



Chapter Best Practices: Fundraising

Raise money (and campus-wide engagement) with this student-driven fundraiser.

Like many Alpha Chi chapters—perhaps yours included—the Carson-Newman University Tennessee Delta chapter’s bank account was more barren than they’d have liked. To help pay for the upcoming AX Convention, the chapter needed to raise money. Tennessee Delta members, jaded by years of diminishing returns from an annual Scholastic Book sale fundraiser, brainstormed for a new way to raise some cash. Tried-and-true ideas bubbled up: Jail-a-thon, Monkey-on-your-back and Fotofest. They all shared one thing in common—the students hated them.

So, they set out to devise their own fundraising game. A brief survey of their members revealed what they liked and didn’t like about fundraisers (chances are your students will feel the same):

- They didn’t want objects, food, or knick-knacks.
- They wanted something they could do with their friends.
- They wanted memorable experiences.

While brainstorming, Associate Professor and Alpha Chi chapter sponsor Kip Wheeler mentioned to his chapter a spy game he once played to blow off some steam in grad school. His idea took root: a spy game on a campus-wide scale where participants outsmart (and assassinate) their friends. Its name: Mastermind Spy.

The Rules of Mastermind Spy

The rules of the game aren’t complicated. Each spy is assigned two targets, enemy spies, to hunt across campus (with designated safe areas like classrooms, work areas, and libraries). Wheeler’s students used ping pong balls as their weapon of choice, but you could use sticky notes (booby traps hidden in books, for example), play old-fashioned tag, or even leverage social media (think of spies “capturing” one another by snagging and posting photos to the chapter’s social page). The last spy standing (along with the runner-up) wins prizes donated by local merchants (think pizza, movie tickets, and coffee). The game does take student coordination, referees, and prep work. The Tennessee Delta chapter has it all figured out for you: an exhausted list of rules, mission brief, waiver sheet, templated cards, posters, and a full PowerPoint slideshow. Just visit: http://cnweb.cn.edu/kwheeler/AX/Mastermind_Samples.html

Additional Tips and Pitfalls:

- You must advertise widely
- Discuss with campus security and coordinate with them.
- Never use any game props that could be mistaken for a real weapon.
- Have students sign consent forms.
- Rules should include “safe-zones” to avoid disrupting campus.
- If a participant excessively complains or annoys the “Rules Committee,” multiple assassins can be assigned to take out said annoyance :)

Why was Mastermind Spy such a success? “It really tapped into this spy mythos,” says Professor Kip Wheeler. “It was just tremendous fun—even faculty played. It has been financially our most successful fundraiser.”

Spying the Bottom Line

Here's another contributing factor to its success: The Mastermind Spy fundraiser costs chapters next to nothing. At \$.14 a ping-pong ball, minimal printing expenses and large manila envelopes, the assembled Spy Packets run only \$.50 per entrant. Tennessee Delta charged \$5.00 to enter (you may want to try \$10.00) for net profit of \$4.50 per participant. Obviously, the profits soar as you scale up the numbers.

If you would like to discuss the fundraiser's specifics with Tennessee Delta chapter's sponsor, Professor Kip Wheeler, he has graciously agreed to answer your questions. Email him at kwheeler@cn.edu or call him at his office [\(865-471-3283\)](tel:865-471-3283).

Shout Out!

This fundraising case study was created by the Tennessee Delta chapter of Carson-Newman University. Their story was originally presented to the 2017 Alpha Chi National Conference in Louisville, KY. With their shared tools and templates, your chapter can launch your own Mastermind Spy game to boost your chapter's bank account.

If you like great tips like "Mastermind Spy," we hope you'll attend the Chapter-Strengthening Sessions held during each annual national convention for other ideas for fundraising, chapter growth, member engagement, and more.