

Student Affairs Gathering

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY · DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

A proposal to establish a recurring division-wide gathering and the planning board needed to carry it forward.

INAUGURAL TARGET

Third week of January 2027.

PROPOSAL TEAM

Sheldon Farrington · Jennifer Nodal · Zach Fiori · Christen Turner.

DECISION REQUESTED

Establish the cross-divisional planning board, approve preliminary budget parameters, and provide the board with this proposed framework as it develops the inaugural gathering.

Executive Introduction

THE PROPOSAL

Given the significant planning and coordination required for a division-wide networking and development event for all members of Liberty University Student Affairs, we propose establishing an intra-divisional planning board to coordinate an inaugural all-Student Affairs gathering in January 2027.

WHY A PLANNING BOARD

The board distributes planning across departmental strengths and resources, builds buy-in from individual departments, and makes execution relevant to the range of roles represented within the division. It also creates a default coordinating body for future conference endeavors, including ACSD and university-hosting opportunities.

WHY THE GATHERING

The annual event will increase relational collateral, share vision and realign mission, reduce silos through strategic partnerships and stewardship of resources, and celebrate the work and workers serving students.

Goals

CURRENT CHALLENGE

Student Affairs seldom gathers as a full division. Employees can identify primarily with their office rather than Student Affairs as a whole; collaboration at senior levels does not always translate into familiarity across departments.

INCLUSION

Previous gatherings have not always included all relevant departments or meaningfully involved those represented.

FIRST-YEAR STANDARD

The inaugural gathering should be useful, well-paced, and worth employees' time. The aim is to earn anticipation for the next gathering rather than presume it.

THREE EMPHASES

Connect: increase relational collateral and clarify each office's work for students. Align: reduce silos, duplicated effort, and misuse of time or money. Celebrate: recognize frontline workers and the breadth of the Liberty student experience.

A Lean Planning Board Entrusted with Comprehensive Planning.

EXECUTIVE CHAIR

Sets annual vision and objectives; leads meetings; maintains the master planning timeline; coordinates budgetary allocations and approvals; resolves cross-functional questions; and serves as liaison to executive leadership.

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT CHAIR

Builds the communication calendar; coordinates invitations, RSVPs, surveys, and follow-up; shapes attendee messaging; and equips departments for the expo.

OPERATIONS & PRODUCTION CHAIR

Secures venues; coordinates room flow, staging, AV, lighting, and technical support; oversees setup and teardown; and prepares contingencies.

PROGRAMS & EXPERIENCE CHAIR

Develops the theme, session arc, speakers, host, video, and interactive elements.

HOSPITALITY & ENVIRONMENT CHAIR

Coordinates catering, food service, seating, décor, signage, and attendee comfort.

PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT CHAIR

Maintains department relationships; coordinates staffing and event-day support; and leads post-event appreciation and feedback.

The Annual Gathering

1. INTRODUCING STUDENT AFFAIRS · 35–45 MINUTES

A polished opening combining leadership remarks, concise department-introduction video, and clear framing for the day. It explains why the division is gathering, connects the work to Liberty's mission and student development model, and tells attendees how to engage.

2. INTERDEPARTMENTAL EXPO · 90 MINUTES

A reception environment with heavy hors d'oeuvres, multiple food stations, round-table seating, cocktail tables, and department booths. It is a structured opportunity to meet colleagues, understand unfamiliar offices, and identify opportunities for collaboration and referral.

3. STUDENT AFFAIRS LIVE · 50–60 MINUTES

An exciting host leads a Family Feud-style game show. Two families represent the whole division, competing through questions on student metrics and tastes, department practices and programs, and Liberty/Student Affairs fun facts. The session ends with celebration and a charge toward the semester.

Implementation Roadmap

MID-LATE OCTOBER

Dustin Dubose seeks approval from Mark Hine; Student Affairs Leadership reviews the proposal. Establish the board, preliminary budget parameters, event purpose, and decision-making cadence.

NOVEMBER

Confirm venue and working identity; assign chair responsibilities; establish recurring meetings; launch a creative division-wide teaser; and begin department conversations.

DECEMBER

Finalize program flow, expo expectations, food and hospitality, production requirements, game-show questions, speaker and host preparation, and operational plans.

EARLY JANUARY

Conduct walkthroughs and rehearsals; confirm participation, staffing, catering, technical requirements, signage, and attendee details.

THIRD WEEK OF JANUARY 2027

Deliver the inaugural gathering; collect feedback; hold an after-action review; and preserve assets and lessons for the next cycle.

Future Opportunities

CONFERENCE READINESS

A standing planning board develops institutional knowledge and repeatable systems for regional or national student affairs conferences, including ACSD and future university-hosting opportunities.

PEER LEARNING

The same board can coordinate peer-institution site visits and focused co-learning opportunities.

SHARED RHYTHM

An annual gathering gives departments a predictable point around which to scaffold smaller trainings, communications, and interdepartmental collaboration.

STUDENT IMPACT

As employees understand neighboring departments and their offerings, referrals improve, duplicated effort declines, and the student experience becomes more coordinated.