What is Retention?
Retention is the process of ensuring that your members or volunteers remain active with your organization. Retention is not a particularly formal process. Instead, it focuses on maintaining a welcome environment, member morale, and organizational progress.

Why is Retention Important?
Retention is important for a variety of reasons, which includes having:

- A happy organizational community
- A pool of members who you can count on to help when needed
- A pool of members who could potentially be future leaders
- A strong indicator of organizational success

New Member Orientation
Once you have recruited new members a solid orientation is the FIRST STEP in keeping them

Training Topics
- Constitution and bylaws
- Organizational structure
- Budget
- Organization files and office space
- Past successes of the organization

Methods
- Training from veteran members
- Icebreakers/socials for all members
- A “meet the new members” meeting
- A list of their names in a newsletter or minutes of a meeting

Why is Retention Important?

Involvement: Get your members involved with program planning and implementation. Invite them to help with as many aspects of your organization and programming as possible.

Ownership: Let your members participate in decision making, or at least give them opportunities to openly voice their needs, interests, and opinions.

Benefits: Offer benefits or incentives for your members to be active in your organization. Benefits can be tangible, intangible, or both. Important benefits include sense of belonging and community.

Retention Strategies

Conversations
Having simple conversations with members can go a long way in terms of creating a welcome environment and ensuring that members feel comfortable in the organization. Conversations don’t necessarily have to deal with organizational business or issues. Small-talk and chit-chat are just as good.

Updates
People can generally lose interest in an organization if they don’t know what the organization is doing or what it has planned. Constant updates, whether through emails, newsletters, websites, or meetings, are key to maintaining a base-level of interest.

General meetings
General meetings are popular ways to disseminate information and update members. However, the drawback with general meetings is that it is a passive activity. In other words, members merely sit and listen to the leadership speak. Students’ time is valuable so do your best to make their time at a meeting worthwhile and productive.

Remember
If things can be said or done via email, then use email instead of reciting information or gathering ideas during a meeting.

Participation Channels
In order to give members ownership of the organization, they need to have opportunities to participate in decision-making and offer feedback. This may include emails, discussion boards, chat rooms, or meetings.

Organization
Being an organized organization contributes to making your organization attractive for students to want to be active members. An organization that is constantly disorganized and does sloppy work can be unappealing to current and future members.

Social Activities
No matter what type of organization you have, it’s always a good idea to offer periodic social activities so that members can relax and get to know the leadership and each other better during informal times. Social activities don’t need to be grand in scale or expensive. Simple, small-scale activities such as dinner outings, sport activities, shopping, retreats, and short trips are some ideas.