

Wellstone

Student Organizing: Leadership Matters

The strength of your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter depends on its officers. In the immediate sense, officers help plan and manage events to bolster recruitment and raise awareness about your chapter's work. They keep your chapter relevant and active and share the responsibility of the group's success. In the long-term, officer positions create sustainability for your chapter. They offer a leadership ladder for people to climb and gradually gain responsibilities, confidence and familiarity with your chapter so they can lead the organization after current leadership (aka: you) moves on.

No pressure, right?

Knowing there's so much at stake when recruiting strong officers; TFNEF has a well-defined system of officer positions. Each officer requires different skill sets and plays unique roles that complement those of other officers and create a sum that is larger than its parts. To help recruit candidates and clearly manage expectations, here are job descriptions for each officer position in your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter:

President / Co-Presidents

- Serves as the representative of the organization on campus
- Provides leadership, general direction and vision
- Organizes and facilitates officer tasks
- Creates meeting agendas
- Facilitates meetings with co-president or vice president
- Leads event planning and outreach efforts
- Serves as host for events
- Acts as official spokesperson with campus and community news sources
- Responsible for developing leadership within the group

For the first year, you may choose to have co-presidents to share responsibilities. After the first year, a president/vice president structure works best.

Vice President

- Assists president in planning activities and direction
- Helps to ensure officers are completing tasks
- Facilitates meetings with president
- Fills in for president when absent or necessary

Outreach Coordinator

- Focuses on outreach and recruitment for the student chapter
- Responsible for coordinating tabling at least once a week on campus
- Responsible for representing the student chapter to other student organizations at meetings and events
- Executes petition, voter registration and voter pledge gathering events
- Responsible for coordinating data entry
- Responsible for maintaining a membership list and adding members to Facebook page or relevant database

Student chapters in the past have chosen to have two outreach coordinators to work together. We have found that this has served as a good model.

Event Coordinator

- Focuses on event logistics, delegating tasks and promotion
- Responsible for working with the university on event planning (room reservations, permits, waivers, funding, etc.)
- Responsible for recruiting, coordinating and directing volunteers at student chapter events

Media Managers

- Manages all of the student chapter's social media platforms, including documenting group activities, creating event pages and driving traffic to the page through regular posting of relevant content
 - Works with the media to cover and promote student chapter events and campaigns
 - Responsible for photographing student chapter meetings and events
 - Responsible for working with local news sources to secure interviews for president
- Student chapters in the past have chosen to have two media managers to work together. This also has served as a good model.

In addition to these officer-specific responsibilities, there are a few general expectations of all Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter officers. Officers should:



- provide a progress report to the president and the larger group at every officer meeting,
- attend and volunteer at chapter events,
- attend all officer meetings and all general meetings, and
- assist with outreach and recruitment for the Student Chapter

Before we move on to the nitty-gritty of electing officers, here are a few more thoughts on the importance of sustainability. Texas Freedom Network Student Chapters, like all student organizations, can become nonfunctional if all its officers and members are seniors. Since it's common to start a chapter with friends who are around the same age, this is an understandable predicament. However, what this means is no one will be left to carry the chapter after the original leadership graduates. A successful Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter takes sustainability seriously. Fear not, we won't underscore sustainability without providing you with pointers on how to achieve it:

- Your officers should never all be seniors – period.
- Age diversity is important. Your co-presidents or president and vice president should be from different graduating classes.
- You and your officers will have to actively work to find first-year, second-year and third-year undergraduate students to constantly provide an influx of new, younger members. When you're first starting out, this process may be hard. However, as your chapter grows in size and builds its reputation semester by semester, it will get easier.
- New and/or younger members should eventually become officers. Having clear job descriptions and active officers modeling the chapter's structure will help tremendously in this leadership transition.
- Prospective officers should shadow and assist current leaders.

Officer Elections

Once you've advertised the officer positions, your chapter must hold elections. We couldn't be registering people to vote and not hold elections within our own chapters, right?

In all seriousness, officer elections provide legitimacy to your officer structure because they allow group members to feel collective ownership over the direction of the chapter through selecting its leaders. Officer elections also promote a chapter culture of transparency and fairness by ensuring officers aren't just selected by the president.

For all these reasons officer elections are a big deal and should occur on a regular basis. And since officer elections are so significant to the well-being and success of chapters,



TFNEF has created election rules to regulate officer elections across Texas and ensure their consistency and parity.

Here we go. Hold on to your hats:

- Officer elections are held on the last general meeting of each fall and spring semester, with nominations held one meeting before then.
- Any members with good standing may nominate themselves or other members that are present at the meeting or absent with a legitimate excuse.
- Another member that is present must second a nomination.
- Nominations will begin with president, and officer positions will be open for nominations in the order they are listed in this guide: president/co-president, vice president, outreach coordinator, event coordinator, media manager(s).
- The president or vice president should record the names of all candidates and the positions for which they are running.
- Following the nominations meeting, candidates may campaign for office and may do so until the voting begins during the election at the following general meeting.
- The election is administered by the current vice president. The vice president should read the name and description of each office.
- The names of the candidates should be read aloud, and the candidates should be allowed to give a speech in alphabetical order according to their last names.
- Each candidate for president should have up to five minutes to speak and up to three minutes to answer questions from members.
- Candidates for all other officer positions should each have three minutes to speak and two minutes to answer questions from members.
- Voting should take place on secret ballots after the speeches from the candidates for all officer positions.
- The votes will be counted by people who are not running for that position and verified by the current vice president.
- The election results should be announced immediately before moving on to the next agenda item. At the end of the election meeting, which is also the last meeting of the semester, the new officers should be photographed together and announced on Facebook and email.
- The ballots should be kept for at least a week and should be available to anyone who wishes to see them.

Phew. Your Texas Freedom Network Student Chapter has officers. Congratulations! Now on to the next question: what are we going to do with them? We have a few things in mind:



Officer Meetings

An officer meeting is when officers come together to plan the events and direction of the organization without the general membership present. It's an opportunity for the chapter president to provide updates and for officers to share the progress of their work. Officer meetings are also when administrative tasks should be discussed and managed. An agenda should always be prepared for officer meetings out of respect for everyone's time and to ensure meetings are productive. If held weekly, officers can meet directly before the chapter's general meeting. Officer meetings should occur at least twice a month.

Officer Socials

Getting together with your teammates just to hang out socially after we've gone on about the importance of structure? Let us explain this one.

Because you're working as a team, it's important for officers to get to know one another outside of your chapter. This will help officers develop the bonds that serve as a foundation for good collaboration and troubleshooting. Try doing this once per month or at least a few times per semester – no agenda required.

