

District Fall Conference

Fall Leadership Conferences are an important part of the District's DECA activities. The Fall Conference can play a critical role in developing motivation and membership for DECA chapters. It gives students the opportunity to experience DECA beyond the confines of the local school classroom. A Fall Conference program which combines leadership workshops, presentations by business people on the latest in marketing innovations, and sessions on DECA programs and competitive events is a valuable learning experience for students which will increase their interest in DECA and often sets the stage for a successful year for individual student members and the DECA chapter. Often districts conduct the District Vice President election as part of the Fall Leadership Conference.

Planning and conducting the Fall Leadership Conference is primarily the responsibility of the District Advisor, with the assistance of chapter advisors. Each district determines the format and program for the conference based on the wants and needs of chapters in the District. While specifics will vary with districts, the following are important components in planning fall conferences.

- ◆ Schedule the date and facility as soon as possible. A year or more prior to the conference would be ideal, but certainly the conference date and facility should be scheduled by the spring prior to the conference.
- ◆ The facility should be adequate for the number of anticipated participants and the conference format. The number of general sessions, breakout sessions, and meal functions are considerations in selecting facilities. Also parking, security, rental fees for space, set up charges for meetings, and audio-visual expenses should be considered as part of the facility selection process.
- ◆ A conference budget should be developed based on a set registration fee, anticipated number of attendees and expected expenses. Expenses to consider should be those associated with the facility, food service, speakers, materials and printing, clean-up fees, and extra security.
- ◆ The conference registration materials, process, and fees should be established soon after the date and facility have been determined. Registration materials should be disseminated as early as possible. A clearly written description of the registration process should be included with the registration materials given to the chapter advisors. The process description should include deadline dates, "pay to" information, mailing address for the materials and payments, and a description of how registration will be handled at the conference site.
- ◆ Expectations for attendees should be clearly communicated in the conference registration materials. The Delegate Conduct and Dress Codes should be part of the registration materials, with direction that chapter advisors work with their students to meet these expectations.
- ◆ Registration which uses a database will facilitate conference management. The database can produce chapter rosters, print nametags and certificates, produce invoices, assign students to workshops, and other items useful for managing a conference.

- ◆ Speakers and workshops should be scheduled into the program based on time frames and facilities available. Speakers should be confirmed in writing and provided pertinent information, including time – both starting and ending – for their presentation, place, purpose of the conference and description of the audience, AV support available, parking, payment arrangements, and contact information. A follow-up confirmation shortly before the conference date is a good idea.
- ◆ Printed materials should be developed early, but not printed until the last practicable date. This allows for last minute changes and corrections to the materials. A printed conference program should be provided. All students should have nametags, whether provided by the district from registration materials or produced by local chapters. Other printed materials such as signs, participant certificates, and awards add to the quality of the conference experience.
- ◆ Arrangements for food service, including attendee meals and speaker hospitality, should be arranged and the information provided as part of the conference registration materials. If food service is not included in the conference activities then options for meals and refreshments should be made known to attendees and speakers.
- ◆ The District Advisor should work closely with the District Treasurer on the finances of the conference. Accurate registration information should be provided for invoices to chapters. Registration payment received should be reconciled against the actual chapter registration. Any bills should be approved by the District Advisor and promptly submitted to the Treasurer for payment. A report on the finances of the Fall Conference should be made available to the chapter advisors upon completion of all financial transactions.
- ◆ If the District Vice-President election is included in the conference activities, the District Advisor must insure that the arrangements for conducting the election, including campaigning, and the necessary materials are in place.

The Fall Conference is primarily the responsibility of the District Advisor, but can only be successful with the commitment and assistance of the chapter advisors. There should be shared responsibility in planning the conference, and shared responsibility in the operation of the conference.