

The Role of the Advisor

Purpose of Advisors

Involvement in campus organizations provides the opportunity for students to develop organizational and leadership skills. Students can complement their educational objectives through important out-of-class activities that offer them the chance to increase their knowledge and life skills, exercise basic freedoms, gain valuable experience and learn about human behavior. In support of these objectives, it is important that persons with experience in organizations be available to assist students in their organizational endeavors. While the range of student activities and group purposes are diverse, advisors can be a valuable resource to the organization in terms of helping with planning matters, University regulations and policies, and financial concerns. Attaining advisors who are committed to student learning through out-of-class activities is crucial.

Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) are required to have an advisor. For organizations comprised of only undergraduates, the advisor must be an MSU faculty member, staff member, or graduate student. For graduate student organizations, the advisor must be either an MSU faculty or staff member.

Advisor Responsibilities

It is important that advisors understand the responsibilities involved before making a commitment to a student group. Those responsibilities include:

1. Should assist students in their activity planning.
2. Assist officers in understanding their duties, administering programs, organizing projects and making appropriate transitions.
3. See that continuity of the organization is preserved through a constitution, minutes, files, and traditions.
4. Encourage meetings that are run in an orderly, efficient manner. (e.g., parliamentary procedures or consensus)
5. Encourage students to understand and apply democratic principles, including recognition of minority opinions and rights.
6. Attend as many Level I and Level II events as possible. The Advisor must be involved in all Level III and Level IV events. She/he or a designee must be in attendance throughout these events to support student efforts in self-regulation. Further, the advisor is responsible for attending the event or securing an appropriate replacement. Their presence at the event is to support the student organization's efforts of self-regulation and reduce the need for MSU police.
7. Articulate campus policies and procedures and help cut through the red tape, when necessary.
8. Be a sounding board, especially for officers, and be supportive of all members.
9. Maintain the ability to deal with the same issues each year, and remain fresh.
10. Be a facilitator both among officers and between officers and members.

11. Be familiar with national structure and services, if relevant.
12. Be a resource for the students especially in regard to understanding University policies, regulations, and services.
13. Consult on programs.
14. Consult with individual students, when necessary.
15. Be generally available to assist the organization.
16. Consult with the Department of Student Life, the advisor, or other University departments when problems arise with the student organization.

Advisors will be required to sign an agreement of acknowledgement and understanding of their responsibilities. The following is an example of the agreement form.

Advisor Agreement (Sample Form)

I agree to be the advisor of the _____ organization and I have received copies of the University's regulations contained in the student handbook, Spartan Life and have read the advisor's section of the Student Organization Handbook. I recognize that the duties of an advisor should include maintaining regular contact with the officers; upholding MSU's mission, policies, and regulations; being familiar with the activities of the organization; and providing assistance in the administration of the financial affairs of the organizations.	
Name:	Date:
University Department:	Title:
Address:	Telephone:
Signature:	

Note: Advisors are not allowed to hold office or vote.

The Organization's Responsibility to the Advisor

1. Notify the advisor of all meetings and events.
2. Involve him/her in the planning of Level III and Level IV events and consult him/her in the planning of Level I and Level II meetings and events. (Note: The advisor must approve the APF form for Level III and IV events, and be in attendance throughout the event.)
3. Consult him/her before any changes in the structure of the group, or in the policies of the organization are made, and before major projects are undertaken.
4. Understand that although the advisor has no vote that he/she should have speaking privileges.

5. Remember that the responsibility for the success or failure of the group project rests ultimately with the group, not the advisor.
6. Talk over any problems or concerns with the advisor.
7. Acknowledge that the advisor's time and energy are donated, and express appreciation.
8. Be clear and open about your expectations for your advisor's role.
9. Periodically, evaluate your advisor and give appropriate feedback.

Suggestions for Effective Advising

1. The maturity/skill of the organization and its leadership should dictate your style of advising. If the leaders have low skill levels, you may need to be more actively involved with the group. As leaders' skill level matures, you can then decrease the amount of direction you need to provide the group.
2. Express sincere enthusiasm and interest in the group and its activities.
3. Be open to feedback from the group. Talk with them regarding your role as an advisor. Be willing to admit mistakes.
4. Give the group and the leader's feedback regarding their performance. Raise questions with them regarding their goals.
5. Be aware of University policies and procedures so that you can be a knowledgeable resource for the group. Be familiar with *Spartan Life* and this handbook.
6. Get to know members. Be available and accessible to them. They will feel more comfortable with you and be more open to your input if they know you.
7. Meet with the officers before group meetings. Assist them in setting an agenda.
8. Following group meetings, discuss with officers any problems encountered during the meeting. Offer suggestions/feedback for how meetings can be improved.
9. Be careful of becoming **too** involved with the group. You are not a member. The advisor should advise, assist, facilitate; not lead, or do.