

# ADVISOR HANDBOOK



*Last revised on 14 August 2006*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the world of advising student organizations. Advisement provides a wonderful opportunity for you to get to know students better and to gain the satisfaction of knowing that you helped guide students in the development of a successful organization or program. Advising an organization does require 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 effective avenues for students to implement theories they have learned in class, to dialogue about 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), and student organizations are one way to encourage student-faculty relationships.

## **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 to 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 and sports/recreation. Every student is encouraged to become a member of those organizations that appeal to their interest. Research has found that involvement in student organizations:

- Improves students' interpersonal skills
- Has a positive influence on skills in leadership, communication, teamwork, organizing, decision-making and planning
- 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

## **PRIVILEGES GIVEN TO STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE REGISTERED**

Student organizations in good standing with the University and registered with Student Activities 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 <http://www.utsa.edu/uctr/Reservations> or [ucevents@utsa.edu](mailto:ucevents@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 on-campus funds 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
  - Obtain a Lonestar email account for your organization
  - Apply for workspace, bulletin boards, or lockers housed in the Student Organization Complex
  - Representation of your group's concerns with the Student Organization Council-President Forums
  - Access to the Speakers' Bureau, Leadership Library and Leader Tips
  - Host organization's website through Lonestar
  - 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, Leader Summit, etc)

## **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 semester;
- Manage itself and carry out its activities listed within its constitution, as well as all local, state, and federal laws, and 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.

## **DEFINING STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISORS**

### ***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 (20 hours). 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.

### ***What is the basic function of an advisor?***

The critical role of the advisor is to serve as a resource for the organization. You can be a valuable resource to the organization through the method of advising you employ. The most beneficial advising is done through a developmental process in which an advisor shares ideas and insights, provides a different perspective, counsels students, and facilitates learning to assist students in their academic, personal, and professional development. An advisor facilitates the maintenance of a strong organization by providing continuity and keeping new members and officers informed of the history of the organization. The advisor does not control the organization or make all the decisions for the students but provides a balanced perspective so students can make the most informed decisions possible. Overall the development process includes the following attributes adapted from *Academic Advising for Student Success and Retention* (Hovland, Anderson & Associates, 1997):

- Is concerned about human potential and growth.
- Requires establishing caring relationships with students.
- Encourages students to take responsibility for their actions.
- Provides opportunities for students to explore their ideas.
- Encourages values of volunteerism, civic engagement, and social responsibility.
- Builds connections between academic and student affairs to assist students in achieving goals.

Ultimately it is up to the advisor and the organization to clearly define the role the advisor should play. However, an advisor can prove to be a valuable asset to a student organization by sharing their life experiences, wisdom, and providing continuity, organizational memory, and connections to resources. Take some time to discuss reciprocal expectations with the student organization.

In return for your support, you should expect to be consulted regularly by the officers concerning their plans for group activities or programs. The advisors should know what events are being planned and should offer ideas and suggestions freely, but not dominate the program planning process. If not being consulted, the advisor should insist that the group do so. At the same time, the advisor should avoid becoming involved in clearing or approving every detail. Refer to this handbook for more information about the delicate role of an advisor.

### ***Assessing students' expectations of advisors***

The level of involvement of an advisor depends on the organization and its leaders. Attendance at every meeting may not be necessary, but it is the best way to stay informed of the activities of the organization. When in attendance at the meetings, the advisor should participate in an advisory capacity and not run the meetings. An advisor should facilitate discussion, offer objective points of view, present alternative solutions to problems, and

encourage the organization and its leaders. Attendance at events should not be viewed as supervising, but as an opportunity to show support and encouragement to the organization. It is very important for the advisor and the student membership to agree upon what the advisor is expected to do. Online ([www.utsa.edu/sa](http://www.utsa.edu/sa), click on Advisor Resources) there is an activity sheet you can do with the officers of your organization to get a dialogue started on expectations. If these are clear from the beginning, there will be less disappointment and conflict.

## **ADVISOR ROLES**

*As an advisor you will assume numerous roles and 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. For our purposes, we are discussing mentors in terms of professional and personal development. These different areas of mentoring are not exclusive of one another and just because you are not in the same field as a student, it does not mean that he/she may not come to you for professional guidance. Also, when developing a student professionally, it is almost impossible not to help the student develop personally. If the student is seeking an education and a career in your field, you may be asked to assist in his/her professional development. To be effective in this capacity, you will need knowledge of their academic program and profession, a genuine interest in the personal and professional development of new professionals, and a willingness to connect students to a network of professionals. You may be approached to review resumes, to connect students with community resources, or to be a sounding board for their ideas of what they want to accomplish in the field. At times, students will seek out someone to assist with their personal development. In this capacity, a mentor will have a basic understanding of student needs and perspectives, a desire to challenge students intellectually and emotionally while providing support to meet the challenge, and the ability to listen to students' verbal and nonverbal communication. Students may want to talk to you about family or relationship issues, conflicts they are having with other students, or to have conversations about their ideas and thoughts on different subjects.

### ***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 to 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 his/her 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 but sometimes this can be the most important action of all. Allow the students to make their decisions even if it is not in full agreement with your ideas. Sometimes students will succeed and other times they may fail. The key is to return to the role of the reflective agent and give the students a safe place to reflect on their experiences.

### ***Motivator***

As an advisor, you may have to motivate students to excel and 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” to keep them excited about all of the potential successes they will experience. You can motivate students through the recognition of their efforts, appealing to their desire to create change, and to connecting 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. 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 advisement you can give to the students on their actions. You can find student organization policies online at [www.utsa.edu/sa](http://www.utsa.edu/sa) under student organizations, or by contacting Student Activities. For national or international policies you should visit their websites.

## **ADVISOR STYLES**

The style an advisor uses to work effectively with a student organization may best be matched to the development 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.

### Group Development Styles

I. Infancy: Students demonstrate low levels of commitment to the organization, programming skills, and responsibility for their actions.

II. Adolescence: Students demonstrate increasing programming skills, interest, commitment, and responsibility.

III. Young Adulthood: Students demonstrate competency in programming skills and an increase in commitment, plus a willingness to take responsibility for their own actions.

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.

### Advisory Styles

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.

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.

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.

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

## **TYPES OF PROBLEMS ORGANIZATIONS MAY FACE**

The following lists are provided so that an advisor may have a better idea of the types of problems he/she may face with their organization (Lorenz & Shipton, 1984). This list is not all inclusive, but may serve as a guide for the advisor.

### 1. Leadership Problems

- The leader does not consult with the organization before making significant decisions.
- The leader appears to lack self-confidence, is non-assertive, and lacks an interest in the organization.
- A rivalry exists between leaders in the organization.
- The leader has work overload, and too many time-conflicts.

### 2. Membership Problems

- Low attendance at meetings.
- Members have low satisfaction and morale, are bored, do not communicate well, feel left out, or are apathetic.
- Members compete for attention.
- An individual member's goals differ from those of the organization.
- There exists a lack of trust among members.
- There is a lack of ideas.

### 3. 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".
4. Inner-organization Problems
    - Disagreement between an organization and other student organizations.
    - Disagreement with institutional policies and procedures.
  5. 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.

## **GROUP DYNAMICS AND CONFLICT**

Successful leaders have come to understand that conflict is not only inevitable in student organizations, but it is also beneficial and healthy, if properly managed. Conflict can stimulate new ideas, clarify elements of an issue, increase talk motivation, and lead to better solutions because of increased understanding of opposing perspectives. Dealing with group conflict and dynamics may be one area where you are called on to help with problems. As advisor, you can help your group deal with conflict in a positive way. This section reviews how you can help group members identify their leadership styles and work through problems to balance the group. Because people come from different backgrounds, they have different leadership styles and different perceptions. Acknowledging the difference in leadership styles can help the organization's members realize that there is no one style of leadership that fits all occasions. In the appendix of this manual is an exercise that you can provide for members of the student group to help each of them determine his/her own leadership style. Results of this exercise place students in one of five categories. This exercise can help students acknowledge that everyone is different and conflict is normal.

**Avoiding:** This style is low in assertion and low in cooperation. Typical phrases may be "I lose, you lose." and "Let well enough alone."

**Accommodating:** This style is low in assertion and high in cooperation. It can be described as "killing with kindness."

**Competing:** People favoring this style are high in assertion and low in cooperation. Attitudes reflected may be "I win, you lose." and "Might makes right."

**Collaborating:** This style is typified by high assertion and high cooperation. "I win, you win." and "Two heads are better than one." are phrases that can be identified with this style.

**Cooperating:** Medium assertion and medium cooperation are common traits. Attitudes may be "I win, you lose, and I lose, you win." and "Half a loaf is better than none."

Conflict could be defined as a... Condition that results when one party feels that a second party has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of the first party. So, conflict does not begin with a knock-down, drag-out fight, but rather happens in stages of mounting frustration. Here are some stages that can be noticed as conflict is developing.

1. Latent: the conditions are ripe for disagreement
2. Perceived: frustration is recognized by one or both parties
3. Felt: tensions are building, but not out in the open
4. Manifest: conflict is out in the open and obvious to others
5. Aftermath: what happens after the conflict.

Taking the time to deal with conflict is important so that every issue your organization faces does not become overwhelming or fester forever. Both good and bad consequences can come from conflict, and group members should be aware of both of these aspects.

Positives Consequence of Conflict:

- Contributes to change
- Activates people
- Represents a form of communication
- Relieves pent-up emotion and tension
- Creates opportunity for personal growth and development
- Aftermath can produce stronger work environment

Negatives Consequences of Conflict:

- Diverts time, energy, and money away from primary goals
- Can be harmful to the organization
- Causes member turnover
- Feelings of stress may cause health concerns
- May result in dramatic behavior like sabotage, revenge, etc.

### **Tips for Dealing with Conflict**

After students realize that they have differing styles and that conflict can be good and bad, you can help them understand how to work together more effectively. Here are some tips you can share with students about working with others with differing leadership styles.

1. Acknowledge that they need to adapt their actions depending on the situation and with whom they are working.
  - Avoiders - let tensions cool first, then discuss
  - Accommodators - demonstrate reasonableness, do not take advantage
  - Competitors - talk about matters of policy, standards, and expectations
  - Collaborators - solve joint problems
  - Cooperators - work on equal ground
2. If possible, work out problems in small groups, before bogging the entire group down. If the officers can discuss their perspectives and come to an answer they will support, the group has direction to follow.
3. Always take time to deal with conflict. Allowing even the smallest problem to fester can lead to an interpersonal explosion that will not benefit anyone. As advisor, you are in a tricky position. You want to be liked by the members of the group, yet you also need to be on the lookout for problems. There is a delicate balance between offering direction and coming down too hard. You need to balance the negative comments with positive ones so the group will keep coming to you for advice.

### **OFFICER TRANSITION**

One of the most important functions of an advisor is to assist in the transition from one set of organization officers to the next. As the stability of the organization, the advisor has seen changes, knows what works and can help maintain continuity. Investing time in a good officer transition early on will mean less time spent throughout the year nursing new officers through the semester. Student Activities staff is here to help.

The key to a successful transition is making sure new officers know their jobs BEFORE they take office. Expectations should be clearly defined. There are a number of ways to conduct the officer transition. The following two methods are examples of two commonly used methods.

#### ***The Team Effort***

The team effort involves the outgoing-officer board, the advisor, and the incoming-officer board. This method involves a retreat or series of meetings where outgoing officers work with incoming officers on:

1. Past records/notebooks for their office and updating those together
2. Discussion topics should include:
  - Completed projects for the past year.
  - Upcoming/incomplete projects.
  - Challenges and setbacks.
  - Anything the new officers need to know to do their job effectively.

The advisor's role may be to:

- Facilitate discussion and be a sounding board for ideas.
- Organize and provide the structure of a retreat.
- Offer suggestions on various questions.
- Refrain from telling new officers what they should do.
- Fill in the blanks." If an outgoing officer doesn't know how something was done, or doesn't have records to pass on to the new officer, you can help that officer by providing the information he or she doesn't have.

The structure of a team effort retreat can take many forms. The advisor's role in this process is to provide historical background when needed, help keep goals specific, attainable and measurable and provide advice on UTSA policies and procedures. This is an outline of a team effort retreat:

1. Icebreakers and team-builders
2. Officer meetings
  - New/old officers pair off (president with president, treasurer with treasurer)
  - Update each section of notebooks, or talk about what should go in a new one. If officers do not have a notebook, take the time to create one!
  - Each pair of officers should discuss the following:
    - Who did the outgoing officer interact with most in Student Activities, University Center Events Management, other student organizations, UTSA administration and in the community?
    - With the departments/areas listed above, what capacity did the outgoing officer work with them on?
    - What University paperwork is this position responsible for completing?
    - What University procedures did the outgoing officer have the most trouble with and how can the incoming officer avoid those troubles?
    - What were the biggest challenges the outgoing officer faced and how did they overcome them?
    - What goals did the outgoing officer have, and which were achieved and which were not.
3. Joint officer meeting
  - Gather as a group; write everyone's notes on a board or flip chart. Note similarities. For instance, the president and treasurer may always interact with the Student Activities administrative assistant or the Assistant Director for Student Organizations.
  - Generate a discussion on similarities, challenges and how challenges can be overcome.
  - Review the Student Organization Handbook. Have out-going officers talk about helpful sections.
4. New officer meeting (This could be a separate meeting, or the next phase of the retreat.)
  - Goal review. What did the past officers accomplish?
  - What is left to do from the past goal list? Revise list or eliminate it if the officers choose.
  - Provide new officers time to list goals for their position on their own.
  - Reassemble and share updated goals.
  - Brainstorm new goals for the organization and ideas for programs, fundraisers, and social events.
    - Make an exhaustive list of everything the group could possibly accomplish.
    - Narrow down that list to what they can reasonably accomplish.
    - Assign tasks to specific officers. If no one wants to do it, take it off the goals list.

### ***One-on-One Training, Advisor with Officers***

While it is ideal to have the outgoing officer team assist in training the incoming officers, often it is left up to the advisor to educate the incoming officers. In that situation, there should be a joint meeting of the new officers, as described in section 4 of the above outline. After that meeting, the advisor should meet individually with each officer; examine the notebook of the previous officer (or create a new one).

Things to include in a new notebook:

1. Philosophy, mission or purpose statement of the organization
2. Constitution and Bylaws
3. Job descriptions of officers
4. Description of committees
5. Organization membership list
6. Historical records of organization
7. Meeting minutes and agendas
8. Listing of basic annual procedures (student organization registration, room reservations, etc.)
9. Calendar of past year with annual events
10. Financial records
11. Resource or contact list of important people (Student Activities, Student Life, Counseling Center, etc.)
12. Student Organization Handbook

Talk about what the officers hope to accomplish in the forthcoming year. Assess the officer's role in the organization. What are the expectations of each position? What are the student's expectations of the position and

his/her goals? If they deal with programming, go through the guidelines in the Student Organization Handbook for event planning (to find the document go to [www.utsa.edu/sa/so](http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so) and look under "Policies").

### **ADVISING ADVICE**

- 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.
- 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.
- Develop a strong working relationship with the president and other officers.
- Discuss concerns with officers in private and praise them in public.
- Remember to let the students make the decisions while you provide guidance and advice.
- 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.
- At times, the advisor must be willing and prepared to tell his/her group that what it is doing, or planning to do, is wrong or inappropriate. When feasible, alternative suggestions should be offered.
- 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 usually 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 attempt to learn the names of organization members as quickly as possible.
- 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 his/her 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, as much as you and the group have determined appropriate. Do not control 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 to 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 must remember that the group is attempting to build a human being and not necessarily attempting to develop the "perfect organization". Such a philosophy calls for the avoidance of dictating or decision-making by an advisor. The advisor must fully understand that by taking direct action too frequently the group will become increasingly dependent upon the advisor and will assume less responsibility and initiative.
- The advisor should be aware that one of the advisor's strongest devices is his/her 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.
- Advisors must be open to criticism by the group. Work with them to define your role. Be willing to be wrong.
- At times it may be wise to leave the group on its own. In some way 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're the "mother hen".
- Act as a positive critic to the group. Give the members feedback on how they are doing.
- Sometimes make suggestions through group members rather than directly to the group.
- Share problems with other staff members in order to get a different perspective.
- Be a coach. Encourage, motivate and acknowledge positive behavior.
- Communicate on a regular basis.
- Do not be afraid to let the group make mistakes. Mistakes teach people lasting lessons. Evaluate the mistake with the chairperson or group and discuss how it could be avoided in the future.
- At all times, keep your sense of humor

## RESOURCES

1. ***In the Loop*** – Advisors will automatically be placed on this email list. The emails contain information on upcoming deadlines and events, policy changes, what student groups are doing and other pertinent information related to student organizations.
2. ***Leadership Library*** is a growing collection of books, workbooks, newsletters, journals, and video and audio tapes on a wide variety of leadership and personal development topics. The library is open to all students, faculty, and staff, and is housed in the Student Organization Complex Lounge. Resources are available on such topics as "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," leadership styles, icebreakers and team builders, diversity awareness, AIDS/HIV, and stress management. If interested in an item, notify a Student Activities staff, so you may check out materials for two weeks at a time. A listing of the holdings can also be found at [http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so/leader\\_org\\_dev.cfm](http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so/leader_org_dev.cfm).
3. ***Speakers' Bureau*** is designed to help students, faculty and staff find qualified speakers on a variety of subjects. The Speakers' Bureau provides a list of topics on which UTSA faculty, staff and alumni are willing to present free of charge. Topics cover such areas as leadership, personal and professional development, current affairs, and social issues. The list provides the session titles, speaker's name, email and phone number. It is updated each year and copies can be obtained from the Student Organization Complex Lounge or on the web page ([http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so/leader\\_org\\_dev.cfm](http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so/leader_org_dev.cfm)).
4. ***Leader Tips*** are quick references available on-line for student organizations. The reference sheets help student leaders and student organizations develop in a variety of areas. Topics include how to write minutes, team building, brainstorming, etc. Visit [http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so/leader\\_org\\_dev.cfm](http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so/leader_org_dev.cfm) for a full listing of topics.
5. ***Student Activities' staff members*** are here to provide any assistance to aid student organizations in meeting their goals and being successful. We can assist with event planning, help with organizational issues, answer questions, interpret University policies, and in general be here for you and the organization.
6. ***Student Organizations' Website*** is full of information to assist advisors and student organizations. There are Leader Tips, links to campus resources, policies and procedures, forms, and other tools and information. Visit the website, [www.utsa.edu/sa/so](http://www.utsa.edu/sa/so), often to see what is new!

## REFERENCES

Hovland, M., Anderson, E., McGuire, W., Crockett, D., Kaufman, J., & Woodward, D. (1997) *Academic Advising for Student Success and Retention*. Iowa City, IO: Noel-Levitz, Inc.

Floerchinger, D. (1992) Enhancing the role of student organization advisors in building a positive campus community. *Campus Activities Programming*, 26(6), 39-46.

Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, F.P.(1991). *Joining Together Group Theory and Group Skills*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Lorenz, N. & Shipton, W. (1984). *A Practical Approach to Group Advising and Problem Solving. A Handbook for Student Group Advisers*. Schuh, J.H. (Ed.). American College Personnel Association.