



NOW and Action!



NOW ON CAMPUS: ACTION ESSENTIALS

Actions enable us to change social attitudes, gain power and influence within our communities, recruit members, raise money, and publicize NOW's existence. Local actions, especially on college and university campuses, are an integral part of the work of NOW! Because actions are so important to NOW they need to be carefully planned in order to be successful. Campus Action NOW groups will be required to adhere to NOW policy regarding issues and implementation of actions in their activities.

What is an Action?

An action can be a protest, rally, March, vigil, or any other activity or event that is meant to **bring awareness to an issue** that affects women's lives. Actions are particularly important on college and university campuses, where they can serve to engage people in bringing about change. As part of the **Campus Action NOW** network groups will receive NOW "Action Alerts" as well as additional materials for actions including voter registrations, the Love Your Body Day campaign, Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, etc. NOW's field team will be in contact with you with specific suggestions for actions that affect your particular campus and local communities.

Planning an Action

It is important that the people involved with the action, including the organizers and the participants, have an understanding of the issue being addressed and its relationship to improving women's lives! Campus organizations issue focus will be largely shaped by the current political landscape and by the priorities and policies set at national conferences and at board meetings. Before taking action organizers should be informed on the issue that is being addressed by the action-before staging an action you can organize a teach-in about the specific issue. It is important to keep in mind that NOW is not a service or support organization. The solution for us is to push for a course of action that will bring about change for the most number of women, or the broadest possible solution. Issues education alone is not action. It is, however, an important part of preparing for action. Regardless of the medium, the goal is to make people realize how they are affected by the issue and move them to take action.

Before Planning the Action:

- Analyze the **campus community**. What strategies or tactics have been helpful in the past?
- Identify the **targets** of your action. Consider the "picture" or message you want created for the campus newspaper or the evening news, and work back from that point.
- Find out what **local restrictions** might apply to your action.

Planning the Action

- After you have determined what strategy or tactic you want to use, **make a list** of everything you think needs to be done to make it successful
- Consider the **costs** involved in your action. These can include printing, postage, permits, etc. After listing all of your potential costs, set a budget for the action. If it is a particularly expensive action, additional fundraising may be necessary
- Consider **how many people** you would like to take part in your action
- **Build on-campus coalitions** with other progressive student organizations on campus
- Start planning to **publicize** your action. How much publicity will the action require? Set a time-line.
- Designate a **Campus Action NOW** spokesperson to the press. Usually this will be the organization's president. You may consider organizing press packets to inform the press of your activities, these will be given out at the event itself.

Carrying Out the Action

Action Checklist

Date of Action _____

- ___ Site
- ___ Permit
- ___ Stage
- ___ Audio system (video system if necessary)
- ___ Podium
- ___ Tables
- ___ Chairs
- ___ Banners and signs
- ___ Sign-in sheets, chipboards and pens
- ___ Literature and Merchandise

Other Helpful Items:

Duct tape, extension cords, sashes, scissor, small stapler, safety pins, bullhorns, rope, pens, first aid kit, and sunscreen.

Action vs. Service

The temptation to engage in service-oriented activities is great, for much work of this kind needs to be done. Certainly, service activities are needed and are important. However, the personal decision of whether to engage in service or action must be separated from the **Campus Action NOW** organizational decision.

For example, the bad treatment of a rape victim by your local police department can be the impetus for a campaign to change the department's policies and procedures, and could lead you to pursue legislative changes so this will not happen to other women in the future. In the long run, this will be more effective for all women than orienting the group's activity toward individual "band-aids" such as volunteering at a local rape crisis center, although individual members may do this on their own.

National Organization for Women
1100 H Street NW, Third Floor • Washington, DC 20005
202-628-8669 • fieldorg@now.org • www.now.org

NOW takes action to bring women, as a group, into full equality and to address problems at their root cause, rather than offering aid to individual women in achieving personal solutions or temporary relief from oppression. Of course, sometimes the plight of an individual can be the perfect "hook" for your campus group to take action that will make real change.

NOW's self-defined role has been to initiate institutional change at the broadest level, to affect the legal and institutional structures of our society in a way that systematically expands the choices and opportunities available to all people.

Campus Action NOW Development and Action

Many NOW activists become very task oriented as we go about the work of changing the world. If a piece of legislation or policy on campus needs to be passed, we plan a lobbying campaign to pass it. If an individual or a group comes to us because they've been denied their civil rights, we set about targeting campus or elected officials or corporation heads to right the wrong. If the group is asked to join in a state, regional or national action, we swing into action with buses and sign-making parties. But all too often, we pass up the chance to set and to achieve organizational development goals and objectives at the same time!

Every action or project in which a **Campus Action NOW** group participates, in addition to the goals of the action--numbers of people, diversity objectives for the crowd and speakers, good press for the issue--should also have the following organizational development objectives:

1. Building your membership and activist base--how many new members will want to become a part of the group around this action or project? Being able to report "We got X new members" is a real win for any group.
2. Building your financial base for this and future actions. Few groups will have a substantial financial cushion that enables them to participate in actions without doing fundraising, and we don't want **Campus Action NOW** groups to not do actions because they feel they can't afford them. Issue fundraising (selling message-specific buttons, bumper stickers and T-shirts) as well as directly asking for contributions to fund the event will not only pay most of the bills, but also increase the number of people who have a stake in the action.
3. Increasing the group's visibility in the campus community. Set goals for the amount of publicity you want to get and don't give up because one kind of media isn't an option (the local campus newspaper editor may be unfriendly, but a local radio station might welcome the group's spokesperson on a talk show, or the TV station might do a story). If all else fails, fundraise around visibility for the action, so you can buy ad space in/on the best form of media for the event.
4. Strengthening community contacts and coalition contacts. This is a good time to look at how the group might work on diversity goals it sets for itself—making certain that all possible allies are represented in a coalition, and/or involving groups with which we haven't had much opportunity for contact. The organization's role is frequently to see who is NOT at the table and to insist on their participation.

All too often, our actions and projects don't result in clear cut "wins." The legislation passed isn't all we wanted, the crowd at the rally falls short of expectations, or the court case we're supporting comes down against us. Setting clear and specific organizational development goals will often give the group the "wins" we might not have gotten otherwise, and a sense of power to try again!