

# Organizing an Effective Campaign

Strategies to Achieve Goals and Influence Decision-Makers.

## A Toolkit & Guide to Action for Student Activists

# Organizing an Effective Campaign

### Campaign Literature

Developing succinct information about the campaign is critically important. We recommend developing a 1-2 page flyer, a petition, and answers to frequently asked questions. See the resources section for samples materials you can work from.

### Building Allies On Campus

- We recommend putting together a list of student groups to reach out to and invite them to endorse the campaign. This is a great way to develop relationships and build support for the campaign. You and the coordinating committee can break up the list of groups and identify who will reach out to which groups. One person shouldn't be responsible for contacting all of them. You could then e-mail or call the groups and ask them if you can come to their next meeting and give a brief 5-10 minute presentation about the campaign. Here's a suggested list of types of groups to reach out to:
  - Architecture club (especially green architecture);
  - Human rights group (i.e. Amnesty International);
  - Women's group;
  - Anti-sweatshop group;
  - African-American student association;
  - Chemical engineering group;
  - Medical or nurses group;
- Are there professors doing research into environmental health (i.e. into phthalates, dioxins) whom might be supportive of your campaign? You could ask them to send a letter in support to the University President and/or allow you to come and give a brief presentation or "rap" to their class.

### Launching the Campaign

We strongly encourage you to launch the campaign publicly to help draw interest, attention and support.

Some ways you can launch the campaign include:

- Holding a "teach-in" to announce the campaign and educate students;
- Organizing a press conference to get the campus newspaper and other media outlets to cover the campaign;
- Launching a campaign website;
- Holding an educational screening of Blue Vinyl, Sam Suds or Trade Secrets;
- Having a campaign launch "party";

### Media and Educational Events

After you launch your campaign, you're going to want to hold educational and media events to draw interest and build support for the campaign. Here's some ideas on the types of events you can hold:

- Screening of an educational documentary such as Blue Vinyl, Trade Secrets, and/or Blue Vinyl;
- Holding a panel discussion of teach-in (for example, you can invite a few different speakers to share different perspectives);
- Organizing a debate (having a debate between opposing voices);
- Holding a rally or informational picket in front of the Student Union or the University President's Building;
- Creative street theater in front of the student union with puppets (be creative and have fun!);
- Inflating Betty the Be Safe Ducky (CHEJ's 25-foot inflatable rubber ducky) on campus;
- Inviting a speaker from a PVC fence line community (PVC chemical plant community or incinerator/landfill community) to talk about how the PVC industry is impacting them;
- Chalking the campus;
- Holding a PVC-free alternatives fair where you display PVC-free products. You can invite local businesses to come and display their products;
- Dropping a banner from a school building;
- Developing a Facebook "page", "group" for "petition" for the campaign;

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### Petitioning, Dorm-Storming, Class-Raps and Tabling

To win your campaign, you need to show school decision-makers that this is an issue that's of concern not just to you and your enviro/social justice group, but is an issue that has broad support from students and faculty on campus.

The most effective way to build support is through one-on-one outreach and engagement with students. There's nothing that can replace it. We encourage you to regularly "table" and "petition" in the student union. You can organize a weekly or bi-weekly table in the student union to draw attention and get petitions. This is an easy task you can seek volunteers for. It's important to train and practice your "tablers" before-hand so they know what to do and feel comfortable speaking about the campaign with strangers. You can also reach out to teachers and see if you can give a brief class rap and circulate petitions within classes to generate interest.

These are great ways to begin building an e-mail list for the campaign to keep students and teachers posted (but of course, not sending out too many e-mails that annoy people).

### Gaining Support From Student and Faculty Legislative Bodies

After you've gained some support and held some public events, the next step is to seek the support from student and faculty legislative bodies. Many schools have student and faculty Senates or other legislative bodies. Some schools also have teacher's unions (and sometimes even separate unions for the graduate students). These are all excellent places to go and lobby for their official endorsement and support. We recommend reaching out to their leadership and meeting with them one-on-one to discuss the campaign. They may invite you to come and give a presentation to their membership. You will want to draft and bring a sample resolution they can pass (see the toolkit for a sample policy). If and when any of these legislative bodies pass a resolution, publicize it! You can ask them if they'd be willing to issue a press release about it and/or send a copy of the resolution to school decision-makers (such as the University President and/or Director of Procurement). Sometimes they may not be willing

to take that extra step, however since they've officially endorsed your campaign, you can even issue a press statement and send a copy of the resolution to campus decision-makers.

### Getting Media Coverage



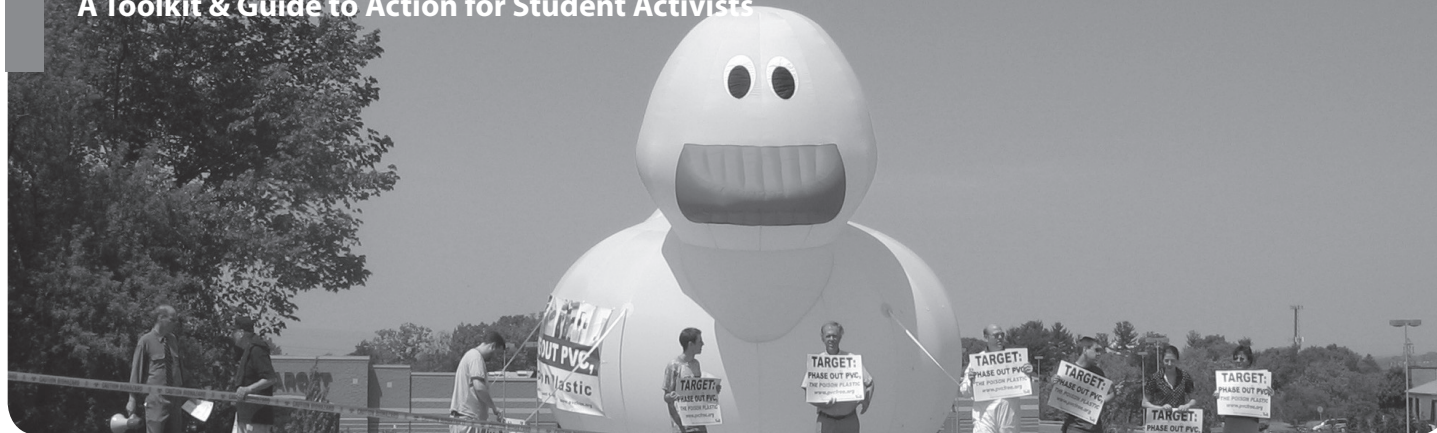
At every stage of your campaign, you want to think about ways for your campus newspaper(s), TV, and radio stations to cover your issue. Holding events is a great way to generate interest and coverage. Whenever you hold a big public event or media event, reach out to them and invite them to come (see the resources section for a link to CHEJ's media toolkit for helpful tips on getting media coverage).

The campus newspaper likely has an editorial board. Once you've gained some momentum, reach out to the editorial staff to seek a meeting and their endorsement of the campaign. Additionally, encourage activists in your group and coalition to regularly submit letters to the editor of the campus newspaper about the issue. Letters to the editor are relatively easy to get published, and are often widely read.

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In addition to on-campus media outreach, reach out to other regional media outlets such as off-campus newspapers, radio and TV stations, online blogs, etc. If you don't have contacts at off-campus media outlets, ask other local/regional environmental groups for their contact lists – they may be happy to share their list with you.

### Building Off-Campus Support

In addition to working on campus, think about ways you can build support for the campaign from the larger community off-campus. Here's some suggestions for groups and institutions you can reach out to and network with:

- Environmental health and justice groups;
- Conservation groups;
- Fishing groups concerned about contaminated-fish;
- Local groups fighting incinerators or landfills;
- Green building organizations such as USGBC or AIA chapters;
- A local Council on Occupational Safety and Health (COSH) group;
- The local Sierra Club chapter;
- Green jobs groups;
- Unions; and
- Health-affected groups (i.e. breast cancer, learning disabilities, reproductive health).

### Online Activism

We strongly encourage you to develop a webpage about your campaign with basic information (the problem, solution, resources for folks to learn more, and information about how folks can take action, and

get involved). You can create an e-mail list for the campaign, create a Facebook or Twitter account, and even a blog! These are all great ways to publicize the campaign and communicate with students and faculty.

### Bring Betty the Be Safe Ducky to Your University!

Betty the Be Safe Ducky is CHEJ's inflatable 25-foot rubber ducky that's been making headlines coast to coast in support of a PVC-free and toxic-free future. Betty was created by CHEJ to support our PVC Campaign and allied groups working to phase out PVC and phthalates in kids' toys and other consumer products. Betty is a symbol of a seemingly innocent household product (rubber ducky) that is often made out of PVC. Yellow duckys made out of PVC often contain and can leach toxic chemicals called phthalates –over 90% of all phthalates are used to soften PVC products. Betty is also a symbol of a safer toxic-free future – a healthier tomorrow of getting toxic chemicals out of kids' toys and our environment. Betty has traveled coast-to-coast, from Maine to California, in support of a PVC, phthalate, and toxic-free future. You can visit <http://www.besafenet.com/pvc/duck.htm> to see photos and stories about the giant ducky in action!

### Want to Bring the Ducky to Your School?

The ducky is a great prop to draw public and media attention. For example you can inflate Betty in front of your Student Union and hold a press conference. Get in touch with us if you're interested in bringing Betty to your school for an event: [mike@chej.org](mailto:mike@chej.org) or 212-964-3680.