

How to Develop an Active Undergraduate Psychology Student Association in Your Department

Kate Kalousek

President of the Undergraduate Psychology Student Association
at York University, Toronto (2005-2006)

Source: Kalousek, K. (2006). How to develop an active undergraduate psychology student association in your department. *Psynopsis: Canada's Psychology Newspaper*, 28(4), 16.

A great Undergraduate Psychology Students' Association (UPSA) can make your department even better! As President of York University's UPSA, my executive and I made it our personal mission to create a fully functioning and active association for Canada's largest psychology department.

Here are the things we did and that you might want to try at your department:

Visibility: In order to be a successful student association, students have to know about you. We found that a great way to promote the York UPSA was to visit undergraduate psychology classes and tell them about the association (you will need approval from the professor to do this). You can also leave pamphlets in professor's mailboxes for them to distribute for you. Other ways to enhance visibility include: weekly tabling sessions in a high-traffic area at your University; hanging brightly coloured posters around school; setting up an UPSA bulletin board in front of the undergraduate office; or giving away pens/buttons boasting your association's name.

Website: A fun, informative and user-friendly website is essential for any active UPSA. In addition to the essentials, great things to include on your website could be online polls for students, discussion forums, recent clinical and research positions,

graduate school information, used text-book sales, links to relevant websites, a calendar of upcoming events, and a database containing volunteer opportunities in the surrounding area.

Listserv: A great way to inform students of upcoming events and other opportunities is to send out emails via a listserv. Ideally, students should be able to sign up for the listserv immediately by entering their email on your website.

Membership: Whether it's to provide refreshments at seminars or to replace the 200 year old computer in your office, your association will need some funds. Since it is unlikely that the university will give you a hefty sum of money any time soon, the best way to have a cash flow is to charge for membership to the UPSA. Depending on your needs and services, I recommend charging anywhere from \$2 – \$7 for a year of membership (be advised that most universities have a cap for student association membership fees). With their membership fee, you could provide students with UPSA membership cards, a pamphlet containing membership services/benefits, and maybe even an UPSA pen!

Free Tutoring: Perhaps the reason most psychology students joined York's UPSA (aside from the free pen of course) was because we provided free tutoring. Members

who needed help in particular psychology courses (stats!) were paired with students who had (1) received an A in the given course; and (2) had taken that course with the same professor. You can choose to set up the tutoring database anyway you see fit, but we found it easiest to provide students with the tutors contact information and have them schedule their own appointments.

Newsletter: If your university does not already have one, why not create a newsletter just for psychology undergrads? The newsletter is a great way to promote the organization as well as provide students with valuable information. Some of our recent topics covered in the newsletter have been ‘How to Create a CV’, ‘What’s the Difference Between Counselling and Clinical Psychology?’ and “How to Study for Multiple Choice Exams”.

Seminars: Seminars are great ways to provide keen students with valuable information. At York, our three most

popular seminars include “Meet & Greet the Professors”, a wine and cheese event where undergraduates get to network with psychology professors; “Meet & Greet the Grads”, an informal gathering where graduate students get probed with questions from eager undergraduates; and various GRE demystification seminars put on by students who have already taken the dreaded test.

Reliant supporters: Having dependable support from administrators, faculty and graduate students is essential to running a successful psychology association. Most importantly, having a faculty representative on the council who will attend meetings, provide input, and help keep other faculty informed about what the association is up to is invaluable.

So there you have it, an abridged guide to help you develop an active, fun, and fully functioning UPSA in your department!