

Advisor Resources

Student Organization Handbook
Southeast Missouri State University

2009-2010

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Advisor Responsibilities

Advising a student organization can be a rewarding experience that also carries a degree of responsibility. The role of the advisor is essential to the development of an organization and its members. Prior to making the commitment to become a student organization advisor, we ask that you consider the following.

What is an Advisor?

An advisor:

- Must be a Southeast Missouri State University faculty, staff member or graduate assistant;
- Acts as a resource to students;
- Acts as both a supporter of the organization and an advocate for its members;
- Assumes responsibilities to the organizations, its leaders, and the University.

Responsibilities to the Organization & its Members

- Be familiar with the organization's constitution;
- Advise group on University policies and procedures;
- Attend club meetings and/or executive meetings, as needed;
- Stay up-to-date on plans and activities of the group;
- Attend events sponsored by the group, especially those off-campus;
- Authorize all financial reimbursements made to club members;
- Serve as a signatory on an off-campus bank account (if applicable);
- Provide assistance with new leader orientation and transition;
- Act as a mentor, role model, and problem-solving agent;
- Encourage all members to play an active role in governance of organization and to be part of the planning process.

Responsibilities to the University

- Consider yourself as a person who works with students, not one who controls or directs the group's events and/or operation;
- Meet with the Coordinator for Leadership Development and other Campus Life & Events Services staff members as needed;
- Be familiar with University policies and procedures;
- Define a role with which both the student group and advisor is comfortable;
- Maintain and update master membership and officer roster for the organization, submit to Campus Life & Event Services each term as requested.

Resources Available to You

Please contact the [Coordinator for Leadership Development](#), 651-2280 if you have questions about serving as an advisor, are looking for additional resources, or would like to receive training.

Before You Commit

Questions to Ask the Organization Prior to Making a Commitment

- Time commitment
 - How much involvement is expected or needed from me?
 - How often does the group meet?
 - How many major activities does the group plan per semester?
 - How much assistance will be required of me to plan major events? Will I be heavily involved in the planning stages or just show up the day-of?
- Working with student leaders
 - How experienced are the student leaders?
 - Is this a partnership or am I there more for moral support?
 - What will our process be if I have a serious concern and we disagree?
- Advisory style
 - How do my skills match the needs of the organization?
 - What are some of the ways I can be helpful to the group?
 - Are there areas of the organization that are “hands off” to the advisor?
 - What are some of the problem areas that the organization specifically needs advisory assistance in dealing with? Ask for past examples.
 - Will I be a silent observer at meetings or an active participant?
 - Should I interrupt during meetings if I think the group is getting off-track? How? When?
 - If things get unruly, should I interrupt or remain silent?
 - Am I expected to give feedback? How? When?
- Liability
 - Am I aware of the liability associated with advising a student organization?
 - Am I aware of risk reduction techniques?

***Please see [Liability and Risk Reduction](#) handout for more information.

Adapted from:

ACPA Commission for Student Involvement. (2005). *Advisor manual*. Retrieved June 20, 2009, from <http://www.myacpa.org/comm/student/documents/acpaadvisormanual.pdf>
Office of Leadership Development Programs at East Carolina University.

Advisor Contract

Once you have decided to make the commitment to be a student organization advisor, you may want to complete an advisor contract to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of the role for the student organization and yourself.

Sample Advisor Contract

The members of _____ (student organization name) request _____ (advisor name) to serve as advisor of the organization for a period not to exceed _____ beginning _____ (start date).

Duties, responsibilities, and expectations of the position are as follows:

- A. List responsibilities and expectations of the advisor and organization
- B.
- C.

Duties and responsibilities may be reconsidered at the request of the advisor, executive board members, or a majority vote of the membership in a regular meeting.

This contract is in effect for _____ (period of time) and may be renewed each year thereafter upon the agreement of both parties.

President/Chairperson's Signature _____ Date _____

I have met with the President of the above-named organization and discussed the duties and responsibilities of advisor as listed above. I agree to serve as advisor and will fulfill these duties and responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

Advisor Signature _____ Date _____

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Office of Leadership Development Programs at Eastern Washington University

Advisor Self-Evaluation Checklist

This self-evaluation can help you to evaluate your success as a student organization advisor. It can be used to identify areas of strength and where improvement is possible.

5 – all of the time 4 – most of the time 3 – some of the time 2 – almost never 1 – never

- _____ I understand the goals of the organization.
- _____ I have read the groups constitution and by-laws.
- _____ I actively provide motivation and encouragement to members of the organization.
- _____ I am familiar with individual members of the organization.
- _____ I attend regularly scheduled executive board meetings.
- _____ I regularly schedule organizational meetings.
- _____ I attend the organization's special events.
- _____ I attend conferences with the organization's members.
- _____ I assist with the orientation and training of new officers.
- _____ I help to provide continuity for the organization.
- _____ I understand the principles of group development.
- _____ I understand how students grow and learn.
- _____ I can identify what members have learned by participating in the organization.
- _____ I understand the principles that lead to orderly meetings.
- _____ I address the negative behavior of members.
- _____ I recommend and encourage without imposing my ideas and preferences.
- _____ I monitor the organization's financial records.
- _____ I understand the principles of good fundraising.
- _____ I understand how the issues of diversity affect the organization.
- _____ I know the steps to follow in developing a program.
- _____ I know where to find assistance when I encounter problems I cannot solve.
- _____ I utilize the services provided by Campus Life & Event Services.

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Liability and Risk Reduction

As an advisor of a student organization, you are the university's representative regarding the organization's activities. As such, you are expected to give reasonable and sound advice to your organization about such things as programs, use of facilities and operational procedures. If you have reason to question an action taken by the organization, express your concern directly to the organization in writing, including the date, a suggested alternative to the questionable action, a warning, etc. It is important to remember that, in general, while we need to be concerned about liability, we can seriously damage the educational process by being paranoid about it. Just as there is no specific statement that explains faculty liability for every possible classroom incident, there is none that covers all the possible situations student organizations might encounter. If you have concerns about a situation unique to your organization or to a specific event sponsored by the organization you advise, please contact the [Coordinator for Leadership Development](#), 651-2280. Although there is no way to completely eliminate risk and legal liability associated with a program or event, there are ways to reduce risk and provide a safer environment for program participants. Here are a few things that your organization can do to identify and reduce risk:

- Complete a *Program Planning Worksheet* found in the *Event Planning & Promotion* section of the [Student Organization Handbook](#) to clarify the needs and expectations of participants.
- Identify specific risks involved in the event. These could include physical risks (such as an event with physical activity) and liability risks (such as events involving food, alcohol, minors, or travel).
- Identify options for reducing risks by including, but not limited to:
 - Hiring a third party vendor or contractor;
 - Assuming a 'worst-case scenario' and preparing for it in order to reduce likelihood of it occurring;
 - Assess the capability of the group to manage risk;
 - Identify the challenges in managing risk, as well as resources to assist in your planning;
 - Providing advanced training;
 - Develop a plan of action in reducing risk;
 - Communicate with everyone involved (officers, members, advisors, participants, facilities staff);
 - Utilizing liability waivers that outline the specific nature and risk associated with the event;
 - Purchasing additional liability insurance;
 - Canceling the event if the conditions are dangerous or the group is not prepared to assume full responsibility for the risk involved.
- Debrief each program by completing an *Event Report* found in the *Event Planning & Promotion* section of the [Student Organization Handbook](#) to ensure that future events are even more successful.

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