A Guide Book for Campus Events
Working with Your Administration

A successful relationship with the campus administration can be a predictor of a successful campus Relay For Life event. It is important to get the administration, faculty and staff involved—cancer affects everyone! Relay For Life planning starts at the beginning of the year (and even before!) and so should administration involvement. Having the high-level administration on your team sets the tone for the rest of the school. When you have top leaders involved, their commitment often trickles down to the groups, organizations, and people they lead which is essentially the entire campus.

This guide will demonstrate the importance of working with your campus administration throughout the Relay For Life planning process. The administration can be your greatest asset as they can alleviate potential obstacles that affect the planning process. This guide will help you determine which administrative offices to approach and how best to reach out to them. You will also learn how to present your information and make a good impression. The tips are based on best practices from some of the most successful collegiate Relay For Life events across the country. You can read about some of these schools’ successes at the end.

Who is your administration?

Administration is a broad term and every school or event may interpret it differently based on the structure of campus. Provided is a sample list of departments and key people on campus to approach and establish relationships. Department names may differ so make sure you interpret and adapt to fit your school’s administrative structure. Consider starting with top leadership: president, principal, chancellor, dean, provost, et cetera. These people are some of the busiest people on campus so start early and be persistent. In addition to these top-tier leaders, identify other departments that might be helpful. The following is a list of other potential offices and administrators to approach:

- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Campus Facilities Services and Maintenance
- Office of Planning and Scheduling
- Student Activities
- Event Planning and Student Organization
- Department Chairs
- Professors
- Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
Reaching Out to Your Administration

The Relay committee should reach out to the administration directly at the beginning of the school year. Has the school year already begun? Then reach out as soon as possible and make a plan to start early next year. Relationships are not formed overnight; they take time and commitment and are built on mutual trust. The administration should trust that Relay is a worthwhile and beneficial event for their student body. Additionally, relationships can crumble fast. So read on to learn how to effectively build those relationships and avoid blunders.

Develop strong relationships with people of influence. When reaching out to top-level leadership on your campus consider approaching their administrative assistants, secretaries or other key people in their office. Talk to those people, share your personal story and reason to Relay. As previously mentioned, almost everyone has been affected by cancer in some way. Discover their personal connection to cancer and use it to gain their support. If your president’s secretary has had cancer or knows someone who has had cancer, he/she might be more inclined to secure a meeting for you with the President. These opportunities are available; you just have to find them.

Send personalized emails to department chairs and ask to speak at faculty meetings. Set up meetings with the key people earlier identified. Make sure you determine the length of time you will have to meet with them, and then plan the agenda for the meeting – consider bringing a survivor, your faculty advisor, or someone else who can share the value of Relay. It also helps to bring a small Relay gift with you to the meeting. Plan on sharing the basics of Relay, why it’s good for the campus community and be specific on what you’d like from them – their support, for them to form a team, recruiting survivors, etc.

Develop relationships with these people outside of Relay. Ask them how they are, find out their interests are and engage them. Constant communication with your new contacts is a must. However, be respectful of their time, talent and profession. Don’t go to the chief of security in your sweatpants. Dress up! If your Dean of Student Life doesn’t keep office hours, call their assistant, schedule a meeting and show up on time. Professionalism goes a long way. And don’t forget to always say thank you, and make it a personal thank you. Take the time to write a note and deliver it in person. The extra effort can make a world of difference.

To maintain consistency in these relationships, ensure a smooth transition each year with new/incoming leadership. The current chair should set up a meeting with each administrative contact and next year’s incoming chair so all transitions can be completed before the school year is over. Additionally, be prepared to deal with changes in administration. If your contact leaves or is replaced, you probably will not be able to pick up with the relationship where the last person left off. You may have to sell Relay to this new person and start from the beginning to establish a strong foundation from which to foster a successful relationship.
While strong relationships with administration are important for your event, don’t become completely dependent on these relationships. If a relationship crumbles or a new person comes on board who is not entirely supportive, you’ll still need to forge ahead.

How to Present Your Information
Making the Relay For Life Pitch to Your Administration

The following are points to help you prepare to pitch Relay For Life to the administration.

- Relay For Life is an international movement that provides many incredible opportunities for national recognition
  - The American Cancer Society provides recognition to top campuses for their Relay efforts, enhancing the image of that institution and making it appealing to prospective students and review boards
  - Relay For Life is the principle fundraiser of the American Cancer Society, a national organization devoted to helping people stay well, get well, find cures, and fight back against cancer
  - Relay For Life events take place on college campuses and in communities across the entire nation and, now, the world
  - Relay events on college campuses are more than just fundraisers; they are ways of uniting young people who are passionate about putting an end to cancer and who will use their gifts and talents to help bring about that end
  - Relay For Life offers a number of leadership opportunities as well as leadership-building experiences

- Relay For Life is an opportunity for community building and campus engagement
  - Relay For Life attracts groups of students from diverse parts of a campus community; groups that may never have had a reason to interact join together to fight for a common cause
  - Relay encourages existing social or system-based groups to engage in a moving and meaningful philanthropic activity
  - Relay offers the larger community in which your campus is located the chance to interact with the student population in a positive and meaningful way

- Relay For Life is your campus at its best!
  - Relay is unique on every campus and intimately reflects each campus’ culture
  - Relay is a chance to highlight the dedication of the students at your college/university to an important cause
Selling the Administration on Hosting a Relay

One of the challenges on selling the administration can be concerns about location – use the following tips to help you prepare.

**Share the benefits of hosting a Relay.** Relay For Life provides leadership opportunities for students and creates a relationship with the community. Cancer affects essentially everyone in their lifetime. Relay allows people with extremely diverse backgrounds to come together to fight a common enemy. Relay For Life events create school spirit and unity, and facilitates friendships. Relay also gives professors the opportunity to interact with their students outside the classroom, developing deeper relationships.

**Understand the Administration’s potential concerns.** It’s most important to go into any meeting prepared to address the administration’s potential concerns or hesitations. For instance, regarding the event’s location, Virginia Tech’s administration was worried the Relay participants might kill the grass on the drill field. The committee’s solution was to offer to have it re-sod if it became an issue. Other universities might be concerned about neighbors and noise complaints. Try to determine what those concerns might be in advance so you can come prepared with ways to address those concerns (example, re-sodding if needed or offering to turn off the main speakers from 11PM to 7AM, and using only portable computer speakers for activities at the stage).

**Find out what the university receives from the American Cancer Society.** An offer to turn down the music may be very good, but it’s more powerful to explain that the university receives $X million dollars in research grants from the Society, and explaining that raising some of that money, on campus, is a wonderful thank you.

**Come up with plans A through Z for a location.** Think outside the box when planning your event. For instance, location is a major issue on many campuses. Using the track is one option, but so is a walk around a lake on campus, using the gym for an indoor Relay, using the intramural field, or taking over any huge parking lots on campus. That way if the university shoots down the first location choice, there are other options. If you’re not able to find another option on campus, consider nearby high schools. For any issue involving administration, coming prepared with back up plans and options demonstrates your forethought and passion for making the event happen.

**Meet in person and ask their concerns upfront.** If they’re very resistant at an in-person meeting, it can help to ask what their concerns really are. An in-person meeting makes it harder to evade the question and find out if there is another reason why they aren’t open to the event.

**Find someone who benefits personally from ACS.** Bring someone on campus who benefits from the American Cancer Society – whether that’s a professor who is a survivor, a funded researcher, or a student that has received aid from ACS programs and services (especially if there are scholarship recipients on campus). It connects a face and a story to the cause, and
can sometimes cut through the red tape. Bonus points if it's someone in the Dean/Chancellor/President's office that comes down to deal with the Recreation and Facilities department!

**Be prepared.** Do your homework in advance – investigate other events that use the location you want to use and find out their constraints. Bring lots of information about the event like a sample schedule for instance (including an explanation of key components like Luminaria, and how you will manage fire hazards), the rain plan, where the money goes, the process for handling money, estimated number of people expected and how you’ll deal with parking.

**Make sure they know it’s alcohol and tobacco free!** It is an all-night event that allows students a safe, substance free alternative to the party scene.

### Step-By-Step Guide for Making a Great First Impression

“*You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.*” This well-known phrase stands true and consistent in any situation in which you meet someone new. When it comes to talking with your administration about Relay, you want to make the best impression possible. The step-by-step guide below will help you make a good first impression, where you will be viewed as competent and confident in your mission.

**Rule #1: You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.** The greatest way to make a positive first impression is to demonstrate immediately that the other person, not you, is the center of action and conversation. Really emphasize that your attention is on Relay For Life and the ACS mission.

**Rule #2: Listen and Observe.** While innovation is a good thing, be mindful of dynamics of the place you are visiting. If you are entering an environment where routines are in place, a newcomer walking in to propose a new interest can often be met with negative reactions. By listening and observing you will learn about the environment and dynamics of the office, and you can use that information to tailor your message. You'll make a superb initial impression when you demonstrate good listening skills.

**Rule #3: Mind Your Manners.** Showing respect and listening are the first keys to successfully gaining more support for your Relay For Life. A good way to show respect is by addressing the person you are talking to directly. Know who they are, and what they do on campus before you go and talk to them. Equally as important, you'll make conversations more personal by including the listener's name several times.

Another important aspect of minding your manners includes humor. You are here for an important cause, and though we all love to have fun, it is important be appropriate when speaking with the administration. **Because you don't know a stranger's sensitivities, prolonged joking might establish barriers you can't overcome.**
Rule #4: Appearance Counts. You would never go to a job interview in jeans and a t-shirt, right? Just as you wouldn’t dress that way in an interview, it is the same with approaching your administration in regards to Relay For Life. Show respect to your administration and to the ACS by dressing appropriately – a neat appearance is important. Dressing the part can always give you extra brownie points. Show your administration that this cause is very important to you, and that they are a vital part of its success. Dress to impress.

Engaging Your Administration Year Round

You engage teams, survivors and participants year round – don’t forget to engage the administration. Send birthday cards, Relay updates and invite them to the Relay event as well as kick-offs and rallies.

Invite them to committee meetings to meet the “force” behind Relay on campus. Ask them to host one of the meetings and lead a one-hour leadership seminar or workshop. Invite a member of the school’s funding board to train the committee on how to properly complete funding applications. Consider inviting members of the campus administration to speak at a kick-off or rally, or have them start a team or participate as survivors and caregivers. Relay For Life can be a healing event for many people so don’t exclude the administration from participating and benefiting from the unique catharsis that Relay offers.

Ensure the administration feels appreciated year round for the help and support that they provide to the committee and event. Consider hosting a thank you breakfast each semester. This is a great opportunity for the committee members to network with the administration and provides an even better opportunity for the administrators to get to know the committee members on a more personal level, helping to support efficient communication and a better working relationship. At the breakfast, share updates about the committee’s progress in planning the event and highlight successes, including but not limited to, successes in fundraising, recruitment, et cetera. These events don’t have to be formal – bagels and coffee will suffice. The idea is to provide an opportunity for the committee to interact with the administration and for the administration to feel appreciated.

Finally, don’t forget to thank your administrators after your Relay event—recognize them for their support in making your event a success. Of course you’re going to send them a thank you note. Consider including a picture of the survivors at Relay or a picture of the committee. Another great idea is to include quotes from your participants so they can see how meaningful Relay For Life is to the student body.
Draft Emails

Provided for you are some email samples to help start the communication process between your committee and your administration. Use these as a guide and personalize your own messages. These were taken from Loyola University, Maryland.

To Campus Ministry / Officials / Faculty:

Name,

How are you? As the summer is coming to a close I have been prepping for the ‘11-’12 Relay For Life season. (Co-chair’s name) and I have pulled out the calendar and are trying to lock down some dates. One of those would be for our committee leadership retreat. We thought the retreat last year went so incredibly well, was really useful for the executive committee and we have decided it was necessary to do it again. We were hoping you could lead it again this year, and hopefully it could be around the same time we had it last year (the first weekend of the second semester). I will be back on campus on date, so we can catch up then.

***Your committee’s leadership building event is a great opportunity for administration to come out and see what fine students are representing such a worthy cause. This email shows that the writer plans to follow-up in person with the campus official to work out some details regarding this endeavor. Face-to-face contact is key.

To the Events or Scheduling Department:

Hello,

Fall semester is approaching quickly now, and I thought it would be a good idea to lock down some dates for the upcoming Relay For Life season.

We are planning to continue with our weekly meetings starting on Tuesday, September 21. I was hoping I could reserve either B01 or B03 for every Tuesday from September 21 until the end of the school year (with the exception of breaks).

We also were wondering what dates were available for our Kick-Off event. We were looking at the following Thursdays as possibilities: Oct. 28th, Nov. 4th, and Nov. 11th. We would need to reserve at least half of McGuire for that event.

Thank you for all your help, and I look forward to talking to you soon.

Name
Relay For Life Co-Chair ’11-’12
Hello!

My name is ______________ and I am the 2012 Relay For Life Event Co-Chair. Now that the 2009-2010 academic year has come to a close, I was hoping to be able to schedule the date for next year’s Relay. ______________, also the Event Co-Chair, and I were hoping to schedule Relay around the last weekend of March, similar to this year as well as to previous years. Please let us know when would be a possible time for Relay to be held so that we can begin our planning! Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon.

Name
Loyola University Maryland

To the President:

Hello President’s name,

My name is ____________, and I am one of this year’s Relay For Life co-chairs. As I am sure you know, our campus’ Relay For Life is one of the largest in the country. For the past three years we have been the number one (per capita) collegiate event. Last year we were also the number five fundraising collegiate event. We were also recently made aware that our event was rated in the top eight for customer service out of every Relay in the world (more than 5000)!

This year we are striving to reach and exceed all the amazing achievements we have previously accomplished. In fact this year, we were one of two universities (along with Virginia Tech) in our division that were selected by an American Cancer Society National Scout Team to be visited and studied to improve Relays across the country.

We would be honored if we could have our President share in our success and deliver our opening prayer at the event. The prayer would be at 7pm, on Saturday, March 26, 2011. Please let me know if you are available.

Thank you,

Name

***This email truly highlights the great aspects of the event. Every Relay event has something to brag about. Talk about how your event unites people from all across campus together to FIGHT BACK against cancer. Let your president know that he/she is not only supporting a great cause, but also a great bunch of committed students and a unique event.
Draft letter

The following letter is from the University of Minnesota. They begin with the impact of the organization and cancer and explain what their organization is. Then they share some successes of their own event and proceed to invite administration to participate in this cause.

Over 1 in 3 people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime; a staggering number when you really think about it. Cancer’s effects are even broader when you consider the families, caregivers, and friends who are also touched by this disease. Through cancer education, survivorship, and advocacy programs, all University of Minnesota college students have the opportunity to make a difference in the fight against cancer. Colleges Against Cancer (CAC) is a student group dedicated to eliminating cancer by spreading awareness and education through volunteer work in the community, working all school year to plan education and advocacy events including the Relay For Life.

In past years, the U of M has been the largest collegiate Relay in the Midwest Division (Iowa, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), and last year was the #9 overall collegiate event nationwide raising nearly $210,000 in the fight against cancer. The student participation in this event over the years has been amazing. Building on this success, event organizers are seeking to increase the participation from U of M faculty and staff in the 2011 Relay For Life (April 8-9, 2011).

I am writing today to inform you of a unique and rewarding opportunity to get involved in your campus community. CAC is looking to form a group of Faculty/Staff Ambassadors to provide insight into how it can get more faculty and staff involved with the Relay For Life. Interested faculty and staff would meet in early February for breakfast to learn more about this opportunity and to brainstorm ideas for encouraging faculty/staff involvement in the Relay For Life.

If you have any questions about this opportunity or are interested in attending the February breakfast please email CAC at umcac@umn.edu to get more details. CAC would greatly appreciate it if you would pass this message along to any colleagues that you feel may be interested.

Sincerely,

Colleges Against Cancer
Testimonials

Loyola University, Maryland

Of the many possible predictors of a successful Relay For Life event, a successful relationship with your college or university’s administration is paramount. At Loyola University, Maryland – today, one of the most successful collegiate events in the nation – this relationship has played a central role in the event’s success, but this relationship took years to build. When Loyola’s event began in 2004, there was little support from university higher-ups. Today, the Relay For Life of Loyola is seen as one of the primary ways the university lives up to one of its core values of giving back to the surrounding community, bearing in mind that cancer affects everyone indiscriminately.

At Loyola University Maryland, these important administrative relationships are maintained year-round, are constantly strengthened, and have smooth transitions from year to year. It is important to recognize too, that these relationships are built upon mutual trust, and there is a large degree of responsibility that comes with the territory. From the start of every school year, the co-chairs and Relay committee work hard to engage the entire campus community in the “Relay Movement;” faculty and students are the primary focus of these efforts. Through close coordination with numerous campus offices – most notably Student Activities and Facilities/Event Management at Loyola – Relay For Life engages diverse groups of students and staff in the fight against cancer. Through highly personalized outreach, Relay builds “strong relationships with people of influence,” said Co-Chairs Matt and Janine (2010-2011).

In dealing with administrators, Loyola has learned from experience that there must be an assessment of needs, identifying exactly what is needed and which office on campus might be able to provide. There is a need to be direct about the resources being sought, allowing for easy yes or no answers, but also leaving room for negotiation. In-person visits are a necessary complement to phone calls and e-mail exchanges, and thank you notes are key to relationship continuity. It is important, as well, to capitalize on the existing connections between university offices when building relationships with administrators. In all these dealings, there must be a keen awareness that not everyone is familiar with Relay For Life, and there should be a formative aspect to all new interactions. University administrators should be invited to become involved with Relay For Life; you may even create the sense that they are missing out on something by not being involved. Loyola University Maryland is a great example of successful administrative relationships that contribute to the success of the event. They warn, however, against dependence on these relationships.
Minnesota State University, Mankato

For the past several years the Relay For Life committee of Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU) has built key relationships with the administration on campus, along with several vital partnerships across campus. Working closely with the administration has given the committee the ability to plan the largest and most successful fundraising event at MSU. This relationship is dependent on devoted committee members constantly communicating with administration, informing them throughout the entire planning process of the progress the event is making towards its goals. In order to keep these relationships running effectively year in and year out, exiting members ensure that new members introduce themselves to the administration. During the introductions the students provide the administration with insight as to why they Relay, how they got involved with Relay For Life, as well as any other personal information they are willing to share (major, interest, hobbies, etc.), and most importantly thanking the administration for their continued support and everything they have done for the Relay in the past.

The committee has also partnered with the Athletic Department, Student Activities, Scheduling & Meeting Services, along with several other student organizations on campus. These relationships are crucial to the success of the Relay for they provided the committee with the ability to plan and execute nearly any idea or activity that arises. These partnerships are dependent on effective communication, personalization, and involvement of the department, office, or organization.

The success and popularity of the Relay For Life of Minnesota State University, Mankato is on the rise. In 2011 the event increased the total amount raised by nearly 40% and the CAC/RFL Committee that puts on the event received the “2011 Outstanding Recognized Student Organization of the Year” award. The success of the MSU Relay is reliant on the relationship between the committee and the administration as well as partnerships across campus that have been strengthened with each year.
Wrap Up

A strong relationship with your campus administration can be your Relay For Life event’s greatest asset. Committees that maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their administrators tend to host successful Relay For Life events. This Guide Book can help you strengthen an existing relationship with your administration or can help you set out on the path toward building a solid foundation through positive interactions with key offices and individuals on your campus.

Using the recommendations and steps outlined in this Guide Book, work with your staff partner and committees to develop a plan of approach. Identify the departments and individuals you would like to pursue and then devise a strategy for approaching them. Don’t forget to be persistent; follow up. Once you’ve made contact, don’t disappear. Engage them. Every so often do something to remind them that you’re still hard at work and provide an update on your committee’s progress.

If you have any questions or would like to share your successes, please email the National Collegiate Advisory Team (NCAT) at cac@cacner.org. Or, refer to your staff partner, Division Youth Lead, or Division Youth Task Force.