

Advising Do's

Assist officers with procedural matters. Be knowledgeable of the organization's purpose and constitution and help the general memberships adhere to them.

- Be knowledgeable about, and comply with federal, state and local laws and ordinances, as well as campus policies. Inform the group of pertinent policies.
- Empower students to take action and to take satisfaction in seeing the student organization succeed.
- Allow the group to succeed, and allow the group to fail. Learn when to speak when not to speak. Remember to let the students make the decisions while you provide guidance and advice.
- Represent the group and its interests in staff and faculty meetings. Reach out to other advisors or departments (i.e. Student Organizations) for assistance.
- At the beginning, develop clear expectations about the role of the advisor and your relationship to the organization.
- Read the group's constitution.
- Get to know all of the members on an individual level. Learn what they want to get out of the organization. Maintain a complete officer and membership list with addresses and phone numbers (or know where to easily find one).
- Develop a strong working relationship with all the officers. Establish as needed meetings with individual members of the organization that need additional guidance in their officer or committee positions.
- Discuss concerns with officers in private and praise them in public.
- Meet with the officers and help them set goals. Encourage the Executive Board to disseminate reports (such as financial reports) to the general membership on a regular basis.
- Orient new officers and members to the history and purpose of the group and help them to build upon it. Help members look toward the future by developing long-term goals and communicating those plans to future members.
- Help to resolve intragroup conflict.
- Enjoy the impact you can have on the students' development. Help to develop the leadership potential within the group. Be visible and choose to attend group meetings and events. At the same time, know your limits. Establish an attendance schedule at organization meetings, which is mutually agreed upon by the advisor and the student organization.
- Know your group's limits. Help students find a balance between activities and their academic responsibilities.
- Keep your sense of humor and enthusiasm. Share creative suggestions and provide feedback for activities planned by students.
- Serve as a resource person. The advisor does not set the policy of the group, but should take an active part in its formulation through interaction with the members of the group.

Since members and officers in any organization are ordinarily active only as long as they are students, the advisor can serve as a continuity factor for the group.

- Be consistent with your actions. Model good communication skills and listening skills. Develop good rapport.
- Be available in emergency situations.
- Head off situations that might give rise to poor public relations for the student group or University.
- Introduce new program ideas with educational flavor; point out new perspectives and directions to the group; and supply the knowledge and the insight of experience.
- Carefully review monthly financial reports from the organization treasurer or business manager. Familiarize yourself with the group's financial structure, from where the treasury is derived (dues, fundraising), for what the money is used, how money is allocated, and how the money is budgeted; assist in budget development and execution.
- Learn the strengths and weaknesses of the group. Offer support when necessary; but also allow students to make their own mistakes and learn from them.
- Encourage feedback and the evaluation process.
- Plan and encourage attendance at leadership training.
- Do things right and to do the right things. Guide and assist students in becoming responsible leaders.
- Provide support. Give the group autonomy but offer feedback, even when it is not solicited. Let the group work out its problems, but be prepared to step in when called upon to assist.

Once again, this list is not meant to be totally inclusive or applicable to every organization, but it may serve as a guideline when determining the role that you will play.

It is also important to bear in mind that the job of Advisor is not always an easy one. At times you may have to make a difficult decision or take an action which is not popular with the organization. It is important to realize that your first responsibility is to the health and wellbeing of the students and to uphold campus and community policies and regulations. It may be necessary on occasion to use your authority to ensure that you meet these responsibilities.

Some information provided by Jim Mohr, Advisor for Student Organizations and Greek Life, Eastern Washington University

Advising Don'ts

- Know it all.
- Be the leader or "run" the meeting.
- Say I told you so.
- Impose your own bias.
- Manipulate the group, impose, or force your opinions.
- Close communications.
- Tell the group what to do, or do the work of the president or other members of the executive board.
- Take everything so seriously.
- Take ownership for the group, be the "parent," or the smothering administrator.
- Miss group meetings or functions.

- Be afraid to let the group try new ideas.
- Become such an advocate that you lose an objective viewpoint.
- Allow the organization to become a one-person organization.
- Be laissez-faire or autocratic.
- Assume the group handles everything okay and doesn't need you.
- Assume the organization's attitudes, needs and personalities will remain the same year to year.

Some information adapted from Schreiber, V. and Pflieger, E. "Supervising vs. Advising", UMR-ACUHO, 1999

Responsibilities of the Student Organization to the Advisor

The responsibilities of Student Organizations to their advisor include, but are not limited to...

- Establishing and sharing a job description for the advisor that clearly defines his/her responsibilities and anticipated lines of communication.
- Notifying the advisor of all meetings, activities, and programs. Establishing an attendance schedule at organization meetings, which is mutually agreed upon by the advisor and the student organization.
- Providing copies of meeting minutes in a timely manner.
- Meeting regularly with your advisor to discuss organization matters.
- Consulting the advisor prior to making significant changes to the structure of the Organization.
- Consulting the advisor when any significant organization policy changes are made.
- Allowing the advisor to share their thoughts and ideas.
- Showing respect and value for the advisor whom the organization chosen to serve as guide and mentor.
- Considering all advice and guidance provided with an open mind and a sincere interest for improvement of daily operational and special event/activity needs.

Some information provided by Jon Kapell, Associate Director of Campus Activities, Drexell University

Questions You May Want to Ask the Organization

- How much involvement is expected or needed?
- How often does the group meet?
- How many major activities does the group plan per semester?
- How experienced are the student leaders?
- How do your skills match the needs of the organization?
- What are some of the problem areas that your organization specifically needs advisory assistance in dealing with? Ask for past examples.
- What are some of the ways the Advisor can be more helpful to the group?
- Will the Advisor be a silent observer at meetings or an active participant?
- Should you interrupt during meetings if you think the group is getting off track? How? When?
- If things get unruly, should you interrupt or remain silent?
- Is the Advisor expected to give feedback? How? When?
- Are there areas of the organization that are "hands off" to the advisor?

Office of Student Leadership Development Programs at East Carolina University