



Advisor Manual

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**Meredith College
Office of Student
Activities and Leadership
Development**

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The Role of a Student Organization Advisor

(Adapted from University of Vermont's Student Organization Manual
and Advising Student Groups and Organizations, Dunkel & Schuh, 1998)

There are many benefits that can result from the advising relationship. Individual students, the organization, and the organization's constituencies share these benefits. Developing a relationship of open and honest communication, sincerity, professional effectiveness and personal approachability provides the advisor and the organization leaders with a chance to grow and succeed. Students and Advisors can gain valuable lessons by working together in an advisor-advisee relationship.

Students who are involved with organizations feel more accepted by their peers. Astin's Theory states "the peer group is the most potent source of influence on students' growth and development during their college careers." Students also gain rewards by adding to the history of the college by participating in or creating activities and events.

As an advisor you will be rewarded as you observe students develop throughout their years at college. Watching students get excited and passionate about organizations and taking on leadership positions or moving into a fully participating member is also rewarding. At times you may serve as a mentor for these students. This is a great way to keep up with students' development and to continue the adviser relationship. As an advisor, you are connected to other professionals who serve in similar capacities. This creates a network of peers for you to discuss joys and sorrows of advising. It can also rejuvenate your interest in helping the students succeed.

What is the role of an advisor?

On the most basic level, the purpose of the adviser is to work with the designated leaders and members of a functioning student organization with the intent of:

- Assisting the leaders and members to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Aiding the organization to define and achieve its goals and objectives.
- Integrating the organizational activity with the overall purpose of the educational setting.

As the advisor to a Meredith College club or organization, you will fill many more specific roles. The following is a list of the roles you will need to play in order to help your club or organization have a successful year:

- **Financial Management:**
Learn the accounting procedures on campus and make sure that your treasurer(s) are trained in these procedures. Assist your organization in the planning of its budget. Assist students in their decision making on how to use their money wisely throughout the year.
- **Planning, Goal Setting, and Evaluation:**
Provide planning resources and ideas (Event Plan of Action on SALD website). Assist students by meeting with them regularly to discuss the agenda of upcoming meetings and the details of upcoming events. Guide students by setting goals at the beginning of the year and evaluating them regularly.
- **Motivation and Delegation:**
Provide information on techniques that can motivate organization members. Assist leaders with defining the roles of members (with job descriptions, constitutions and possibly an organizational flow chart) and identifying skills and talents of members.
- **Communication:**
Compile resources on communication skills that can be used by members. Provide members with sample memos, contracts, letters of agreement, and techniques for using the telephone. Encourage students to practice communication skills as a part of the learning process of being a leader or member of an organization.
- **Decision Making and Situational Analysis:**
Assist students in becoming "problem solvers" and being "resourceful." Help students to think through the pros and cons of decisions being made in the organization. Ask that students clarify the issues and focus on the outcomes of their decisions.

- **Initiative:**
Empower the students to take the initiative in all matters concerning the organization, thus helping to instill confidence in their abilities.
- **Support and Approachability:**
Be the CHEERLEADER for the organization, offering encouragement to the students. Be a listener for the students and offer helpful feedback when needed. Always try to be approachable and be open and honest.
- **Relationship Building:**
Be a role model for the students by demonstrating appropriate working relationships and being "professional." Discuss with the students your expectations of them and their expectations of you. Help students with conflict management by having them distinguish between personal conflicts and issues related directly to the organization.

Often students and advisors have different expectations of the role an advisor should play in an organization. Take the following example from Dunkel & Shuh (1998):

The Role of the Advisor as viewed by the Advisor
(*listed in priority order by the Advisor*)

- Person of resource
- Friend/counselor
- Picks up pieces when necessary
- Assists in planning
- Able to play "devil's advocate"
- Helps set goals
- Helps maintain direction and provide continuity
- Stimulates creativity and motivates
- Serves as a sounding board for chairpersons
- Facilitator for group process
- Being accessible

The Role of the Advisor as viewed by Student Leaders
(*listed in priority order by student leaders*)

- Person of resource
- Positive reinforcement and support
- Provides constructive criticism
- Serves as liaison between committee and college
- Deals with legal and contractual matters
- Attends committee meetings
- Advises on specific college procedures
- Easily accessible and available
- Discusses ideas but doesn't dictate
- Able to play "devil's advocate" when needed to
- Has brainstorming skills
- Realizes leaders are volunteers

Words of Advice for the Advisor

- Advisors who are able to establish mutually rewarding relationships with leaders and members of the organization generally do so by naturally allowing their experience and expertise to direct them.
- Spend time getting to know the students. Meet for lunch or a break during the day and talk about activities, how you spend your time when you're not at work, recent books you've read, movie likes/dislikes, etc. This is a great way to get to know each other as you begin to build this advisor/student relationship.
- Attending meetings and keeping in touch with the officers on a regular basis keeps the lines of communication open and encourages the advisor to assist in planning and problem solving as needed. Some students need to meet more often than others depending on how often the group meets.
- Failure can also be a learning experience. Nobody expects you to have all the answers. Problem solving involves the whole group.
- Officers and advisors must work to provide each other with a positive experience. Once you build the relationship you need to work at it to keep it together.

Advising Styles

The advising style of an organizational advisor varies from person to person, and group to group. If you have done this for more than one year, you will realize that your advising style will vary from year to year - even within the same organization. This is due in part to the changing dynamics of the different students involved.

- Depending on the experience and motivation of the students with whom you work, you may be asked to take either an active or passive role. Likewise, your own advising style will determine how active a role you play.
- Some advisors prefer to be highly involved in the groups they advise by attending all meetings, helping to make the group aware of current situations, and aiding in major financial or programmatic decisions.
- On the other hand, there are advisors who see themselves as resources, or sounding boards for the group. This style of advising seems to be less active, but no less important or effective.
- Between these styles are various levels of involvement, all dependent upon your personal strengths and weaknesses, the group, and the situation.
- What is most important is that the advisor, and the leaders and members of the organization communicate to mutually define your role as the advisor.

*Flatter me, and I may not believe you.
Criticize me, and I may not like you.
Ignore me, and I may not forgive you.
Encourage me, and I will not forget you.*

Advisor Acceptance

As an advisor it can be difficult to show interest without showing too much interest and by taking over. On the other hand you don't want to be too passive as to give the impression you are not interested. Sherif and Sherif believe that "in order to develop good rapport advisors need to:

1. ensure by word and deed that group members are aware of the advisor's lack of authority in situations where the group needs to be together;
2. appear in word and deed as a "bigger brother" or "bigger sister" who is interested in the members and wishes them well, and who may be helpful on occasion;
3. avoid any signs of dislike or disapproval of any member, on the one hand, or signs of favoritism on the other;
4. avoid suggesting or initiating activities for the group, unless such activities are deliberately planned as a part of the organization's calendar;
5. be helpful in activities initiated by group members without displaying skills that will put the advisor in competition for status with group members."

Student/Advisor Relationships

An advisor and student should have an open, honest relationship and have the opportunity to share ideas, receive feedback, and build trust.

1. The responsibility for building the relationship must be shared between advisor and student. *View this relationship as a partnership.*
2. The relationship must be based upon open, direct communication. *Share needs, responsibilities, and expectations with each other.*
3. Both must recognize the other's various roles and responsibilities in/outside of their activity position. *Know each other's commitments and let each other know their impact.*
4. Both advisor/student are human beings who make mistakes, follow their own value systems, and work in individual, professional, and personal styles. *Everyone makes mistakes. Accept, discuss, and learn from mistakes – then move on!*
1. Both advisor and the student are continually growing, changing, and learning; each within their own unique stages of development. *Challenge and support each other.*

Motivating Students

In Advising Student Groups and Organizations, Dunkel and Schuh (1998) state that understanding what motivates students may be your single most desirable skill. "Motives are sometimes defined as needs, wants, drives, or impulses within the individual. Motives are directed toward goals, which may be conscious or subconscious...Goals are often called incentives by psychologists" (Hersey and Blanchard). Some students are motivated by hard work, achievements and by being involved. Other students do not get motivated by any of these ways. Student motivation can be either extrinsic: recognition, money and achievement or intrinsic: desire, value and approval. There is not just one way of motivating students.

Group Effectiveness

In order to have a group of members work productively the group needs to have a model or plan on how to meet goals. Johnson and Johnson have developed a nine-point model for group effectiveness:

1. Group goals must be clearly understood, be relevant to the needs of the group's members, highlight the positive interdependence of members, and evoke from every member a high level of commitment to their accomplishment.
2. Group members must communicate their ideas and feelings accurately and clearly.
3. Participation and leadership must be distributed among members.
4. Appropriate decision-making procedures must be flexible in order to match them with the needs of the situation.
5. Conflicts should be encouraged and managed constructively.
6. Power and influence need to be approximately equal throughout the group.
7. Group cohesion needs to be high.
8. Problem-solving adequacy should be high.
9. The interpersonal effectiveness of members needs to be high.

Tips for Programs and Events

The advisor can be a valuable programming resource by encouraging the officers and committee chairs to work for programs, which are of high quality and in good taste; remind them that a few good programs are more desirable than many mediocre ones.

1. Be aware of programs or materials which will be viewed by a large audience; these often have a more complex set of details which may need special attention.
2. Encourage students to establish a time line (set goals and identify specific deadlines) as part of their planning process; this aids them in visualizing appropriate time for requesting facilities and services, program advertising, contract approval, etc. See the Event Plan of Action handout at the end of this manual.
3. Ensure that there is active participation by the members of your organization. If you have only one or two people actively involved, it is not beneficial for the organization.
4. Remind students to observe the policies listed in the student handbook and the most recent General Manual.

Advisor/Student Expectations Checklist

Listed are some expectations student leaders have of their advisor.

This form is designed to help advisors and student organizational officers arrive at a clear and mutually agreed upon role of the advisor.

Directions: The advisor and the officers should respond to the following items and meet and compare answers and “iron out” any differences. For some items, which are determined not to be the responsibility of the advisor, it would be valuable to clarify which officer will assume the responsibility.

For each of the following statements, respond on a scale of 1-3 how important that function is:

- 1- Essential for the advisor to do
- 2- Nice, but they don't have to
- 3- Absolutely not an advisor's role

The advisor is expected to:

- ___ 1. Attend all general meetings
- ___ 2. Attend all executive meetings
- ___ 3. Call meetings of the executive committee when necessary
- ___ 4. Explain college policy when relevant to the discussion
- ___ 5. Explain college policy to the executive committee and depend upon the officers to carry them out through leadership
- ___ 6. Explain college policy to the entire membership at a general meeting once a year
- ___ 7. Reserve an appointment with the president before each meeting
- ___ 8. Help the president prepare an agenda before each meeting
- ___ 9. Serve as parliamentarian for the group
- ___ 10. Speak up during discussion when he/she has relevant information
- ___ 11. Speak up during discussion when he/she believes the group is making a poor decision
- ___ 12. Be quiet during the meeting unless called upon
- ___ 13. Exert his/her influence with officers between meetings
- ___ 14. Take an active part in formulating goals with the group
- ___ 15. Be one of the group except with voting and holding offices

- ___ 16. Attend all group activities
- ___ 17. Require the treasurer to clear all transactions with you
- ___ 18. Request to see the treasurer's books at the end of the semester
- ___ 19. Check the secretary's minutes before they are written in final form
- ___ 20. Check all official correspondence before it is sent
- ___ 21. Keep all official files in your office
- ___ 22. Inform the group of infractions of their bylaws, codes, and rules
- ___ 23. Veto a decision when it violates a stated objective
- ___ 24. Mediate conflicts that arise
- ___ 25. Be responsible for planning leadership skill workshops
- ___ 26. Let the group work out its problems, including making mistakes
- ___ 27. Let the group thrive and decline on its own merits
- ___ 28. Represent the group in any conflicts with members of the college staff
- ___ 29. Recommend speakers, programs, etc.
- ___ 30. Approve all candidates for office in terms of scholastic standing and ensure GPAs are maintained
- ___ 31. Cancel any activities you feel have been poorly planned

Adapted from: Organization and Adviser Manual, Activities Center, California State Polytechnic University

Advisor Evaluation

This evaluation instrument has been designed to improve the relationship between student leaders and their advisor.

It is the privilege of the evaluator to remain anonymous if he/she wishes to do so. This will allow the evaluator to give candid feedback. Feel free to elaborate on any item of the instrument.

Please respond to all items with honesty and frankness. Your constructive feedback is appreciated.

Advisor being evaluated: _____

How would you describe your advisor's performance?

Please use the following key:

	Not Applicable	NA
	Never	N
	Sometimes	S
	Usually	U
Always	A	

- ___ 1. The advisor is well prepared for meetings.
- ___ 2. The advisor is fair and impartial to all student leaders.
- ___ 3. The advisor is concerned with the progress of each student leader.
- ___ 4. The advisor conveys enthusiasm to student leaders.
- ___ 5. The personal objectives of the adviser are made clear.
- ___ 6. The advisor makes available office hours.
- ___ 7. The advisor is open to student opinions.
- ___ 8. The advisor stimulates independent thinking.
- ___ 9. The advisor has faith and trust in student leaders.
- ___ 10. I have faith and trust in the advisor.

Evaluate the following areas related to the advisor using this key:

1-- Very Good
2-- Good
3-- Fair
4-- Poor
5-- Not Applicable

- 1. Knowledge of the field.
- 2. General attitude toward student leaders.
- 3. Personal attitude toward the job.
- 4. Personality.
- 5. Speaking ability.
- 6. Ability to explain and clarify.
- 7. Tolerance for disagreement.
- 8. Encouragement and stimulation for creativity.
- 9. Attendance at executive meetings.
- 10. Attendance at committee meetings.
- 11. Availability.

How would you best describe your advisor's specific attitude towards student leaders? (Check One)

- Sympathetic, helpful, actively concerned.
- Distant, cold.
- Routine in attitude, avoids individual contact.
- Moderately sympathetic.

I believe the role of the advisor in his/her relationship with student leaders to be one of a:

___ Consultant

___ Dictator

___ Advisor

___ Administrative liaison

___ Facilitator

___ Laissez-faire peer

___ Change-Agent

___ Authoritarian

___ Other

Briefly explain your opinion:

I think the advisor's three greatest strengths are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I think the advisor's three areas for improvement could be:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Overall rating of this advisor (Circle one):

Outstanding

Very Good

Good

Adequate

Poor

How Am I Doing as the Advisor?

Evaluation adapted from Clemson University

Use these questions as a way to gauge your role as advisor. This is for you to fill out after one semester in the role as advisor. Some questions may be more appropriate for advisors of certain organizations than others.

1. How much time have I devoted to my advisor position this semester?
2. Have I given enough/too little time to my position?
3. Have I confronted executive board members on issues and concerns?
4. Have I been consistent in reading/answering calls, emails, and mail?
5. Have I been enjoying what I am doing?
6. If I were to rate myself from 1-5 (5 being the highest), what would my score be?
7. If the student organization members rated me, what would it be?
8. What one thing about being an advisor do I enjoy the most?
9. What one thing about being an advisor do I enjoy the least?
10. What can I do to help this organization, the members and the leaders succeed?

OFFICER TRANSITIONS

Things to think about and a few helpful resources

Transitions benefit outgoing and incoming officers:

- The development of an effective officer transition process will assist outgoing leaders to bring closure to their experiences. It can help them let go, which is often a difficulty process, especially for those leaders you are vested in the welfare of the organization.
- Gives outgoing leaders a sense of accomplishment in their experiences.
- Experienced leaders will feel needed as you use their expertise for transition programs.
- Helps the incoming leadership take with them some of the special expertise of the outgoing leaders.
- New leaders will start their jobs with increase confidence and knowledge of available resources.

Transitions benefit advisors:

- Allows time for setting and clarifying expectations about the role of an advisor and the relationship between advisor and organization leaders.
- Takes pressure off of the advisor to be the single source of knowledge about past practices and campus resources.
- Helps advisor form relationships with new officers before they begin their position.

Transitions benefit the organization as a whole:

- Your organization will not repeat ineffective practices, because it can now begin to build on previous knowledge.
- Successful transition will prevent the “lame duck” period when group effectiveness can be limited.
- Provides for transfer of significant organizational knowledge.
- Minimizes the confusion of leadership change.
- Minimizes the loss of momentum and accomplishments of the group.
- Provides a sense of continuity among the membership.

An effective transition program is a stepping stone to building a strong team for the future:

Team Building includes ten essential elements:

1. Knowing the skills, abilities, needs, and fears of your membership.
2. Fostering open and honest communications.
3. Building positive social relationships.
4. Frequent open communication.
5. Delegation of responsibilities.
6. Trust in each other to complete tasks.
7. Mutual support among members and advisor.
8. Appreciation of differences and respect for all members.
9. Use the uniqueness of members to accomplish goals
10. Pride in your group.

When do you start?

It's never too early to begin preparing future leaders of your organization! Make a point each year to begin early identifying emerging leaders within the group.

- Create an organizational structure to support leadership development.
- Develop a mentoring program.
- Develop leadership notebooks.
- Create a shadowing program.

- Encourage potential leaders through person contact. Help in developing skills, delegating responsibility to them, sharing with them the personal benefits of leadership, clarifying job responsibilities, letting them know that will be orderly and thorough, and last modeling an open encouraging leadership style.
- Elect officers at least one month before installation to provide an “overlap” period for new and old officers to work together.
- When new officers are elected, orient them together as a group with all of the outgoing officers. This process provides the new leaders with opportunity to understand each other’s roles and to start building their leadership team.
- Be sure to transfer the knowledge and information necessary for them to function effectively. An organization’s history and flowchart is helpful.

How do you start?

Beginning the process of transitioning officers may be a daunting task, especially if it seems as though there is not enough time. Start by creating a transition timeline, with consideration for the following:

- Review, as a group, the Meredith College Transition Checklist for Outgoing Officers of Student Organizations (available on page 27 of the General Manual for student organizations).
- Outgoing officers should create or update a notebook for each position.
- Consider a transition retreat (see Sample Officer Transition Retreat Agenda).
- Evaluate past successes and plan for future (see Incoming and Outgoing Officer Evaluations).
- When setting goals and making plans, decide upon explicit expectations for each position – including advisor – and for the nature of interactions between individuals (see Working with an Advisor).

Adapted from

<http://www.sa.ucsb.edu/osl/LeadershipDevelopment/LeadershipResources/pdf/TransitionChecklist.pdf>

Helpful web resources on officer transitioning:

<http://www.meredith.edu/students/activities/officermanuals.htm>

Meredith College: Officer manuals can be found through this website. Page 27 of the General Manual includes the Meredith College Transition Checklist for Outgoing Officers

<http://www.sac.iastate.edu/Resources/?at=transition>

Iowa State University: Worksheets and resources to assist organizations with multiple aspects of transitioning officers. Topics include goalsetting, working with advisers, and archiving significant information

<http://sao.nd.edu/studentleadership/officerresources/development/index.shtml>

University of Notre Dame: Officer and group development tools. Topics include budgeting, goal setting, meeting management, and officer transition.

Event Plan of Action

Title of Event: _____

Purpose of Event: _____

Target Audience: _____

Date and Time of Event: _____

Event Chair: _____

Location of Event	Date Made Reservation	Responsible Person

Publicity	Responsible Person	Deadline	Date Completed
Posters			
Flyers			
E-News			
Herald			
Invitations			
Other			

Event Guest	Contact Name	Phone Number	Date Contacted	Responsible Person	Check when Completed
Speakers					
Vocalists					
Dance Groups					
Musicians					
Other					

Equipment	Yes/No Date Needed	Responsible Person
TV/VCR		
Flip Chart		
Projector		
Chairs		
Tables		
Microphone		
Sound System		

Expenses	Notes	Cost
Decorations		
Catering or Refreshments		
Gifts		
Travel/Van usage		
Publicity		
Event Guest		
Other		

Refreshments: _____
 Responsible Person: _____
 Date Completed: _____

Decorations: _____
 Responsible Person: _____
 Date Completed: _____

T-Shirts/Souvenirs: _____
 Vendor: _____
 Approval Form Completed: Y or N
 Selling Location: _____
 Dates Sold: _____
 Distribution of Item: _____

Picture Sales
 Location of Sale: _____
 Date/Time: _____
 Responsible Person: _____

Notes:
