



## Membership Building

### Introduction

The United Nations Association of the USA is a grassroots chapter based association dedicated to building understanding of and support for the ideals and work of the UN among the American people. United States' support for the UN grows stronger with each UNA-USA member! Whether you're a campus or community chapter, membership engagement is an important part of your activities. This toolkit provides guidance and suggestions for UNA-USA chapters to build large, diverse, and engaged memberships.

### Why Chapters Must Focus on Membership

*Seven reasons why chapters must work hard to recruit and retain members.*

- 1. More Local Resources:** Increasing your membership means that your chapter has a larger pool of talent, ideas, and resources. With more members it is easier to fill vacant leadership positions and to find fresh ideas. It is also easier to raise funds to further develop your chapter.
- 2. More Financial Resources:** For community chapter, with each membership payment UNA-USA receives half of the revenue is returned to the local chapter. The more members that your chapter recruits, the more income your chapter will receive from UNA-USA.
- 3. More Americans Understand the UN:** The UN can be difficult to comprehend, even for people who follow international affairs. UNA-USA members have information at their finger-tips to help them cut through the jargon and understand the UN's many activities and agencies.
- 4. More Americans Express Support for the UN:** Polls and studies show that the majority of Americans support the work of the UN, but most are not vocal in their support. UNA-USA members not only receive information about the UN but they learn how to effectively speak-up for the institution. It is easier to mobilize UNA-USA members than unaffiliated supporters when critics make misinformed political attacks against the UN.
- 5. More Members Will Make UNA-USA a Greater Political Force:** Associations with more members have more clout in Washington, D.C. Groups with tens or hundreds of thousands of members frequently affect policy decisions and debates. More members mean more respect for UNA-USA as an organization and your chapter's efforts will help make this a reality.
- 6. More Will Care About UNA-USA:** Members feel a greater sense of ownership in UNA-USA than people who merely attend events without joining. By recruiting members and involving them in chapter activities, you are recruiting people who will care about the local chapter and the entire association.



**7. More Members Mean Your Chapter Can Attract More Attention:** As a small group, few people know what you are doing, but as you strengthen your membership, other organizations and local media outlets tend to pay more attention.

## **Why Become a Member of UNA-USA?**

*Below are brief points you can use to discuss the benefits of joining UNA-USA.*

### **Gain exclusive access to information about the UN and its causes**

UNA-USA members receive timely information about the United Nations through *UNA Today*, our online newsletter. In addition, you have access to UNA's Global Engagement Summit event at the UN Headquarters where you hear from UN officials and other experts.

### **Help build support for the UN among the American people and elected officials**

It's easy to talk, but taking action gets things done. You can act by joining local and regional events hosted by UNA-USA's chapters and Divisions across the country. Without your involvement in these local educational events, misperceptions about the UN can persist. As a member of UNA-USA, you can work to inform and shape public opinion at the most fundamental level. Through our advocacy campaigns as well as through our relationships with some of the country's top decision makers, you can help keep the pressure on to make sure that U.S. support for the UN stays alive.

According to Former US Ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, *"The UN is only as good as the US commitment,"* and, *"The UN cannot succeed if the US does not support it."* Unfortunately, this commitment has fallen short at times in the form of late payments and the under-funding of important efforts such as peacekeeping operations. Through our advocacy campaigns as well as through our relationships with some of the country's top decision makers, you can help keep the pressure on to make sure that US support for the UN stays alive.

### **Demonstrate that the American people long for positive engagement**

In the highly globalized and vastly interdependent 21st century, you know the world needs positive engagement from the US government. One of the most vital tools in ensuring that commitment is the UN. In recognition that change often comes from the bottom up, we individual citizens must personally demonstrate the engagement we would like to see our leaders pursue. As Mahatma Gandhi said, *"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."* There is no greater way to send a message urging cooperation and dialogue than for you to join an internationally-minded civil society organization such as UNA-USA.

### **Join a community of like-minded individuals**

Let's face it, not everyone shares our views on what would make the world a better place. That's fine; discourse between individuals is what makes for a vibrant democracy. But isn't it good to



brainstorm and converse with people that agree with you on core issues such as the value of diplomacy and participation in international organizations? By becoming a member of UNA-USA, you are introduced to a network of like-minded individuals that have the energy and inspiration necessary to promote the work of the UN at the grassroots level.

### **Promote UNA-USA programs to develop global citizens**

Programs such as Global Classrooms educate younger members and support the next generation of leaders, ensuring that they are fully aware of the global implications and contexts of their decisions.

### **Help UNA-USA offer vital experience for young professionals**

The UNA-USA Young Professionals program provides emerging leaders with resources to act on issues of national and global importance. Your involvement enables hosting events, coordinating fundraising programs, and at national and international conferences, members 21 to 40 years of age hone the skills and knowledge to become the next group of global leaders.

*By becoming a member of UNA-USA, you show your family, friends, community, and elected officials that you care about the United Nations and its causes.*

## **Tips to Growing Chapter Membership**

*Chapters are encouraged to use these guidelines to help structure their overall membership programs.*

**Members are the most important part of UNA-USA, and building membership is the most important responsibility of our chapters!**

Polls show that more than 86% of registered voters support U.S. involvement in the UN. With your help we can mobilize this majority to voice their opinions and actively support the UN in the United States by becoming members of UNA-USA.

### **What inspires people to become members?**

**Support of the United Nations and its causes** – The one thread that connects all UNA-USA members is their connection and support of the United Nations. However, the majority of UNA-USA members are content simply mailing a yearly membership payment and do not take advantage of chapter or national membership benefits. People often refer to these types of members as “inactive,” but in reality, these individuals are showing their support by annually making a membership payment.

**Ethical** – Many UNA-USA members, especially our younger members, join the organization because they want to make a difference in the world. This type of member is looking for



opportunities to work on projects, engage in the local community, fundraise for an international project, or advocate for the UN.

**Professional** - Some people want to develop new skills, network, build leadership qualities, embrace learning opportunities, and have valuable experiences that will help them learn about possible career tracks. Make it clear that membership in UNA-USA can provide them with this invaluable experience. UNA-USA gives members the chance to challenge themselves, take on important tasks, and actively learn about the work of the UN.

**Social** - Some people join to meet others with similar values and interests, make new friends, and have fun. Others may join to work on issues that appeal to them personally. To make the chapter more appealing to outsiders, plan varied activities and provide opportunities for members to get to know each other.

**Intellectual** – Some people join organizations such as UNA-USA because of a general curiosity about the world and an eagerness to learn about current events. These types of members tend to be at the end of their careers or in retirement. These members are most likely to attend events, book-clubs, and seminars.

## Recommendations to build membership

### Be organized and diligent

- Establish a Membership Committee within your chapter. The responsibility of this committee is to establish membership goals and strategies and discuss potential membership challenges. While membership growth is the particular focus of this committee, building membership is the responsibility of the entire chapter.
- The Membership Committee should work with the National Office to ensure that the chapter's membership records are up-to-date. The committee should also track when memberships are scheduled to expire and invite those members to renew.
- The committee should also keep a list of prospective members that may be interested in joining the organization and should directly invite those individuals to join.

### Be proactive

Create exclusive member experiences at all public events. Members want to feel like they pay membership dues for a reason. You may implement such tactics as:

- Member/Non-member Fees at Events



- Special Seating for Members at all Events
- A reception or meet-and-greet with speakers and panelists before or after events
- Membership information should be given to every person who attends a chapter event. A laptop should also be available at the chapter's event registration table for members to join on-the-spot at [www.unausa.org/join](http://www.unausa.org/join).
- Develop relationships with other local NGOs to co-sponsor events and pursue similar interests.
- Scan local newspapers for the names of influential community leaders; invite them to a meeting, and later follow-up with them via written letter or phone call asking them to join.
- Publicize your events and programs within your community by displaying UNA-USA information at community centers and public spaces. Make sure that the mission and message of UNA-USA is clear at all public events.
- Utilize internationally recognized days such as UN Day, Human Rights Day, and International Women's Day, for public events and membership building.
- *Remember*—people do not join unless you ask them to! Have a sign-in sheet at all events and follow-up by asking them to join.
- Establish a web and social media presence through low-cost formats such as Facebook and Twitter. Update any created page regularly with tips on how people can get involved.

### **Make new members feel welcome**

Many UNA-USA members can be depended on to renew their memberships every year without too much effort from chapters. This is because they have a long history of support of UNA-USA and understand its benefits. Recent research shows that it takes three years of constant communication to new members to reach the level of effortless renewals. **It is important to show new members the most support the first three years of their membership to your chapter.**

- Reach out to new members as soon as you receive notice from UNA-USA. Make a personal phone call or send a hand-written letter or email welcoming them to you chapter.
- Educate new members about UNA-USA by establishing a member mentorship program.
- Invite new members to read fact sheets and talking points about the UN by visiting UNA-USA resource page.
- Celebrate new members! Introduce new members at a board meeting or event to the rest of your chapter.
- Have a "Member Spotlight" in your electronic newsletter or online where you highlight one member per month, and ask him or her to address why they joined UNA-USA.

### **Engage all members in recruitment**

- Create a "Bring a Guest" day for all members.



- Offer incentives to those members who recruit new members, such as a free registration to a chapter event or program. Recognize those members who recruit new members in the chapter's newsletter or on its website.
- Conduct a Membership Survey! Ask members to write down the names of friends, neighbors, colleagues, and business acquaintances that may be approached as prospective members.
- Invite Model UN groups from high schools and colleges to give a presentation at meetings.
- **At the end of each year, re-evaluate your membership growth strategy and make changes where necessary.**

## How to Recruit and Retain Students

*Youth members are commonly regarded as the future of UNA-USA, below are points on how to attract and keep them as members.*

Most students qualify for our free youth membership, which is open to individuals who are 25 years of age or younger.

### **Suggested methods for attracting student:**

- Develop relationships with faculty members at local high schools and universities. Students may come and go, but professors and teachers offer a longer-term link to possible student members.
- Contact department chairs in disciplines such as Global Studies, Political Science, History, and Economics to see if your chapter can speak to a class about UNA-USA.
- Advertise chapter activities in local campus newspapers.
- Partner with young professional groups in your community to co-host networking or mentoring events.
- Participate in "student life" or "student organization fairs" at local universities. Remember to have a sign-in sheet or information request form in order to follow-up with students afterward.
- Reach out to existing student groups and see if they would like to co-sponsor an upcoming event.
- Develop programs and events with the interests of young audiences in mind and be sure to publicize them appropriately. Remember, our younger members "want to make a difference" in their volunteer work.
- Create a chapter internship program consisting of challenging tasks that broaden students' and young professionals' understanding of the global issues and the UN.
- Establish a chapter committee charged specifically with youth programming and outreach.



### **Suggested methods for retaining members:**

- Get to know your youth members. Find out what about the UN interests them and get them involved in it.
- For each new youth member, see if there is someone on the chapter board that can serve as a mentor.
- Don't let a youth member graduate, change jobs, or move away without finding out where they are going. Make sure to keep in contact with them and see if there is a UNA-USA chapter where they are relocating to.
- Select youth members of the week, month or year and publicize their accomplishments. Being recognized increases the chances that a student will pay attention to what the chapter is doing and stay involved.

Remember, students are very motivated but also have a lot of responsibilities on their plates. Usually their job comes before volunteer responsibilities. Be sure to give them volunteer tasks that are realistic. They tend to be very mobile and tend to move to different cities several times throughout their lifetimes.

### **Your Chapter Membership Committee**

*Each chapter should form a committee to lead the chapter's membership recruitment efforts, and appoint a chair to lead the committee.*

**Membership Chair:** The membership chair is responsible for managing the chapter's membership records and developing a membership growth strategy. Specific responsibilities include: contacting lapsed members, prospective members, and welcoming new members.

### **Membership Committee Responsibilities:**

- Establish a membership growth strategy to recruit new members and engage and retain current members.
- Develop strategies to increase membership in new and diverse demographics.
- Ensure that all chapter programming has a membership building element.
- Build awareness that it is the responsibility of each UNA-USA chapter board member to recruit and engage new members.
- Implement a plan to monitor and report progress on membership recruitment efforts, and acknowledge successful recruitment efforts.
- Plan a special event for potential new members with a short orientation program that identifies national and local membership before regular meetings.
- Utilize social media to publicize the chapter and its programs, and to recruit to new members.



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- Monitor membership statistics monthly to identify potential problem areas and work proactively to correct them.
- Find tabling opportunities. Ask other local programs and community events such as Model to allow you to set up a table where you can distribute information and recruit new members.
- Produce a Chapter directory, listing all members including Student Alliance and Model UN members in order to keep individual members connected with one another.