

APCA Advisor Roundtable Brief

Leadership on Broadway Experience – New York City
July 21, 2026

1. How Can We Rebuild Attendance at Campus Events?

Best Practices Shared

Make students part of the planning process

- Use student advisory boards to help select programs.
- Survey students regularly before and after events.

Collect meaningful event feedback

- **Bralyn Simmons (McNeese State University)**
 - Every event includes a QR code linking to a Microsoft Forms or Google Forms survey.
 - Students identify what they liked, disliked, and what should change.
 - Results are reviewed after every event and used to improve future programming.

Empower students to promote events

- **Steve (Alfred State College)**
 - Created a student-led Instagram promotions team.
 - Uses Story polls to measure interest before events.
 - Tracks analytics to guide marketing decisions.

Promote the entire campus, not just your own events

- **Craig (Grambling State University)**
 - Student Activities shares events from every student organization.
 - Builds trust and encourages cross-campus collaboration.

Use campus engagement apps

- **Katie (Grambling State University)**
 - Uses the Campus Lush app where organizations post events.

- Students browse events by category (social, civic engagement, professional development, etc.).
- Analytics and post-event surveys help improve engagement.

Market the experience—not the logistics

- Focus promotional messaging on what students will experience rather than simply listing time and location.

Leverage peer-to-peer influence

- **Kathy Matson (Mount Wachusett Community College)**
 - Internal campus app encourages students to invite fellow students.
 - Peer recommendations outperform institutional messaging.

Follow social media trends

- **Craig (Grambling State University)**
 - Incorporate TikTok trends, dances, memes, and current content styles into event promotion.

Create memorable marketing campaigns

- **Kristin Adams (Sul Ross State University)**
 - Organized programming into themes (Fun, Learning, Professional Development).
 - Produced Family Feud-style marketing featuring staff dressed as Steve Harvey to generate excitement.

Build a content library

- **Marcus (Grambling State University)**
 - Utilize student photographers, videographers, and content creators.
 - Produce recap videos to show future attendees what events are like.
- **Cheyenne**
 - Capture content at recurring events for reuse throughout the year (#TBT, #MotivationMonday, next year's promotions).

Build Traditions Students Expect

Several institutions emphasized creating recurring weekly programs that become part of campus culture.

Examples included:

- **Michael**
 - Free Movie Fridays
 - Costume contests

- Door prizes
 - Community participation
 - **St. Petersburg College**
 - Friday Bowling
 - **Kelly Hampton**
 - Monday Funday
 - Tuesdays at the Tech
 - Wellness Wednesdays
 - Thirsty Thursdays
 - Same day, same location, every other week
 - Entire schedule released before classes begin.
 - **Catherine (HC)**
 - Thursday Game Nights
 - Workout Wednesdays
 - Surprise programs (Goat Yoga)
 - Attendance tracked across an event series.
 - Students eligible for grand prizes only after attending every event.
 - **Kathy Matson (MWCC)**
 - Jindo Bingo
 - Running continuously since 2020
 - Open nationally to 50 participating colleges.
 - **Gabby (SPC)**
 - "Polish and Prepare"
 - Professional appearance week before graduation featuring local salons, nail technicians, and barbers.
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2. How Can Campuses Do More with Smaller Budgets?

Best Practices Shared

Partner across campus

Many advisors agreed that collaboration is the most effective strategy for stretching limited budgets.

Suggested partners included:

- Career Services
- Orientation
- Title IX
- Counseling
- Learning Resource Centers

- Student Senate
- Enrollment
- Veterans Services
- Affinity Groups
- Institutional Advancement
- Greek Life
- Cybersecurity programs

Examples:

- **Brooke (Fox Valley Technical College)**
 - Massage Therapy students provide free wellness massages.
 - Gives practical experience to students while supporting campus wellness.
- **Todd Straight (Ivy Tech)**
 - Other departments may not contribute funding but can provide staffing, marketing, logistics, and volunteers.
- **Steve (Alfred State)**
 - Develop partnerships with local businesses such as bakeries, pharmacies, and restaurants.
- **Tyler (Alfred State)**
 - National Hazing Prevention Week coordinated among multiple campus departments.
- **Nache (Cuyahoga Community College)**
 - Collaborates with affinity groups and academic alliances.
- **Marcus**
 - Work closely with Institutional Advancement Foundations.

Use Cooperative Buying

Participants recommended participating in consortium purchasing and cooperative buying programs whenever possible to reduce entertainment and programming costs.

Let Data Drive Funding

Several schools emphasized collecting attendance and assessment data to justify future funding.

Examples:

- **Amy Cotner (MAC)**
 - Used survey data to demonstrate student interest in trips.
 - Board of Trustees eventually funded transportation.
- **Dylan (HC)**
 - Five campuses shared attendance and engagement data.
 - After several years of documented success, secured an additional **\$15,000** in programming funds.

3. What Programs Are Improving Student Retention?

Best Practices Shared

Connect students immediately

- **Todd (Ivy Tech)** and **Maren (University of North Dakota)** emphasized introducing students to organizations during Orientation.

University of North Dakota's model includes:

- Representatives from over 300 student organizations.
- Five student leaders and one advisor at each organization table.
- Students encouraged to join immediately.

Measure Involvement

Participants agreed that involved students remain enrolled at significantly higher rates.

Recommendations included:

- Track student organization participation.
- Compare retention rates between involved and uninvolved students.
- Use retention data to demonstrate institutional return on investment.

4. How Can Student Affairs Better Support Student Mental Health?

Best Practices Shared

Create recurring wellness programming

Examples included:

- Wellness Wednesdays
- Yoga
- Relaxation activities
- Creative expression

- Counseling partnerships

Programs highlighted included:

- **Kelly (Ivy Tech)**
 - Wellness Wednesdays
- **Kelly**
 - Window Between Worlds
 - Healing through collaborative art experiences in non-judgmental environments.
- **Kelly (Point Park University)**
 - Pioneer Pause
 - Held during October when student withdrawals peak.
 - Included slime making, pumpkin carving, yoga, relaxation activities, and "Consent Fries."
- **Tiffany (North Carolina)**
 - Food pantry
 - Professional clothing closet
 - Community gardening
 - Thrifty Thursday clothing exchange
 - Fashion shows
 - Crochet projects benefiting homeless populations
- **Dylan (HC)**
 - Strong partnerships with Counseling and Wellness offices.
- **Leah (State Fair Community College)**
 - Build Your Own Essentials Kit
 - Included fidgets, calming supplies, and counseling resources.
- **Tiffany (Bossier Parish Community College)**
 - Bagels and Boundaries
 - Relationships in Bloom
 - Ball Pit Conversations

5. How Can Campuses Build More Inclusive Communities?

Best Practices Shared

Support First-Generation Students

Several institutions highlighted partnerships with TRIO programs.

Examples:

- **Maren (University of North Dakota)**

- Extensive collaboration with TRIO.
- **Nathalia Flores (Arizona Western University)**
 - Hosts First Generation Week every November in partnership with TRIO.
- **Leah**
 - Thanksgiving Resource Luncheon
 - Collaborative program with TRIO.

Help Students Learn Campus Resources

Suggested orientation activity:

- Campus-wide scavenger hunt introducing students to important offices and services.

Create Emergency Student Support Programs

- **Todd (Ivy Tech)**
 - Ivy Cares program provides emergency assistance through an application process.
 - Support includes:
 - Gas cards
 - Grocery assistance
 - Emergency disaster support
 - Basic needs funding

Participants agreed that removing financial barriers helps students remain enrolled through graduation.

Key Themes from the Roundtable

Across every discussion, five consistent themes emerged:

1. **Students are more likely to attend events they help create and promote.**
2. **Recurring traditions build stronger campus culture than isolated events.**
3. **Partnerships multiply both budgets and staffing resources.**
4. **Assessment data is essential for demonstrating value and securing future funding.**
5. **Student success depends on supporting the whole student—academically, socially, financially, and emotionally.**

These strategies provide practical, low-cost approaches that campuses of all sizes can implement to improve engagement, strengthen retention, and create a more connected student experience.