

### Guiding Principles for Student Organization Advisors

All registered student organizations must have an advisor who is employed at UW-Milwaukee. (Student Employees and Teaching, Research, or Graduate Assistants do not qualify). Advisors are educators outside the classroom setting and a resource person for the organization. Ideally, the advice of the advisor to the organization's membership and leadership is welcome and seen as valuable. It is understood at times the advisor may disagree with an organizational decision and/or activities, but decision making and goal setting for the organization must remain in the hands of student membership. A situation may occur when the advisor feels organizational activities or decisions as incompatible with his or her own beliefs, the objectives of the University, or inappropriate for a university setting. In this case, if the students do not heed the insights of the advisor, he or she must decide whether to continue on as the group's advisor. If the actions or decisions of the organization are contrary to University policy or regulation, the advisor must report the group to Student Involvement or the Dean of Students.

Advisors have a variety of roles with an organization including a mentor, teacher, leader and follower. Ideally, the advisor assists the organization members and officers in staying in compliance with their charter, constitution and bylaws and applicable Student Association, UW-Milwaukee and UW System policies as well as local, state and federal laws and ordinances. Advisors should also assist student leaders in developing critical thinking skills in the areas of event planning, risk management, organization management, group processes, and ethical decision making among other areas for personal development.

- Advisor responsibilities to UW-Milwaukee are to work with students in order to help them plan programs and activities that are:
  - Beneficial to students and UWM community
  - Consistent with the educational mission and objectives of the University
  - Within the scope of the organization statement of purpose and mission
- Advisor responsibilities to the student organization are to assist the group in:
  - Setting realistic goals and objectives each academic year
  - Knowing about policies and procedures that may affect the organization's decisions, programs, etc.
  - Providing opportunities for educational and personal development
  - Following their charter/constitution/bylaws and other operating documents.
- Student Organization members' and leaders' responsibilities to an advisor are to:
  - Discuss expectations of the advisor's role with the advisor from the very beginning of the year
  - Seek advice and counsel on issues such as campus policies/procedures, goals, conflict resolution, etc.
  - Notify the advisor of all meetings and send the advisor a copy of all minutes
  - Meet regularly with the advisor to discuss organizational matters and to keep him/her updated on organization activities well in advance
  - Consult with the advisor before any changes in the structure or policies of the organization are made and before major projects are undertaken
  - Understand that although the advisor has no vote, he/she should have speaking privileges
  - Evaluate your advisor periodically and give appropriate feedback to let them know how they may improve in order to advise you better

### Advisor Function and Role

As an advisor or student, you may be wondering why a student organization would want a faculty or staff advisor when most of the students are competent and capable leaders. An advisor can provide the student organization with support that the students may not have thought of, such as:

- Assisting the student leaders with administrative red tape
- Providing support from related academic or service departments
- Providing the organization with some connection to University administration and services
- Assisting in providing a past history of the organization to new members

The role of the advisor, besides assisting student leaders with the list above, includes:

- Serving as a "sounding board" to bounce new ideas off of
- Planning and assisting in the leadership development of all executive officers and general members
- Providing continuity and stability as student leaders change from year to year
- Providing an outside perspective or view on various policies, decisions or activities
- Mediating conflicts, when appropriate, between group members
- Helping deal with organizational crises
- Giving honest feedback to group members to assist them in their personal growth and development as a leader

Being involved with a student organization can offer the advisor a number of benefits, such as:

- A unique opportunity to get to know and work with students outside the classroom or office
- The reward of watching the group develop and grow to its fullest potential
- The reward of watching students mature and develop their individual skill and talents
- The chance to informally share his/her knowledge and expertise on relevant topics
- The satisfaction and accomplishment through making a special contribution to a particular group of students

It is important to determine what the advisor's role will be with each group of officers from year to year. Depending upon the group, the role of the advisor may change. Both the advisor and students must remember that an advisor may assist the group reaching its goals, but the success or failure of an organization or project rests ultimately with the group.

Once an advisor begins to serve, keep him/her well-informed, clarify expectations and roles when needed, and draw on the advisor's expertise. Occasional thank-you's and acknowledgments are a good idea (e.g. 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.

### **Advisors for Student Organization Policy Foundations**

There are several policies which advisors need to be aware of in order to effectively advise a student organization. Although there are hundreds of policies that affect student organizations, these are some of the more important ones:

- Segregated University Fees (SUF), Financial Policy 50 (F50), <http://www.uwsa.edu/fadmin/fppp/fppp50.htm>  
This policy outlines the eligibility for and how student groups can spend SUF funds. It also lists the criteria for student organization university recognition.
- Safety & Loss Prevention Risk Management Policy and Procedure Manual, <https://www.wisconsin.edu/risk-management/manual/studentorgs/>. This manual reviews UW-system policies and guidelines for Student Organizations and Risk Management.
- Board of Regent Policies, <http://www.uwsa.edu/bor/policies/rpd/>  
Items to note are: 30-6 Policy on Recognition of Student Organizations; 30-3 Guidelines for Student Governance; and 25-3 Policy on Use of University Information Technology Resources.
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), [http://www4.uwm.edu/current\\_students/records\\_grades/ferpa.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/records_grades/ferpa.cfm)  
UW-System also has information on FERPA at: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/general-counsel/legal-topics/ferpa/>. This policy covers what information UWM may release about students to others.
- General Counsel, Overview of Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law, <https://www.wisconsin.edu/general-counsel/legal-topics/open-meetings-law/>
- UW-Milwaukee Administrative Services Manual, <http://www.bfs.uwm.edu/ASM/browse.aspx>  
Items to note are: 5.5.4: Expenses Not Reimbursable; 5.6.2: Headquarters City and UWM Sponsored Events; 5.3.7: Vehicle Rentals; 3.3.14: Ineligible Vendors - Affirmative Action Contract Compliance; and 3.3.20: Contracts for Entertainers and Public Speakers.

For more information on specific policies that apply to student organizations and their faculty/staff advisors, see the Student Organization Manual, Advisor Handbook and other publications online at <http://www.activities.uwm.edu> or contact Student Involvement at (414)229-5780 or at [activities@uwm.edu](mailto:activities@uwm.edu).

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