Advisor Handbook

Revised March 2015
Welcome Student Organizations Advisors

Welcome to the world of advising student organizations. Advisement provides a wonderful opportunity for you to get to know students and to gain the satisfaction of knowing that you helped guide students in the development of a successful organization or program. Advising an organization requires additional time demands; however, the rewards gained by advising are great, and more than compensate for these demands. Advisors for student organizations are important catalysts for the learning that happens out of the classroom and have the potential to influence and develop that learning. Student organizations are avenues for students to implement theories they have learned in class; to discuss what they are learning in the classroom; to develop friendships; to network with professionals; and to improve their interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills. Student involvement and interaction with faculty are considered determining factors in students’ satisfaction, intellectual and personal development, and persistence (Floerchinger, 1992); student organizations are one way to encourage student-faculty relationships.

For the most current version of the Student Organization Handbook, log in to RowdyLink, click Campus Links and then Click “Student Organization Handbook.”

If there are any questions regarding any information in this handbook, please contact Student Activities at getinvolved@utsa.edu or 210.458.4160
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Purpose of Student Organizations

The purpose of student organizations is to provide students with opportunities to participate in activities that develop their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical, and professional abilities. These organizations are important components of the academic life of the University. To meet all the different developmental needs of students, UTSA offers a multitude of student groups covering the following areas: academic, professional, religious, political, general social Greek, honor, military, service, cultural, special interest club sports, and recreation. Every student is encouraged to become a member of those organizations that appeal to their interest.

Involvement in student organizations:

- Improves students’ interpersonal skills
- Gives students a greater satisfaction with their college experience
- Provides useful experience in obtaining a job and providing job related skills
- Develops lifelong values of volunteerism and service to others
- Has a positive influence on skills in leadership, communication, teamwork, organizing, decision-making, and planning
General Student Organization Information

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS
It is the responsibility of every student organization and/or its representatives to:

- Register their student organization with Student Activities every year;
- Attend one of the annual RowdySync Sessions offered in March;
- Attend the State Mandated Risk Management Training at the level required by the University;
- Manage itself and carry out its activities listed within its constitution, as well as obeying all local, state, and federal laws, as well as University regulations and policies;
- Anticipate, provide for, and meet all legitimate financial obligations;
- Act in the best interest of its members and the University;
- Comply with all distributed organization information;
- Take reasonable precautions for the safety and comfort of participants at organization events;
- Immediately notify Student Activities of any changes in the organization’s representatives, addresses, telephone numbers, emails, or constitution;
- Communicate with Student Activities regarding any questions;
- Utilize Student Activities for expert knowledge in all events and activities.

PRIVILEGES GIVEN TO STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS
Student organizations registered with Student Activities and in good standing with the University have the following privileges:

1. Use of campus facilities
   - Use of rooms and space, subject to policies and procedures (contact UC Events Management for more information at www.utsa.edu/events/or emcsevents@utsa.edu)
   - Use of academic technology (for more information contact the UC Events Management)
   - Invite off-campus speakers, performers, and other guests to appear for regularly scheduled meetings and events/programs. (Speakers, performers, and other guests must comply with University policies and procedures)

2. Financial Support
   - Use of cost center account system
   - Request funding through LeaderFund for an organizational event or program
   - Sponsor profit-making events to solicit funds for organizational activities in accordance with University regulations and State laws

3. Marketing and Promotion
   - The right to advertise as a student organization at UTSA
   - Distribute literature relating to the organization’s purpose and activities
   - Be listed as a student organization by Student Activities in any publications and on the Student Activities website
   - Use of the Graphics Room in the Student Organization Complex to create banners and inflate balloons

4. Organizational Support
   - Apply for workspace or bulletin boards
   - Access to the Speakers’ Bureau, Leadership Library, and Leader Tips
   - Eligibility for University Life Awards and other recognitions through the University
   - Receive USPS and campus mail through Student Activities
   - Participate in University sponsored events (Homecoming, Fiesta UTSA, Window Wars, etc.)
Student Organizations Advisors

Why does a student organization need an advisor?
An advisor can prove to be a valuable asset to your organization by sharing their life experiences, wisdom, providing continuity, providing organizational memory, and providing connections to resources. The key role of the advisor is to serve as a resource for the organization. Take some time to discuss reciprocal expectations with your advisor(s). Try to establish open lines of communication that will enable you to work together effectively.

Who is eligible to serve as an advisor?
An advisor must be either a faculty member (not on sabbatical) or a staff member at the University. The faculty or staff member must be employed at the University at least part-time and in a benefits eligible position. Advisors are expected to be actively involved in the affairs of their organizations. Unless it states otherwise in their position description on file with human resources, faculty and staff may only advise two student organizations.

Mandatory Expectations of an advisor?
Each advisor must attend one Risk Management Training. In addition, the advisor serves as the link between the Student Organization and the University; providing guidance to the organization in regards to University policies and procedures.

An advisor must sign the Advisor Agreement Form each year during registration periods.
Responsibility of an Advisor

Good advisors keep the following three sets of responsibilities in mind while working with student organizations:

1. Responsibility to individual group members
2. Responsibility to student organizations
3. Responsibility to institution – The University of Texas at San Antonio

**Responsibility to Individual Organization Members**

- The advisor may help the students find balance between their academics and their co-curricular activities.
  - Student leaders often have the tendency to burn the candle at both ends and will overextend themselves if not guided to balance these various responsibilities. The advisor has a unique opportunity to mentor students through their academic obligations and personal needs.

- The advisor may encourage each individual to participate in and plan group events.
  - Some students fade into background if not effectively encouraged. Being a member of a student group can provide students with valuable interpersonal and/or leadership skills, but these are best developed when the student is involved.

- The advisor may encourage students to accept responsibility for specific roles within the group.
  - The advisor may help them understand the importance of these roles. From officer positions to committee members, each student should feel invested in and accountable for their specific role.

**Responsibility to Student Organizations**

- The advisor may assist the group in developing realistic goals for the academic year.
  - This will contribute to the education and personal development of the students involved. It is often a positive experience when the advisor takes an active role, rendering advice and counsel as circumstances allow.

- The advisor may be aware of all plans and activities of the group and inform the group of institutional policies that may affect these plans.
  - The advisor may recommend that the group and its officers know where policies are listed, what the policies are, why they exist, and the channels to be followed for changes, revisions, or exceptions to policies.

- The advisor may encourage collaboration and shared governance within the organization, and also encourage quieter students to take initiative.
  - Eager leaders may occupy the limelight more often than appropriate. This can lead to resentment by some members or pressure others into silencing themselves. The advisor can help provide a balance by pointing out such concerns in a one-on-one setting with the students or the organization leadership.

- The advisor may need to refer students to counseling. Invariably, during interaction with the group’s members, the advisor will encounter students with personal problems.
The counseling role might require individual consultation on a personal level or referral to the student counseling service.

The advisor may provide continuity within the group and should be familiar with the group's history and constitution.

Membership turnover in student organizations is high and often the only link with the immediate past is the advisor. The advisor can steer group members clear of mistakes and help them avoid the proverbial reinventing of the wheel. Serving as the group's memory and continuity link, the advisor can help new officers build on history and develop long term plans for the future of the organization.

The advisor may offer ideas for projects and events.

The advisor will perform his/her greatest service by providing opportunities for the students to exercise initiative and judgment and to enjoy a proper measure of autonomy in self-directed social, educational, recreational, cultural, and spiritual activities. Advisors may help the group understand a program's complexity and discuss the necessary steps that need to take place in order for the program to be successful. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the active members to operate the organization; however, advisors are vital to the learning that occurs during this important educational experience.

The advisor should assist the group in evaluation.

This includes evaluating individual programs as well as doing a complete evaluation at the end of the academic year. The advisor must be willing to give constructive criticism when necessary and offer words of praise for work well done.

Responsibility to The Institution - The University of Texas at San Antonio

The advisor may work with the group, but not direct its activities.

Although the advisor's role is not regulatory or disciplinary, the advisor has a responsibility to both the institution and the organization to keep their best interests in mind. At times, the advisor may need to guide the organization to operate within institutional policies so that violations do not occur. The advisor may also work with the organization's officers to establish and maintain internal group standards and regulations for conduct.

Occasionally, an advisor can help an organization during an emergency.

Although this type of intervention is rarely necessary, the advisor's good judgment can be the saving grace in the event of mishaps, internal conflict, or personal crisis. Assisting the group's president as a spokesperson or serving as the main contact for the University can help in these cases.

Advisor Roles by Dunkel and Shuh

As an advisor you will assume numerous roles; all the possible roles are not even mentioned here. A key idea to remember is that you are an advisor not the leader. You provide guidance, insight, and perspective to students as they work on projects, but you should not be doing the work. Students will learn if they are engaged. Be careful of being challenged into doing the work for a student project. The students make the decisions and they are accountable for those decisions and for the successes and failures of their groups.

Again, there are many different approaches to advising and you will develop a style that is most comfortable for you and the students you work with. In most cases, it is best to be involved with the students and to talk them through the process they are going through when they are trying to turn their ideas into action. Students will challenge you to assume and work with different roles depending on the situation. Following are some of the roles you may assume as an advisor.

**Mentor**

Many students will come to see their advisor as a mentor and the success of these relationships can last many years and be rewarding for both the student and the advisor. Because of the nature of student organizations, your mentoring role may meet different needs.

Dunkel and Schuh (1998) describe mentoring as a one on one learning relationship between an older person and a younger person based on modeling behavior and an extended, shared dialogue. They identify five qualities that characterize good mentors:

- Good mentors have been successful in their own professional endeavors
- Good mentors behave in ways worthy of emulation
- Good mentors are supportive in their work with subordinates. They are patient, slow to criticize, and willing to work with those who are less well developed in their careers.
- Good mentors are not afraid to delegate tasks to colleagues and are not threatened by others who exhibit talent and initiative. They provide support for protégés who have been unsuccessful and provide plenty of praise for those who have been successful
- Good mentors provide periodic, detailed, and honest feedback to the protégé

**Supervisor**

There are many similarities between advising and supervising and many of the skills and styles are transferable. Dunkel identifies the components this style as a supervisory cycle many of which are transferable to effective advising. The six stages of the supervisory cycle are team building, performance planning, communication, recognition, self-assessment, and evaluation.

- **Team Building** – In team building, your role is to work with the president and executive board soon after their appointment or election. Team building establishes relationships that will enhance the ability of the organization’s leadership, members, and adviser to work together.
- **Performance Planning** – This includes writing position descriptions, determining and listing expectations, and setting goals.
- **Communication** – The third stage of supervision is regular communication which includes the transfer of both knowledge and feedback. Keep in mind that communication comes in many forms and is both verbal and nonverbal.
- **Recognition** – As an advisor, you may participate in meetings with individual students. These students may express a wide range of emotions, and to respond effectively in
unexpected situations, a working knowledge of these characteristics and backgrounds can be helpful. Some situations may require documenting the incident for your protection and the protection of the institution. Written documentation should include the specific nature of the exchange, the date and time, the individuals involved, and the outcome of the exchange.

- **Evaluation** – The sixth and final stage of supervision is formal evaluation. Some institutions, national organizations, or oversight bodies require students to complete various evaluations. You should know what forms the students need complete as part of the duties of their office or in order to fulfill all of their requirements. A formal evaluation is an opportunity for you to provide feedback to the organization or to individual members. Your participation in the evaluation process should be understood early in your relationship with the organization so as not to come as a surprise to the students.

**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. Team building is important because it enhances the relationships of the students between one another and the advisor. Positive relationships help the organization succeed and work through conflicts and difficult times.

Team formation does not occur by accident but rather through an intentional design and process. To accomplish the goal of creating an effective team, it is necessary to conduct a workshop (if you and the students have the time, a full-scale retreat encompassing team building and goal setting could be planned) to engage students in this process. As the advisor, you may consider working with the student officers to develop a plan and to have them implement it. Training students in effective techniques for team building will keep students invested in the organization and give them the opportunity to learn what it takes to build a team. If you need resources on team building activities, Student Activities can provide them or the office can conduct a workshop with your organization.

**Conflict Mediator**
Inevitably, students are going to join the organization with different agendas, goals, and ideas about how things should function and the direction they should be taking. This is a natural part of running an organization and conflict that is properly managed can lead to a more successful and active group. If conflict is ignored and not handled, the potential for the organization to become inactive is increased. When working with students who have come in to 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, ask them how they think they can work together, and to point out the organization’s mission and ask how their conduct is helping the group achieve its mission. Sometimes, one student may be causing problems with other students. In many cases this student may not realize that his/her actions are causing a problem. In this case, speaking with the student individually could be helpful. Chances are no one has met with the student previously and discussed how her/his attitudes are impacting other people, and how those attitudes or actions can be changed to make everyone feel better. In many cases, the student will appreciate honest feedback.
**Reflective Agent**

One of the most essential components to learning in “out of classroom” activities is providing time for students to reflect on how and what they are doing. As an advisor, you will want your officers to talk to you about how they think they are performing, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Give them the opportunity to discuss their thoughts on their performance. Then be honest with them. Let them know when you agree with their self-perceptions and, in a tactful manner, let them know when you disagree. Remember any criticism you provide students should be constructive and you will want to provide concrete examples of actions the student took that seem to contradict their self-perceptions. When students discuss their weaknesses, ask them how they can improve those areas and how you can help them. Students usually have the answer to what they need; they just don’t like to ask for help. Remember to have students reflect on their successes and failures. Student Activities can provide self-assessment tools for students to complete. There are also organizational and programmatic assessment tools available so groups can assess how they are functioning.

**Educator**

As you work with student organizations, students will undoubtedly look to you for guidance and assistance. In your work with them, you will find ample opportunities to help them learn. There may be formal educational moments such as workshops on how to run meetings or event planning or a seminar on topics related to the organization’s purpose. There may be informal moments when a student doesn’t follow through on a commitment or when a project doesn’t occur as anticipated. As an advisor, your role of educator will often come through the role modeling of behavior, guiding the student in reflection of their actions, and being there to answer questions. One of the most difficult actions to take as an advisor is to do nothing; however, sometimes this can be the most important action of all. Allow the students to make their decisions even if their actions do not agree with your ideas. Sometimes students will succeed and other times they may fail. The key for you is to fill the role of a reflective agent and by doing so give the students a safe place to reflect on their experiences.

**Motivator**

As an advisor, you may have to motivate students to excel, to carry out their plans, and achieve their goals. Some students are easily discouraged and at the first sign of difficulty they may want to quit. You will need to be their “cheerleader,” working to keep them excited about all of the potential successes they will experience. You can motivate students through the recognition of their efforts, by appealing to their desire to create change, and by helping them connect their experiences here at the University to the experiences they will have in the community.

**Policy Interpreter**

Student organizations operate under UTSA policies, procedures, and rules. Some student organizations that are affiliated with national or international organizations are responsible to those entities as well. At times, students may not be aware of these policies and may do things in an inappropriate manner. The more you know about these policies the better advisement you can give to the students on their actions. You can find student organization policies online at www.utsa.edu/sa under student organizations, or by contacting Student Activities. For national or international organizational policies you should the visit the website for the organization in question.

Advisor Styles

The style an advisor uses to work effectively with a student organization should be matched to the developmental stage of the group. Allen (1983) and McKaig and Policello (1984) presented models in which students progress through four stages of development. Different styles may be needed as the students and group mature over time.

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<th>Group Development Styles</th>
<th>Advisory Styles</th>
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<td>I. Infancy: Students demonstrate low levels of commitment to the organization, programming skills, and responsibility for their actions.</td>
<td>I. Program Director: High concern for product, low concern for process. The advisor takes the role of group member - takes part in group activities like a member; or a programmer - identifying, planning, and implementing programs and activities for the student group.</td>
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<td>II. Adolescence: Students demonstrate increasing programming skills, interest, commitment, and responsibility.</td>
<td>II. Teacher/Director: High concern for product, high concern for process. The advisor takes the role of advocate - persuading students on the appropriateness of activities; authority - monitoring students’ compliance with legal requirements, as well as institutional procedures and regulations; or expert - offering suggestions to students based on experience or specialized knowledge base.</td>
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<td>III. Young Adulthood: Students demonstrate competency in programming skills and an increase in commitment, plus a willingness to take responsibility for their own actions.</td>
<td>III. Advisor/Teacher: Low concern for product because students have taken over this concern, high concern for process. The advisor takes the role of educator - designing and encouraging student participation in developmentally powerful experiences; resource - providing alternatives and suggestions; evaluator - assisting the group in collecting data to be used in decision making and program planning; or process consultant - assisting students with increasing the effectiveness of group functioning.</td>
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<td>IV. Maturity: Students demonstrate a high degree of competence in programming and group skills. A strong commitment to the group and a willingness to take responsibility for their own and their group’s actions.</td>
<td>IV. Consultant: Low concern for product and process because students assumed responsibility for both. The advisor takes the role of reflector - serving as a “sounding board” for students’ ideas and plans; or fact finder - providing information to students on request.</td>
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The appropriate role of the advisor is not to become "one of the gang" nor is it to remain conspicuously aloof from the group. The effective advisor is one who will render advice when it is requested and offer counsel even though it may not have been sought.

Remember to let the students make the decisions while you provide guidance and advice.

At the beginning develop clear expectations about the role of the advisor and your relationship to the organization.

Read the group’s constitution and know University policies regarding student organizations.

Get to know all of the members and attend their events.

An advisor should attempt to learn the names of organization members as quickly as possible.

Develop a strong working relationship with the president and other officers.

Discuss concerns with officers in private and praise them in public.

The advisor should be aware of the fact that at times he/she will be called upon to serve as a personal confidant in organization-related matters. This is a particularly sensitive role. The advisor, most likely, will want to provide assistance to the person seeking advice (usually in regard to a problematic situation). However, the advisor cannot compromise his/her relationship with the group by showing favoritism to one or a small group of individuals.

The advisor can expect to be asked to provide quick solutions to problems, which he/she may be unable to render as rapidly as the group would like.

The advisor might be expected to serve as a counselor by individuals with personal problems unrelated to their organizational affiliation.

An advisor should not hesitate to engage in the general discussion of organizational matters at meetings; however, he/she normally should not dominate discussions or become the focus of attention.

An advisor should not feel offended if he/she is not asked to be involved in all of the organization's activities.

An advisor should realize that students often may not accept her/his advice as "gospel". The advisor should expect to be challenged; however, this should not be interpreted as an indication that his/her help is no longer desired.
• Failing is part of the learning process. Mistakes and poor decisions will happen. While it may be your first reaction to intervene and fix all the mistakes you see, this is not the role of the advisor. You can help students to think through their actions and to consider various possibilities but the final decisions must be theirs. Take advantage of failures and use them as teachable moments with students.

• Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure that students understand what the consequences are for their decisions. Be pro-active when a controversial situation arises, but let them make the decision. Help students take ownership of their decision and responsibility for any consequences that may follow.

• Assist students with the development of a budget and the spending of their funds, do this in a way that you and the group have determined appropriate. Do not dominate the finances of the organization. Your primary role is to monitor the expenses, provide feedback on the budget, and approve reimbursement for expenditures.

• The advisor should strive continually to help the organization become as self-sufficient as possible. The advisor will perform the greatest service by suggesting the students of the organization do for themselves what they should. It is the task of the active members to operate the organization. An advisor who attempts to remove this responsibility from the students deprives the members of an important educational experience.

• The advisor should be aware that one of the advisor’s strongest devices is her/his own example. The advisor is under continual scrutiny from members and must demonstrate adherence to the practices which the organization advocates.

• The advisor’s role is a dynamic one...one that must continually be reshaped if there is to be an effective advisor relationship.

• The advisor should be just as interested in the members as individuals as in their collective welfare as a group.

• At times it may be wise to leave the group on its own, to step back for a short time. It shows trust in their decision-making. If you step back too far, they may feel that you are not interested. If you never step back, they may feel that you are the “mother hen.”

• Sometimes make suggestions through group members rather than directly to the group.

• Share problems with other staff members to benefit from different perspectives.

• Be a coach. Encourage, motivate, and acknowledge positive behavior.

• Communicate on a regular basis.

• At all times, keep your sense of humor.
Campus Resources

Office of Student Activities
Office Location: HUC 1.210
Phone Number: 210.458.4160
http://www.utsa.edu/sa/

Events Management and Conference Services
Office Location: UC 1.02.04
Phone Number: 210.458.4155
http://www.utsa.edu/events/index.html

Catering Services
Office Location: MS 1.01.52
Phone Number: 210.458.7275
http://www.utsa.edu/auxiliary/catering.html

Housing and Residence Life
Office Location:
Phone Number: 210.458.6200
http://www.utsa.edu/housing/

Student Conduct and Community Standards
Office Location: UC 2.02.18
Phone Number: 210.458.4720
http://www.utsa.edu/studentlife/conduct/index.html

Office of Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management
Phone Number: 210.458.5250
http://www.utsa.edu/Safety/
REFERENCES


