

STUDENT GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES THAT FOCUS ON SPECIFIC INTERESTS OR IDENTITIES CAN HELP REDUCE FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND INCREASE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING. THE GROUPS OFTEN INVOLVE SHARED VALUES AND OBJECTIVES, AND ARE PLACES WHERE MEMBERS CAN DISCUSS CHALLENGES THEY ENCOUNTER AND STRATEGIES FOR HOW TO ADDRESS THEM.

Related Resources:

#### **Connect with ACM**

The Association for Computing Machinery offers information on how to form a student chapter of ACM's Committee on Women in Computing (ACM-W) on your campus.

[acm.org/chapters/students/form-acmw](https://acm.org/chapters/students/form-acmw)

#### **See how student groups—and other strategies for enhancing community and belonging—fit within a broader system approach:**

NCWIT Undergraduate Programs System Model  
[undergraduate-tij.ncwit.org](https://undergraduate-tij.ncwit.org)

#### **Other tips for increasing student success and belonging:**

Top 10 Ways You Can Retain Students in Computing  
[ncwit.org/resource/top10retainstudents](https://ncwit.org/resource/top10retainstudents)



**WAYS TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN  
COMPUTING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS  
ON YOUR CAMPUS**

[ncwit.org](https://ncwit.org)

# TOP 10 WAYS TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN COMPUTING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ON YOUR CAMPUS

## 1 PREPARE:

**REMEMBER THAT ESTABLISHING STUDENT GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD BE ONE PART OF A LARGER, MULTI-PRONGED STRATEGIC PLAN TO BUILD COMMUNITY WITHIN YOUR COMPUTING PROGRAMS.**

These groups should not be seen as the sole driver for change or student support on your campus. Student groups, such as Women in Computing or Coding Across Disciplines, should help build community.

**RECOGNIZE THAT SOME STUDENTS MAY NOT WANT OR BE ABLE TO JOIN A STUDENT GROUP OR ORGANIZATION.**

Not all students will want to join a group that focuses on specific interests or shared identities because they find support and community through other activities or groups. Students who commute to campus, hold off-campus employment, have family responsibilities, etc. may be limited in their on-campus involvement. Therefore, the computing group or organization should be one of several avenues for engaging with peers and building connections within the computing department.

## 2

**IF THE STUDENT GROUP IS CENTERED ON A SPECIFIC IDENTITY OR CHARACTERISTIC (E.G., WOMEN IN COMPUTING), REMEMBER THAT MEMBERSHIP SHOULD STILL BE OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS WITHIN THE COMPUTING DEPARTMENT.**

While a wide body of research points to the benefits of interest and identity-specific communities for students, organizations should be open to all students within the department.

## 3 CREATE:

**ENGAGE A GROUP OF INTERESTED STUDENTS AND ADVISERS.**

You need a handful of dedicated students, and at least one adviser, who will commit the needed time and energy. To build interest, engage students in discussions of their shared experiences, challenges, and opportunities. Motivate students to join by highlighting the value that the student group or organization brings to their communities.

## 4

**MAKE THE GROUP OFFICIAL.**

Official standing legitimizes the time and effort student leaders invest in organizing group activities and helps qualify the group to use campus facilities and obtain funding. Your institution may also have guidelines for student chapters, groups, and organizations—be sure to check in with your college/school, student affairs office, and/or student government for processes and procedures.

Steps might include forming an executive board of officers to assume primary responsibility for steering the group. The E-Board should be representative of the overall group and recruit and encourage new members to assume leadership positions. Another might be establishing a charter to give your group direction and communicate the group's goals, expectations, and structure to others. Charters of similar student groups or organizations groups at peer institutions can serve as examples.

## 5

**MAINTAIN:**

**GET ACTIVE AND STAY THAT WAY.**

Activities in the first year might focus on building members' sense of belonging. But increase impact by sponsoring a broad range of activities—for instance, an informal launch party, tech talks and "code-athons," or workshops to ensure consistent engagement among a wide swath of members.

**CREATE A PUBLIC PRESENCE.**

The student organization can create a website with information about group activities and meetings, as well as use social media to keep members connected and informed. "Low-tech" broadcasting methods, such as posting flyers in prominent locations across campus or announcements in courses, are effective in drawing attention of non-members.

**RECRUIT MEMBERS ON AN ONGOING BASIS.**

Members are natural ambassadors to convey your group's importance and positive impact. Actively recruit at freshman orientation and in introductory classes; on social networking sites, department websites, and on flyers posted in residence halls and around the building; and

hold an open house at the beginning of every semester. Consider connecting with university-level offices to identify recruiting opportunities.

**CONNECT AND COLLABORATE WITH LIKE-MINDED ORGANIZATIONS OFF-CAMPUS.**

To gain traction, work with other student groups and consider affiliating with a national professional organization. Affiliating with a professional organization such as ACM-W gives your group instant recognition, helps expand membership, and connects it to analogous groups at schools nationwide.

**RECOGNIZE MEMBERS FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.**

Recognition can take many forms: a simple congratulatory email that cc's administrators, faculty, and peers; an article in a department or professional society newsletter; a posting on a networking website; or an award at a public ceremony. Recognizing members goes a long way to increase their self-esteem and confidence. It signals that their work is both valued and rewarded, inspires others to follow their lead, and enhances the group's visibility and stature.