

Responsibilities of Organizations and Advisers

Unless otherwise specified by the organization's constitution, selection of an adviser is the responsibility and decision of the organization. Although some organizations may have difficulty obtaining an adviser and vacancies may occur due to resignations, it is imperative that such vacancies be of short duration.* The adviser is a representative of the University and serves as a liaison with the faculty and administration. The adviser provides additional perspectives for the group members and has the ability to serve both as a consultant and evaluator. Since the value of student organizations is centered on the learning experience, the adviser also serves as an educator.

Occasionally an organization leader may select an adviser, thus believing they have met the requirement. On rare occasions, an adviser will accept the position thinking his/her commitments will extend to attending an occasional meeting or signing a requisition. Organizations should keep advisers informed of the activities, decisions, meetings or election of officers. When one or both sides offer few services to the other, it is difficult to develop a strong student/staff partnership.

The relationship between the adviser and the organization must be one of communication, mutual understanding, trust and respect. The adviser must be able to depend on the organization to behave professionally and responsibly. When issues arise, the opinions of the adviser should be sought and given proper consideration. Although the adviser is not responsible for policy-making, the adviser may make recommendations and expect them to be followed but the adviser's role in the organization is just that. It is not the responsibility of the adviser to run or lead the organization. However, advisers can be held responsible and liable for the actions of student organizations during officially sponsored events/activities of the student organization.

The literature on faculty advising suggests three major areas of responsibility for sponsors:

1. Maintenance functions are activities that help maintain the group and minimize the difficulties it encounters. The adviser serves as a link with the past, interprets University policies, helps the group avoid bad relations, arbitrates intragroup disputes and provides a validation signature when necessary. Any of these activities may call for careful consideration and significant work on the part of the adviser with officers or members of the organization.
2. Group development functions are designed to aid the group in improving its effectiveness in operating and to help it progress toward its goal. Activities that may fall within this category are teaching techniques of leadership, helping the officers understand the principles of organization and administration, and helping the group learn self-discipline and a sense of responsibility, stimulating activities and helping the group concentrate on its goals. The adviser may introduce new objectives and help the group attain its established goals.
3. Program functions may be seen as an expansion of the group's development. The adviser should assume an active role by introducing new program ideas and insisting that the group do more than just maintain itself. The adviser may urge the group to develop educational programs and help the members practice the skills they learn in the classroom. A key role of an adviser is to point out new perspectives, provide ideas for new projects and supply expert knowledge.

* SLL needs to be notified as soon as possible when vacancies occur.