

# WORKING WITH YOUR FACULTY/STAFF ADVISOR

Every Registered Student Organization (RSO) must have a faculty or staff advisor to be officially registered with the University. The advisor must be a benefits eligible full-time or part-time faculty or staff university employee. The ideal relationship between the advisor and the student organization is a partnership providing the basis for good decision-making and leadership of the organization. The following information will help you select an advisor as well as understand the advisor's role in your organization.

## SELECTING AN ADVISOR

- Sit down and talk as an organization about your expectations of an advisor.
- Before making a selection, consider:
  - finding someone who will have the time to devote to your organization
  - finding someone who will take the role willingly and seriously
- If possible, choose someone who shares some of the same interests of your organization and someone with whom you are in contact.
- If your organization is departmental, try to find someone in that department to be your advisor.
- When approaching your potential advisor for the first time, make certain that he/she has a clear understanding of your organization's purpose as well as what will be required of him/her in their role, duties and time commitment as advisor.
- Allow the person a reasonable length of time to consider the decision.
- Once a Faculty/Staff member has agreed to be your advisor, he/she must complete Advisor Risk Management training in order for your organization to be registered.

## WORKING WITH YOUR ADVISOR

- At the beginning of their tenure, the organization's executive officers should meet with the advisor to determine their roles and expectations for each other. It is helpful for the advisor to work with the executive officers to develop realistic goals for the upcoming academic year.
- **Learn from your advisor.** The most important reason for having an advisor is to enhance the learning opportunities associated with student involvement. Any consultation with your advisor can be useful whether it is in regard to organization matters or otherwise.
- **Include your advisor in the group.** Relations with your advisor can remain positive by introducing him/her to the group and by providing the advisor time to address the organization.

- **It is the responsibility of the organization to communicate its needs to the advisor.** Advisors should be willing to get involved with the organization, but don't make him/her guess what you need.
- **Allow the advisor to say "No" when needed.** Your advisor should be partnering with you to ensure organizational success. Sometimes advisors may have some prior knowledge or are able to interpret policy that may hinder some organization activities. It is important that you build a rapport with your advisor so that you are able to understand their decisions. Be willing to listen and understand that your advisor wants your organization to be successful.
- **Maintain regular contact with your advisor.** Establish and maintain lines of communication. Consider meeting with your advisor prior to schedule meetings to discuss agenda items or how to effectively conduct the meeting. If the advisor is unable to attend an organization meeting, the chief student officer or another officer should brief the advisor soon after the meeting.
- Make sure that you give your advisor copies of all important documents to be kept on file.
- Use your advisor as a resource if things in your organization seem to be stuck.

## **A FACULTY OR STAFF ADVISOR CAN:**

- Play devil's advocate when needed.
- Help with problem solving as an impartial third party who assists you to work through problems and conflict.
- Act as a sounding board. If you want to discuss a new idea with an impartial third party before proposing it to the entire group, try it out on your advisor.
- Provide advice on activities that might be of interest to the students or enhance organizational development.
- Assist in evaluating the organization. Use your advisor as a resource to help determine what you should be evaluating and when.
- Help the organization set up future schedules.
- Provide knowledge and advice about University policies.
- Stay abreast of things happening on campus that may be of particular interest to your organization (e.g., field trips, special programs, speakers, etc.).
- Inform the organization about financial opportunities (e.g., grants, scholarships, etc.)
- Work cooperatively with the organization, answering questions objectively.
- Provide networking opportunities for members of your organization to interact with people in the field or area of interest which helps the members develop new contacts.

# ADVISORS PROVIDE THREE MAIN FUNCTIONS FOR THE ORGANIZATION. THESE ARE:

1. **Maintenance Functions** – These include activities that help maintain the group and minimize difficulties. The advisor serves as a link to the past, interprets university policies and helps the group maintain a positive image.
2. **Group Growth and Leadership Functions** – These functions are designed to aid the group improve its effectiveness in operations and to help it progress in achieving its goals. This could involve teaching leadership techniques, helping officers understand the many principles of organization and administration, helping the group develop self-discipline, stimulating activities and helping the group focus on its goals.
3. **Program Content and Coordination Functions** – These are an extension of the group growth functions. The advisor can play an active role in the organization by introducing new program ideas and helping the group do more than just maintain itself. The advisor can provide expert knowledge that encourages members to develop programs and to put classroom and other learned skills into action.