

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

**SOONERS HELPING
SOONERS**



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PURPOSE:

Sooners Helping Sooners is a student organization at the University of Oklahoma with a purpose of raising money for an Emergency Allocation Account within the University, which has been created to help students who find themselves in extenuating circumstances and in need of emergency financial assistance.

While our formal statement of purpose is listed above, our organization also finds purpose in doing for others what they cannot do for themselves and in feeling a responsibility to other members of the University of Oklahoma community who are in need. Sooners Helping Sooners is founded upon compassion such that every Sooner has an opportunity to succeed at OU, despite extenuating circumstances.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

Sooners Helping Sooners consists of an executive council of 20 members and approximately 300 staff members. The executive council attends weekly meetings to decide jointly on our next actions to take as a whole and also as independent departments.

Executive council represents the departments and positions of Outreach Director, Creative Director, Logistics Chair, Events Team, Gratitude Committee, Financial Correspondents, PR Specialists, Campus Liaisons, and Social Media Master. The staff members also attend bimonthly meetings and serve to implement the executive council's plans.

In addition, an Allocation Committee has been setup to contain 50% University faculty members and 50% students. This committee reviews applications requesting for aid,

evaluates each application, and decides the allocation amount. Approximately 1-5 applications are received weekly and the turn around time for checks to be made is less than a week depending on the level of emergency for the applicant.

MOTIVATION FOR PROMOTING PHILANTHROPIC PRACTICE & AWARENESS ON CAMPUS:

Sooners Helping Sooners lives by the mission of selflessly serving others. We want to not only help students, but also teach OU students the importance of sacrificial giving. It is important for every Sooner to understand the immense need on our campus – walking within us and sitting within our classes – so that we can begin to better the lives of other Sooners. We believe that you really have not lived until you have given something to someone who can never repay you. Sooners Helping Sooners strives to teach this message to every student – so that we live more consciously and compassionately for the people in the world. At the end of the day, it is people that make the world a good or bad place and we have every opportunity and responsibility to make the world a better place for everyone.

Our campus awareness will continue to grow as time lapses and the mission of Sooners Helping Sooners has spread deeply into the core of what it means to be a Sooner – to be committed to the Sooner community and fellow Sooner students. Our vision is that through Sooners Helping Sooners every student will be touched with compassion and humility – both students receiving awards as well as students giving money.

STRATEGY & ACTIVITIES:

Sooners Helping Sooners promotes our philanthropic practice and promotes awareness on campus via sidewalk chalking and yard signs around campus, carrying out random acts of kindness for others, speaking to student groups, and phone calls through a call campaign. We have initiated a student-leader campaign to express to students the reasons for supporting our program. For every donation of \$15 or more, a free Sooners Helping Sooners t-shirt is given to the student, so that awareness can be furthered by those who support the program.

Furthermore, Sooners Helping Sooners is promoted by campus liaisons presenting at the meetings of other student organizations on campus, Facebook and other social media, and word of mouth. We have engaged large organizations through competitions and goals allowing them to receive prizes for getting 80% of their organization to be committed donors.

We also plan an annual Guinness World Record Attempt at the largest number of simultaneously made trust falls. A trust fall is where a pair of students stand directly in front of one another – face to back – and the front student falls backwards with a straight body into the other students held out arms. We choose this exercise, because we wanted to physically represent to the students what it meant to support one another. The students who attend are encouraged to wear their Sooners Helping Sooners t-shirt, in which they have to be a donor to have. We had an attendance of 324 students last year breaking the world record with 162 pairs of trust falls. This year we hope to go even further.

RESULTS:

The work that Sooners Helping Sooners does undeniably has a positive impact on the University of Oklahoma's campus. As a new organization, its operations were in full swing last semester (Fall 2012) raising \$11,650, which was awarded to 19 students who found themselves in dire unforeseen financial circumstances. The money was raised through 417 student gifts. On average, students gave \$28. This trend continues to grow as awareness events occur and the campaign continues.

Not only were those students financially awarded, but also expressed to our executive committee the emotional and psychological awards they experienced as a direct result of the initiative that Sooners Helping Sooners undertook. These awards have given students the courage to pursue their dreams despite the trials and tribulations that they face and have felt a sense of belonging to the OU community as this program allows all OU students to come together to help those Sooners in need.

BUDGET FOR PHILANTHROPY RELATED-ACTIVITIES:

Currently, our budget has consisted of student funding. However, our goal to make 100% of student gifts charitable to other students helped us gain some start-up money. An OU alumnus, Kelly Mitchell, gave \$25,000 to Sooners Helping Sooners in its first year. This money has helped mainstream marketing efforts and allow Sooners Helping Sooners to plan outreach events such as our Midnight Breakfasts, in which occur once a month. Students are asked to make a donation for free breakfast and these donations will contribute to helping a student in emergency-based need. Currently, our budget for each breakfast includes pancakes, bacon, and fruit for 300 people and is \$1357.93. During the

event, to spread awareness, awarded students give testimonials, student leaders speak on Sooners Helping Sooners' behalf, and dancing occurs. Our volunteers make sure that everyone in attendance has heard about our program and is asked to give a donation. Our most recent midnight breakfast raised \$367.00 from students for students.

SUSTAINIBILITY PLAN:

Knowing, from feedback, that the students awarded feel an extraordinary gratitude motivates and sustains not only the executive committee but also the many staffers, which keeps students feelings engaged and excited to continue pursuing the goals of Sooners Helping Sooners.

From a financial standpoint, our organization plans to continue funding its activities over time through scholarships such as this one, contributions from private donors, and through the money raised by students.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Sooners Helping Sooners has learned that awareness is key to success – the more people aware of the organization, its mission, its activities, the better and more successful the organization will be. We have also learned that people buy into “why” you do something more than “what” you do. We do raise money, however students want to raise money with us when they understand the “why” we raise money. Painting a picture for them through the student applications we have received helps the students recognize the stressful situations others are in and then, can be sacrificially grateful by giving to those who are in an unfortunate situation.

Sooners Helping Sooners has also learned that those truly committed to the purpose of the organization will enable it to succeed. We have witnessed that the relentless compassion and sympathy for others is unable to be stifled and it will allow the organization to prevail.