

## **Faculty/Staff Advisor Information**

### **Welcome & Introduction**

Thank you for volunteering to be an advisor to a club/organization. Being an advisor to a club/organization is a wonderful way of getting to know students, working with students on events, and contributing to student life on campus. As an advisor you will have a major impact on the lives of the students and their experience here at Stony Brook University.

Below is some important information for you. The information will help to guide you as an advisor to a club/organization. You will find helpful information such as important dates, timeline information, and tips on how to be a successful advisor.

Again, thank you for volunteering to be an advisor. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

The Student Activities Staff

### **Important Dates**

Please refer to page 6 in the club/organization manual for the important dates. These dates are important because they guide student clubs/organizations in the event planning process. Most of these dates are for USG funded clubs/organizations. The dates for the last day of programming are for both USG funded and Non USG funded organizations.

### **Reservations**

#### ***Reserving a Space on Campus***

Reserving a space is now online! Here is the link to the online reservation form:

[http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/sac/docs/student\\_group\\_room\\_request.pdf](http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/sac/docs/student_group_room_request.pdf)

Just fill out the form, save it, and email the filled out form to [studentactivities@notes.cc.sunysb.edu](mailto:studentactivities@notes.cc.sunysb.edu)

A confirmation of the room request will be emailed to the club contact person and/or sent to your organization's mailbox within 5 business days.

### **Basic Policies and Procedures**

Please refer to the Policies and Procedures section starting on page 7 in the club manual. The policies and procedures are in place in order to ensure that student club/organization events are successful.

### **Being an Advisor**

#### ***Defining an Advisor***

An advisor is one who gives ideas, shares insight, provides a different perspective, and counsels among other things.

Only a member of the faculty or staff of Stony Brook University may be invited to serve as an advisor to a campus club or organization.

Every campus club/organization must have an advisor. Failure to secure an advisor may jeopardize the club's standing.

Fraternity and Sorority organizations may have alumni advisors in addition to a campus advisor.

*Advisors for student organizations have three main functions:*

- To help with the growth and development of students
- To add to the continuity of the group as members graduate. Advisors can provide the consistency and communicate the goals, legacy and history to future generations of members
- To assist in the area of program content and purpose

#### **Advising Tips**

Every student organization will differ and may require a different approach by the advisor. Using the following information will serve as a beginning point.

- In the beginning of the advising relationship, agree on clear expectations about the role of the advisor and the role of the student organization. Discuss philosophies and reach a consensus.
- Read the constitution of the group, get to know the members, attend meetings and/or events, and generally make yourself seen so that they know who you are.
- Assist in the establishment of responsibilities for each officer and member.
- Develop a strong relationship with the president or chairperson and other officers. This is important because these students will be your main contact with the group.
- Discuss concerns with an officer's performance in a one-on-one setting. Whenever someone does something extremely well, be sure to let others know.
- Be honest and open with all communication. The students need to feel that you are just in your dealings with them

- Realize that you have the power of persuasion, but use this judiciously. The students sometimes need to learn how to fail.
- Help them see alternatives and provide an outside perspective.
- Remember: Praise in public, Criticize in private.
- Find a balance between being the strict naysayer and the laissez-faire friend. The students must feel that you are supportive of them and yet work with them to be fair and consistent. If there are issues with the club please do not hesitate to contact the Student Activities staff in SAC 218 at 631-632-9392.
- Have fun, this is a learning opportunity for you as much as it is for them.

Also, don't forget to utilize the staff in the Student Activities Office. The staff are a great resource!

### **Roles and Responsibilities of an Advisor**

The role of an advisor varies, but it is always an important one. The scope of an organization's activities, the effectiveness of its officers, the time commitments of the advisor and several other factors should be committed to the group's success, may need to sometimes go above and beyond the call of duty, and should never only be someone who serves as a signatory on forms.

Considering their expertise and experience, advisors can often supply significant insights on group matters such as goal setting, program ideas, conflict resolution, and group growth. It is often the advisor who can aid in maintaining an organization by providing continuity and by serving as an information source. In short, a good advisor can help nurture an organization's success. The pattern of team work between an advisor and the organization must be individually tailored to the personalities and needs of both parties. Some guidance is necessary in developing such a relationship. The following functions and responsibilities should direct the advisor toward appropriate behaviors and roles with the group.

(The above information is adapted from the Resource and Policy Manual, Virginia Commonwealth University)

### **Responsibilities to the Student Organization**

The advisor should assist the group in developing realistic goals for the academic year. This will contribute to the education and personal development of the students involved. The advisor should take an active role, rendering advice and counsel as circumstances dictate.

The advisor should be aware of all plans and activities of the group. The Program Advisor is the person who informs the group of institutional policies that may affect the plans for activities. The advisor should see that the group and its officers know where policies and procedures are listed, what the policies are, why they exist, and the channels to be followed for changes, revisions, or exemptions to the policies. Questions concerning the interpretation or application of policies and regulations pertaining to student organizations can be answered by the Student Activities Office staff at 631-632-9392.

The advisor should discourage dominance of the group by any one individual and should encourage students to take initiative. Eager leaders often steal the limelight more often than necessary. This can lead to resentment by some 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 sympathetic interest in an individual student on the part of an advisor is a traditional role of the college teacher and one that has a long proud history in higher education. The counseling role might require individual consultation on a personal level or referral to the student counseling center.

The advisor should 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 and the staff in Student Activities. The advisor can steer group members clear of mistakes and help them avoid the proverbial reinvention 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 should 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. He or she should not dominate the program planning process. However, advisors should ensure that the group understands a program's complexity and has discussed the necessary steps that need to take place in order for the program to be successful. The advisor should remember that it is

the task of the active members to operate the organization. Removing this responsibility from the members would deprive them of an 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.

### **Responsibilities to Individual Group Members**

The advisor should 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 often over extend themselves if not held in check. The advisor has a unique opportunity to remind students of their academic obligations and personal needs.

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

The advisor should encourage students to accept responsibility for specific roles within the group. The advisor should help them realize 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 the University**

The advisor should 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 interest in mind. At times, the advisor may need to remind the organization of 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. Any violations of policies and procedures should be directed to the Student Activities staff.

The Student Activities staff will work with the faculty/staff advisor and the group to properly address any situations that may arise. Please remember to consult with the staff in Student Activities.

### **Getting your student leader to understand their responsibilities to the advisor**

The organization-advisor relationship is not a one-way street, with the advisor doing all of the giving and the organization doing all of the taking. The organization has some definite responsibilities to its advisor. Here are some tips to guide you in your advisory capacity:

- Establish a clear understanding between yourself and the organization as to the advisor's role and function. Set up a time to discuss this at length with the leadership. Talk about the purpose of the group and its needs; determine what you have to offer as an advisor, and then agree on the nature of the relationship. Review the relationship periodically and encourage the organization to let you know how you may advise the group better.
- It is the responsibility of the organization to communicate its needs to the advisor. Advisors should be willing to be involved with the organization, but they should not intrude and "force the hand" of the group.
- Establish lines of communication. Find the best way to keep the flow of information moving smoothly between yourself and group members. Check your schedule for times you can meet with the organization. Tell the organization what information you, as an advisor, would like to receive on a regular basis (e.g. meeting notices, minutes, event announcements, etc.) and check to see it is sent. Remind the organization that there are many ways to communicate: face to face, in writing, by voice mail, or e-mail.
- It's OK to say NO. You have other responsibilities such as family or relationship, job, and financial concerns that do not always permit undivided attention to the organization. Organizations can extend an invitation, but should not be offended if the advisor must say no thanks.
- The advisor should let the organization know what type of talents he or she can offer. Recognize that as the advisor you are a resource person with a wealth of expertise. Offer opinions, advice, and creative ideas.
- An advisor is an integral part of the organization but not a member. The advisor's job is to coach and guide the organization in its function, not to perform tasks for the group.

### **How Advising Can Assist the Organization**

In addition to the above listed roles and responsibilities, an advisor can assist an organization in many ways:

#### **Maintenance functions:**

The advisor can help maintain the existence of the student organization by

providing continuity with past history and traditions. Such activities may include consulting on University policy, serving as a role model, arbitrating group conflicts, and keeping files on past organizational functions.

**Group growth function:**

The advisor can improve the operation and effectiveness of the group and help it progress toward its goals. Such activities might include: teaching the techniques of good leadership and fellowship, coaching the officers in the principles of good organizational and administrative practice, developing self-discipline and responsibility among members, teaching the elements of effective group operation, developing plans and procedures for action, keeping the group focused on its goals, and stimulating or even initiating activities and programs.

**Program content function:**

The advisor can question the educational rationale for the organization's existence and lead its members into activities that will contribute to their intellectual and social development. Such activities might include introducing new program ideas, helping group members practice skills and concepts learned in the classroom, pointing out new perspectives and directions, and supplying expert knowledge and insights.

**Networking Opportunities:**

The advisor can help provide opportunities for organization members to interact with different people in their field of interest and help them with developing new contacts for possible future careers. Such opportunities to network might include identifying guest speakers, field trips or site visits, or attending conferences related to their area of interest.

**FAQ's**

**The organization is planning a questionable event:**

The difficulties inherent in the plan should be pointed out and other ideas suggested. The advisor may request that the group obtain the opinion of the individuals or groups affected by the action. A meeting may be set up with the appropriate members of the Student Activities staff to clarify any questions.

**You are no longer comfortable being the advisor of the organization:**

Explain to the executive officers of the organizations that you are no longer comfortable being the advisor of the organization. Give them a reasonable amount of time to find a new advisor. When changes are made, the office of Student Activities must be notified.

**You sense major problems with the organization:**

Meet with the officers and discuss your observations. Brainstorm solutions and get a plan of action. Members of the Student Activities Office are willing to help mediate or seek solutions.

**You find out your organization is in violation of University policies and/or federal state or local laws:**

Advisors have a responsibility to bring violations to the proper governing board, and administrator.

## **DIRECTORY OF DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES AND CONTACTS**

Campus Recreation 631-632-7168

Commuter Student Services 631-632-7320

Craft Center 631-632-6822

Dean of Students Office 631-632-7320

Fraternity & Sorority Life 631-632-9392

Red Hot After Hours 631-632-9392

SAC Art Gallery 631-632-6559

SAC Facilities Manager 631-632-4966

SAC Info Desk 631-632-6730

Student Activities Office 631-632-9392

Student Media 631-632-6828

Union Facilities Manager 631-632-6827

University Police 631-632-3333

