

Student Organization Advisor Manual



Marietta College

Date: 09/01/08

Table of Contents

What is and Advisor	3
How to develop a good relationship with your organization	3
What can impact the effectiveness of an Advisor	3
Advising Styles	4
Suggestions for being an effective Advisor	5
Advisor Responsibilities	5
7 key steps to reducing risk	7
Contracts	8
Ten Commandments of Good Communication	9
Common Problems in Student Organizations	10
The Art of Relaxation	13
Signs of Stress	13
Conferences	14



Student Activities and Greek Life

WHAT IS AN ADVISOR

An Advisor cares enough to get involved with his or her students and tries to make a difference in the students' lives and the campus as a whole. An Advisor has to be a good listener, a counselor, caring and understanding. BUT, an Advisor also has to be strong enough to say "NO", play devil's advocate and be the "bad guy". Another difficult role for the Advisor is being put in the middle between students and administration. Advisors must be able to handle adversity and heat from all directions. The really good Advisor is available, attentive, and willing to go the extra mile! The really good Advisor rewards, praises and rejoices in his or her group's success.

HOW TO DEVELOP A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR ORGANIZATIONS

Share the responsibility for building the relationship between the advisor and the members of the organization.

Strive for open and direct communication.

Remember that the advisor and the student organization members are human beings who make mistakes, follow their own value systems and work in individual, professional, and personal styles.

Understand that student organization members are continually growing, changing, and learning each within their own unique states of development.

Encourage student organization members to talk by asking open ended questions.

Be yourself and allow student organization members to be themselves.

WHAT CAN IMPACT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ADVISOR

College's Philosophy

What students expect

Supervisor's expectations

Advisor's skill level/ability

Management Style

Skill level of students

Job satisfaction

College Resources

Advisor's Commitment level

ADVISING STYLES

Educator

- Many approaches to advising (situational)
- Allows organization to make mistakes and take guarded risks that have been researched and evaluated by the group
- Always provides support
- Very responsive and non-assertive

Referee

- Attempts to educate/oversee, but actually handles group's disputes
- Needs to expose group to training programs (team building)
- Works best with groups in turmoil
- Tries to empower group transformation

Overseer

- Stays at a distance, serving when called upon
- Helpful when group needs experiential learning
- Assists in developing group's competencies
- Can be explosive if group expects more interaction

Boss

- Very authoritative and certain s/he has all the right answers
- Expects group to take orders
- Can be a good advisor if motivational, persuasive, and educational
- Ineffective if president has the same style or if used in a threatening way
- Highly responsive and assertive

Copeland, T. R. (1996). Successful matches on advisor's styles, group's stage. *ACUI: The Bulletin*, 64, 8-10.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEING AN EFFECTIVE ADVISOR

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 in the group. As the leader's skill level matures, you can 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 advisor. Be willing to admit mistakes.
4. Give the group and the leaders feedback regarding their performance. Raise questions with them regarding their goals.
5. Be aware of the College's policies and procedures so that you can be a knowledgeable resource for the group.
6. Get to know the members. Be available and accessible to them. They will feel more comfortable with you and be more open to your input.
7. Be careful of becoming too involved with the group. You are not a member. Advise, assist, and facilitate; Do not lead or do.
8. Know each student well enough to be perceptive of individual needs and how these needs influence individual aspirations.

ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

As an Advisor your job is never done. Your responsibilities are many and varied. Most Advisors are responsible for the following:

General

- Have a thorough knowledge of the club, its constitution and its objectives.
- Have a belief in and an enthusiasm for the club and its purpose.
- Work closely with the club President and officers.
- Act as a liaison between the students and administration.
- Attend all meetings of the club.
- Attend important meetings of club committees.
- Foster teamwork.

- Be a resource person.
- Encourage an active interest of the club in campus-wide objectives so they will identify themselves as a part of the whole campus community.
- Monitor academic progress of all club officers to make sure they maintain satisfactory grades and present a positive image to fellow students.
- Maintain a flow of information concerning the status and activities of the club with the Director of Student Activities and Greek Life.

Activities

- Coordinate along with club officers, a calendar of events consistent with school policies and that promotes the overall growth of the club.
- Advise the club on educational and social activities to ensure they are in accordance with school policy.
- Encourage participation of the membership as a whole in activities and services sponsored through the club.
- Assist in making arrangements to attend all conference and away meetings as deemed necessary.
- Accompany and supervise students to, from and during all away meetings and conferences.
- Ensure that all club elections are held in accordance with the club constitution.

Budget

- Advise and assist in preparation of the club budget.
- Encourage good record keeping and sound financial and business practices.

General Hints

Here are some hints, suggestions and general good ideas to follow when working with your students. Remember sometimes it isn't so much what you do but how you do it that really makes a difference with your group.

- Tell your students that you are there to guide, not dictate, nor be dictated to.
- Ask them to consult with you before they approach faculty, staff or administration (this can really save you some embarrassing moments).

- Provide leadership and act as an example.
- Be a good listener.
- Relate and communicate with your students.
- Have the courage to say “NO” and “YES” a lot.
- Treat students as adults and expect “appropriate” adult like behavior. Most times they will rise to meet your expectations.
- Recognize that each year working with the club will be different. You must meet the challenges and continue it to the end.
- Have a dependable and accurate secretary (if possible) and put everything into minutes.
- Contribute to the club’s discussion by listening constructively. If things go off in an unprofitable direction the advisor will want to contribute and nudge things back on the right track.

7 KEY STEPS TO REDUCING RISK

1. Be familiar with your job description, all duties, authority, and institutional protections.
2. Be familiar with your organization’s constitution, by-laws, and guidelines.
3. Review the College’s insurance policy.
4. Establish a good risk management program with the organization you advise.
5. Understand the law as it relates to the organization you advise.
6. Make sure the organization you advise has good financial practices in place.
7. Understand that alcohol is a significant risk factor with any student organization.

Liability can be established if:

- There is some duty of care to the person or situation,
- That duty is breached,
- The breach results in injury, harm, or loss,
- The breach is the proximate cause of the damage.

CONTRACTS - A BRIEF CHECKLIST

One of the areas you need to be knowledgeable about is that of contracts. What follows is not intended to be a complete guide to contracts, but a checklist of more obvious pitfalls in editing a contract or writing your own contracts.

Remember, all contracts are negotiable. You never have to accept a contract the way it is sent to you. A contract is a mutual agreement to reach a goal with benefits for both parties. It should contain as much information as possible and be as straightforward as possible.

Some of the following tips might be helpful to you in negotiating a contract:

1. Know your artist and his/her representative. Deal only with reliable firms. If in doubt, check with other Advisors from other schools who may know.
2. Is the artist clearly specified? Check for a clause that permits the substitution of an artist of "equal standing" for a good cause. Make sure it is clear that you make the determination of the quality of the substitute, and that it should not be made without your consent.
3. Is it clear that the College is the contracting party, not you? Never allow yourself to take personal liability by signing a contract or being named in one.
4. Is the location clearly specified? Date and starting time? If you have more than one group performing, indicate the starting time of the artist you are contracting with. Make sure the date and day match, otherwise you are at the mercy of the contract.
5. Is the duration, frequency, and length of the performance clearly outlined? If you expect the artist to do other things (i.e., teaser in the Mall), in addition to the performance, make sure to specify them in the contract.
6. Make sure all "extras" are covered in the contract. Do you need to provide stagehands, when is the sound check, does the artist need any special equipment, what requirements do they have for the dressing room? Request to see any and all riders before you have the contract signed and commit to anything. All contract performers must have either a Social Security number or a Federal Tax ID number listed on the contract.

Be aware of verbal contracts. A verbal agreement with an agent or performer

can still be a binding contract. Make sure you have thought through all aspects of the program before making any form of verbal agreement.

Once a contract has been fully executed, make alterations only in writing. The letter stating the changes should be signed by both parties. If you have been negotiating a date and, for some reason, choose not to go ahead, telephone the artist's representative immediately and inform them of your intentions. Follow-up phone calls with a letter.

10 COMMANDMENTS OF GOOD COMMUNICATION

Every good leader today realizes that communication is the most vital management tool. S/he is aware the s/her not only communicates with words, but through attitude and actions. Communication obviously encompasses all human behavior that results in an exchange of meaning. The following ten commandments of good communication might serve as help to improve a leader's skills of communication with supervisors, advisees, and peers.

1. Seek to clarify your ideas before communicating. A prime reason for ineffective communication is the result of the initiator not having a clear concept of what s/he intended to communicate in the first place.
2. Examine the purpose of each communication. A clear determination must be made of what the communicator really wants to accomplish with his/her message. A good guideline to follow is "Don't try to accomplish too much with each communication." The sharper the focus of the message, the greater its chances of success.
3. Consider the total physical and human setting whenever you communicate. Meaning and intent are conveyed by more than words alone. The circumstances under which a communication is transmitted has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of that communication. The physical setting, the social climate, and past practices will have an impact upon the net results of effective communication.
4. Consult with others, when appropriate, in planning communications. Such consultation often helps give additional insight and objectivity to the message. Moreover, those who have helped plan the communication will tend to give their active support.
5. Be mindful, while you communicate, of overtone, as well as content of your message. Your tone of voice, expression, and apparent receptiveness to the responses of others all have tremendous impact on

those you wish to reach. Although frequently overlooked, these subtleties of communication often affect a listener's reaction to a message even more than its basic content.

6. Take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help and value to the receiver. People on the job are most responsive to the leader that values the message of the receiver and are perceived as helpers.
7. Follow up your communication. This can be done by asking questions, by encouraging the receiver to express his/her reactions, by follow up contracts, and by subsequent review of performance. Make certain that every important communication has a feedback so that complete understanding and appropriate actions result.
8. Communicate for tomorrow as well as today. Be sure the long range interests and goals of the organization are taken into consideration.
9. Be sure your actions support your communications. In final analysis, the most persuasive kind of communication is not what you say, but what you do. When a person's actions or attitude contradict his/her words, others tend to discount what s/he said.
10. Seek not only to be understood but to understand. Be a good listener. Listening is one of the most important, most difficult, and most neglected skills in communication. Only when you are listening can you detect the overtones and hear the feedback from your own communication. A person cannot talk and listen at the same time.

COMMON PROBLEMS IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Listed below are five common problems which may be encountered in the club you advise. Should any of these be insurmountable or if you would like assistance addressing the problems, please don't forget the other advisors here at Marietta College and the Director of Student Activities and Greek life are here as resources for you.

Lack of participation

Possible Causes

- Members may feel insecure.
- More aggressive members may not give others a chance to participate.
- Members may not know how to participate.
- Members may not be interested in the activities.

Possible Solutions

- Make sure members have a part in developing objectives.
- Make sure members have a part in planning programs and activities.
- Provide opportunities for new members to serve on a committee where they can gain experience before giving them a big assignment they might not be able to handle.
- Promote a friendly, helpful group spirit where no one laughs at or ridicules a person who goofs.
- Take the opportunity to seek out timid individuals so they might be encouraged to participate.

Failure to accept responsibility

Possible Causes

- Members or leaders feel insecure.
- Members or leaders may have other things to do that are more important to themselves.
- Members may not know what is expected of them.

Possible Solutions

- Make sure members and leaders have a part in planning the program and that they understand the objectives.
- Make sure members and leaders understand what is expected of them when they are asked to serve.
- Help members and leaders understand the importance of assignments.
- Try to match assignments with members' abilities.
- Give recognition and thanks for work done.

Poor standards of operation

Possible causes

- Members may lack interest.
- Members may not know what is right or expected.
- Group may have fallen into bad habits.
- Some members may feel insecure and are trying to gain attention.

- The meeting time may not fit members' other responsibilities.

Possible solutions

- Discuss problems with members. What standards do they want?
- Encourage members to state their expectations.
- Hold workshops for members and leaders for increase knowledge and skills in such areas as parliamentary procedures.
- Change meeting time if it does not fit the group.

Maintaining involvement

Possible causes

- Some people may not know about the group, what it does, or who may belong.
- Present members may not try to welcome new members.
- The organization may not be of interest to present or prospective members.
- Some members may not have a way to get to meetings.
- Other organizations may be more exciting.

Possible solutions

- Try to improve the atmosphere of the organization—make it warmer or friendlier.
- Make sure that present and prospective members understand the purpose of the organization.
- Involve members in planning a program that is attractive to them.
- Give members responsibilities so they will have a role in the organization and feel important to the group.
- Give members recognition for what they do.
- Make members feel liked and wanted.

Members are not interested in the organization

Possible causes

- Members do not identify their personal objectives with those of the

organization.

- Members may have had little part in planning the activities of the organization.
- Members may not find a satisfying role in the organization.

Possible solutions

- Involve members in setting the organization's objectives
- Involve members in planning the programs they want.
- Involve members in carrying out the activities. They should have challenging responsibilities which they can carry out successfully.
- Give members recognition for their contributions.

THE ART OF RELAXATION

The best strategy for avoiding stress is to learn how to relax. Unfortunately, many people try to relax at the same pace that they lead the rest of their lives. For a while, tune out your worries about time, productivity, and "Doing right." You will find satisfaction in just being, without striving. Find activities that give you pleasure and that are good for your mental and physical well-being. Forget about always winning. Focus on relaxation, enjoyment, and health. Be good to yourself.

SIGNS OF STRESS

- General irritability, hyperactivity, or depression.
- Pounding of the heart.
- Dryness of the throat or mouth.
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability.
- The overpowering urge to cry or run and hide.
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thought, and general disorientation.
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, or dizziness.
- Predilection to become fatigued.
- "Floating anxiety" or fear without knowing why you are afraid.

- Emotional tension and alertness, feelings of being “keyed up.”
- Trembling, nervous ticks
- Tendency to be easily startled.
- High pitched, nervous laughter
- Stuttering and other speech difficulties.
- Bruxism - grinding of the teeth.
- Insomnia
- Hyper motility - increased tendency to move about.
- Frequent need to urinate.
- Diarrhea, indigestion, vomiting.
- Migraine headaches.

CONFERENCES

The organization you advise might decide to attend a conference. What do you do and what are your responsibilities?

1. Assist the organization leadership in submitting registration material for the conference.
2. Help delegation register upon arrival at conference.
3. Assist head of delegation with committee and workshop assignments.
4. Attend all business sessions.
5. Be available to your delegation at all times.
6. Be present at hotel overnight.
7. Volunteer, if time permits, at the conference.

General hints:

- Have a working knowledge of the organization constitution and code of operations.
- It is always a good idea to only allow those students that are active in the organization throughout the year to attend conferences. Not only is this

seen as a reward to the hard workers of the organization but in working with these students you should also have some sense of the student's personality and behavior (this can eliminate some sleepless nights at conference).

- Always meet with your delegates prior to conference to cover rules and responsibilities: attending meetings, dress code, meals, alcohol, behavior, and respect for each other. They also need to know to inform the advisor if anyone leaves the premises.
- Reward your students. If time permits in the schedule, take them out to eat, shopping, or sightseeing.
- About alcohol - each conference is different. Each delegation and advisor will need to make and discuss policies concerning the presence of any controlled substance at any conference or function.
- And don't forget...Conference may be the most exceptional thing that happens during the year for some of your students. Help make the occasion special for them!

Student Activities and Greek Life
215 Fifth Street
Marietta, OH 45750-4031

Phone: 740-376-4465
Fax: 740-376-4420
E-mail: dt003@marietta.edu

Marietta College