

ADVISOR'S GUIDE TO RECOGNIZED STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS



All great leaders choose
great advisors, people
they really trust for
their governance.

Tom Payne



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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RSO = Recognized Student Organization

BENEFITS OF ADVISING

- The satisfaction of seeing and helping students learn and develop new skills.
- Watching different groups come together to share common interests and work toward common goals and an understanding of differences.
- Developing a personal relationship with students.
- Furthering personal goals or interests by choosing to work with an organization that reflects one's interests.
- Sharing one's knowledge with others.



ADVISOR ROLES

- **Mentor:** If the student is seeking an education and a career in your field, you may be asked to assist in their professional development. Other times, students will seek out someone to challenge them in their personal development.
- **Team Builder:** When new officers are elected or new members join the organization, you may need to take the initiative in turning the students from individuals with separate goals and expectations into a team.
- **Conflict Mediator:** When working with students who have come into conflict, it may be necessary to meet with them and have them discuss their issues with each other. In many cases, it may be necessary to remind them that they both want what is in the best interest of the organization.
- **Reflective Agent:** Provide time for students to reflect on how and what they are doing. Any criticism you provide students should be constructive, you will want to provide concrete examples of actions the student took that seem to contradict their self-perceptions.

- **Educator:** Your role of educator will often come through as modeling behavior, guiding the student in reflection of their actions, and answering questions.
- **Motivator:** You may have to motivate students to excel and to carry out their plans and achieve their goals. Some students are easily discouraged and may want to quit at the first sign of difficulty.
- **Policy Interpreter:** Student organizations operate under policies, procedures, and rules. At times, students may not be aware of these policies, and they will do things in an inappropriate manner. The more you know about these policies the better advising you can give to the students.

Advisor Do's

- Be knowledgeable about and comply with federal, state and local laws and ordinances, as well as campus policies.
- Empower students to take action and to take satisfaction in seeing the student organization succeed.
- At the beginning, develop clear expectations about the role of the advisor and your relationship to the organization.
- Read the group's constitution.
- Develop a strong working relationship with all the officers. Establish meetings as needed with individual members of the organization.
- Discuss concerns with officers in private and praise them in public.
- Meet with the officers and help them set goals. Encourage the Executive Board to disseminate reports (such as financial reports) to the general membership on a regular basis.
- Be visible and choose to attend group meetings and events.
- Orient new officers and members to the history and purpose of the group and help them build upon it. Help members look toward the future by developing long-term goals and communicating those plans to future members.
- Help to resolve intragroup conflict.
- Introduce new program ideas with educational flavor, point out new perspectives and supply the knowledge.
- Know your group's limits. Help students find a balance between activities and their academic responsibilities.
- Serve as a resource person. The advisor does not set the policy of the group but should take an active part in its formulation.
- Head off situations that might give rise to poor public relations for the student group or university.
- Familiarize yourself with the group's financial structure.

Advisor Don'ts

- Know it all.
- Be the leader or “run” the meeting (unless if they temporarily need an example to model the way)
- Manipulate the group, impose, or force your opinions.
- Take everything so seriously.
- Miss group meetings or functions.
- Be afraid to let the group try new ideas.
- Allow the organization to become a one-person organization.
- Assume the group handles everything well and doesn't need you.
- Assume the organization's attitudes, needs and personalities will remain the same year to year.



Student Organization Officer Roles

Each student organization writes its own constitution and bylaws. It is up to the members of the organization to assign responsibilities to a specific officer, but here are some possible position responsibilities. It is intended to assist in constitutional development and to help students answer the question, "Now I've been elected, what am I supposed to do?"

Role of President

Some Potential Responsibilities include:

- Presides at all meetings of the organization
- Schedules all meetings, events, and other activities of the organization
- Prepares and files any reports required
- Appoints committee chairs
- Completes annual Recognition Forms
- Attends Recognized Student Organization meetings
- Represents organization at official functions
- Maintains contact with organization advisor
- Remains fair and impartial during organization decision making processes
- Votes in cases where there is a tie
- Coordinates organization elections

Role of the Vice President

Some Potential Responsibilities includes:

- Assume the duties of the President as needed
- Plans officer orientation and retreats
- Coordinates organizational recruitment efforts

Role of the Secretary

Some Potential Responsibilities:

- Keeps a record of all members and activities of the organization
- Keeps and distributes minutes of each meeting of the organization
- Notifies all members of meetings
- Prepares the organization calendar of events
- Manages organization office space

Role of the Treasurer

Some Potential Responsibilities:

- Keeps all financial records of the organization
- Pays organization bills
- Collects organization dues
- Prepares and submits financial reports to the members
- Prepares an annual budget
- Prepares all budget requests for funds
- Advises members on financial matters (i.e. vendors, ticket selling procedures)
- Coordinates fund raising drive

Other possible positions:

Marketing Director, Social Media Director, Parliamentarian, Activities Director, Recruitment / Retention Director, Academic Coordinator, Liaisons, Community Service Director, etc.

How Advisors Help

- **Leadership Problems:** The leader appears to lack self-confidence, is non-assertive, and lacks interest in organization. A rivalry exists between leaders in the organization. The leader has work overload and too many time-conflicts. The leader does not consult with the organization before making significant decisions.
- **Membership Problems:** Low attendance at meetings. Members compete for attention. An individual member's goals differ from those of the organization. There exists a lack of trust among members. Programs fail. There is a lack of ideas. Members have low satisfaction and morale, are bored, do not communicate well, feel left out or are apathetic.
- **Organizational Problems:** Meetings are disorganized. Meetings are too long. The organization suffers from financial problems. There is no continuity from one year to the next. The organization has no "plan of action".
- **Inter-organization Problems:** Disagreement between an organization and other student organizations. Disagreement with institutional policies and procedures.
- **Advisor Problems:** Organization members avoid the advisor. Organization members do not pay attention to advisor's advice. The advisor is overwhelmed by their responsibility. The advisor assumes a leadership function.

Advising Styles and Skills

Situational advising allows you to change your advising style to match the development needs of the individual or organization you advise. Your advising style is the way you advise when you work with someone. It is how you conduct yourself, over time, when you are trying to influence the performance of others.

ADVISING STYLES

You will need to vary these based on your assessment of the readiness level of your students/groups. Many times, advisors may struggle with students because they believe that they need a higher level of interaction or direction when the student is actually able to accept more of a delegating style and vice versa.

Directing: The advisor provides specific instructions and closely supervises task accomplishments. Use this style with students/groups that are at a low level of readiness.

Coaching: The advisor continues to direct and closely supervise task accomplishment, but also explains decisions, solicits suggestions, and supports progress. Use this style with groups that have a few leaders that are at a higher readiness level who will need your support with the rest of the group to get things accomplished.

Supporting: The advisor facilitates and supports the efforts toward task accomplishments and shares responsibilities for decision making with the students. Use this style with students/groups that are just starting to understand the concepts that will lead to success - the group is just starting to “get it”.

Delegating: The advisor empowers the students to conduct their own decision making, problem solving, and delegating. Use this style with students/groups that are at a high level of readiness.



ADVISING SKILLS

Flexibility: Moving from one style to another allows you to meet the needs of the different types of students and multiple circumstances you will encounter.

Diagnosis: Determining what is needed as opposed to what is wanted is sometimes a difficult task. It is also important to note that what is needed is not always the thing that will get the most positive response - it is what will lead the student through a problem, set the standard for the future, or help to teach the student a valuable life lesson.

Contracting: It can be helpful to work together to reach an agreement as to which advising style student leaders need and want from you. This is a valuable lesson for assisting students with understanding the rules of engagement and interaction that will be carried forth as they mature.



Budgeting

Developing a Budget

- ◆ Begin preparations a month or more before the close of the current academic year.
- ◆ Prepare an outline of the organization's planned activities for the coming year
- ◆ Do careful research of funding, cost and resources.
- ◆ Determine the available funds (carry over balance from previous year, cash on hand, funds in bank, interest, etc.)
- ◆ Estimate expected income and when it is expected to be available (dues, sales, etc.)
- ◆ Get price quotes on big expenditures, delegate responsibilities to members.
- ◆ Rank order by their relative importance, which activities/programs are the widest expenditures of funds.
- ◆ Choose programs to initiate; ask how much is available to allocate.
- ◆ Negotiate as necessary: eliminate or limit less essential expenditures.
- ◆ Revise, review, coordinate, cross-reference, and then assemble into a final budget; the budget must be flexible to anticipate conditions which might have been overlooked during planning.
- ◆ Vote to approve budget.

Managing the Budget

- ◆ Once approved, adopted and prepared, budget should be monitored closely.
- ◆ Set and maintain a minimum cash balance.
- ◆ Formulate procedures and policies needed to achieve objectives.
- ◆ Keep an accurate log of financial transactions (income/expenses); maintain in a record book (check and balance records regularly).
- ◆ Set up internal controls designed for safeguards and accurate accounting data.
- ◆ Control cost-allow only approved expenditures
- ◆ Review budget regularly.
- ◆ After the budget period has elapsed, determine the outcome of each expense and revenue.



901 Accounts

The Maverick Involvement Team and Business Services partner in creating on-campus accounts for Recognized Student Organizations. These accounts operate very differently from banking accounts in that the responsible persons for the account do not get a debit card or checkbook to facilitate spending. It is best to think of these accounts as simply a safe holding space for the organization's money.

Creating 901 Account

An organization can easily apply to create a 901 Account. To do so, please have an officer of the RSO complete the 901 Account: Creating & Updating Access on Mav Central. In order to successfully complete the application, you will need to have a name for the account (most RSOs just use the name of the Organization) and a person responsible. If you aren't sure about exact numbers, it is okay to estimate. After you have submitted your application, an MIT member from the RSO office will download your application and initiate an email with a staff member within the Business Services Office (WA 236). The submitter of the application will be cc'd on this email and informed of account number and details upon set-up.

Please Note: Newly created 901 Accounts will have a starting balance of \$0.00. It is up to the RSO to deposit funds into the account; Student Activities and Business Services do not provide any initial funding.

Updating 901 Account

For RSOs that already have a 901 Account, it is important to regularly update who has access to the account. We recommend updating access any time there is a change in leadership in the group; that way, the most up-to-date information is on file. To update who has access to an RSO's 901 Account, an officer of the RSO will complete a form on Mav Central with the names and Tech IDs (8-digit number) of anyone who is gaining access to the account. For removing previous officers, you will only need their names. An MIT member will request an update to the group's information and notify you once it is completed.