

# Student Organization Advisor Resource Manual

2009-2010

Student Leadership and Involvement Center (SLIC)  
Student Life Pavilion, Third Level, 301  
260-4802  
[www.sandiego.edu/slic](http://www.sandiego.edu/slic)

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Dear Advisor:

Thank you for advising one of University of San Diego's student organizations. We realize that this responsibility is above and beyond your classroom, research, or regular duties, and sincerely appreciate your time and interest in adding to the quality of life at the University of San Diego. By accepting this role as advisor, you agree to **be present for students, to give them your time and energy and to assist them to navigate the university's policies and procedures**. In addition, you agree to abide by university policy and educate students regarding culture, morals and values of the University of San Diego and encourage them to work outside of the box. We thank you for accepting this role as advisor – your work with students is essential to their success.

The advisor is an integral part of every campus organization. As a member of the faculty or staff of the University, the primary function of the advisor is to actively advise, counsel, and serve as a resource for the student organization. The advisor should ask questions that allow the students to consider possible alternatives, and make appropriate comments and suggestions that would strengthen the organization and help it to fulfill its objectives.

The following handbook is meant to clarify your role, give tips for effective advising; answer the most frequently asked questions, and educate you on the ways the Student Leadership and Involvement Center (SLIC) can enhance your experience. We welcome any questions you may have regarding the organization, leadership development and USD resources. If we can help you or your organization in any way, please do not hesitate to call.

We would like to extend our thanks to you for accepting this important position as an advisor to a campus organization. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at (619) 260-4802.

Sincerely,

Student Leadership and Involvement Center Staff

Ashley Rodriguez, Associated Students Vice-President for Student Organizations

Mandy Womack, Director of Student Organization and Greek Life

Jason Schreiber, Director of Student Activities

Onar Primitivo, Assistant Director, Leadership and Involvement

Liberty Hebron, Student Leadership and Involvement Coordinator

## **Advisor's Role**

### **Teaching and Coaching**

As an advisor, teaching and coaching are skills, which you will use a great deal. You can serve as a resource to introduce new program ideas; help the members apply principles and skills learned in the classroom, and point out new perspectives and directions to the group. You may also assist members in the development of insight into their problems, point out additional resources within and outside the college community, and coach individuals in their duties as officers.

Throughout your relationship with the organization, you should be alert to opportunities to create or capitalize upon experiences and situations that will tend to maximize the learning potential of, an activity. To teach effectively in your role as advisor, you must participate actively by making a contribution when you feel circumstances call for it.

Advisors can often supply significant insights on group matters such as goal setting, mission statement, program ideas, and group growth. The advisor can serve as an aid in maintaining an organization by providing service as an information resource. Help students understand their responsibility and accepting this responsibility for their specific roles within the organization.

The advisor should assist the entire group in developing realistic goals for the academic school year. The advisor should help and assist in finding a balance between the students' academics and their activities. This will contribute to the total development of all involved. Encourage all to get involved and plan event for the group as a whole.

### **Group Effectiveness**

- The advisor can help in improving the effectiveness of the group, connect them to USD's learning goals and help it progress toward its goals. Such activities might include: teaching the techniques of good leadership and fellowship, coaching officers in the principles of good organizational and administrative practice, developing self-discipline and responsibility among all involved, teaching the elements of effective group operation, developing plans and procedures for action, keeping the group focused on its goals, and stimulating or even initiating activities and programs.

### **Intellectual and Social Development**

- The advisor can lead its members into activities that will contribute to their intellectual and social development. These could include, introducing new program ideas, helping group members practice group skills and concepts learned within the classroom setting, pointing out new perspectives and directions, and supplying expert knowledge and insights.

### **Opportunities for Interaction**

- The advisor can also help provide opportunities for organization members to interact with different people in their field of interest, helping them to develop new contacts for possible future careers. Such opportunities to network might include identifying guest speakers, field trips or site

visits, or attending conferences related to their area of interest. The advisor is vital in connecting students with opportunities to experience and discuss issues of diversity and inclusion.

### **Consulting**

In your advisor role, you should expect to be consulted regularly by the officers or chairpersons concerning their plans for activities or programs. You should know what projects or events are being planned and offer ideas or suggestions. You must be careful, however, not to dominate the program planning process. It is not the advisor's job to operate the organization, but to merely advise, counsel and suggest.

Students should be encouraged to be empower other members of the organization. No one individual should steal the leadership limelight. Let all within the group or organization take initiative.

### **Providing Continuity**

Providing continuity is a very important responsibility. The transition of officers and members in an organization is continual, and often, the advisor is the only link with the immediate past. You can orient new officers and members to the history of the group and help them build on it. Continuity implies a link with the future, and you will play an important role in helping to develop long term plans for the future of the organization and in communicating these plans to succeeding generations of members during their training in period.

The advisor should know the past history of the group and the working constitution and mission statement of the group or organization. Since member turnover is high every year, it is important for the advisor to know and understand the above because they are often the only link between the past and present organization. Serving as the group's memory and past link, the advisor can help new officers and members build on history and develop long term plans for the future of the organization.

### **Counseling**

As an advisor, counseling students is necessary because you know how the members of the group interact in informal settings. You have a unique opportunity to identify students having problems in their personal lives that appear to affect their work or effectiveness within the group. It is up to you to find an opportunity to speak privately with the student to see if a problem really exists and what might be done about it. When the problem is serious, please consider referring the student for professional assistance to the Counseling Center.

### **Communication**

Communication and feedback involves transferable knowledge from an advisor to the group as a whole. This is both verbal and nonverbal. The actual words in verbal communication carry only a portion of the entire intended message. As an advisor, be aware of students' posture, gestures, facial expression, hand and foot positions, and dress carry nonverbal messages.

## **Goal Setting**

Goal setting is a very important aspect to any club and organization. It helps in the performance planning of the group. Goal setting can be completed for the organization by the president and executive board, with the assistance of the advisor. Goal setting for the year is important for knowing what work will be required at various times throughout the year, what positions will need to be filled and the training involved? Also, what finances will be needed for the entire year? Goal setting can also be accomplished for individual events, activities, and projects.

The process of setting goals involves many varied aspects. Goal statements must be measurable and realistic. They must also include a time frame for accomplishment of the particular goal. Setting goals that the organization cannot attain can lead to frustration and a sense of underachievement by the students. Each goal statement should be followed by a certain set of objectives and action plans that the student leaders can use to guide the organization throughout the year.

## **Attending Meetings**

You should attempt to attend all regular and special meetings of the organization in order to keep informed about organizational efforts. You should also meet periodically with the officers to assist in long-range planning and leadership development. This is often a good time to address problems or concerns in a small group.

## **Organization Finances**

Each organization will elect its own treasurer. You will need to spend some time supervising the financial records and the treasurer's work. This may include teaching the treasurer the elements of simple bookkeeping or the intricacies of the organization's record system. An advisor should be aware of the nature, extent, and pattern of the group's expenditures, income, and introduce corrective measures when necessary. Particular attention should be given to accounts receivable, the current balance and the prompt payment of bills. The SLIC Coordinator (x4802) is also available to assist with budgeting and student organization finances.

Advisors should always be keeping an eye on the legal issues dealing with fund handling. You do not serve as the club's treasurer. The advisor should make sure that the organization must avoid expending funds in violation of state law or contrary to the institutional regulations. Please call the Student Leadership and Involvement Center (SLIC) if you notice even the slightest hint of irregularity with the organization's officers.

## **Organization Records**

The committee reports and group records are an important part of the organization's history on campus. These records contain valuable information for future officers. An advisor should see that officers maintain adequate records and minutes of the group's activities. A copy of these records should be kept in a permanent file in the advisor's office.

You should work with officers and committee chairs to establish a system of recording the planning and evaluation of events. These records will assist in future event production.

## **Interpreting Policy**

As a representative of the administration to the organization, you will be in a constant position of interpreting the institution's policies and regulations pertaining to student organizations. The advisor should see that the group and its officers know where policies are listed, what the specific policies of both the organization and of the institution are and why they exist. Along with this, it would be helpful to know how to change any policies, revise any procedures, and know any exception to the rules. All of USD's policies are available on the University website ([www.sandiego.edu](http://www.sandiego.edu)). Student Organization Representative (SOR) are available to assist advisors and students with interpreting, understanding and applying the University's policies.

Although your primary responsibility is not regulatory or disciplinary, as a member of the staff or faculty, you have a responsibility to keep both the institution and the organization's best interests in mind. In a well-run organization, an advisor's supervisory role may be minimal, but you may need to remind the group of appropriate regulations and/or actually step in to prevent, the organization from violating public or institutional policies.

An advisor works with the officers of the organization to maintain standards and values within the organization that remain consistent with those of the University.

*Taken in part from: C.J. Baaken's, Legal Aspects of Student Personnel Services. Dr. Paul C. Bloland, Student Advising in Higher Education.*

## Advising Styles

As an organization’s advisor, you are a valuable resource person. An advisor must attempt to establish an open, honest relationship. You can share new ideas, give and receive feedback and build trust. It requires time, energy, and patience to build this type of relationship. When this type of relationship occurs, the ability to provide consistent and progressive leadership is enhanced.

### Determining the Type of Advising Role Needed

Throughout your relationship with an organization, you should pay close attention to the advising style chosen to work with your group. There is no right way to advise students, but there are several factors, which influence this choice:

<b>Developmental Stage</b>	<b>Advisor’s Style &amp; Role</b>
Infancy Stage: Students demonstrate low levels of commitment, programming skills and responsibility for their actions.	Director: Advisor acts as a program director, showing high concern for product and low concern for process.
Adolescence: Students demonstrate increasing programming skills, interest, commitment and responsibility.	Teacher/Director: Advisor acts as a program teacher, showing high concern for product and high concern for process.
Young Adulthood: Students demonstrate competency in programming skills and continued increase in commitment, plus a willingness to take responsibility for their own actions.	Advisor/Teacher: Advisor act as a program advisor, showing low concern for the product because students take over this concern, but high concern for the process.
Maturity: Students demonstrate a high degree of competence in programming and group skills, a strong commitment to the group and a willingness to take responsibility for their own actions as well as their group’s actions.	Consultant: Advisor acts as a program consultant, showing low concern for product and process because students have assumed responsibility in both areas.

When these are determined, it is appropriate to match your advising style with that of the group’s development. Matching the most effective advising style to the students’ stage becomes a matter of deductive reasoning. When the group is young and the members are unsure of themselves, you must take a more directive and active approach in dealing with the group. As the group ages and members become more self-assured, an advisor can function as a consultant and assume a more

passive role. This cycle of development must be reassessed each semester/year as new students join the organization and take on leadership roles.

Developing a relationship of open and honest communication, sincerity and approachability provides both you and the student with a chance to grow and succeed. The effect that it has on the leadership skills of the student can only be positive. Throughout this process, you will become more skilled and consistent. This in turn will allow you to become more effective and the group as a whole will achieve greater success.

## **Tips for Effective Advising**

### **Most groups prefer an active advisor.**

Being active does not mean serving as the leader. It does mean getting involved with the group. Such involvement usually entails attending meetings and activities, assessing the group's progress and being available to discuss ideas and problems. An advisor may also set up personal time with individual officers and members to discuss organizational and personal concerns.

### **Be a good resource person.**

An effective advisor is able to convey his/her knowledge to the group. You will save the group a lot of valuable time by being aware of the policies and procedures of the university.

### **Become acquainted with the administrative details.**

Regardless of how worthwhile the program may be, it may not be successful if such details, as room rental agreement, contracts, or police requests have not been completed. You should be familiar with the policies and procedures of the organization and USD before attempting to advise the group.

### **Help the group set goals and objectives.**

Although the group must determine its purpose and structure, it is generally beneficial for you to make recommendations based on stated purposes of the group and what the group tried to accomplish in the past. Most groups find goal setting understandable and helpful. Make sure that goals are broken down into cleanly stated objectives, which include a time frame for completion.

### **Help the group prepare their organizational budget.**

The group's budget should allow the treasurer to record revenue and expenses in an easy and understandable method.

### **Never forget that you are human and will make mistakes.**

When such a situation occur, it is best for the advisor to admit the error and make a sincere effort to ensure that it does not occur in the future. Usually the group will accept such a response and even welcome it as a sign of your "humanness."

### **Do not be afraid to admit a lack of information.**

It is far better to simply say, "I do not know the answer to that, but I will find out and get back to you" than to give misinformation. The student will respect this answer and he/she will see you as valuable resource.

**An advisor shall not “bail out” an organization.**

A group, which fails and learns from that failure, has the potential to evolve into a stronger, more productive group than one, which succeeds only, to become dependent on the advisor. Once you have gone over the pros and cons of each solution to the problem, the group has a right to decide. Whatever solution the group picks, within USD’s policies and mission, you should support it.

**You should never underestimate the power of positive reinforcement.**

High and sincere praise of positive powers and outcomes can increase the likelihood that they will reoccur. Positive reinforcement can be considered a powerful tool for you.

*Revised and condensed from A Handbook for Student Group Advisors, by John H. Snow.*

## **The Advisor's Role - Month-By-Month**

The following outline should give you an idea of what to expect through the year.

### **August**

- Read the club constitution to review its operating procedures.

### **September**

- Establish a regular meeting time with the club leadership.
- Begin attending club/officer meetings, as needed.
- Participate in the Alcala Bazaar
- Review the club's financial standing.

### **October**

- Review the club's financial standing to ensure they have not overspent.
- Verify academic eligibility of student leaders with the assistance of the SLIC Coordinator.

### **November**

- Begin discussing the club's plans for the spring semester.
- Review the club's financial standing.

### **December**

- Begin to identify future leadership of club. Talk to the president about elections and officer transition.
- Meet with club officers to evaluate the past semester.
- Review the club's financial standing.

### **January**

- Follow up with any academic ineligibilities (if necessary).
- Review spring semester activities with club officers.
- Review the club's financial standing.

### **February**

- Review the club's financial standing.

### **March**

- Many clubs hold officer elections in February/March/April. Attend elections to ensure a fair, democratic process.
- Verify academic eligibility of student leaders with the assistance of the SLIC Coordinator.
- Review the club's financial standing.

#### **April**

- Assist with officer transition.
- Verify that student leaders are academically eligible to participate in the organization.
- Review the club's financial standing.

#### **May**

- Begin planning for the following academic year.
- Review the club's financial standing.

#### **June**

- Self-evaluate your effectiveness with the club over the past academic year. What were your strengths? What areas could use some improvement?
- After you evaluate, relax...you deserve it!

**Inter-Club Council meetings are held 3 times a semester. Organizations must attend to be in good standing and eligible for funding. Please visit [www.sandiego.edu/associatedstudents](http://www.sandiego.edu/associatedstudents) for the dates, times and location.**