

THE MIRACLE OF CO-SPONSORSHIPS: Save Budgets While Creating Campus Unity

By Andy Masters

Unless your campus works with an UNLIMITED programming budget, most programming boards are always looking for creative ways to stretch their dollar to get the best entertainers and speakers on campus. Co-sponsorships with other campus groups are a GREAT way to help solve this problem, but they aren't explored quite enough. Programming boards must take initiative to create such teamwork in providing new and different programs, which are also cost-effective for the campus. So, why should co-sponsorships be such an important part of your programming plan?

There are several key benefits in pursuing co-sponsorships on your campus:

- 1) Allows more expensive acts to become financially feasible, that you may not otherwise be able to afford on your programming budget alone.
- 2) Promotes teamwork among campus organizations to help organize and promote the event—and programming boards don't always have to “do all the work.”
- 3) Can often bring greater attendance, since separate organizations often reach out to entirely different audiences on campus.

There are many different co-sponsorship avenues available for campus programs that you may or may not be aware of. Many acts are a natural fit for co-sponsorships in which more than one campus group may have a direct interest in booking. For instance, the cultural band *Pieces of East* offers an entertaining brand of music, but with a very cultural and educational twist. Their music blends Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Indian cultures—and the group educates the audience on the music during their sets.

At a recent APCA Regional Conference in Philadelphia, *Pieces of East* earned over a dozen bookings from colleges who loved their music, but who also saw the international and cultural impact of the program. Many programming boards were able to take advantage of budgets earmarked solely for cultural acts, while other boards worked to arrange co-sponsorships with another group or department on campus.

The popular jazz duet *Davis and Dow* is another example of an act whose interest spreads across several disciplines. This talented act highlights historical jazz divas such as Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holliday, but also “teach” a bit about the history as they intro each song. Sponsoring this group with cultural organizations, or even the music department, is another example of being able to “kill two birds with one stone.”

Many speakers and entertainers have arrangements that provide a no-cost or low-cost second showing of their program. For instance, I often get inquiries from Orientation coordinators who work in conjunction with Greek organizations, or even the Career Center, to provide a second same-day program at no extra charge. One could be scheduled in the afternoon, and another in

the evening, for example, and can either offer a repeat performance, or a completely separate program. Both sponsoring groups can then split the cost of the paid program, making the program half as expensive as originally thought. Be sure to investigate these options with future speaker and entertainer bookings.

The athletic department can get involved, as well, with programs or events that are geared toward athletes. This can include programming on leadership, time management, or pure entertainment centered around a sporting event, such as homecoming. Athletic departments often have budgets that are often earmarked for such programs, and can even be required by their student-athletes.

Co-sponsorships can even go beyond teaming up with another campus group. Many career events, for example, seek out corporate sponsorships to help finance the event—and they can even help draw attendance. Most corporations offer giveaways that students can receive for attending the event, often including valuable prizes. Consider what local employer might have a vested interest in your event, or what major corporation is trying to reach the exact same target market.

Examples include the music industry, credit/finance industry, video game industry, and car insurance industry—as all are notorious for spending big money to reach college markets. You'd be surprised at the PR budgets companies have for programs geared towards community or educational outreach. Gaining the opportunity to work with actual PR professionals also provides a great experience to those on programming boards to witness how events and promotions work in the real world.

There are many creative resources available to brainstorm in regards to co-sponsorships on your campus. Therefore, your group should plan to reach out to *at least* one new group per semester to encourage a co-sponsored event. It will give a boost to your programming, develop a team atmosphere with other campus groups, and hopefully help create a well-attended and successful event—without busting your budget!

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