



USC Men's Ultimate (Frisbee) Club

// 2012-13 Presidency Case Study

Background

The USC Men's Ultimate Club is the 3rd largest sports club at the University of South Carolina. The club plays in the USA Ultimate College Championship Series, competing with other schools across the country for the opportunity to play in the televised national championships. USC Ultimate are two-time Atlantic Coast Regional finalists. The club also hosts an annual Fall semester intramural league for students and alumni. I was elected President by my teammates for the 2012-13 season and responsible for leading the club on and off the field.

The Challenge

Over the course of my presidential term, I sought improvement in three main categories:

- 1) Increasing the club budget
- 2) Gaining maximum campus exposure
- 3) Improving club management

To begin, the club needed more money to support more players, travel to more tournaments, and host more on-campus events. Secondly, although the club was growing each year, we were not attracting the top talent at USC. High school athletes coming into the university were being drawn away by other club sports such as rugby, lacrosse and soccer. Finally, the future leaders were not getting an opportunity to learn how to run the club, therefore causing a rough transition between seasons and a period of acclimation for each new leader that could have been better spent promoting the club.

The Approach

1) To increase our club budget, we first had to deliver a convincing pitch to the university's allocation board. The board would decide how much money the university awards us to help operate the club. In our proposal, we outlined our projected growth and described events we were going to host for the entire student body. Next, we looked outward to the community. I designed a sponsorship package and led a team of club members around small businesses known to help student organizations. We also reached out to club alumni and family members. Inheriting a boat load of unsold merchandise from past seasons, we set out to sell it all to supporters of the club (classmates, alumni, and family members).

2) Although the Men's club was one of the largest at USC, it was clearly not a representation of "best Ultimate players" at the school. Talented players were committing their time to other sports clubs, choosing to play only at the intramural and "pick-up" level, or just not familiar with the club and level of competition it offered. We changed that by infiltrating every level of play at USC. The Men's club began hosting weekly pick-ups, ramping up marketing efforts for our intramural Fall league, and heavily promoting all on-campus events. By being the go-to source for all things Ultimate at USC, we were able to communicate with talented players at every level of interest.

3) I was the first president in the club's history to get hands-on experience operating the club before I was voted in. This gave me the ability to hit the ground running and create an effective plan of action before the season started. Wishing to ensure the same opportunity for every future leader of the club, I established four new positions. Each of the four traditional cabinet members (president, vice president, treasurer and secretary) would have an assistant member to help with responsibilities pertaining to their position. From the beginning, future leaders would handle small yet necessary tasks.

1) The proposal was well received, granting the club the same allocation as was awarded the previous year. This was done in a year where *every* other club's allocation was docked at least 10%. We secured a large jersey sponsorship from a local restaurant, increasing our budget 16%. Other businesses were also interested in sponsorships by other methods: food donations the day of events, percent nights, and event-night discounts at restaurants and bars. The largest addition to the budget, however, was in selling old merchandise on campus, to family and alumni, and at every single event we hosted or travelled to. Close to 70% of unsold merchandise was unloaded, making the club about \$800 (\$300 in our best day alone).

2) By promoting the club's Fall intramural league with posters around campus and informational tables outside the student union, we saw a record level of participation. 208 people signed up for Fall league, easily surpassing the old attendance record and netting the club about \$8 per player which more than doubled the school allocated budget. We were able to use this large crowd to promote the Men's and Women's clubs, as well as crowd source ideas for what events students wanted to see us host. As a result of the league's and other events' popularity, the Men's club had the largest incoming freshman class in history (11 new dedicated players added to our roster of 36 returners).

3) Sharing in the responsibility of club operations also gave the new young managers a share of the success. The resulting confidence boost could easily be seen on the field. Introducing a new level of management was essential in handling all of the new events, promotions, and players we took on. Secondary management handled social media, poster pinning, table promoting, and some travel planning. This gave upper level management the opportunity to focus on the club's main missions: how the club is performing in the College Series and how it is helping to grow Ultimate in the local community.