

# The Management of Multicultural Members of Registered Student Organization (RSO) by Observing Two Groups: Volunteer Illini Projects (RSO1) and Dance 2XS Caliente (RSO2) at UIUC

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## Introduction

The University of Illinois has recruited more than 10,843 international students in 43,603 college students in Fall 2014 (illinois.edu 2017). Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) create multicultural environments; however, cultural differences may become cultural conflicts if members do not develop multicultural awareness (Connerley, M. L. & Pedersen, P. B., 2005). Therefore, maintaining a harmonious atmosphere is an important task for every RSO. Volunteer Illini Projects - VIP (RSO1) and Dance 2XS Caliente (RSO2) are appropriate study objectives for this research for the reason that they are multicultural associations. The preliminary findings of this research highlight the characteristics of their management styles.

## Research Questions

What attitudes towards members who are from different backgrounds do leaders/members have?

Do leaders assign members into different positions by considering their background?

Did RSO1/RSO2 hold any activity to integrate members who are from different backgrounds?

## Methodology

For this project, we conducted four interviews and two observations.

For the interview, the interviewees are one leader and one member of each RSO. Face-to-face interviews lasted for 15-35 minutes varying from participant to participant. The Director of RSO1 and the Executive Director of RSO2 shared their experience of managing the RSO. Besides, their members shared their experience of joining their RSO and the perspective of multi-culture.

For the observations, we observed one activity of each RSO. We took field notes during the observations.

After the data had been collected, we coded the interviews and summarized the observations, and came up with the preliminary findings.

## Preliminary Findings - Interview

For the interviews, we will provide a few quotes by the interviewees that pertain to their thoughts on management of multicultural members.

### Equal Treatment

VIP Director: I just like treat all members the same.

Director of Dance 2Xs Caliente: We all treat everyone the same. Our team likes a family since we are pretty closed with each other.

### Focus on their abilities rather than cultural backgrounds

VIP Director: I assign the working position of members based on their experience. Cultural background is not something which I've even taken to account.

Director of Dance 2Xs Caliente: We have an executive board and everyone can apply their ideal position. After electing the new director by voting, we provide some trainings for them.

### Enhancing the members' interaction

VIP Director: We do have a social game nights and general meetings. I think it helps everyone be collaborative together. At the end of the year, we have like all the volunteers get together and we have a food party.

Director of Dance 2Xs Caliente: After the audition, we will have parties to welcome the new members. Besides, we may have parties before performance and we play games together.

Through the interviews, there are three similarities of the management styles of two directors. First, they treat all members the same and each of them has the right to choose their ideal position. Second, the positions of members are assigned based on their experience or abilities rather than their cultural backgrounds. Third, parties and games are the common ways to enhance members' interaction.

## Bibliography

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## Preliminary Findings - Observation

VIP Mentoring and Tutoring program in Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center:

It was one of the recurring events held by the VIP Director. It was well-planned and prepared with a good contact with the center coordinator. The event ran very smoothly. However, the VIP Director did not have many interactions with members despite the instruction part as he focused on the body of the event with no clear concern to members' attitudes or their feelings towards the event.

Dance 2Xs Caliente weekly practice in Illini Union:

We have observed the practice for one and half hour. Through the observation, we discovered that every member can express their opinions freely. They always communicated with each other. Every member including the leader were treated equally throughout the organization.

## Conclusion

This research finds out that equal treatment is a critical component of an organization. A research study stated that respondents are mainly neutral to positive in their belief when managers are authentically committed to racial and gender equality (Visagie, J., Linde, H., & Havenga, W., 2011). Members seldom have conflicts with each other and the participants did not report any conflict; however, the interviewees who are leaders would like the conflicts are solved by the involved people themselves if there is a conflict. Besides, there are less integration activities in VIP since their goal is to help people rather than making friends. The Director's action is considered as self-orientation (Hofstede, G., 2011).

In contrast, Dance 2XS Caliente always hold parties for their members and communicate with each other, since such event can cultivate their team spirit and benefit to their performance.

"Power hierarchy" is the relative power difference between group members (Frauendorfer, D., Mast, M. S., Sanchez-Cortes, D., & Gatica-Perez, D., 2014) and there is no obvious power hierarchy between leaders and members.

## Preliminary Recommendation

There are some recommendable management styles to be a good leader for members with multicultural backgrounds: equity, ability, and interaction.

- People will be more satisfied when they receive more equal treatment (Boroş, S., Meslec, N., Curşeu, P. L., & Emons, W., 2010). Multiculturalism is common in RSO. Leaders have to treat their members equally in order to maintain harmonious atmosphere.
- Stevens, M. J., & Campion, M. A. (1994) mentioned that focusing on knowledge, skill and ability rather than human's background is very important.
- Emphasizing teamwork and interaction between members can enhance the efficacy of the group.