



## Choosing a Student Organization Adviser

This guide is designed to help student organizations understand and identify the characteristics that make a good faculty or staff adviser and to help student organizations select the adviser for their needs.

### What is an adviser?

A student organization adviser is a faculty or staff member who has been requested by a student organization to provide support and guidance to its officers and members. The adviser serves as a representative and advocate of the group.

### What do effective advisers have in common?

#### 1. They are willing to make a time commitment.

The amount of time that is required by a student organization adviser varies based on the needs of the organization. Minimally, an adviser could expect to spend 4-8 hours per month on student organization issues during the academic year. A very active adviser for a large student organization could expect to spend as many as 2-4 hours per week engaged in related activities.

#### 2. They are able to empower students to accomplish their work.

Advisers act as a guide, allowing students to develop their own leadership and ownership of the student organization.

#### 3. They assist in organizational planning, helping to ensure that policy and procedures are followed.

While it is the responsibility of the organizations' leadership and members to adhere to University policies and procedures, the adviser should help remind the students to check important deadlines, guidelines, rules, and authorities.

#### 4. They act as an informational resource for student organizations, providing ideas and suggestions about all topics relevant to the organization's purpose and goals.

Advisers act as educators, assisting students involved in organizations to learn and practice skills in decision-making, program planning, goal setting, fundraising, financial management, membership recruitment, marketing, and all other aspects of operating an organization.

#### 5. They model professional and ethical conduct for student organizations.

Beyond students' skill development, advisers assist students in grappling with underlying issues of business ethics, diplomacy, management theory, and other issues involved in daily organizational decision-making.

#### 6. They are advocates for student organizations.

By being knowledgeable about student organization activities, advisers can actively promote

organization activities and respond authoritatively to questions about student organizations. Advisers also provide a voice for student concerns and needs at levels where students may generally feel unheard.

### **7. They provide continuity for student organizations as members leave.**

As new leadership emerges, advisers help students with long-range planning and coordination to ensure that the organization remains viable through student transition.

## **Inappropriate vs. Appropriate Responsibilities**

Below is a list of examples about what are appropriate and inappropriate responsibilities of an adviser. Both current advisers and students developed these lists.

### **Inappropriate Responsibilities**

- To run the student organization meetings.
- To be ultimately responsible for program problems or failures.
- To have veto power over decisions.
- To be ultimately responsible for the group's decisions.
- To be responsible for the content and expressed ideas in programs.
- To be the sole recruiter for new members for the organization.

### **Appropriate Responsibilities**

- To be an available resource to the organization.
- To share knowledge in the development and implementation of programs.
- To help students check important deadlines, guidelines, rules, and authorities.
- To suggest program ideas.
- To provide historical continuity for the organization.
- To be a personal role model.
- To advise officers in decision making matters.

### **How do orgs select a faculty or staff adviser?**

1. The student organization identifies a faculty or staff member to be their adviser. This should occur prior to the start of the academic year, preferably before the end of the spring quarter.
2. The adviser is approached by the organization and asked to serve for the upcoming academic year.
3. The name is forwarded to Student Involvement, where they will arrange to follow up with the faculty or staff member to ensure they fully understand the expectations of being an adviser (items outline in this document).
4. If the adviser accepts the request, he or she will be expected to meet with a Student Involvement adviser for an information session, which are scheduled on a quarterly or need based basis.
5. The term of service will be one year. If the student organization desires the adviser to serve in the same capacity the following year, this process must be repeated.

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