Strategies for Retaining Members in Your SACNAS Chapter

First, it is important that you **define what members should get out of participating in your Chapter**. Among Chapter Leadership, including the Advisor, create a list of priorities for your Chapter that entices potential members and is in alignment with SACNAS' mission and vision. For example, at a meeting with the Chapter Leadership at the beginning of every year, the chapter can identify four focus areas for that year, such as Community Outreach, Professional Development, Presenting at Annual Conference, and Fundraising, and then the Chapter can refer to these priorities when creating activities and recruiting Chapter members.

You should **focus on being good at a few things, rather than trying to do everything** that a community-based organization like SACNAS could do for its members. The few things you are good at should align with what members should get out of the Chapter. An example is, if your Chapter says members should get Professional Development out of participating, then your Chapter should be good or work toward being successful at identifying professional development resources, speakers, creating professional development activities and networking opportunities.

Hexagonal diagram with SACNAS logo in center, surrounded by: Define the Benefits for Chapter Members; Focus on Being Good at a Few Things Than Everything; Cultivate Relationships; Build Community by Checking in with All Members Regularly; Support Chapter Leadership in Their Direction of the Chapter; Be Flexible; Connect Members with Financial Resources; Feed People

It is important to **cultivate relationships**, within the Chapter and also with individuals outside of the Chapter, such as faculty, staff, and administration of your organization or institution. You should promote your Chapter among those who are not members to potentially increase membership and increase the visibility of your Chapter at your institution or organization. Furthermore, at institutional / organizational events, mentioning your Chapter in a social setting and speaking about the community you feel in your Chapter can entice others to join. Similarly, inquiring about if an institutional / organizational leader has heard of your Chapter could help the long-term visibility of the Chapter if there is institutional / organizational support for the Chapter's goals. Cultivating mentorship between members of a chapter are important relationships to build as well.

Be sure to **build community by checking in with all members regularly**. Identify consistent meeting times so members can build this time into their regular schedule and will consistently come to meetings. Chapter Leadership should reach out to individuals who have not been at recent meetings and see if there is a way the Chapter can better support the individual member. For example, in the couple of weeks before finals, set aside some meeting time to check in with how everyone is studying and preparing for their exams. Similarly, when there are new members, be sure to include them in discussion and have more senior members introduce themselves to the new members.

It is important to support the **Chapter Leadership in their direction of the Chapter**. Creating a supportive Chapter environment is every member's responsibility. Empower the Chapter Leadership to push the Chapter in the direction they believe is best for the Chapter and help the Chapter Leadership develop leadership skills so that they can best gauge where the members want the chapter to go. For example, if your Chapter Leadership has identified priorities for the chapter that you feel could be improved, offer constructive criticism and encourage the Chapter Leadership to incorporate feedback. Conversely, ensure that Chapter Leadership elections align with the Chapter members' values. Also follow the direction of the Chapter Leadership when volunteers are needed for prioritized activities and community building.

Be flexible - Remember SACNAS should be your scientific home where all members are part of the team. Recognize that members may have other life events that keep them from participating fully, particularly for short times, and support their decisions and welcome them back when they return to meetings. For example, if a member has the responsibility to reserve rooms, there should be a secondary member who checks on items to be accomplished for the Chapter so that one member is not solely responsible for the Chapter's success.

Connect members with financial resources to retain member participation. Chapter members and Chapter Leadership should help identify and track potential financial resources that members may be interested in (summer research positions, scholarships, etc.), as well as keep records of previous members who have successfully applied for similar funding opportunities to help future applicants be successful. For example, maintaining and sharing a database of well-written cover letters for graduate school or emails for application waivers from Chapter members will help future members of your Chapter with those same applications.

Remember to **feed people** - communities are built on food! Having food at meetings is a good way to encourage people to come and may serve a reminder to current members on the benefits of sharing food in community with others. An example is creating an end of year potluck to celebrate the success your Chapter had in the past year and discuss the future directions of the Chapter for the next year. Furthermore, SACNAS is where you bring your whole self, and food from your culture is an important part!