

Leadersheet

An Organization and Its Advisor

As a student organization with competent and capable leadership, you might wonder why student organizations would want or need a faculty or staff advisor. Consider the following:

- Do you sometimes wish your group had more support from related academic or service departments?
- Could your organization benefit from some "connections" with university policy-makers?
- Will your group have to start again from scratch next year?

A faculty or staff advisor could help alleviate these and other problems without taking over the leadership of your organization. Advisors play an important role in the development of the student organization by providing support and guidance.

An Advisor:

- Supports your group and serves as a "sounding board" off which you can bounce off new ideas
- Intervenes in conflicts between group members and/or officers
- Is knowledgeable of policies that may affect your organization's decisions.
- Provides continuity and stability as student leadership changes
- Gives honest feedback to group members
- Points out new perspectives and directions to the group and introduce new program ideas
- Gets to know and work with students outside the classroom or office
- Feels satisfaction and accomplishment through making a special contribution to a particular group of students
- Serves as a resource and support person as well as facilitator of creativity and innovation for the group

Group Members:

- Discuss your expectations of the advisor's role with your advisor from the beginning. This information should be from all of the students with whom the advisor will work - officers, chairs, etc.
- Notify the advisor of all meetings.
- Send the advisor a copy of all minutes and other information. Too much information is probably better than too little!
- The officers should meet regularly with the advisor to discuss organizational matters and to relay information.
- Consult with the advisor before any changes in the structure or policies of the organization (committee) are made and before major projects are undertaken.
- Remember that the responsibility for the success of a project rests ultimately with the group, not the advisor.
- Conduct annual advisor and organization evaluations. This allows for developing an ongoing advisor relationship.

Develop a clear statement of group goals and a clear statement of expectations of the advisor, both in terms of role and time commitment. It would also be helpful to outline what the advisor could fairly expect of the group. With this information in hand, you will be ready to approach potential advisors and discuss with them their interest and ability for advising your group. The most suitable advisor is one who shares a common interest with your organization.