



Chapter 6: For the Advisor

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Tips for Advising Student Organizations

Although the student organizations are student-run, the advisor has a major impact on the group. The advisor must get to know each member of the group and should attempt to assess, with each member, the contributions that s/he can make to the group. Keep in mind that each student's overriding commitment must be his/her academic responsibilities. Group commitments must remain secondary. The advisor must also be aware of the forces acting on and within the group as a whole. One major force influencing the group will be the advisor; remain cognizant of your role and the influence that you can have. Arouse interest, give advice, stimulate ideas, but try not to take the leadership role. Remember, if you can't appear to be enthusiastic about the organization, how can you expect anyone else to be? Don't consider it "just another part of the job."

Responsibilities of an Organization Advisor

By accepting the position of advisor to a student organization, you have chosen to become involved with campus activities. An advisor is a consultant to an organization and assists in the growth and development of the group by providing direction, advice, understanding, and clarification. It is important that from the beginning, the advisor should clarify his or her role to the group members as s/he sees it. Once understood, there should be fewer problems due to misunderstandings regarding roles and responsibilities.

The literature on advising suggests three major areas of responsibility for advisors. These are maintenance and custodial functions; group growth functions; and program content functions. The advisor will perform certain functions within any of the three categories. The three categories as described below provide a classification, a rationale, and a validity to group advising.

Maintenance Functions: This includes those activities that help to maintain the group and to minimize the difficulties it encounters.

- 1) Be able to interpret College policies governing recognized student organizations.
- 2) Provide continuity to the group by sharing the policies, regulations, roles, and responsibilities with group members, and also assist with the transition of officers each year.
- 3) Be available to the officers of the organization for consultation.
- 4) Encourage the officers to maintain accurate records.
- 5) Be available to group members to advise or assist in organization-related problems or issues.
- 6) Stay up-to-date on what is occurring within the organization.
- 7) Advise and consult organization officers on budgets and other financial affairs.
- 8) Attend any workshops sponsored by the Office of Student Activities.
- 9) Attend organizational meetings whenever possible.
- 10) Provide a validation signature when needed.
- 11) Teach parliamentary procedure if necessary.
- 12) Be familiar with College facilities and services.

Group Growth Functions: These functions are designed to aid the group in improving its effectiveness in operating and to help it progress toward its goals.

- 1) Encourage and assist the group in setting organizational goals.

- 2) Assist officers in understanding their duties and organizing programs.
- 3) Promote involvement and discussion.
- 4) Discourage group domination by one individual by encouraging all group members to participate.
- 5) Provide constructive feedback when appropriate.
- 6) Help the group in developing self-discipline and a sense of responsibility.
- 7) Recognize that failure is as much a learning process as is success.
- 8) Teach the art of leadership.
- 9) Promote diversity within the organization.
- 10) Encourage continuous evaluation of the group and its activities.

Program Content Functions: This may seem to be an expansion of the group growth functions. The advisor should assume an active role by introducing new program ideas and insisting that the group do more than just maintain itself.

- 1) Be a facilitator of creativity and innovation for the organization.
- 2) Incorporate classroom learning into group activities when possible.
- 3) Supply expert knowledge.
- 4) Encourage the group to enlarge its thinking by pointing out new perspectives or by providing ideas for new projects.

The advisor's activities may fall within any of these categories as the situation requires. There are various types of groups and as the objectives differ, consequently the functions differ. Also, because the members and officers of groups vary from year to year, and because new circumstances and environmental factors may arise, the advisor may find that his/her approach and activities will change. Advisors should not allow the group to become dependent upon them and their decisions, but they should work towards becoming accepted as participants and as a significant part of the decision making process of their organizations.

It is important to realize that an advisor cannot be expected to give unlimited time to advising the organization. S/he must establish priorities. Judgment is also involved in terms of whether the advisor feels that s/he is competent to advise in various situations. Obviously, it is better to give no advice than to give advice that may create difficulties for the organization.

Advisor Roles

The advisor must form a unique relationship with both the student leaders and the general membership of the organization. This relationship may require the advisor to assume many roles, which will alter in response to certain situations. These role relationships might include the following:

- **Laissez-faire:** At certain times it is necessary to leave students alone to interact with each other. Little interchange with the advisor is needed, wanted, or should be encouraged. An example of this may be a group that is trying to find a new logo name. They need to exchange ideas and arrive at a group consensus.
- **Non-directive:** There are times when the advisor needs to be present, but in person only. Presence for the nature of the advisor's role is sufficient. For example, two cliques in the group are at odds over an issue that concerns the group. The confrontation will be at the group's monthly meeting. The advisor's presence at the meeting may induce the groups to deal with their differences constructively and with civility.
- **Democratic:** Most of the time the advisor should advise and assist students as they work out concerns together. Responsibility here is to offer alternatives for the consideration of the students. It is important to offer suggestions in a manner that

will allow the group to accept or reject the suggestions on their merit rather than on the basis that the advisor offered them.

- Consultant: An open-door policy should exist in order for students to come and ask for help as they need it. The advisor should also be knowledgeable of College policies and services when students seek assistance.
- Authoritative: Sometimes the advisor is forced into this role due to his/her responsibility of enforcing rules and regulations. The advisor must then be very directive.
- Dictator: This role should be used only in times of crisis where professional attention is needed to ensure the prevention of disaster. Examples of this include insufficient funds, unprofessional tactics on the part of the students, or possible breakup of the organization.

Building Effective Advisor/Student Leader Relationships

Both the organizational advisor and student leader must share the responsibility for building an effective working relationship, but the advisor is responsible for initiating the process. Effective relationships are based upon open and direct communication, dependability, and trust.

In establishing a strong relationship, both the advisor and leader should be responsible for the following:

- 1) Assessing Self
 - Assess personal goals, expectations, needs, and values.
 - Define mutual expectations for responsibility to share with each other.
 - Devise and review often a year-long “personal plan of action.”
- 2) Meeting the First Time
 - Schedule a meeting early in the year to discuss mutual expectations, goals, and training.
- 3) Spending Time Together
 - Get to know each other on a personal level.
 - Schedule a weekly time to meet and discuss ideas, plans, and concerns.
 - Be available.
 - Attend meetings and events.
- 4) Being Human
 - Remember student leaders are volunteers—reward them with appreciation.
 - Be enthusiastic about the organization.
 - Be critical in private and give praise in public.
 - Be concerned about their personal and academic welfare.
 - Always compliment and thank when appropriate.
- 5) Being Responsible
 - Follow through on daily tasks (returning phone calls, completing work on time).
 - Confront in a positive manner when necessary—hold each other accountable.

Responsibility of Advisors

The advisor is expected to follow the College’s policies, as listed in the Student Handbook, and to prohibit, to the best of his/her knowledge, the organization from violating these policies. It is important to note that if a group is participating in an off-campus event, such as a conference or trip, students must still abide by College policies because they are serving as representatives of GC and have received school funding for the event.

Advisors should ensure that all members of the organization sign the Activity Participation and Release Form (found online or in the Student Activities Office) before participating in a recreational or off-campus activity. This form is to be used as a waiver to protect the institution from liability and also provides emergency information for the participants.

Expectations of Advisors at GC

Advisors are not expected to organize and lead student groups, but rather serve as a resource and encourager to the officers and other members. It is important for advisors to stay abreast of important events, meetings, and deadlines for student clubs and organizations, and to ensure that their groups follow policies and procedures.

The main document that can assist you in working with your group is the Checklist for Maintaining Good Standing (found online and in the Student Activities Office). If you and the club officers follow the checklist and deadlines, you should have a successful year. It is also important that you communicate with the Director of Student Activities any concerns, questions, or changes in leadership, so that issues can be addressed and information assimilated to the correct persons.

A few items specifically pertain to you as an advisor at GC:

- 1) Student Organization Advisor Luncheon: Early in the fall semester, the Office of Student Activities hosts a luncheon for advisors to provide a little training and information and to say “thanks” for the commitment made to the organization.
- 2) Student Leader Appreciation Week: Sponsored by ICCH, this event is usually held the second week of November. This is an excellent opportunity for you to do something special for your organization officers.
- 3) ICCHs’ Leadership Awards Convocation: Nominations for club and organization awards are usually mailed out in March. If your group or an officer has made a significant contribution during the year, this is a great way to recognize their efforts.
- 4) Trips and Conferences: Groups are required to have an advisor accompany them for out-of-state travel and are encouraged to include their advisor for in-state travel. Also, 100% of costs for advisors to participate in a trip or conference must be covered. There might be instances when members must pay out-of-pocket for some portion of the trip. However, this should not be the case for an advisor.
- 5) Advisor Signature: The advisor must approve of any check, fundraising, or vehicle requests before club officers submit the paperwork to the appropriate persons.
- 6) Copying: All student clubs and organizations have an account number to use for making copies. Organizations should use the copier located in the Reynolds Center Copy Room and should be discouraged from using other departmental copiers on campus. Groups may also use their account numbers to pay for banners or posters printed in the Reynolds Center Secretary’s Office.
- 7) Office Supplies: Funding is provided to each club and organization for purchasing supplies, making copies, and postage. The Office of Student Activities will provide paper, spray paint, markers, tape, sidewalk chalk, balloons, helium, banner paper, and a few other items for student groups’ use.
- 8) Emergency Contacts: In case of emergency, advisors should contact Campus Security at extension 245. The situation may also call for you to contact the Physical Plant (extension 271) or a member of the Student Development Staff.