



An Organization And Its Advisor

As a student organization with competent and capable leadership, you might wonder why student organizations would want or need a faculty or staff advisor. Consider the following:

Do you sometimes wish your group had more support from related academic or service departments?

Could your organization benefit from some "connections" with university policy-makers?

And even though you are doing a super job now, will your group have to start again from scratch next year?

A faculty or staff advisor could help alleviate these and other problems **WITHOUT TAKING OVER** the leadership of your organization. Advisors play an important role in the development of the student organization by providing support and guidance.

The Role Of An Advisor Is To:

Serve as a "sounding board" off which you can bounce off new ideas

Support your group

Intervene in conflicts between group members and/or officers

Be knowledgeable of policies that may impact on your organization's decisions, programs, etc.

Provide continuity and stability as student leadership changes

Provide your group with connections

Serve as mediator during an organizational crisis

Give honest feedback to group members

Point out new perspectives and directions to the group and introduce new program ideas

The organization/advisor relationship benefits the advisor too. Being involved with a student organization offers the faculty or staff member unique opportunities to:

Get to know and work with students outside the classroom or office

Informally share knowledge and expertise on relevant topics

An opportunity to feel satisfaction and accomplishment through making a special contribution to a particular group of students

Inform the transfer of knowledge and skills learned from the co curricular experience

Serves as a resource and support person as well as facilitator of creativity and innovation for the group

The Responsibilities Of Group Members To Their Advisor Are:

Discuss your expectations of the advisor's role with your advisor from the beginning. This information should be from all of the students with whom the advisor will work - officers, chairs, etc.

Notify the advisor of all meetings.

Send the advisor a copy of all minutes and other information. Too much information is probably better than too little!

The President/Committee Chair/Executive Board should meet regularly with the advisor to discuss organizational matters and to relay and update information.

Consult with the advisor before any changes in the structure or policies of the organization (committee) are made and before major projects are undertaken.

Remember that the responsibility for the success or failure of a group project rests ultimately with the group, not the advisor.

Conduct annual advisor and organization evaluations. This allows for developing an ongoing and effective advisor relationship.

Now that you know how much your organization and potential advisor can benefit from one another, you probably want to know how to find this advisor. There are at least two things your organization should do. First, develop a clear statement of group goals and a clear statement of expectations of the advisor, both in terms of role and time commitment. It would also be helpful to outline what the advisor could fairly expect of the group. With this information in hand, you will be ready to approach potential advisors and discuss with them their interest and ability for advising your group. The most suitable advisor is one who shares a common interest with your organization.

Poll your group members for the names of professors or staff members who they have found helpful and interested in student life. Approach potential advisors confidently and positively. Remember to be clear about the purpose and activities of your organization, your expectations of the advisor and all benefits the advisor will enjoy.

Once your advisor begins to serve, keep him/her well informed, clarify expectations and roles when needed and draw on his/her expertise. Occasionally, thank you's and acknowledgments are a good idea - if you have organization t-shirts, for example, make sure your advisor has one too! Enjoy what can be an extremely rewarding and mutually beneficial relationship.