



College Station Citizens' University

Since 1998

by Peggy Calliham
Community Relations Mgr. (retired)

Purpose of the Program

- Awareness and understanding of the city's philosophy, issues, function and services
- Better informed citizens willing to participate in making their local government successful



Why A Class?

- Most have little knowledge of local government
- Little is taught in schools
- It is where citizens can make the biggest difference
- Only get information from a negative media
- Knowledge is power
- An informed public is usually supportive



How Is It Run?

- Accept 24 applicants annually
- Must meet certain criteria
 - Resident for a minimum of one year
 - Registered voter
 - Not running for political office at the time
 - Commitment to attending classes
- 3-hour sessions for 10 weeks beginning January
- Begins with meal at 5:30 pm
- Free to applicants



Selection Process

- If there are more applicants than places, a committee of graduates screens the applications and makes the selection
- If there are only one or two that do not make the cut, they are considered alternates
- If they do not make it the first year, they are automatically accepted the second year if still interested



What Does It Cost?

- An average of \$150-\$175 per participant
- Includes:
 - Three ring notebook with city information
 - Meal(Try to stay within a \$7-\$8 range)
 - Graduation plaque, shirt or memento
 - Bus tour of important sites



Who is Responsible?

- Skills necessary for Coordinator :
 - Organizer/ Planner
 - Host/Hostess
 - Good general knowledge about the city
 - Good relationships with departments and in general
 - Preferably very invested in the city government
 - Time to devote to the program
 - Good communicator



Scheduling

- A period of time:
 - that's good for the organization
 - when the public is not generally too busy (First of year)
- Minimum of 6 months advance planning to schedule w/departments



Class Format

- Each class should be a balanced mix of:
 - **Lecture** (Power Points or straight lecture)
 - **Visual** (video, maps, brochures, demo)
 - **Group activity** (tour, role play, in-basket exercise)
- Located at the department that will be presenting
- 5:30- 6 p.m.- Meal and networking
- 6 p.m.- 9 Class time
- Coordinator makes sure leaders stay on schedule



Training for Leaders

- Some session leaders may need some assistance with planning their presentation
- Bureaucrats LOVE to talk about their topic
- Many students get bored with too much lecture, fact and detail
- Encourage leaders to use all forms of presentation to keep the attention
 - Lecture
 - Visuals
 - Group Activity



Benefits to Participants

- Much clearer understanding of what their city can and cannot do for them.
- Get to know their city staff and leaders
- Get to know their fellow citizens and neighbors
- Feel empowered to get involved
- Our council seeks out graduates to appoint to boards and committees



Benefits to the City

- Build citizens' confidence in their city
- Grass roots support group
- Great resource to use as focus group, surveys, or for task forces
- Knowledge they can pass along to neighbors, family, and friends
- Develops a group citizens who are knowledgeable enough to make good volunteers for boards, committees or elected office.



Build Citizens' Confidence in their City Government

*"If you once forfeit the confidence of your
fellow citizens, you can never regain their
respect and esteem..."*

Abraham Lincoln

For more information
contact the

City of College Station
Public Communications Office

at 979/764-3445

or jsocol@cstx.gov