

ICMA Student Chapter Reactivation Guide

ICMA Student Chapters are comprised of eager, future public service leaders who have decided to take their learning a step beyond the classroom, get involved in their surrounding communities, and make connections with current public service professionals. However, the natural flow of students in and out of universities and programs can make maintaining a chapter and keeping momentum difficult. Organizational participation often wanes and waxes with each passing semester. Chapters can use this guide to reactivate a chapter during periods of low participation and low activity.

Reimagine.

- Revisit/redevelop your chapter's charter and bylaws. Oftentimes chapters crumble at their foundations. Making changes to the chapter's core documents can make all the difference in the world; and it's a great place to start. Although the chapter was founded before you became a member, in some instances you must approach governing the chapter as a brand-new undertaking. Don't be afraid to throw things out or add things.
 - Although only a president is required, it is a good idea to create or reimagine an ICMA Student Chapter board. Each seat in the board should be equally as important as the next and duties should be established upfront. This creates buy-in among everyone on the board. One person can't run the chapter on their own. Collaborative leadership will be key.

Refocus.

- A strategic plan may be the next step for your chapter. Some of the most successful chapters attribute their success to a commitment to a strategic plan. It may be a tedious process, but it will come in handy, especially during leadership transitions.
 - Be sure the plan will get the chapter through at least one leadership transition. It will help guide the next board and will give them time to get in the swing of things before they must develop a plan of their own.
 - It's okay to be ambitious in your plan, but it's important to be realistic too. Set goals that will push your chapter, but won't knock it down if they aren't achieved.

Reconnect.

- Now that your board is all in and there is a strategic plan in place, it's time to focus on your program and/or college/university, and local governments in the area.
 - Be sure to tap into any funds that are available to student organizations from your school. It's free money! You can also work with your university to find out if there are any other ways to access funding for student organizations.
- Rebuild the chapter's relationship with its mentor. Oftentimes individuals that have agreed to mentor are active members of ICMA. Get that relationship going again. You will need their advice, their connections, and their influence.

- If your mentor isn't available to the chapter anymore, contact ICMA for suggestions for a new mentor.
- Is local government management an afterthought in your program? This is quite common. In the past, chapters have worked with the deans of their colleges to use chapter activities to fill the local government gaps in the curriculum.
- Some students already have an ICMA membership. Find them. Do your best to get them involved with the student chapter. Don't be afraid to use the free membership as one of your selling points.
- Program and chapter alumni can be great resources to you. Reach out to them and let them know you welcome any help they are willing to offer. Note: Using alumni as speakers at events is a good way to engage them and mitigate costs for the chapter.
 - There are other creative ways to involve chapter and program alumni. Chapters have opted to create alumni boards that advise them. These boards can be involved in several processes, including the selection of new board members.
- Reach out to your state association. You're already on their radar and they are constantly searching for ways to engage students in your state. Why wait on them to reach out to you? These organizations are great resources for funding, partnerships, scholarships, ideas, etc.
 - Try to organize networking/coaching sessions with association members, chapter members, and other students in your program.
 - Propose initiatives/events that benefit association members and students.
- Partner with chapters at other schools. There are so many student chapters at ICMA and all of them are eager to collaborate. Joint initiatives and events are among some of the most successful chapter events. If you aren't close enough for that type of collaboration, other chapters are always good for ideas and advice.

Reenergize.

- Never underestimate the power of word of mouth. It's free, and it works. Most of your future members don't even know your chapter exists yet.
- Get as much visibility as possible on and off campus. (Local events included.)
- Celebrate small successes. They are successes, nonetheless, and usually aren't as small as they seem.
- Sometimes, focusing on the general public is worthwhile. Your student body is important, but events/efforts do not always have to be student-only or student-focused. Events that include the general public can lead to sponsorships, scholarships, and so much more.
- Use events for multiple purposes. Recruit. Educate. Collaborate. Sometimes you can do it all in one event.

- Use topics and issues discussed in your classes as themes for panels and other events. This is a foolproof way to get support from students in your program who are not members of the chapter. It is also a way to entice them to join.
- Include your online students in chapter activities. They're students too! Not including them in planning, events, etc. can be a big mistake. Find ways for them to contribute and make sure they are just as committed as students who take classes on-campus.
- Don't be afraid of the more traditional student organization events. Study sessions, resume reviews, panels, etc. work. Don't be afraid to organize these events with or without your chapter's own spin.