

## Brief Guide to Researching Your Campus<sup>1</sup> by Rich Cowan

Right-wing activity on campus is not limited to outside pressure groups; it is often present within your university's administration and board of trustees.

When a school's leaders resist calls for democratic reform, that is a sure sign of Right-wing influence. We've heard many of the excuses they use.

We 'can't afford' a tuition freeze. There aren't any 'qualified' minority faculty members we can hire. Women are not capable of 'excellence' in math and science. Ethnic Studies requirements 'bias' the curriculum. Opening the meeting to students 'politicizes' the discussions. Just wait 40 years: sexism and racism will disappear.

When we challenge these excuses the administration accuses us of naivete, while Right-wing students claim that too many university resources already have been allocated to progressive reforms.

This is where research can help.

A little digging can reveal where your school's priorities really lie. Who is controlling your university, and for what purposes? In your organizing, it will be helpful to know who pulls the strings and where the money is coming from. How much funding comes from tuition? The state? The federal government? Corporate research and user fees? Alumni and corporate contributions? Are students and taxpayers paying 70% of the university's expenses, but only given a token voice in determining the universities priorities? Is the campus administration and board of trustees connected to the entire community, or just to white male corporate America? Are their priorities ours?

The techniques presented below were used by students at the University of Massachusetts, MIT, Rutgers, and the University of Texas at Austin to fight the powers that be at those schools. These techniques can demonstrate the misuse of power by campus administrators such as John Deutch, a former provost of MIT [see "Academia Unincorporated," *Z Magazine*, February 1990] or William Cunningham, president of the University of Texas [see "Our Invading University, UT President William Cunningham as Corporate Agent in Austin and Indonesia," *Texas Observer*, Aug. 17, 1990]. When you expose the wheelings and dealings of campus officials, revealing the "true colors" of their initiatives, those officials and their Right-wing student allies will lose their effectiveness at carrying out a regressive agenda and at undermining yours. Your movement will also recognize its own power, gaining both confidence and members.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from *Guide to Uncovering the Right on Campus*, edited by Dalya Massachi and Rich Cowan. This article may be photocopied or distributed electronically at no charge provided that the article and this notice are included in their entirety. Scott Henson of the *Polemicist* in Austin, TX contributed to this article, an earlier version of which appeared in the Fall 1990 issue of *Education for the People*.

Here are some well-tested methods for finding the information you need (librarians can help too):

A. General information - In early September, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* releases its annual "Almanac issue" containing all the statistical tables it has published in the past year. This resource is an excellent starting point, as many of the Chronicle's tables are sorted by university. Locally, you should go to the library (or archives) and ask for three university documents: the annual treasurer's report, the annual on sponsored research, and the annual reports of various department heads to the president. If the library does not have public copies of these documents, find out what they are called and request copies from the appropriate university offices.

B. Administration Salaries - The salary of the top ten officials at a private university is located in form 990, the IRS tax forms that all non-profit organizations must file. In a few states it may be on file for public inspection in the public charities division of the state capital. Otherwise, you can call 1-800-TAX-FORM and request form 4506-A from the Internal Revenue Service, "Request for Public Inspection or Copy of Exempt Organization Tax Form." The president of Boston University made over \$350,000 in 1994; the average college president salary was over \$110,000. No wonder they think tuition is reasonable; they can afford it!

At public universities, the salary of top administrators is usually in the state budget, and the regents and president will probably be required to file financial disclosure with the state. Check with the same bureaucracy that handles financial disclosures for political candidates, or call the president's/regent's offices and ask for a copy.

C. University Budget Priorities - Although the treasurer's report is helpful, it probably does not list the school's budget by accounts. Students at Rutgers and UMass used their positions on the student government to obtain more budget information from their schools than they would otherwise be given. The fact that both schools have had large demonstrations with thousands of students certainly added the leverage students needed to win disclosure.

You can try obtaining budget information through student trustees, sympathetic faculty who receive financial memos as department chairpersons, and the office of your provost. At public universities, the Freedom of Information Act or Sunshine Law of your state may give you all the leverage you need. At the Secretary of State's office in your state, information on university-owned trusts, university-affiliated investment corporations, and university bond filings for construction projects should be available. You can even get a copy of your school's bylaws, which may include democratic procedures which your ignores.

D. Major University Donors - Major gifts and grants to the university should be listed in university's complete treasurer's report. 990 forms may list all donors of more than \$5000 to your school, with addresses. You could also try to get this information directly from the portion of the campus bureaucracy which solicits donations. Find the top

bureaucrat and request a listing. At public universities, donor lists should be a matter of public record. At the first sign of resistance file an open records request for the desired information.

E. University Portfolios and the Corporations on them - A full treasurer's report will usually list investments. Since these investments also change, you will want to request a more current list as Tufts students did (see p. 46) before waging a divestment campaign.

F. Tuition and Financial Aid Historically vs. Inflation - Try back issues of any large U.S. almanac such as the "World Almanac" for a list of thousands of college tuition figures for that year. Try the Statistical Abstract of the US for some additional statistics. The university financial aid office will probably provide lists of statistics to you.

G. Minority Enrollment and Faculty Representation- Your first task is to gather enrollment statistics, which your university is required to keep if it accepts government funds. A summary by race appears each year in the Chronicle of Higher Education for all colleges except those which escape the reporting requirement by refusing government financial aid money (i.e. Hillsdale College). Are these figures correct, or is your university playing with the numbers to escape the heat? Network with other minority students to see what efforts have been made to correct any deficiencies in minority representation.

While you are gathering statistics, demand a tally of minority and women faculty by department and by tenure status from the President or Provost of your school. You may ask whether the official faculty regulations and hiring policies contain explicit anti-racist language. If affirmative action is endorsed by the administration but left up to individual departments, do departments ignore this policy? We must publicize the numbers so that departments with bad records will feel the heat and open up a few slots to untenured women or faculty of color.

#### H. Harassment (sexual or racial)

For harassment research, you are likely to encounter some obstacles. You can check campus police crime reports, but internal university records on harassment by faculty members are seldom disclosed. It may take quite a bit of digging around, including meetings and interviews with other students, to identify professors prone to racial or sexual harassment or insults.

It may be helpful to consult the discrimination related government agencies of your city, your state, the US Department of Education, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Finally, go to the clerk's office in the courthouse of the county in which your school is located to see if your school is a defendant in any active cases which may relate to sex or race discrimination. Simply look up the docket numbers of the cases your university is involved in and request to see them.

I. Research, science, and education statistics historically. Call up the National Science Board, at (202) 357-9582 for a copy of Science Indicators 1990, which is published every two years by the Board, an arm of the National Science Foundation. If you tell them the copy is for a review by your campus newspaper, they'll probably send you the 400-page book for free!

J. Research Contracts (Government and Military) - Your university (try "sponsored research" office) may be willing to provide you with a free listing of all externally funded research, both corporate and military. If they do not do this, remind them that as a taxpayer you have a right to information on publicly-funded research!

You can apply pressure within the university for a current list (not a 2-year-old one), and take direct action if you are refused. You can try the state Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for disclosure of contracts. If you manage to get a list of contracts by agency, you then can ask to see the contracts themselves. Each research contract includes 100 pages of irrelevant information, so it is best to choose what you want carefully before becoming inundated with paper. If your university refuses to provide the contracts, you can use the Federal FOIA to obtain them. Tips to using the Freedom of Information Act are located in Packets 2 and 3 of the War Research Info Service (see back cover for ordering information).

K. Research Contracts (Corporate) - Corporate research contracts are sometimes harder to track down. The procedure is the same as for military contracts, except that you cannot go to the federal government for assistance since they do not fund the contracts. At public universities corporate research contracts will be available under open records statutes, though in some states segments of contracts dealing with "proprietary" information will be deleted. You may get a few leads by looking at the advisory boards for all technology-related university department and buildings to see which corporations are represented. If you do get a copy of a corporate contract, see if it is a subcontract of a military contract. Is a company farming out a small piece of its weapons research to your school? Does the professor who works on that project consult for that company?

L. Outside corporate ties of administration, trustees [adapted from *Z magazine*, 2/90] - Administrators or faculty members that are beholden to outside companies may have agendas or time commitments which get in the way of their teaching duties. Such outside ties are worth exposing if they will show how the university is concealing the profit motive of a company - using up public resources which could otherwise be used to directly help people. From our experience, you are better off focusing on one or two particularly bad cases of conflict of interest, because if you go after everyone simultaneously you scare the faculty, your attack loses focus and the people you attack gang up on you.

Guess which academics are the most likely corporate agents. Go to a business library and try to find at least one board of directors on which each individual sits. The DUNS Marketing Service Reference Book on Corporate Management, and the compact disk (CD-ROM) databases produced by Disclosure, Inc. are the best sources. Once you find

one company, you can find out the other “directorships” of that individual by obtaining the proxy statement for that company, which is sent to all shareholders in advance of the company’s annual meeting and is available for free if you write the company. The proxy will have also have a photograph of that person, a brief biography, his or her board subcommittees, the number of meetings attended, the annual stipend he or she receives for sitting on the board, and possibly additional consulting compensation.

Once you find this information, search through the administration’s newspaper and look for the names of the companies you discover. You may find some interesting connections. Also check out the company in the business press. The Wall Street Journal Index, The New York Times Index, and The Business Periodicals Index will be your best and most accessible sources-they will be available in any business library. Once you find articles concerning controversies involving the company, start calling individuals or organizations that have previously been struggled with the target company. Unions and environmental groups will be particularly helpful, but anyone who’s fought a large company at any level is likely to have files to share and stories to tell.

Also, if the company has recently been involved in a lawsuit, call the county courthouse where the suit was filed and ask for a copy of the “original complaint” for the suit, as well as any “amended complaints.” If the trial is over, you can even get transcripts of the proceedings. And don’t forget to call the other litigant or her/his attorney for further leads.

Example: At the University of Texas, students discovered that a finance professor, while serving as UT Vice President for Administration, also sat on the board of a savings and loan while it was being looted in a classic S&L scandal. At the same time, the professor also served as the chief regulator in the region for the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Currently this professor teaches “Money and Banking” in the UT finance department. Students uncovered his background in a student alternative newspaper, largely using information gleaned from court proceedings and reports from the business press.

M. Professors: Conflicts and Academic Fraud - The techniques presented above are also useful for researching a professor. If that professor is doing research for the government, you can obtain a copy of the professor’s resume (called a “curriculum vitae”, C.V.) by requesting through FOIA (see above) any research proposal that professor has submitted to the federal government. Sometimes, you can obtain a C.V. from the university’s public relations office. In addition, many university public relations offices maintain newsclip files on all professors, administrators and even institutions and programs at the university.

Outside interests of professors often lead to bias in research and even to cases of academic fraud. In *The Closed Corporation*, a Vietnam-era classic, James Ridgeway gave examples of fraudulent research funded by tobacco companies at Columbia which purported to discover a “safe cigarette.”

Today there is evidence of industry manipulation of academics in order to win approval for Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH), a chemical that makes cows produce more milk.

For example, University of Minnesota scientists have received hundreds of thousands of dollars to evaluate BGH from Monsanto and American Cyanamid, two companies which stand to profit from FDA approval of the hormone.

Jaron Bourke, formerly of Harvard Watch, suggests checking the publications of professors with outside corporate connections to see if they are honest in disclosing those affiliations. Bourke also suggests: "Universities limit how much time professors can spend off campus working for corporations. Most are lax in enforcing these rules because they depend on the very scientists who stand to gain most from conflicts of interest to enforce the rules." You may discover enough outside commitments to demonstrate that a professor is breaking the rules.

N. Electoral Politics and Real Estate - At the assessor's office in any college town, you can get a list of the properties your university owns, as well as a list of properties different candidates may own. At the election commission, you can obtain a list of campaign contributors to local board of aldermen (sic), city council, or mayoral races. The state election bureau will have similar publicly available lists for congressional and governor's races. At the county registry of deeds, you can find out what real estate transactions your university has been involved in recently. Because of space, we're not going to tell you everything you can do with this information. But take our word; there's a lot of real estate wheeling and dealing - even outright attempts by university officials to buy the influence of local politicians through campaign contributions! More information on this type of investigation can be found in Mother Jones' "Raising Hell: A Guide to Investigative Reporting," a brochure published in 1979 that is still available through the Center for Investigative Reporting in San Francisco.

O. Other tips for researching an individual - You can go to the assessor's office of area towns and ask for a list of properties an administrator owns in those towns. You can check to see if any articles have been written by or about your university officials by typing that person's name, or your university's name, into Infotrac, or Academic Index, or Public Affairs Information Service Magazine Index computer that is available in many libraries. Try calling journalists who write such articles and discuss additional leads they did not have time to explore. And try the appropriate academic indexes for lists of scholarly publications by the individuals you are investigating. In the 1970's, Science for the People used this technique to expose the racial bias of eugenics science. For a list of academics on military science advisory committees, see the War Research Info Service Packet #3 (ordering info on back cover).

## Why Work for Peace & Justice on Campus?<sup>2</sup>

In a genuine democracy, people would have a real voice in the decisions affecting their lives. Politics would be a dynamic, active, creative process in which people meaningfully participated. Governments and corporations would be directly accountable to the people they affect.

Unfortunately, many of us do not feel like we have a voice in governing our society. We may be too busy to participate, or we may lack information. We may think that no one else feels the way we do. We worry about what other people will say if we act, or whether we'll jeopardize our prospects for "success." Our cultures teach us that women should defer to men, and our society teaches us that the people in charge are usually white. We are encouraged only to sit in front of the TV, trust the "experts," and once every few years vote for the lesser of two evils.

Despite all these obstacles, people do act. The changes that most improved our lives were not gifts bestowed by the "experts," but the hard-won results of organizing by ordinary people. The 40-hour work week was not made by wealthy industrialists, but by rank-and-file union organizers sick of working 60 hour weeks for subsistence wages; the vote -- and rights to property and abortion -- were not granted to women by men, but won by female suffragists over many decades of struggle. Our history books often emphasize the "great men" who held positions of power and prominence. In fact, history is made by all of us. Before Martin Luther King, there was a legion of Black leaders who stood against the oppression of the African-American community. The large-scale, glamorous victories which we all hear about stood on the shoulders of smaller victories and the lessons of defeats experienced by thousands of grassroots organizers.

When we act as individuals, our actions may seem small and insignificant. But when we act collectively, anything is possible. Why work for peace and justice on campus? Because the campus brings us into physical and intellectual proximity with others at a time when we are questioning and formulating our ideas about the world around us. Students of all races and often from many different countries live together in dorms; working-class students will sit in class beside rich kids. In a society where individuals are increasingly isolated, the campus provides an unusual opportunity for discussion, organization, and community.

Not surprisingly, students have been in the forefront of most major social movements. In the 1930s, students picketed with striking workers; in the 1960s, they opposed the Vietnam War and fought for civil rights; in the 1980s, students opposed U.S. military intervention in Central America.

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<sup>2</sup> From *Campus Organizing Guide for Peace and Justice Groups*, by Rich Cowan, et. al. ISBN 0-945210-04-3. Please feel free to redistribute this document at no charge provided that this notice is included in its entirety. Please obtain permission before republishing. Copyright 1995 Center for Campus Organizing, Inc.] For the completed 16-page guide, please send \$2.50 to Center for Campus Organizing, Box 748, Cambridge, MA 02142. Outside the USA the cost is \$4. For info on memberships (\$25/20/10), send e-mail to [cco@igc.apc.org](mailto:cco@igc.apc.org) or call 617-354-9363.]

While campus activism may concern issues or conditions which exist outside the campus, our colleges and universities are themselves political institutions where internal controversies mirror those in the larger society. Do students have the rights to free speech and assembly? Which students can afford to attend your campus? Who teaches? What subjects are taught? How is the campus climate for women and people of color? Asking these questions can lead to more questions about social justice and the meaning of education, deepening our understanding of ourselves and society. Colleges and universities are also very strategic arenas of power in our society. Research performed by professors is used by politicians and corporations in shaping policies and in developing weaponry. University professors serve on corporate boards and as advisors to governments. Our colleges support the dubious activities of many large corporations by investing billions of dollars in their stock. The anti-Apartheid movement of the 1980s, which involved tens of thousands of students and faculty members, forced over 150 universities to divest from companies doing business in South Africa and was a part the world-wide movement that catapulted Nelson Mandela, the former political prisoner, to the South African presidency. Organizing on campus is not just play-acting or a support effort for an “adult” organization, but a real contribution to helping make a better and more democratic society.

Finally, many students will go on to other positions of influence -- families, workplaces, and communities -- where they can either perpetuate the status quo or fight for progressive change. Your campus organizing can make a difference for years after you graduate. Making the decision to participate in public life is no small thing. It demands commitment, sacrifice, and an openness to change. But the rewards are many: new skills, a sense of purpose, awareness of how our society operates, and a feeling of community that comes from working together with others for a vision.

As one activist put it, “After I became an activist, I wasn’t afraid of the world anymore.”

## How to Start a Group

### Join With An Existing Group, or Start your Own?

First, find out if there are any existing organizations interested in peace work on your campus. Check with your Student Activities office, look for posters in the student union, and ask others if a peace and justice group has recently been active. If a group of progressive students has already been formed at your school, talk to some key members and find out what kinds of issues they work on. If they seem politically compatible and open to your ideas it may be easier to join with them than to start a new group from scratch. If that group is very large you could start a spin-off group, or subcommittee. If there is no group that fits the bill, why not start your own?

### Start Your Own Group



To start a group of your own, first try to find one or more like-minded people to share in the initial work. Then advertise by posting flyers around campus and writing in the school paper. If you know students in other organizations, have them announce your meeting at their own. Choose a location for your meeting that is easily accessible, like a room in the student union, a caf or a meeting hall. You can make the meeting open to all students, faculty, and members of the community. Or have your first meeting include a small group of people you know and your second one be an “open house” meeting that is built broadly. You may wish to choose a working name for the first meeting and then let the group decide on its permanent name.

### Know your Campus

Are students at your school used to taking part in political activities? Is your campus an elite private university, a residential public university, or a commuter school for part-time students? How strongly is your school linked to the military, and is there a strong right-wing presence there? Activities that go over well at one school may not work at another. Whatever your situation, it is helpful to talk to other activists to learn what has and has not worked. One suggestion is to invite activists from even as far back 10 or 20 years back to come to campus to discuss their experience with today’s activists. Not everything they say will still apply, but it’s likely that much will still be true.

### Figure Your Constituency

You need to figure out who you want to involve in your activities. Undergraduates or Graduate Students? On-campus residents or commuters? Engineering student or liberal arts students? If you gain faculty and community support, it will only make your movement stronger.

### Don’t Exclude Potential Allies

Many groups are started by people from similar backgrounds, and unknowingly may exclude people who do not come from the same background. For example, low-income students who work in addition to studying may not have time for four-hour meetings. Try to reduce the number of long meetings, and define smaller roles for students who may only have 30 minutes a week to help out.

### Define Your Mission

The mission of your group should be located somewhere other than the inside of the founder’s head. The purpose should be articulated so that the initial members will be comfortable. It should be debated at your initial meetings to give group members a sense of ownership over group decisions. One way a group can foster this ownership is to discuss and revise its mission at the beginning of each academic year. A mission should say, in 1-2 paragraphs, who you represent, what you do, where you do it, and why you do it, and how you do it.

## Prepare for the New Semester

Most campuses have an activities fair or orientation week where established activities can set up tables to recruit new members from the incoming class. Be sure that you make the deadline for reserving a table, that you prepare an inviting display, and that your core of active members is mobilized for this important recruitment opportunity.

### Get Recognition and Submit a Budget

Once you have gained official university recognition, you ought to take their money. Some budget items you may wish to consider. Educational Video Series \$90 Forum Publicity (posters) \$25 Rally Publicity \$40 Rally Supplies (Placards, etc.) \$20 Educational Flyers (2K copies) \$50 Video Player/Film Rental \$20 Membership Mailings \$40 CCO Group Membership \$35 TOTAL \$300 Always consult your student activities office for some advice and guidelines before seeking funding. Some schools may let you add \$1,000 or more to pay an outside speaker. Be forewarned that some campus administrations, states, and student governments have imposed restrictions on funding “political” activity to limit the political expression of student groups.

## Meetings and Group Process

Meeting as a group, on a regular basis, will strengthen your organization. Meetings provide an opportunity to discuss plans and needs. They should be both fun and effective. Below are a few key concepts that will help plan effective meetings.

### Meeting Structure & Agenda Setting

A key to a good meeting is a workable agenda. Without an agenda, the discussion is likely to be unfocused and prevent progress. It is difficult to make decisions if your group’s “train of thought” is interrupted. You may also run out of time, leaving individuals making decisions which ought to be made by the group.

An agenda should be created by several people; and it is best if planning occurs near the end of the previous meeting, when your group is thinking about its future needs. By planning ahead, you can advertise the main attraction of the meeting and win new members Q especially if it will be a video, faculty presentation, speaker, free food, etc.

Once you have brainstormed a list of items, group them into categories. Make time for business items, new ideas, announcements, and discussion items. You will want to allow adequate time for all of these items. Try to limit your meeting to less than one and a half hours, leaving time to plan for the next meetings and to assign responsibilities.

Begin with quick decisions, and allow progress to be made on new items without letting them postpone major business. This meeting model may or may not work for your group. For example, if an emergency arises, you won’t have time to set the agenda before the meeting. We encourage you to discuss and change the model to suit specific situations.

## Decision-Making Options

Decisions of the group are strongest when made unanimously. A split vote on an issue may leave those on the losing end upset. However, while it is a good idea to strive for consensus, the need for total consensus can paralyze your group. One person will be able to obstruct decisions.

C.T. Butler, in a highly recommended guidebook called “On Conflict and Consensus” (see Bibliography) encourages peace and justice groups to come within one vote of consensus. Other organizations use Robert’s Rule of Order (which everyone should know equally well, otherwise they can be used by a few to manipulate a meeting), Majority Voting, or Modified Consensus Models. If your group is not in favor of consensus, look at the rules of other decision making structures.

A “facilitator” guides the process of building consensus. Choose a facilitator and a note-taker at the very beginning of your meeting. A facilitator makes it possible for others to conduct the discussion, but refrains from stating his/her own opinions and so should refrain from this role if s/he has a lot of input. Beware of a strong chair who dominates your meetings.

Proposal initiation varies from group to group. Some allow proposals to be introduced by individuals; others collectively brainstorm and present proposals based on an intensive discussion of ideas. Once you present a proposal, here is a possible model for decision making:

- 1) Introduce the proposal.
- 2) As a group, talk about the proposal, its strengths, weaknesses, relation to your organization, etc.
- 3) Improve the proposal as ideas come about. Agree upon these as they come up.
- 4) Take a trial vote, if it is unanimous, the proposal is approved.  
Now move on to planning the logistics of the action, events, or initiative just passed.
- 5) People who object, if not unanimous, should state their concerns.

A true consensus model encourages the proposal to be modified until there is no more than one unhappy person, but in large organizations or in newly constituted groups this can be very inefficient. Your organization must decide how much support will be needed to approve proposals. It is best to use the beginning stages of consensus for any decision. How to deal with dissent is a group decision that you should feel comfortable using for all meetings.

### Encouraging Democratic Participation

The facilitator is also responsible for observing the process in the room. If attention is not paid to who is speaking, your peace and justice group may be controlled by the input of a vocal few. This is a situation that you want to avoid. If a few people dominate the facilitator can implement some of these devices to make sure everyone’s input is heard:

Only accept comments from those who have not spoken

Have a “go-round.” Go around the room and ask every person to state an opinion on a key question

Alternate between men and women, if this is possible and applicable

Take “straw polls”

Ask if people need a break

Break up into smaller groups and then report back to the whole

Have another person keep time so that you can focus on facilitating

Be sure to rotate the facilitator and note-taker so that all members of your group pick up these skills; every year you could hold a training so that new members can more easily pick up these and other skills. [Note: For more information on consensus decision-making, we highly recommend “On Conflict & Consensus,” listed in the Bibliography.]

#### Planning an Event

**Public events** are one way that you can raise consciousness around a specific issue, cause discussion of your issue on campus, broadcast opposition to a government or corporate policy, or win new recruits. While there are many kinds of events Q panel discussions, film showings, outdoor rallies, benefit concerts, speakers, etc. Q they all demand the same general principles of planning and execution.

**Panel Discussions** are excellent ways to generate dialogue around a specific issue. A panel discussion is typically a series of invited speakers who each make 5-10 minute presentations on a topic, then take questions from each other and the audience. It is important for panel discussions to be well-framed and topical. Invite professors at your school and prominent local activists.

**Film Showings** are excellent ways to educate current activists and to recruit uninvolved students. Show political documentaries or feature films with a socially-conscious theme, either on a TV or, if available, your campus movie theater. The film could be used as a build up to a larger action (be sure to announce the action before and after the film starts). You can also order pizza and invite people to stay after the film to discuss it.

**Band benefits** are both great fundraising events and a way to reach out to new constituencies. The important rule of thumb with band benefits is to plan to make much more than you invested. Try to get everything donated: performance space, sound equipment, bands, food. If a club owner or musician is reluctant to donate an evening, then rap with them about the important work that you are doing and how social justice groups can't function without money. Tell them that it's what they can do for the

movement, which is the truth. Afterwards, thank the bands and owners, and offer to take them out to dinner so they will be receptive to working with you in the future. During the show, be sure to schedule short and punchy political speeches while the bands are setting up, and make a pitch to raise more money, but remember that people are there to have fun. If you can, display a large banner behind the bands that advertises the name of your group and the issue you are raising money for.

**Informational Pickets** can be used to keep an issue in the news and to reach out to people involved in a particular institution or business (e.g., picketing outside of a weapons plant will enable you to talk to the employees). All you need is a dozen or more participants with signs and leaflets, who are willing to walk in circles for an hour, two hours, or all day. Sometimes, it is best to work in shifts. Consult with a lawyer or experienced activist to find out the local laws that regulate picketing. Hold signs, pass out literature, but most of all, talk to passerby in a nonthreatening and informative way. If your picket is part of a boycott effort, then be persistent, regular, and creative, to keep the boycott target off-balance and pressured.

**Outdoor Rallies** can garner considerable attention for your issue through the media, bring new people out of the woodwork, and empower people already involved in an issue. A large and militant rally will make the powers-that-be very nervous, and therefore more accountable. All you need to organize a rally is a few people who have something meaningful to say, and a microphone. In some locations, you may need to get a rally permit; look into it and get one well in advance of the rally itself. Rallies work best if you can mix substantive speeches with music and participatory exercises to loosen up the crowd (“What do we want?” “Tuition Freeze!” “When do we want it?” “Now!”). You can schedule and advertise several speakers in advance, then follow with an open-mic discussion, or you can just stick with one speaker schedule. Remember to circulate a sign-up sheet; be sure to announce your next meeting more than once! Be sure that representation of women and people of color on your speakers’ list at least matches that of your campus. Ask other activists, or the women’s studies program, or your chaplain’s office if you need suggestions for potential speakers.

1) Setting Goals: Public events are often the result of inspired brainstorming sessions, but when the dust settles, a difficult question must be asked: what are our goals for this event? Your group should set concrete goals for attendance and intended impact. This will give direction to your planning and a criteria for evaluating the event.

2) Planning: Now that you have an idea and a set of goals, you should define your event. Why are you doing it? Who is it for? Where is it? When is it? After thorough planning, you may want to revise your goals.

3) Dividing up responsibilities: Make a list of everything that will need to be done and divide up responsibilities among members of the group: getting a rally permit, reserving rooms, filling out forms for student government, making food, etc. Core members and leaders should be sure to delegate tasks, so that one small clique doesn’t end up

monopolizing all the power and burning themselves out. If possible, devise a system to back up people who don't follow through with their responsibilities.

4) Logistics, organizing, and networking: Reserve rooms and get permits well in advance; make sure that speakers know what they will be speaking on; arrange transportation for participants. Ask other organizations on your campus to endorse the event or help to organize it. This will build support for your action and broaden its impact.

5) Outreach/Publicity: See pages 9 and 11 of this guide for Publicity and Media suggestions

6) Last minute preparation: What needs to be done on the day of the event? Make sure that a designated group of activists know what they need to do: calling the media, microphone, setup/ cleanup, literature/donation/ signup table, food, etc.

7) Evaluation: This step is sometimes skipped because of exhaustion, but it is important for the core organizers to sit down and engage in self-criticism: What did we do right? What could we do better? This will build the cohesiveness of your group and allow you to improve your public events over time.

### Researching your Campus

The previous section of this guide provides an introduction to organizing events. Holding good events is a very educational and rewarding activity in itself, but is not all there is to organizing. How can you plan out your action each semester for maximum impact? Can you design your initial activities to prepare the campus for later events? Can you anticipate and respond to any backlash? Can you measure your success? You will be better able to do all of these things if your events are mapped out as part of a campaign.

A campaign is a series of activities (tactics) designed to achieve medium and long-term goals. Campaigns are more likely to be successful if your entire group has an opportunity to be involved in the planning process. To share ownership in the planning process, we must adopt some common terminology when talking about our campaign organizing. A goal is something your group wants to achieve. An example of a goal is getting your school to freeze tuition, or getting 1,000 students to sign a petition. Short term goals are things which you can do within a month, like obtaining the petition signatures. Another example of a short-term goal is to be allowed to construct a shanty-town on campus without interference from your administration.

Tactics are the tools you use to meet your goals. Doing a petition drive is a tactic. Obtaining 1,000 signatures is a goal. Holding a band benefit is a tactic. Raising \$500 is a goal. Tactics can be very small things too, like postering, leafletting, showing a movie, or sending a letter to the school paper.

The distinction between goals and tactics can be confusing because you may need to achieve small goals in order to employ certain tactics. For example, you might choose the construction of a shantytown as a tactic toward achieving the goal of educating your

campus about the conditions of poverty many people face each day. You can't just go out alone with a pile of lumber and start building however, because many people, including the campus police, might question or oppose what you are doing. So (unless there are 1,000 people in your group) you must first achieve the goal of getting students and the administration to understand or accept your decision to build the shantytown. So you might choose the tactic of sending a letter signed by 10 different student organizations to your college president urging that the shantytown construction be allowed. However, before you can send such a letter, you will need to meet a goal of getting 10 student organizations to sign on to it.

We could break this down even further (some important groups might be reluctant to sign on or would need to take a vote so you would use tactics to convince them or you would go ahead without their endorsement). But let's stop here.

The point is that social change is not instant and your organizing does not occur in a vacuum, so you have to come up with a plan that will build support for what you want over time. And you may need to be flexible, because hurdles may be placed in your path by your opponents. When you are figuring out this plan you are strategizing. Your strategy is the approach you take to meeting your medium and long-term goals. It is the blueprint for your campaign.

#### Ideas for Strategizing

You may wish to set aside a few hours to strategize at a time other than your regular meeting Q perhaps a Saturday afternoon. Some ideas: Using "butcher paper" (big sheets of brown paper) or large newsprint and some markers, conduct a brainstorming session to identify your medium and long-term goals. Then come up with a list of tactics for achieving those goals. You may wish to use a common brainstorming model, such as the Strategy Chart developed by the Midwest Academy (see Bibliography).

After you narrow down the list of goals to a few you can work on in the next semester or two, make a timeline, including events beyond your control (spring break, holidays, election day, etc.), actions and events you have planned, and all preparations and deadlines leading up to them. Adjust your timeline to make it realistic and to maximize your effectiveness.

With the timeline in front of your entire group, this is a perfect time to delegate tasks, projects, and responsibilities among your members. Make sure that someone records everything on paper so that people confirm what they signed up to do.

During the campaign: Periodically review timeline and revise if necessary.

After the campaign: Look back at your goals, tactics, and timeline and do a thorough group evaluation. Get written comments from everyone who was involved and even from some observers. Save this evaluation and the charts. Review them when you plan a new campaign. An organization that doesn't learn from its past strategies keeps on making the same mistakes.

To anticipate the opposition's actions: Pretend you are them and hold a strategy session from their perspective. How would you effectively counter your own campaign? Identify weaknesses and adjust your own strategy accordingly. Thinking and planning strategically can make the difference between ho-hum campaigns that get no attention and dynamic, creative campaigns that excite people, build your organization, and create real change.

### Publicity Techniques

“He who controls the present controls the past. He who controls the past controls the future.” Q George Orwell, 1984 In our peace or justice activism, we are often accused of naivete or idealism. Progressive people are dismissed as “emotional” and “uninformed,” even when we are articulate and knowledgeable on numerous issues. Meanwhile, the powers that be are often portrayed as objective purveyors of truth and fact.

Much of what we see in the media is written by those with money and power. How we perceive the world is largely determined by how such media portray it. It is difficult to call attention to problems when those responsible for them are able to frame the discussion around them.

One essential tool of activists is research. By doing research, we can expose what's going on behind closed doors. We can pressure those in power through such exposure. And we can build support for our cause by showing people the facts they wouldn't otherwise see and demonstrating our credibility.

Research can be as simple as going to the school library or clipping news paper articles. You can get an amazing amount of information just by asking institutions for data. For example, if your administration wants to raise tuition, call them up and ask them to send you the facts behind the increase, including information on financial aid, teacher salaries, and investments.

If you go to a public university, this information should be easy to obtain. If the administration denies you the information you need, then this becomes a political issue and can be made part of your campaign: “what are they hiding?”

For campus organizing, it may be useful to answer some questions about your school. The answers may help you understand “where the money is coming from,” “who pulls the strings” on your campus, and what issues your group might choose to work on.

In many ways, information is power, and being able to access information is an essential democratic right. Getting this information can be very difficult. People who benefit from withholding certain facts will often try to prevent you from getting it, such as by ignoring your requests.

Most students do not realize that they are often legally entitled to many records and data, through the Freedom of Information Act and other laws. You may need to file Freedom of Information Act requests (FOIA's) to get certain documents. There are several manuals that will help you understand this process, such as “Manual of Corporate



Investigation,” “Tapping Officials’ Secrets,” “Research Methodology Guide,” “Raising Hell,” “The Military in Your Backyard,” and “The Opposition Research Handbook.” Please see the bibliography for more information about these guides.

Filing FOIA’s can be a long process, but can yield amazing results. For instance, you can find out how university research is being used by corporations or the government, how much certain alumni or corporations are donating, what pesticides and chemicals your universities use, what animal testing they are engaged in, how much your administrators are paid, etc.

Once you shed light on the wheelings and dealings of campus officials, they may find it more difficult to carry out their regressive agenda or to undermine yours. By doing and publicizing such research, your movement will also expand its own power, gaining both confidence and members. Activists have used this information to win successful campaigns in the past. For example, student activists in Arizona and Michigan were able, through FOIA information, to stop the investing of their universities into the construction of a telescope on Mount Graham, on sacred Native American land in Arizona.

What information you can find about your school

List of lawsuits against your school

Property owned by your school and its staff Investment portfolio;  
university budget

Listing of research contracts on campus Activists with 20-year history of the community

Property transactions made by your school

Names of activists on campus 10-30 years ago whom you can invite to speak to your group

Names of high donors to your school Salaries of top university officials

Political contributions made by professors

Media and Press Releases

The impact of any event or action your group plans can be greatly enhanced by media attention. Larger events relevant to the surrounding community can reach an audience of hundreds of thousands if covered by a TV station or daily paper. Media attention can put you in contact with people in your community working on similar issues who will lend support.

A good rule of thumb is to spend 10% of your organizing time on attracting press. For small events, you need spend only a few minutes on press outreach. Send a personal note to an editor you know at your campus paper and follow up with a few calls. For large events, consider the likelihood of coverage from each news source on your media list before wasting paper and time. Remember that some TV stations have no news on weekends, that daily newspapers run small issues on Saturdays and Mondays, and that “big name” reporters schedule their assignments as much as two weeks in advance.

Suggestions for attracting the media to larger campus events

Make a list of places to send press releases. Include the “Assignment Desk” at all local TV news stations (including cable) and daily newspapers. Include the “news editor” at key campus publications, local weekly papers, and radio stations with big news departments. Also include the “News Desk” and “Photo desk” at the nearest offices of Associated Press and UPI. Finally, add any “education journalists” specifically assigned to cover events at your campus as well as weekly TV news shows. Call in advance to get the names of these people. For each outlet, include its name, address, phone number, and fax number in your list.

10 days before your event, mail a press advisory to weekly papers or TV shows and follow up in 3 days.

Mail your press release to the entire list so that it will arrive 3 business days before your event and call them 2 days before the event. Use a formal, upbeat style. Don’t read a long pitch. Pause frequently, so that the reporter will have a chance to give you feedback. That way you can tell whether he or she is actually considering covering your event. Make sure you take neat notes on whether the reaction you get is “no way,” “maybe,” or “probably.”

The day of the event, call each media outlet (except weeklies) in their first hour of business for the day (5:30am for radio, 7am for TV, 8am for daily newspapers. If they don’t know about the event, offer to fax them the press release and make sure you have access to a fax machine. Write down those you expect to come.

At your event, staff a table marked “PRESS.” Hand each reporter literature and sign them in so that you can find out later if they run a story.

Befriend and cultivate good relations with the media. If possible, designate one person to follow up with reporters who seemed particularly receptive.

### Press Release Suggestions

A press release should include the rationale for an event, what you are trying to change, and all relevant information that you would want to be considered by a journalist, but keep it brief. Include your strongest facts or stances. Reporters may use your exact words and text of your release. One page with all event information is standard. At the top of your press release, include the date you want the information to first be announced (usually the day of the event, never later). Immediately below, include the names of at least two press spokespeople, one of which must be available during business hours. Right below that, write the title, time, date, location, directions, and names of participants in your event.

Have a group of people has a review the drafts of the press release. This group will be able to divide the work of followup calls.

The body of your release should be written in clear simple English, with short sentences so that it could be read on the air. The first sentence should describe the whole event: "Two hundred students rallied today at the University of Buffalo to demand a 50% reduction in their tuition, which is now \$15,000 per year." The rest of the release should explain everything so simply and clearly that your aunt or your grandfather would understand what you were trying to accomplish.

What about press conferences?

A press conference is a formal presentation of your case designed exclusively for the press. The key question to ask when deciding whether to have a press conference is, "Will reporters come?" You will be best off when there is some other big event (perhaps organized by the university) to which your press conference can serve as a form of "counterdemonstration." Or when a big story that has been brewing for weeks or months finally breaks, such as the results of a campus referendum. A press conference announcement only needs to be one page long, usually with the information about time, location, topic, participants, etc. spelled out in outline form. Make sure reporters receive it two days before the event. Followup calls should be made to key reporters and then on the morning of the event.