

# Planning a Retreat

## Where to Begin

When you begin to plan your retreat there are several things to consider that will help you choose activities, participants, and programs that will best fit your needs. In addition to this guide, if you would like more information on how to plan an event, please refer to our *Event Planning Leadership Workshop* that is also a part of our Leadership Toolbox.

It is important to establish specific a goal(s) that will be achieved as a result of this retreat. This goal(s) should inspire your list of who is expected to participate in this retreat.

Some other factors to consider are the when, where, how, and who of the retreat:

### **Who are you planning this retreat for?**

- Members
- Officers
- Advisors
- Workshop presenters (if any)
- Resource personnel (if any)

### **When should your organization have a retreat?**

- At the beginning of the year or quarter
- At midyear for an evaluation or a refresher
- Before or after new officer installation
- Before a major program

**Where should you hold your retreat?**

- On campus
- At a high ropes course or other experiential activity site
- Off campus

**How long should the retreat be?**

- Several hours
- Half day
- Whole day
- Entire weekend

**Who is helping plan this retreat? / Who should facilitate the retreat?**

- Members and/or officers who are qualified and comfortable
- Advisors
- Alumni
- Faculty
- Student Activities staff

**What are the goals of your retreat?**

- Strategic planning and goal development
- To educate and provide information/workshops
- To evaluate current short and long term goals
- Building team dynamics and bonding
- Introduction of new members
- Conflict resolution
- To just have fun!

## Create a Timeline

Once you have determined these retreat basics, start planning a timeline for your retreat. We suggest, depending on the caliber of your retreat, you begin planning 1-3 months ahead of time.

### **2-3 Months Prior**

- Determine goals of your retreat
- Know who you are planning this retreat for
- Create a budget
  - Consider venue, transportation, catering, speaker, and material costs.
  - **Please Note:** If you are planning to sign a **contract**, get into contact with your advisor or SALD **first** to determine the best way to handle this situation for your group. University of Cincinnati contracts can take up to **two months** to complete.
- Reserve location for the retreat
- Request retreat facilitators
- Inform participants of retreat date and time

### **1 Month Prior**

- Develop an agenda for the retreat
  - Consider your goals and the group's needs.
  - Consider whether you want flexibility with timing or an explicit agenda
  - Plan activities
- Confirm venue, catering, participation of facilitators, and any outside resources
- Collect supplies, materials, and handouts needed for activities and retreat as a whole
  - Be sure to check audio/visual capabilities if applicable
- Arrange for catering and food

- Check for food allergies or dietary needs from participants
- Arrange transportation amongst group members or through the University
  - Any student organization traveling off campus must fill out a [Group Travel Authorization Form](#)
  - If you plan to travel outside of a 50 mile radius of UC you will need to rent vehicles from the University
- Inform participants of retreat details, location, transportation information, policies, and what to expect from the day

### **Week prior**

- Confirmation from all participants for attendance
- Confirmations from retreat site, transportation, catering, facilitators if not already accomplished

### **Post Retreat**

- Pay any remaining bills
- Send thank you notes
- Evaluate retreat and how it met your goal/expectations

## Day of Retreat

### **1. Kicking off your Retreat**

- Introduce new faces
- Share the goals of the retreat
- Overview of the agenda

### **2. Create a comfortable and collaborative space for team members.**

Groups that feel a sense of camaraderie will be able to work together more effectively than a group of strangers.

- Start with an Ice Breaker that fits your team
- Engage in activities that include the entire group
- If you separate for workshops or breakout activities, find time to come back together (i.e. lunch)

### **3. Have working sessions**

- For larger groups this could involve breakout sessions into smaller groups or pairs
- For smaller groups this could involve all or pairs
  - *Note that ten people working on problems in pairs then sharing their outcomes drastically increases creative output compared to a ten person collective discussion.*
- Can begin with a lighter working session or presentation to get members comfortable and involved in the goal of the retreat
- Later follow with more in depth working sessions or presentations that can tackle more specific or pressing issues

### **4. Keep notes of each session**

- There should be an organizer/leader present at each working session taking notes to record ideas and discussions pertinent to

the goal of the retreat. Other ideas and inspiration may come along unprompted as well.

### **5. Come together for closing**

- Conduct an activity to bring the retreat to a formal close
- Reflect on the retreat and working sessions
- Readdress your goal
- Distribute/collect evaluations. Keep it short and simple to get honest feedback.

### **6. Clean Up**

- Always leave your environment cleaner than when you found it. Remind members to do their part, the whole group is responsible for upholding the integrity of your organization.

## Sample Agendas

### **Half-Day Retreat**

8am	Arrive
8-8:30am	Introductions and Ice Breaker
8:30-9:30am	Team Building/Leadership Development activity
9:30-10:30am	Working session one
10:30-11:30am	Working session two
11:30pm-12pm	Guest speaker
12-1pm	Lunch
1-1:30pm	Closing Remarks and evaluation
1:30pm	Depart

### **Full Day Retreat**

8:30-9am	Arrive and Check in
9-9:30am	Opening remarks and Ice Breakers
9:30-10:30am	Working session one
10:30-10:45am	Transition
10:45-11:45am	Working session two
11:45-1pm	Transition and Lunch
1pm-2pm	Working session three
2-2:15pm	Transition
2:15-2:45pm	Speaker
2:45-3:15pm	Closing Activities
3:15-3:30pm	Evaluations
3:30pm	Depart

*Information inspired from*

*<http://ohiounion.osu.edu/posts/documents/FINAL%20retreat%20guide.pdf>*

## Retreat Locations

### *On Campus:*

In order to reserve space on campus you must go through the University of Cincinnati's event services website 25Live:  
<https://schedule.uc.edu/25live/>

### *Off Campus Single Day Retreats:*

#### **Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens**

3400 Vine St, 45220

513-487-3481

<http://cincinnatizoo.org/groups/rental-facilities/>

The Cincinnati Zoo is home to numerous indoor and outdoor venues for retreat locations.

#### **Pyramid Hill**

1763 Hamilton-Cleves Rd, 45013

513-868-1234

[pyramid@pyramidhill.org](mailto:pyramid@pyramidhill.org)

<http://pyramidhill.org/rental/>

The outdoor venues have seating from 130 to 300. Pyramid hill is an outdoor museum focusing on monumental pieces of sculpture and art with a museum housing Greek, Roman, Etruscan, and Egyptian Sculptures.

#### **Burnet Woods**

3251 Brookline Ave, 45220

513-357-2604

<http://www.cincinnatiiparks.com/central/burnet-woods/>



This 90-acre park is located across the street from the University of Cincinnati sporting hiking trails, a fishing lake, shelters, picnic areas, a nature center and a disc golf course.

### **The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati**

513-362-YMCA

<http://www.cincinnatiymca.org/locations>

### **Higher Ground**

3820 Logan Creek Ln.

West Harrison, IN 47060

Phone (812) 637-3777 Fax (812) 637-3848

<http://www.hgcrc.org/hgcrc-facility/>

With lodging options, dining facilities, meeting rooms and recreation space Higher Ground Conference and Retreat center provides groups with individual care to help make your experience a positive one. Staff will work with you to plan set ups and tours.

### **Cincinnati Parks: Shelter Areas**

<http://www.cincinnatiiparks.com/reserve1/picnic-shelters-group-picnic-areas/>

### **Alms Park Group Picnic Area**

711 Alms Park Lane, 45226

Shelter Capacity: 20

Reserved Area Amenities: open shelter, picnic tables, swings, water, volleyball net, horseshoe pits, restrooms, grills, parking

Cost: \$160 Fri-Sun & Holidays, \$135 Mon-Thurs, April 15-October 15

### **Mt. Airy Forest Group Picnic Area 22**

4700 Trail Ridge Rd, 45223

Shelter Capacity: 80

Reserved Area Amenities: open shelter, picnic tables, swings, grills, water, restrooms, volleyball net, horseshoe pits, parking

Cost: \$160 Fri-Sun & Holidays, \$135 Mon-Thurs, April 15-October 15

### **Mt. Airy Forest Stone Steps Group Picnic Area**

1500 Stone Steps Ridge Rd, 45223

Shelter Capacity: 80

Reserved Area Amenities: open shelter, picnic tables, restrooms, swings, grills, playfield, horseshoe pits, water, volleyball net, parking

Cost: \$160 Fri.-Sun. & Holidays, \$135 Mon.-Thu., April 15-October 15

### **Drake Park Picnic Shelter**

5800 Red Bank Rd, 45213

Shelter Capacity: 75

Reserved Shelter Amenities: picnic tables, restrooms, grill. Exclusive use of shelter; lawn remains open to the public.

Cost: \$100 Fri.-Sun. & Holidays, \$50 Mon.-Thu., April 15- October 15

### **French Park Picnic Shelter**

3012 Section Rd, 45237

Shelter Capacity: 75

Reserved Shelter Amenities: picnic tables, restrooms, grill. Exclusive use of shelter; lawn remains open to the public.

Cost: \$100 Fri.-Sun. & Holidays, \$50 Mon.-Thu., April 15- October 15

### **Jackson Hill Park Picnic Shelter**

3037 Eleanor Pl, 45219

Shelter Capacity: 60

Reserved Shelter Amenities: picnic tables, restrooms, grill. Exclusive use of shelter; lawn remains open to the public.

Cost: \$100 Fri.-Sun. & Holidays, \$50 Mon.-Thu., April 15-October 15

### **Mt. Echo Picnic Shelter**

202 Crestline Dr, 45205

Shelter Capacity: 75

Reserved Shelter Amenities: picnic tables, hilltop panoramic view, restrooms near shelter, grill. Exclusive use of shelter; lawn remains open to the public.

Cost: \$100 Fri.-Sun. & Holidays, \$50 Mon.-Thu., April 15-October 15

### **Rapid Run Picnic Shelter**

4450 Rapid Run Rd, 45238

Shelter Capacity: 75

Reserved Shelter Amenities: picnic tables, restrooms, grill. Exclusive use of shelter; lawn remains open to the public.

Cost: \$100 Fri.-Sun. & Holidays, \$50 Mon.-Thu., April 15- October 15

*Off Campus Overnight Retreats:*

### **Ohio State Parks**

<http://parks.ohiodnr.gov/rates#lodge>

### **Hocking Hills Shelters & Facilities**

[http://www.hockinghills.com/park\\_facilities.html](http://www.hockinghills.com/park_facilities.html)

### **Scenic Retreats**

<http://hockinghillsscenicretreats.com/>

740-603-7223  
scenicretreats.llc@gmail.com

**Bellevue Retreat**

<http://www.hockinghills.com/bellevue/>  
740-603-6000  
Bellevue@ohiohills.com

**Higher Ground**

3820 Logan Creek Ln.  
West Harrison, IN 47060  
Phone (812) 637-3777 Fax (812) 637-3848  
<http://www.hgcrc.org/hgcrc-facility/>  
With lodging options, dining facilities, meeting rooms and recreation space  
Higher Ground Conference and Retreat center provides groups with  
individual care to help make your experience a positive one. Staff will work  
with you to plan set ups and tours.