

From the Outside: Getting Organized
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By Rick Snee

Organizations are that aspect on The Inside that doesn't carry over so well into The Outside. Sure, we have our Kiwanis, Water Buffalos, Shriners and the occasional Knight of Columbus. But those organizations are a different animal than the clubs at Radford University.

College organizations are a step-up from those half-assed clubs in high school that we took to impress our Spanish teachers. They're run more by the actual members, and the professors serve—to some degree of ambivalence—more as advisors. Really, they put their input in whenever a potential lawsuit may arise (thanks, Tim!) and provide a reality check when the monetary checks are about to run out.

The previously mentioned adult clubs (not like *that*) are more of a support group. They're a place to go where everybody is the same as you. They're not designed to specifically help you find people to drink with or have sex with like college organizations, nor do they exist to pad your resume. Well, except the Masons. But college organizations often inject community service into their constitutions, which is usually the basis of adult clubs as well.

If I were to continue with the metaphor of The Inside being prison, then college organizations are like converting to the Aryans to make your stay a little more pleasant. Think about it: Club Fair was one of the first events of the year, not counting the opening day bagpipes. At the very outset of the school year, you are presented with the opportunity to give random people your email based on a common interest in karate or physics, and then to attend their meetings afterwards.

But the timing is unfair to you new students. You just arrived at college, 17 or 18 years old, with a vague idea of majoring in marine biology or superhero criminology, and this club wants you to be its latest 4 year or more member. You liked women in high school, but how do you know you'll want to continue with Women's Studies next week, much less next *year*?

So if you were smart, overwhelmed or afraid of commitment, you walked around Club Fair for the free swag. Even if you didn't find your niche in the RU community, you will never have to buy another Frisbee or key chain for the rest of your life.

This isn't an indictment, though—more like an intervention. If you aren't in an organization, you need to reconsider, and now (late October) is the perfect time to join something.

The reason is because you've been at RU long enough to have friends in one or two of these. Your time on The Inside is impacted by the networking you do early on, whether you stay with a club all four years or jump around. Also, many of the students that sign-

up at Club Fair don't follow through with organizations, so you haven't missed anything too important.

Throughout this series, I've sent questionnaires to various alumni, and week after week, whether I asked about money, drinking, tradition or their majors, they all brought up their clubs. In fact, I didn't even bring up organizations until this latest questionnaire because, well, I take them for granted. I just assumed everyone was in organizations like I was, but didn't think their lives revolved around theirs like mine did (with this column as evidence).

Almost every respondent has indicated at one or more times how organizations helped them scholastically, socially and financially.

I think of organizations and their members in categories.

Academic Clubs

These are the ones that are the closest to high school clubs (e.g., math, history, physics and *cough* English). There are two approaches to joining these.

Most members join the club that corresponds with their major. The idea is that you meet other people in your department and get an "in" with your professors. The drawback is that you will feel silly if you switch majors. So these members tend to be True Believers, as in they believe "my major, right or wrong." These members will tell you all the best jokes about other majors, which invariably refer to serving fries after graduation.

The other approach is rare, but—I think—more courageous, and that is the non-major that joins an academic club because he or she enjoys the topic. Not to say that majors don't enjoy their club's topic, but they don't have that hobbyist's enthusiasm. For more information, see *Mythbusters v. actual scientists*.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of drawbacks. Many of these clubs number in the tens at most, so people will notice if you drop-out and you will likely be given a leadership role. Also, if it's already your major, it's likely to go unnoticed on your resume. Finally, since it's an academic club, that means your free time will consist of the one thing you're trying to avoid: your school work.

Service Organizations

These groups are the unsung heroes of RU. Whether it's Alpha Phi Omega, Men of Standards or the countless other awareness groups, they usually get the shaft when it comes to school PR. They constantly do community service; however, when regular sororities and fraternities clean up the New River or play with inmate puppies for a day, it's out-of-character and, therefore, newsworthy.

Think about how much they've been taken for granted. The Red Cross club organizes the blood drives that other groups use for their community service requirements. Spectrum and Women's Studies protest and raise awareness on behalf of gender and sexual equality

so you don't have to. CAB and BAP use what little budget they have to book acts so you have something to bitch about.

So if you really want to do some good, or just convince future employers that you care about other people, these are the organizations you should look into. Just remember: these clubs do almost nothing but work, so be wary if you're lazy.

Pseudo-professionals

These are the clubs that will actually look good on your resume. Unfortunately, they usually mean working for free in a semi-corporate setting, so if you're in college to put off board-style meetings, late working nights, supervisors and a social life centered exclusively on your coworkers, stay away.

On the other hand, they might be the only opportunity in your life to enjoy your work. Student Media means working as a writer, editor, video producer, artist or disc jockey. The subject matter, as you've seen in this magazine, is often about sex, drugs and music that may or may not rock.

Profession-based fraternities present opportunities to experiment with business models. Facebook is an example of a college entrepreneurial group striking it rich. From what I've seen, they also party pretty heavily, so there is a social aspect. Once again, though, these are your coworkers.

Resume-groomers

These are the groups that offer leadership opportunities by being about, um, leadership. On the positive end, you are guaranteed to have a leadership position on your resume. And you'll also meet other likeminded people who are also concerned about their resumes.

On the negative end, you'll meet other likeminded people who are concerned about their resumes. It's also a prerequisite to enjoy both ends of the authority stick: using authority over others and being micromanaged by authority.

The effectiveness of these groups ranges from "they do what now?" (SGA) to "who the hell are you?" (RHA). And if you ever wanted to piss off your peers and get paid in candy, then become an RA.

These clubs are not fun; they are a grueling life lesson in how The Outside works. You, too, can join an organization that answers solely to the overgrown RU bureaucracy, enforce its rules and enact beneficial changes as the administration sees fit. In exchange, you are monitored to make sure you don't embarrass the school or misrepresent it to the public (i.e., your fellow students). But if you're in the right position, then you get free room and board.

Fun Clubs

Believe it or not, they exist. There's snowboarding, martial arts, rods and guns, ultimate Frisbee, LARPing and rugby as well as countless others. These are the clubs that you will want to join when you're on The Outside, but will have no time for.

Bear in mind that many of these are seasonal, so you'll need to find something else to do.

Religious Organizations

Whatever your opinion is of Jesus, you will find your club. They range from "He's my homeboy!" (Catholic Campus Ministries, Burning Bush, etc.) to "He's a nice guy, but what's all the fuss about?" (Hillel, Muslim Student Association, etc.).

If religion is your main thing, then these clubs will keep you entertained. They meet regularly to read the bible, play music/sing, hold church services, go on retreats and eat lunch.

Political Organizations

Some students want to talk about politics *all the time*. I don't know why, but these groups always seem to do well with recruiting. Your choices, just like on The Outside, are the Democrats and the Republicans. There might be a couple of students in the Libertarian or Green party clubs, but they are about as unimportant at RU as in real life.

They don't do much except schedule debates, sit at tables with flyers, finance service groups and speakers to do their dirty work and voice umbrage to Student Media. If impotent umbrage is your thing, then put on your flag pin and sign up.

Those are the basics, though I left out at least a hundred other student groups. That's not to say they're any less important or worthwhile. Also, fraternities and sororities will be saved for another week.

From the alumni perspective, our organizations shaped us in ways that classes and parties could not. Clubs instill a sense of belonging, leadership development and, often, working experience in careers you've never imagined. If anything, most alumni even said that employers asked more about their organizations than their GPA, which—in many cases—is a good thing.

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