Get on your school's master calendar.

This is crucial, because often other groups reference this when planning their events. Talk about this with someone at Student Activities (or the equivalent). Also, many schools have a calendar of daily events and their locations, which they post in the student center or other buildings that have meeting rooms. You should be on it if your group reserved a room for your activity, but double check on the morning of an event. If you aren't on it, get on it. Lost people look at these.

Personal announcements

Be sure to announce future meetings, activities, and events at your meetings. Do this at the beginning; if you do it at the end, people who have left early may miss out. (Although it never hurts to repeat it again at the end.) You can also make announcements at other club meetings that you attend, in your classes, or anywhere else that likeminded people may be.

Letters to Potential Members

Ask your university's director of religious affairs if your university keeps a list of people who, when they applied, indicated a religious preference of "agnostic," "atheist," "humanist," etc. As a registered organization, you may be able to get peel-off address labels for these potential members. Create some interesting material and mail it off at the beginning of the semester.

Word of Mouth

Waste no opportunity to inform people of your group and/or events. You'll be surprised how many people will be interested (and how often people will say, "I've heard of you guys! You're the president?"). Most importantly, contact clubs and departments that may have a special interest in your event. For example, if you're doing something on women and religion, contact your women's studies department and tell them about it.

Campus Freethought Alliance Publications

Keep the CFA Coordinator informed of your group's major events. The CFA can advertise them in its publications, thus drawing in students from neighboring campuses.

Local Media

Media releases

Send these to your student and local newspapers, radio and TV stations. Be sure to check with your university's news services; they might distribute your press release for you. Send the releases at least ten days in advance, and call to ask if they are doing a story. It won't hurt to ask editors if they prefer a hard copy or an e-mail version of the release. If you've already publicized like crazy and stirred up curiosity in the newsroom, the press release will be even more effective. Be sure to include contact information so reporters can ask questions or interview you. Include your URL so they can find out more information about your group. Try to make what you send out newsworthy, and you'll be much more likely to get an article written about your group. Don't send out press releases about fluff (your group's getting-to-know-you pizza party). Do send out press releases about the formation of your atheist group, or the Superstition Bash you're going to throw. Read the sample in Appendix G to get a feel for press release writing.)

Letters to the Editor

Mobilize members, via your electronic discussion list or telephone, to write letters to the editor in response to items in the paper (see Appendix H). Include a cover letter that briefly explains the content of your letter and lists your contact information.

Newspaper Advertising

Your newspaper may have special rates for registered student organizations. Contact the paper's advertising representative for information. Be sure to have an ad in the freshman orientation section at the beginning of the fall semester. You'll probably need to place it the previous spring.

Newspaper Calendar

This is a section in your newspaper that lists the day's or week's meetings and events. Be sure to send your item to the paper before the deadline. Check both the local newspapers and campus ones.

Radio Advertising and Announcements

Your student radio station probably offers bargain ad or underwriting rates for registered student organizations. If you've got the money, get in touch with the station well before the event and see what you can work out. If you're broke, you can probably still get your event announced on-air for free. Some campus stations don't even allow advertising, but do announcements for any campus event. Contact the station about this.

Radio Talk Shows

Another good way to utilize campus radio is on talk shows. Many campuses have debate forums and are always looking for speakers. The hosts who run these campus shows are usually looking for topics, so if you have an event that can tie into a debate or interview, give the radio station a call.

Interviews

A story about your organization is great publicity. Contact an editor and pitch the idea. If it's a go, prepare well for the interview, imagining possible questions and your answers. If the reporter calls instead of interviewing you in person, it's okay to tell the reporter you'll call him or her back once you're ready. Do the same if the paper runs a story about an upcoming event. Also, reporters may approach you at one of your events, so be prepared. Give reporters your number(s) and tell them to call you if they have any questions.

Afterwards, thank the reporter and editor for doing the story. Let writers know if you're happy with their stories, but also let them know if you found something unfair or inaccurate. Try to establish a good rapport with the paper, as they wield great power to influence public opinion of your group—for better or for worse.

Interviewing well

Know what you're talking about ahead of time when you do an interview. Be professional. Ask for a list of the questions you'll be asked ahead of time. Remember that religion and the paranormal can be sensitive subjects, so don't be hostile; be careful that what you say isn't misconstrued. Try not to make long, convoluted statements; stick to short "sound bites." If at all possible, record the interview, or ask for a copy of the reporter's tape. This will protect you and your group if you're badly maligned in the story. Remember, when granting interviews, you're placing yourself in the hands of the reporter. If you're portrayed badly or inaccurately in the article, be sure to send a letter to the editor for publication.

Press conferences

You probably won't need one of these unless you have a really well known speaker or you're involved in some controversy, probably brought on by your publicity stunt. Have a little speech prepared addressing the topic that you called the conference for, and be prepared for the hard questions.

Demonstrations/Publicity Stunts

Pick a location with a lot of traffic where your event will provoke a reaction from many students. But don't aim at generating an angry mob. A Superstition Bash on Friday the 13th is an example of an event that typically attracts excellent media coverage without making anyone angry. Remember that even if you're doing a publicity stunt, you should spread the word around beforehand. And if you're going to do a demonstration, make sure to do extensive preliminary planning. There is nothing more pathetic than a disorganized demonstration.

If publicity seems like a big job to you, you're absolutely right. Recruit as many people as you can to help you out. Be specific and set clear deadlines. Start a public relations committee if you don't have one yet. Get help from your office of student activities, your union program council, and your university news services. Read the useful publications they provide to student organizations. Talk to your advisor, faculty members, other club members, and other organizations. Ask the advice of other CFA affiliates and CFA Headquarters.

Make it your goal that every student will hear of your organization by semester's end. You may never quite reach this goal, but with enough enthusiasm and imagination you can come close and have a good time trying.

Chapter 13

Using the Internet

Using the Internet is vital to the success of your group. That's all there is to it. Your group may be able to survive without it, but it has almost no chance of expanding and continuing without using the Internet.

This chapter seeks to lay out the basics: what kind of Internet resources have proved useful to CFA groups already in existence, how to get at those resources, and how to use them most effectively. It assumes a very basic level of computer competence, but not much. If you can check and send e-mail and know how to use a web browser (like Netscape or Internet Explorer), you'll find this chapter quite useful. If you can't do those things yet, talk to a friend, or wander on down to a computer lab on your campus and hit up the site assistant for help on these basics. However, even if you're already a web whiz, there are a few pointers and suggestions in here that may prove useful.

Why the Internet?

There are two main reasons to use the Internet:

1. The Internet is professional and attractive all at once. When you post ads for your group, make t-shirts, or sign letters to the editor in the name of your group, they look much more professional if they have a web address at the end of them. People see that your group has the competence and resources to put up a web site. They get the idea that you're not just a couple of people who meet in a closet once a quarter, but that you're actually active and accessible.

2. The Internet is, believe it or not, actually useful. People can go to your web address and read all about the group, and you don't have to print a zillion copies of a brochure about your group only to have half of them thrown away. Plus, when reporters are interested in doing a story on your group, you can just point them to the web site and answer at least half the questions with a single line of text.

Creating a Web Site

You might be wondering what makes up a web site. Well, web sites are made almost entirely out of text files and image files. Some of the fancy ones have sound and video files, but there's no need for you to deal with such things to make a great web site for your group.

Text

Text files are written in a language called HyperText Markup Language, HTML for short. An HTML file is a normal text file with certain special pieces of text (the HTML) that tell Web Browsers how to display the information contained within the file. Those special pieces of text are called tags. There are lots and lots of tags in HTML, but only about a dozen or so that you'll need to know in order to create a page; this makes it very easy to learn to create basic web pages.

While this chapter does not contain an HTML tutorial, there are lots of good ones on the web. Case Western Reserve University's "Introduction to HTML" is a good one, and it can be found at www.cwru.edu/help/introHTML/toc.html. Another is HTML Goodies, at www.htmlgoodies.com. If you read through either of these, you will be more than able to make a great web site.

Of course you don't have to learn HTML yourself. You can either find someone who already knows it (or wants to learn it more than you do), or you can try using a "What you see is what you get" (or WYSIWYG) HTML editor. There are several of these on the market; some good ones are Adobe's Site Mill and Dreamweaver by Macromedia (both for Mac and Windows). They allow you to make web pages according to how you type up a document in a word processor and you never have to touch HTML; at least that's the idea. The ugly truth is that it's often much easier to get the results you want if you already know HTML and can understand what the editor is doing. Another downside to editors is that they aren't free; they run anywhere from thirty to several hundred dollars. So unless you already have access to one, it's a lot easier to learn HTML and use a text editor (like SimpleText, Emacs, or Notepad) to make your web pages.

Images

The other big part of web pages is images. Including images in a web page is simple, since all it takes is a one line HTML tag to do it. Making the images is the hard part; you either need to find them somewhere or make them, which obviously requires the basic skill and the software to create them. Luckily, there are several free and shareware packages that can help you accomplish this. Color It! is a good one for Mac, Paint Shop is good for Windows, and GIMP is a good one for Unix. They can all be downloaded from www.download.com or www.shareware.com. There are better packages that you can pay for if you are so inclined—Adobe Photoshop and MetaCreations Painter (both for Mac and Windows) are both good. Playing around with them for a few hours will yield a good deal more skill with them than you might think.

When saving your images, make sure they are saved in either "jpg" or "gif" format. Files you find on the web are already in these formats, but you may run across images from other sources (scanners, lots of painting and drawing programs, etc.) that are in other formats. All of the above mentioned packages can convert most common formats to jpg and gif.

Finding a home

Now that you know how to make a web site, you need to figure out where to put it. In order for your web site to be accessible to the world, you need to put it on a server. Almost all universities offer web space to their student organization; just contact the office in charge of student organizations, and they should send you in the right direction. Once you find whomever you are supposed to talk to about this, they will give you an address, username and password; you'll need to use these along with an FTP client (a piece of software used for uploading your web page to the server) to get your site up and running. Fetch is a good FTP client for Mac, WS_FTP is a good one for Windows, and Unix has FTP built into it.

If your school doesn't offer server space to student organizations, you'll either have to buy space from a private company or use a free service like Tripod (www.tripod.com) or Geocities (www.geocities.com) to host your site. It's probably better to use a free service, since web hosting can get kind of pricey (at least ten dollars a month, often slightly more). Instructions for getting free space are easily accessible at both www.tripod.com and www.geocities.com.

Advice for web site creators

There are lots of really horrible web pages out there, but a few simple rules will go a long way to keep yours from being one of them:

1. Keep it simple. Almost everyone gets a huge power rush after learning HTML and wants to show the world what they've learned, so their pages are full of blinking text, frames, animated gifs and other things that aren't worth touching. Avoid showing off. The simpler and more elegant your page, the better. Users appreciate a page that contains nice looking images, but is still simple enough so they can quickly find what they want without taking forever to download.

2. Avoid the one page web site. For some unknown reason, many web authors try to stick tons of information on one page; this is a telltale sign of unprofessionalism. Split up the content of the site into several pages with specific topics for each.

3. Spell check and proof read. With all those HTML tags flying around, people sometimes get lazy about making sure that the words in the finished web page are what they really want. People make a lot of judgements about your group based upon what they see on the web. Make sure that everything looks clean and makes sense.

4. Never underestimate the power of tables. When you learn a bit more about HTML, you'll learn about tables. Don't shrug them off. Tables are perhaps the easiest and most powerful tools to use for formatting documents the way you want them in HTML. Exact formatting is impossible with HTML, but with the clever use of tables, you come close. Also, remember that almost everything

you can do with frames you can also do with tables with less work and less download time. Learn to use tables well.

5. Keep the page's content professional. People who are very new and very unsure about the mission of your group are going to see your web page, so make sure to make the content is as polite and welcoming as possible.

6. Keep the page's content up-to-date. This is perhaps the most important and most over-looked element of running a web site. While building the site is mostly fun and games, after the thing is up and running you need to be vigilant about making sure that up-to-date information is available. An out-of-date web page makes people think that your group isn't active.

7. Let people give you feedback. Include a channel so people can tell you what they think about your page and ask questions about it. This can be as simple as putting your e-mail address on the page, or, if you feel up to it, you can create a form or a guest book for this purpose. Of course, the maxim of simplicity applies here again: an e-mail address is likely the best alternative.

If you keep these few simple rules in mind, your web site will be a lot better off and so will your group.

Other Internet Resources

There are many other resources available to you on the Internet. Chapter 9 has already addressed e-mail listservers and online discussion forums. Educate yourself further by surfing the web and playing around. However, if you put up a good web page, use your e-mail robustly, and set up an online discussion forum, your group will have all the Internet resources it needs to succeed.

If you find yourself having trouble developing any of the resources mentioned here, ask for help. Your local university tech support may be the best place to start. Also, don't be bashful about asking the CFA for help. If you run into problems, send an e-mail to admin@campusfreethought.org and someone should be able to help you within a few days.

Chapter 14

Networking

Activism can't happen in a vacuum. And since the concerns of CFA affiliate groups extend well beyond the classroom, it's vital that your group reaches out, builds bridges, and networks with members of the larger community. Through networking, you can dramatically boost the vitality of your group while at the same time helping other groups and working towards shared goals.

Types of Networks

Networking can take a range of different aims, from building a formal coalition, in which participating groups unite to form an supra-organization, to maintaining a resource-sharing network, in which participating groups simply agree to share information, expertise, materials, or other resources. Somewhere in between are collaborations by groups on specific projects, such as campaigns or even individual events. Which types of networks are appropriate for your group will depend on the group's goals and projects at any given time.

Networking on Campus

Other Campus Freethought Alliance groups

Reach out to CFA affiliates at other schools in your local areas and even in your region. As CFA grows, this kind of networking will be vital to its maintenance. College groups should make a special effort to seek out and encourage high school CFA affiliate groups.

Faculty members

Especially in higher education, faculty members can be valuable allies. Send out an e-mail to all faculty members explaining who you are and inviting them to participate in your CFA activities, especially by supporting the national activities like the Superstition Bash and Darwin Day.

Allied student organizations

Make a list of other campus groups who may have common interests with your CFA chapter or with secular humanism or freethought in general. Examples include feminist and gay rights organizations, philosophy clubs, debate clubs, liberal political organizations, civil liberty movements, and Objectivists.

Opposing student organizations

Don't be afraid to network with groups like Campus Crusade for Christ or other conservative or evangelical student organizations. Networking with these groups can prove to be positive on many fronts; for example, increasing publicity, distributing costs of events, stimulating dialogue and mutual understanding. As John Stuart Mill said, those who know only their side of a position know not even that.

Networking off Campus

Even if your group isn't situated in a major cultural center, there will probably be other organizations in your area that would be willing to collaborate with you. For example, you might contact organizations such as:

African Americans for Humanism
Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies
American Civil Liberties Union
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal
The Hemlock Society
International Humanists and Ethical Union
National Association for the Advancement of Science
National Center for Science Education
National Organization for Women
National Abortion Rights Action League
People for the American Way

General Networking Strategies

1. Keep in mind the ultimate goals of any network you are trying to establish, and make sure these goals are clearly understood by everyone involved. Remember that there are various forms of inter-organizational cooperation. Think and discuss carefully which form will best suit the aims of your group.

2. The platforms and methods of the various parties to a network or coalition of organizations are bound to differ. This is to be expected. Indeed, the differing strengths of the organizations provide the rationale for banding together. Be sensitive to these differences. It will often be important to establish clear limits and disclaimers regarding the extent of the agreement and endorsement that exists among the parties.

3. If you don't already have one, devise a concise statement (one or two paragraphs long) of the overall mission of your group, some of its recent successes, its plans for the future, and how this network fits into those plans. Potential allies will be more likely to collaborate with your group if they know exactly what it's all about.

4. Whenever possible, identify a member of each organization who will serve as the contact person for the others. Compile the address, phone, fax, and e-mail contact information of these contacts.

Your Regional Representative

In order to assist your group and to help you establish beneficial relationships with kindred organizations, the CFA maintains a network of regional representatives who serve as local liaisons between CFA Headquarters and CFA affiliate groups. Contacting the regional representative in your area is a great way to begin building meaningful bridges to connect your group with others.

To find how to contact the representative nearest you, get in touch with a CFA Coordinator at 1-800-446-6198 ext. 220 or by e-mail: coordinator@campusfreethought.org.

Chapter 15

Advice for Group Leaders

The mission of the Campus Freethought Alliance is to promote freethought, skepticism, and secularism on college and high school campuses. While the CFA tries to help students in any way it can, there is one method that works far better than all others: the creation of student organizations, divided by schools, united under an umbrella organization. A CFA affiliate group needs two components in order to exist. The first is people. This is obvious. But for a group of people to be an organization, some structure is required. Hence, leadership is necessary.

These two parts, membership and leadership, are the most important aspects of any group. They are crucial not just for a group's success, but for its bare existence as well. Membership and leadership also form an important circular relation—good leadership understands the importance of membership and works towards acquiring active, involved members. In return, good membership provides a group with its future leaders. So remember the importance of membership in creating a strong set of leaders. Also, while reading this chapter, note that much of the advice is useful not only for leadership, but for acquiring new members as well.

This chapter explains the importance of strong leadership, the roles of a leader in relation to the rest of the group, some guides to excellent leadership, as well as some pitfalls to avoid. While this chapter is written primarily for the president or head of a group, everyone is encouraged to read it, especially those with any sort of leadership position.

What is a leader?

Leaders have one and only one responsibility—to make sure that stuff gets done. "Stuff" consists of any goals the group wishes to achieve. The vast majority of work within any organization is done either by committee members or other volunteers. This is where most of the ideas come from, as well as event planning, logistics, and lots of details. The leader, however, must think globally, not specifically, and balance the different parts of the group, bringing them together to form a whole.

How does a leader make sure that goals are met? First of all, the group must decide what it wants to accomplish. Leaders are in charge of bringing all proposed goals together, weeding out the bad ones, and creating a well-balanced agenda with reasonable and attainable goals.

In order to help meet these goals, a leader must make sure that people are working. Many times members make empty promises to complete projects. A strong leader must either confront these individuals or find replacements. He or she must also make sure that everyone is doing what they are supposed to and not stepping on

others' toes. And of great importance is keeping lines of communication open. When communication fails, work either doesn't get done or multiple people redundantly do the same thing. Not an efficient scenario! And of course, bad communication leads to an amateurish and unprofessional atmosphere that can greatly stifle a group's chances to attract new members and future leaders.

Some Common Misconceptions about Leaders

Leaders are the people who have the best ideas. Not necessarily. A good leader doesn't care where good ideas come from, just as long as they come from somewhere and are implemented.

Leaders have the best solutions to problems. Again, not necessarily, for the same reason as before. A good leader doesn't care where solutions come from, as long as they come from somewhere and are put into use.

Leaders are always the smartest people in the group. This couldn't be further from the truth. Intelligence has little to do with organizing people.

So what traits does a good leader have? Usually the best leaders are the ones with the best people skills.

People skills

There are many obstacles to effectively motivating and coordinating volunteers. People don't like to take orders and don't like to be bossed around. People don't like to be told they are wrong. Fortunately, there are superior means of motivating and coordinating.

1. *Praise*. Do not criticize, condemn, or complain. Instead, praise, encourage, and show honest appreciation. This sounds obvious. It's surprising how often we forget it, and yet it can make a world of a difference. Make sure volunteers understand their importance and know that their contributions are necessary. Remind them of it often. If you must criticize, do it constructively. *Always* find something good to praise to complement the criticisms.

2. *Admit your faults*. Talk about your own mistakes first, do it frequently, and do it emphatically. Nobody is perfect, including leaders. If we are correct even 50% of the time, that's a lot! By admitting and sharing your mistakes, you remind people that you're no different from them. This brings others to the same level as you and opens them up to your suggestions and help.

3. *Avoid confrontation*. Although they are unavoidable in an organization of any size, confrontations are agitating, frustrating, and exhausting. They can seriously undermine the group's cooperative efforts. If you see a confrontation arising, it's best to walk away and address the issue at a future time. Deal with people when they are calm, rational, and open.

4. *Save face*. This is a term that is foreign to most people, but is one of the greatest tools you can use to change other's opinions and help others to acknowledge their errors. Saving face is the action of confronting people about their mistakes without embarrassing them or angering them. Saving face is easy: always talk positively and balance your criticisms with praise. Talk about your own mistakes first. Whenever appropriate, present criticisms individually, so that no one is humiliated in front of others. Ideally, people can be led to discover for themselves what their mistakes are. That is how Socrates would do it.

5. *Smile*. This advice may seem trite, but a smile can do wonders for you. Nobody wants to work with a grouch. Show people that you're friendly and have the best of intentions. It may be contagious.

6. *Challenge*. Rather than just telling people what to do, give them their assignment in a way that stimulates them to excel. Emphasize the importance of the project, but also the real difficulties that it will involve. This makes others feel that they are making a significant contribution to a worthy cause.

7. *Listen*. Be a good listener, be receptive to the ideas of others, and keep an open mind. Being a good listener is a difficult job but can earn you a great amount of respect with those you work with. And remember, a good leader isn't necessarily the one who comes up with the bright ideas, just the one who finds them.

8. *Elicit a "yes."* The word "yes" is more powerful than you think. A person who says "no" quickly shuts down, resisting new ideas for the sake of saving face and winning an argument. Instead, get the person to say "yes." This opens up their minds to new ideas and leads to better reconciliation and cooperation. Start your arguments with points and opinions you share with others and then work your way towards areas where you differ.

These eight points are by no means comprehensive. There are dozens of books with which to continue learning about leadership.

Teamwork

Teamwork is a concept that for some reason is foreign to many students. We all know what teamwork is: working collaboratively with others towards a common goal. Teamwork draws on people's skills most efficiently by allowing individuals to specialize in what they do best. Also, proper distribution prevents overworking. The obligation to foster teamwork falls on the group leader or leaders. Leaders must dole out the work, taking into consideration an individual's strengths and weaknesses as well as how much time and effort that person can contribute. Distributing work is a difficult task that deserves much thought. Some pointers:

- Don't overwork anyone. This leads to poor results and takes away from the fun of making a contribution. This caution applies to leaders themselves! All too

often a highly motivated individual takes on all of a group's tasks, only to graduate exhausted a few years later without having left behind any experienced members who could carry on the group's work.

- Realize that people *want* to help. Let them! This is especially true for humanists, who are often very active. Those who are not given an opportunity to help won't take an interest in your group and will never become strong members. The importance of this can't be overemphasized!
- Don't neglect small tasks. Take new members with you to buy refreshments before meetings. Ask them to help put up flyers and advertisements. They are small tasks, but when these new members see themselves helping, they will quickly realize that they have an opportunity to join and benefit a community. And they will return and become even more dedicated.

Continuity

A group and its goals should outlast the set of student members that constitutes it at any given time. Hence, a good leader takes steps early on to nurture the next generation of leaders and ensure the group's continuity, making sure that there are not only enough people to fill the positions, but that they are educated about their duties as well. There are many steps a leader can take to ensure continuity.

Membership

An organization's leaders of course come from within the organization's membership, so a strong membership is essential.

Potential leaders

Approach potential leaders. Tell them that they have what it takes to lead the group and that they could do a good job at it. Be forthright when approaching these people and ask them if they have any interest in assuming a leadership role. Approach them many months before elections; this gives them time to think about it and prepare.

Leader apprenticeships

In this arrangement, a leader stays in the group after officially vacating his or her position to pass on experience to the new leader. This technique produces a self-sustaining yearly cycle. The past president (a senior) spends a year working with the acting president (a junior). When the senior graduates, the junior then becomes past president, a new active president is elected, and the previous student becomes the new teacher. Incidentally, this is a powerful argument for having a non-senior act as president. If seniors fill the president's chair, there will be no one available to apprentice new leaders in the knowledge vital to the group's continuation.

A Few Concluding Remarks

Being a leader isn't an easy task. The point of this chapter is to help you understand the type of mentality that good leaders have. However, most of the learning is done the hard way. This can make leading a frustrating and sometimes painful job. But whatever you do, try to enjoy yourself. Yes, it can be stressful at times, but it can also be a very rewarding experience that you won't regret.

How to Contact the Campus Freethought Alliance

CFA Headquarters

Center for Inquiry, International
PO Box 664
Amherst, New York 14226-0664
Tel: 1-800-446-6198 ext. 220
Fax: 1-716-636-1733
www.campusfreethought.org

Staff

Coordinators
coordinator@campusfreethought.org
1-716-636-7571 ext. 220

Student Executive Council

President
president@campusfreethought.org

Vice President
vice_president@campusfreethought.org

Political Affairs Director
political_affairs@campusfreethought.org

Public Relations Director
public_relations@campusfreethought.org

Publications Editor
editor_campusfreethought.org

Internet Affairs Director
admin@campusfreethought.org

Intercampus Affairs Director
intercampus_affairs@campusfreethought.org

Secretary
secretary@campusfreethought.org

APPENDIX B

Event posters

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Legendary magician and entertainer Harry Houdini doubted it. But he vowed to his wife that if his spirit lived on, then he would attempt to contact the world every Halloween night...

Join Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance for

A SKEPTICS HALLOWEEN

---

featuring:

THE HOUDINI SÉANCE

A STRAITJACKET ESCAPE

PARANORMAL COSTUMES

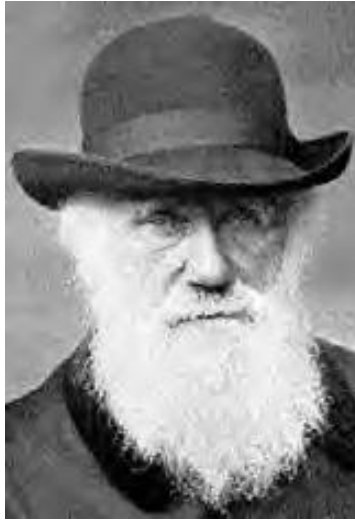**"GHOSTLY" WRITING**

SLIDE SHOW

REFRESHMENTS

AND MUCH MORE!!!

October 31st, 7:00 PM. Student Activities Building C30
COME IN COSTUME!!!

He solved the riddle of life's existence…

The least we could do is remember the guy's birthday!

Celebrate Darwin Day!
Commemorate the life and work of
Charles Darwin on his birthday
February 12, 11am-4pm

featuring:

- **marathon reading from Origin of Species**

- **Lecture on the importance of evolutionary theory**

- **Showing of "Inherit the Wind," the dramatic classic film depiction of the infamous "Scopes Monkey Trial"**

for more information please contact cfa@jonesu.edu

APPENDIX A

Group Flyer

Jones University

Campus Freethought Alliance

In the course of reason, there are no prerequisites.

What does CFA do?

- CFA advocates the use of reason, science, and skepticism as the best available tools for the acquisition of knowledge and the solution of societal problems.

- CFA supports campus freethinkers, skeptics, and humanists through social events, weekly meetings, and educational events and materials.

- CFA defends the often-neglected social and legal rights of unbelievers.

- CFA educates the campus community through literature, lectures, and debates about issues including, but not limited to:

- Critical examinations of pseudoscientific and paranormal topics such as astrology, creationism, psychic abilities, and so-called "alternative medicines"

- Philosophical challenges to supernaturalistic worldviews, including both traditional religions and "New Age" beliefs

- The history of, importance of, and current dangers to the Constitutional principle of church/state separation

- The media's responsibility for objective treatment of pseudoscience, the paranormal, and the supernatural

- The threats to personal and academic freedoms posed by fundamentalist religion

- Positive, secular alternatives to supernaturalistic systems and worldviews

How can I get more information about CFA?

For information on upcoming events, weekly meetings, how to become a member, or for more about what we do and why, contact us:

By E-Mail: cfa@jonesu.edu   By Phone: (716) 636-7571

On the Web: http://www.jonesu.edu/~cfa

APPENDIX H

Letter to the editor

FAX TO:

Opinion Editor, *New York Times*
212-556-3690

FAX FROM:

Micah White
716-636-1733

PAGES: 4

Dear *New York Times* Opinion Editor:

Please consider the following opinion article for publication on your editorial page. It contains a viewpoint that hasn't been heard concerning the Columbine tragedy and the ensuing call for school prayer. That is the viewpoint of a high school atheist. Atheists have been demonized over Columbine, and our situation would only get worse with a return to public school prayer.

Thank you,

Micah White

A High School Atheist's Perspective on Littleton

We hear it everywhere, from churches to Congress: the call for a return to school prayer after Littleton.

Groups like the Christian Coalition say that "Putting God back in our schools" is the only way to avoid another Columbine tragedy. They say there has been a moral decline in our nation ever since school prayer was banned by the Supreme Court. They make a hero of Cassie Bernall, the student who was killed at Columbine for admitting she believed in God. And they make demons out of all atheist students, who really are nothing like Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

As a high school atheist in Michigan, I am very concerned with the national trend of blaming school violence on "godless" teenagers. This is especially troubling for me because I have always endured persecution for my beliefs, and I know exactly what the result of official school prayer in public schools would be. The only outcome of any increase of religion in the schools would be an increase in hatred and anger directed against those students who are either not of the dominant religion, or lack religion at all.

I know first-hand how openly non-religious students are treated in American high schools. Recently, after a two-month fight with my high school's administration, I formed an atheist club, as an alternative to the Bible Club already existing in my school. Although the law is clear on the illegality of discriminating against one club because it endorses atheism, I was still forced to get legal aid from Americans United for the Separation of Church and State before my school allowed me to form the club.

Being forced into threatening a lawsuit against my school was sad, but the reaction of my fellow students was even worse. Immediately after my atheist club formed, students seemed to take it upon themselves to physically and emotionally intimidate me. Signs promoting the club were torn down, and insults such as "Burn in Hell" were scribbled on them. Students would come to our meetings and yell, simply to be disruptive. And, after the shootings at Columbine High School, a history teacher at my school stood up and told his whole class that my atheist club was the same thing as the Trench Coat Mafia.

All this negativity towards my atheist club may seem to indicate that perhaps the club was doing evil things. But actually, all we do is meet weekly to discuss philosophy, to donate science books to our school library, and to try to keep our school as secular as possible. We faced opposition not because we are bad people, but because our ideas are unpopular.

As religious groups try to prove the correlation between atheism and violence by telling stories of killers who targeted religious students, it's important to examine what the actual results of in-school prayer would be. If we have school prayer, what will happen to those students who are not Christian, but are Jewish, or Hindu, or Muslim? What about those students who are atheists? Will they be punished if they refuse to pray? Or will they simply be forced to leave the room or abstain? This would simply lead to atheist students becoming even more ostracized than we already are.

If we begin to allow school prayer in public schools, we will be beginning condoned religious discrimination. Countless students may already be feeling the heat of religious pressures as our school year comes to a close, since many school districts still have prayer as a part of their graduation ceremonies. One student in Maryland, Nick Becker,

was detained by police after he tried to re-enter his own graduation, which he had left because he was offended by the prayer.

I have spent a lot of time thinking about how I can show America that atheist students are not the source of America's ills. Through my club, I feel a lot of people have already begun to realize there is nothing to worry about in atheist students. The solution, as I see it, is a national movement towards more, not less, openly atheistic student groups in American high schools. That is why I am devoting my time to the Young Freethinkers Alliance, a group whose goal will be to provide support to high school CFA affiliate groups.

Maybe if there are more students who are openly atheist, people will see that though our ideas are different, we are just people after all. And then maybe we can move towards accepting all students, and finding a way to bring an end to the violence and ostracism, not increase it.

826 Words.

APPENDIX C

Promotional posters

"An open mind is a virtue….
But not so open that your brains fall out."

- Carl Sagan

Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance

Sworn enemies of dogma, irrationality, and common idiocy.

"I don't know if I believe in God. All I know is that I won't allow this life - the only one I think I know to exist - to be wasted."

\- George Clooney

Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance

We don't burn heretics; we welcome them.

cfa@jonesu.edu

http://www.jonesu.edu/~cfa

Weekly meetings

636-7571

"Question with boldness even the existence of a god."

- Thomas Jefferson

Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance

Where those who dare to doubt hang out.

cfa@jonesu.edu
http://www.jonesu.edu/~cfa

Weekly meetings
636-7571

"I have… endeavored to keep my mind free so as to give up any hypothesis, however much beloved… as soon as the facts are shown to be opposed to it.

-   Charles Darwin

Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance

In the course of reason, there are no prerequisites.

cfa@jonesu.edu

http://www.jonesu.edu/~cfa

Weekly meetings

636-7571

APPENDIX D

Officer job descriptions

Education Director

- Facilitate flow of information from outside sources to members: acquire new, quality materials (handouts, flyers, brochures, books, videos, etc), seek out discounts from national organizations, make materials available known to members effectively and regularly
- Seek out new topics of interest to students, new resources for speakers and educational materials, etc
- Seek out professors on campus, videos, and other resources for use in educational meetings (actual setting up of such events will be the job of the Events Coordinator)
- Run group library: check out, timely return enforcement, updated material listing, acquisition of new materials, labeling of all materials, etc
- Provide educational materials at weekly meetings
- Compile topical recommended reading and website lists before public events
- Be familiar with topics relevant to the rationalist movement; read FI., SI, C/S, regularly
- Work with Events Coordinator to come up with topics for outreach events
- Prepare weekly reports to be presented at meetings (need not be detailed or even typed, just be able to tell me, and the meeting, what you've done that week and, when applicable, why.)

Publicity Coordinator

- Ensure all events are publicized effectively, in all areas of the campus; this includes flyers, the online events listing, campus media, handouts, and any other means available
- Get master copies of flyers from Graphic Design and make copies in bright, sexy colors for distribution
- Coordinate the flyer squad effectively
- Get them materials
- Make check-up calls
- Ensure full campus coverage
- Coordinate "waves"
- Calculate necessary amount of copies
- Ensure that in periods between events constant flyer coverage of the group itself is maintained throughout campus
- Work with Events Coordinator (details) and Graphic Design (layout) on all event posters and handouts
- Set up quality information tables at events and, if possible, in Union or other buildings Quality control of group materials; all output should reflect positively upon the group

- Prepare weekly reports to be presented at meetings (need not be detailed or even typed, just be able to tell me, and the meeting, what you've done that week and, when applicable, why.)
- Seek out new ways of publicizing the group and its events

Treasurer/ Secretary

- Pay all bills and debts promptly
- Deposit earnings into bank account
- Keep detailed records of all expenses and earnings
- Make all major group purchases, always seeking the best deal
- Keep inventory of all group merchandise & supplies
- Seek out new effective ways for group to make money
- Send thank-yous to donors, keep track of their contact information and amount given
- Serve as interface to donors for appreciation dinners, etc
- Organize group handouts, flyers, etc; ensure a master copy is retained and that we have enough of all materials
- Don't embezzle
- Organize office space
- Prepare weekly reports to be presented at meetings (need not be detailed or even typed, just be able to tell me, and the meeting, and what you've done that week, when applicable, why.)
- Prepare weekly written reports covering all group financial gains and losses to be given to the President either by e-mail or at meetings

Events Coordinator

- Work closely with the President in all areas relating to events and meetings
- Plan outreach and social events
- Ensure a wide range of interests are represented and that all presenters are high quality speakers with high quality content, as much as is possible
- Research potential resources for speakers
- Contact speakers about putting on lectures, debates etc
- Work with speakers and the school room rental to find workable dates and times for events (weekday evenings (not Fridays), weekend afternoons preferable)
- Get all event who, what, where, and when type information to President, Graphic Design, Internet Director, Education Director, and the Publicity Coordinator as soon as you know it
- Serve as liaison to other student groups when cosponsoring events or social outings

- Work with the CFA Coordinator and Intercampus Affairs director on nationwide events
- Prepare weekly reports to be presented at meetings (need not be detailed or even typed, just be able to tell me, and the meeting, what you've done that week and, when applicable, why.)
- Anything I've forgotten

Internet Director

- Maintain webpage; make as useable, informative, and attractive as possible
- Keep Events page up to date with all meetings and events' who, what, where, and why Provide links to relevant sites for specific events (for example: links to Kurtz's biography if he was speaking, links to Americans United next to information on a church/state event), and provide relevant website lists to Education Director
- Run all group listservs
- Keep records of times, places, names, and attendance of all meetings and events
- Keep "links" page current and filled with only the best links
- Seek out general quality online resources; work with Education Director to get good online info to group members
- Prepare weekly reports to be presented at meetings (need not be detailed or even typed, just be able to tell me, and the meeting, what you've done that week and, when applicable, why.)

Graphics Designer

- Get information from Events Coordinator for use in event flyers, as well as photos of speakers when applicable
- Create event flyers in a timely manner which are eye-catching and informative, get them to Publicity Coordinator well in advance of events.
- Create general group flyers for use in promoting the group itself throughout the year
- Work with Internet Director to make the webpage look sexy
- Create stand-ups, button boxes, price tags, informative signs, etc for use in tabling
- Prepare weekly reports to be presented at meetings (need not be detailed or even typed, just be able to tell me, and the meeting, what you've done that week and, when applicable, why.)

APPENDIX E

Group constitution

Jones University
Campus Freethought Alliance Constitution and Bylaws

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance (CFA), hereby establish this constitution to outline the goals, regulations, details, and by-laws of The Jones University CFA. Furthermore, be it proclaimed that this constitution will serve as the fundamental governing document of the Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance.

ARTICLE 1: NAME

The exact title of this organization is the Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance; abbreviated by the acronym "CFA."

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE
- Section 1

CFA is a unique cultural organization. Its purpose four-fold:

1) To establish a positive social environment for Jones University students who are rationalists, non-theists, humanists, or skeptics.
2) To enrich Jones University campus life by sponsoring educational events and fostering student dialogue on matters of faith, science, and reason.
3) To engage Jones University students in issues of national and international import surrounding freedom of conscience and secular education.

- Section 2

Be it hereby known that the CFA abides by all established policies of Jones University.

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP
- Section 1

Any interested undergraduate members of Jones University are eligible for official membership in CFA. Candidates for membership must be willing to actively participate in the meetings and activities of the organization, and must promote keeping a hostile-free atmosphere. People need not be official undergraduate members to attend meetings and/or activities. The officers of the organization will grant membership to candidates after careful consideration and approval of the candidate's membership application. Members will pay five-dollar dues each year.

- Section 2

Members may withdraw their memberships on a voluntary basis. A member who refuses to pay dues will be evaluated by the organization's officers, and may be eligible for probation of membership.

- Section 3

CFA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, or sexual orientation.

ARTICLE 4: OFFICERS

The officers of CFA include the President, Vice-president, Secretary and Treasurer. Various committee chairs may also be appointed upon by discretion of the organization.

The PRESIDENT shall:

1) Preside over meetings.
2) Evaluate membership applications and membership standing.
3) Organize activities, speakers, etc.
4) Act as the liaison between the Office of Campus Programs and CFA.
5) Have the final word in all organizational policies (but is encouraged to favor the desires of the majority of the organization's members).

The VICE-PRESIDENT shall:

1) Assist the President in any and all of his or her duties.
2) Preside over meetings and activities in the absence of the President.
3) Evaluate membership applications and membership standing.
4) Advise the President on all organizational policy matters.
5) Serve as an informal Parliamentarian.

The SECRETARY shall:

1) Assist the President and Vice-president.
2) Take minutes of each meeting and type/copy them to hand out to members at the next meeting.
3) Type letters and other related items for distribution.
4) Advise the President and Vice-president on all organizational policy matters.

The TREASURER shall:

1) Assist the President and Vice-president.
2) Collect dues and keep track of the CFA account balance.

3) Advise the President and vice-president on all organizational policy matters.

The COMMITTEE CHAIRS shall:

1) Preside over all meetings and activities of their respective committees.
2) Serve as the liaisons between their respective committees and the organization's officers and members.

ARTICLE 5: OPERATIONS

Officers are elected by secret ballot of all official undergraduate members of CFA who are in good standing. For at least the first semester of operation of CFA, the two co-founders of CFA will serve as the President and Vice-president of the organization. Elections are held the first meeting in November, and terms of office are for one year starting the day after elections. Officers may be re-elected an unlimited number of times. Any official undergraduate member of CFA is eligible to serve in an office of the organization. Officers may be removed from office if the following criteria are met:

1) A written, formal complaint against an officer has been filed by one or more official undergraduate members of CFA.
2) The other officers of CFA unanimously agree that there is reason for CFA to vote on removing the officer from his or her position.
3) After hearing a plea and explanation of guilt or innocence to the charge(s) by the officer being impeached, a majority of the undergraduate members of CFA, by secret ballot, vote to remove the officer from position.

If the officer is removed from position, a member of the organization will be appointed, by the officers, to take the person's place.

The role of the advisor of CFA is left to the discretion of the person in that position. To clarify, the advisor may take as active a role in CFA as he or she wishes, but under no circumstances will have the final say in any policies or proceedings of CFA.

ARTICLE 6: FINANCES

The activities, etc. of CFA will be funded by:

1) Submitting an annual budget to Jones University Student Government Association Finance Committee.
2) Holding fund-raisers and/or other money-making activities.
3) Collecting annual dues of five dollars from official members of CFA.

ARTICLE 7: AMENDMENTS

Section 1 Amendments to the CFA Constitution may be proposed by any official member of the organization. Amendments will be read aloud by an officer, and debates may take place. The vice-president, serving as the Parliamentarian, will use informal Robert's Rules of Order to conduct the debate. ANYBODY may participate in the debate, but only official undergraduate members may vote. Amendments are passed by a majority vote of the official undergraduate members of CFA. Voting is by secret ballot.

ARTICLE 8: REGISTRATION RENEWAL

Registration renewals for CFA are to be filed and approved by the officers and members of CFA at the first meeting each December.

BYLAWS

1) CFA meets every other Thursday of every month during the school year at 7:00 PM. More meetings may be scheduled as needed.

2) Officers are elected by secret ballot of all official members of CFA who are in good standing. For at least the first semester of operation of CFA, the two co-founders of CFA will serve as the President and Vice-president of the organization. Elections are held the first meeting in November, and terms of office are for one year, starting the day after elections. Officers may be re-elected an unlimited number of times. Any official undergraduate member of CFA is eligible to serve in an office of the organization.

3) Officers may be removed from office if the following criteria are met:
   a) A written, formal complaint against an officer has been filed by one or more official undergraduate members of CFA.
   b) The other officers of CFA unanimously agree that there is reason for CFA to vote on removing the officer from his or her position.
   c) After hearing a plea and explanation of guilt or innocence to the charge(s) by the officer being impeached, a majority of the undergraduate members of CFA, by secret ballot, vote to remove the officer from position.
   d) If the officer is removed from position, a member of the organization will be appointed, by the officers, to take the person's place.

4) The role of the advisor of CFA is left to the discretion of the person in that position. To clarify, the advisor may take as active a role in CFA as he or she wishes, but under no circumstances will have the final say in any policies or proceedings of CFA.

APPENDIX G

Press release

campus
freethought
alliance   **the course of reason.**

Tel: 800.446.6198 ext. 223 • Fax: 716.636.1733 • coordinator@campusfreethought.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **Contact: Austin Dacey**
March 23, 2000   (800) 446-6198 x223

STUDENT-LED COALITION SUBMITS PRO-EVOLUTION PETITION TO STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

"S.O.S.: Save Our Science, Save Our Schools" campaign, representing thousands of
students and their supporters, sends message to U.S. educators
See www.campusfreethought.org/sos

Amherst, NY — A student-led coalition representing thousands of students and their supporters recently submitted a petition urging state educational authorities to uphold the teaching of evolution and other origins sciences. The coalition is led by the Campus Freethought Alliance, a national alliance of high school and college students dedicated to promoting scientific and critical thinking and protecting the separation of church and state in public education.

The petition, entitled "S.O.S.: Save Our Science, Save Our Schools," reads in part, "We stand in opposition to all efforts to either (1) remove or reduce students' exposure to the best available scientific theories about the origins of life and the universe or (2) include religious doctrine masked in the guise of science."

The S.O.S. Campaign was prompted by the recent wave of decisions by state boards and departments of education to minimize the teaching of evolution and other sciences dealing with the origins of life and the universe. Since its launch in November of last year, the campaign has gained the support of numerous national and international organizations, including the American Geophysical Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Kansas Citizens for Science, Freedom to Read Foundation, Society of Physics Students, Skeptics Society, Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies, and the Canadian Federation of Students of British Columbia.

Harvard University student Chris Kirchhoff, Political Affairs Director of the Campus Freethought Alliance, commented, "By working together, our message of church-state separation is reaching farther than ever before. The S.O.S. campaign is proving that student activists can really make a difference in the current crisis in science education."

APPENDIX F

Letter to donor

Ms. Vivian Smart
24 Maple Rd.
South Collegeville, Indiana 55001

20 December, 2001

Dear Ms. Smart,

    I am writing to thank you for your recent financial contribution of $750 to Jones University Campus Freethought Alliance (CFA). It's only because of contributions like yours that CFA can hope to continue to be an effective voice for reason on the Jones University campus. The expenses a university group like ours face can be major roadblocks to putting on effective programs, let alone mounting a challenge to the thirty-plus religious organizations on campus. Room and equipment rental, copies of flyers, and informational handouts are just a few of the costs that hit us when we wish to bring our message to the wider campus community. Unfortunately, there is no way around these expenses.

    Financial backing like yours is vital. Your contribution helps us to effectively publicize our group and publicly proclaim that there are those who are ready to defend rational ideals. It's people like you, backing not only CFA, but also the growing number of campus CFA affiliate groups around the country, who will ensue that these organizations will have a foundation for the future. Just as we aren't self-sufficient in finances, so too are we in need of your advice and suggestions. Please contact us should you have any questions, concerns, good ideas, or constructive criticism. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your contribution and in advance for any ideas you may have.

Sincerely,

Chris Apollonia
President, Jones University CFA

To affiliate your organization with the Campus Freethought Alliance, complete this form and return it to: CFA; PO Box 664; Amherst, New York 14226-0664 or visit www.campusfreethought.org to complete this form online.

campus**freethought**alliance
application for organizational affiliation

1. Name of your school:

2. Location of your school:

3. Name of the organization:

4. Organization's contact information:
   Address -

   Email -

   Phone -

   Web URL -

5. Name of organization leader(s):

6. Contact information for organization leader(s):

7. Expected graduation date of organization leader(s):

8. Faculty advisor (if applicable):

9. Contact information for faculty advisor (if applicable):

10. Number of active members of organization:

11. Number of individuals who have expressed interest in organization:

12. Contact information for up to six active members:

13. Description of the organization's goals and intended activities:

14. Are the goals and activities of the organization consistent with the following statement of commitments shared by all CFA affiliates?

Campus Freethought Alliance Minimum Statement

The Campus Freethought Alliance (CFA) includes campus groups and individuals that promote rational thinking, defend and cultivate an individual's right to unbelief, and enhance the presence of freethought, skepticism, science, and secular humanism on campuses worldwide. The CFA respects the personal freedom and affirms the right and responsibility of persons to give meaning and shape to their own lives. The CFA is an inclusive union that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

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15.   Any other pertinent information, comments, questions, or requests: