



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Office of Student Engagement and Involvement

Student
Organization
Advisor Handbook

OFFICE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Student Organization Advisor Handbook

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Welcome!

Dear Faculty or Staff Member,

Thank you for your interest in serving as an advisor to a student organization. The University of South Florida provides students with a wide variety of opportunities to become involved on campus and throughout the community. There are over 400 registered student clubs and organizations here at USF, including academic, athletic, cultural, honor societies, religious, political, Greek, and social groups. As an advisor, you can make a difference in these organizations and the directions they take.

Student organizations provide students an opportunity to expand and enhance their overall educational experience, interact with others, gain self confidence, take on responsibility, acquire leadership skills and succeed in what they do.

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide for you, the advisor, in your efforts to actively advise a student organization. The Office of Student Engagement and Involvement continually aims to build stronger student organizations and with your assistance, organizations that provide not only a social outlet for students, but also valuable learning experiences that allow students to grow and develop.

The Office of Student Engagement and Involvement sincerely thanks you for your interest and commitment to the role of advisor. You have just committed to an enjoyable and worthwhile experience that has its own awards. If you have any questions, please contact our office at 813-974-7595 or stop by our office, which is located on the second floor of the Marshall Center, 215.

Sincerely,

Damian Medina
Coordinator for Student Organizations

What are the responsibilities of an advisor?

The following is adapted from the Resource and Policy Manual, Virginia Commonwealth University

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 the student organization
3. Responsibility to the institution – University of South Florida

Responsibility to individual group members

1. **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 overextend themselves if not held in check. The advisor has a unique opportunity to remind students of their academic obligations and personal needs.
2. **The advisor should 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 will not develop if the student is not involved.
3. **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 student organization

1. **The advisor should assist the group in developing realistic goals, strategic planning, and training for the academic year.** This will contribute to the education and personal development of the students involved. The advisor must take an active role, rendering advice and counsel as circumstances dictate.
2. **The advisor should be aware of all plans and activities of the group and inform the group of institutional policies that may affect these plans.** The advisor should see 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. Advisors should also participate in the planning/review of each activity.

Responsibility to the institution – University of South Florida

The advisor must attend the University of South Florida Office of Student Engagement and Involvement sponsored training activities. Although some advisors have been an advisor before, it's important that advisors attend all training sessions created for them. New things happen in the Office of Student Engagement and Involvement and we want to keep advisors as up to date as possible.

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 interests 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.

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.

Advising tips

The following is adapted from Lenoir-Rhyne College's Advisor Handbook
Every student organization will differ and may require a different approach by the
advisor. The following information can serve as a starting point.

1. 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.
2. Read the constitution of the group, get to know the members, attend events, and generally make yourself seen so that they know who you are.
3. Assist in the establishment of responsibilities for each officer and member.
4. Develop a strong relationship with the president or chairperson and other officers. This is key because these students will be your main contact with the group.
5. 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.
6. Maintain a sense of humor – it's college, not rocket science.
7. Be honest and open with all communication. The students need to feel that you are just in your dealings with them.
8. Realize that you have the power of persuasion, but use this judiciously. The students sometimes need to learn how to fail.
9. Help them see alternatives and provide an outside perspective.
10. Remember: praise in public, criticize in private.
11. 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 that you will hold them accountable.

Advisor Expectations Checklist

Student Group: _____

Listed below are some expectations which can be negotiated between student leaders and their advisor. The form is designed to help advisors and officers arrive at a clear and mutually agreed upon advisor role.

The advisor and the officers of the organization should rank the following items (**from 1-5, with 1 reflecting something that is absolutely not role of the advisor and 4 being an essential duty of the advisor**) and then meet to compare answers and discuss any differences. For items that are determined not to be the responsibility of the advisor, it is important to establish whose responsibility it will be.

<u>Rating System</u>	
NOT an advisor's duty	1
Optional duty	2
Occasional duty	3
Essential duty	4
More of a student duty	5

	Take an active part in formulating the goals of the group
	Take the initiative in developing teamwork and cooperation among the officers
	Be responsible for planning leadership skills workshops
	Attend all general meetings
	Attend all executive committee meetings
	Call meetings of the executive committee when believed to be necessary
	Attend all group activities, meetings, events, etc.
	Meet with the chief student leader before each meeting
	Help the chief student leader or other officers prepare an agenda before each meeting
	Be quiet during the general meetings unless called upon
	Speak up during discussion when the advisor thinks the group may make a poor decision
	Exert influence with officers between meetings
	Initiate ideas for discussion when the advisor believes they will be helpful to the group
	Be one of the group, except for voting and holding office
	Veto a decision when it violates a stated objective, the bylaws, or University policy
	Check the secretary's minutes before they are written in final form
	Check all official correspondence before it is sent
	Get a copy of all official correspondence
	Inform the group of infractions of their bylaws, codes, and standing rules

Group development

If you have been an advisor for an extended period of time, you may have realized that your advising style will vary over time – even within the same organization. This is due in part to the changing dynamics of the different students involved. Your advising style may also change depending on the dynamics of the group and the developmental level of the organization.

Tuckman developed a sequential model with the foundation being that groups develop through an orderly, invariant sequence of stages or phases. In 1965, Tuckman reviewed approximately fifty developmental models and research studies and developed his own model of group development. Tuckman's model categorized group development in five identifiable sequential stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

1. Forming – This developmental stage is devoted to issues of membership, inclusion and dependency. Members at this stage are trying to determine their place in the organization, clarify goals and group structure.
2. Storming – This period is defined by internal conflicts around tasks and interpersonal issues also develop.
3. Norming – The third stage is defined by a development of group cohesion where members discover new ways to work together and accept the defined acceptable rules of behavior.
4. Performing – This is the stage in which group members work actively on the task and fulfilling their responsibilities.
5. Adjourning – This concluding stage is not necessarily relevant to every organization. Adjournment refers to the termination or disbanding of the group as they have finished the task at hand and members will anticipate a change in their relationships.

Services provided to registered student organizations!

Use of Display Cases

Officially Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) are granted the privilege to request use of Phyllis P. Marshall Center Display Cases. These display cases can be used to promote your organization and recruit new members. Eight, locked display cases are available on the first floor of the Marshall Center. Student organizations using the display cases must agree to the following:

- Student organization name must be clearly visible in the display case.
- Organizations may use the display cases for only one one-month period per semester.
- If your organization has not utilized the assigned display case by the end of the 5th school day of that month, the case will be assigned to another group.
- Items must be removed by the end of the month. Failure to remove items on time will result in your organization begin prohibited use of the display case for the remainder of the year.
- The Office of Student Engagement and Involvement is not responsible for items displayed and not removed as scheduled. Do not put valuable items in the display case.

**Keys, sign-up sheet, and rules regarding the use of the cases are available in the Office of Student Engagement and Involvement, CTR 215.*

Campus Signs

Officially Registered Student Organizations are granted the privilege to request the posting of large, wooden signs around campus. The Engagement and Involvement Staff provides approval and monitors locations for placement of the signs. Each group is responsible for providing their own sign. This is an excellent way to advertise your organization's events and recruit members.

There are many designated sign locations located throughout campus. An organization can post a maximum of three large, above-ground, non-electric signs, at these

Mailing Labels

RSO's may request mailing labels for USF students, faculty and staff, subject to the rules and regulations of USF policy regarding labels. Labels must be for legitimate student organization business. Request forms and label policies are available in the Engagement and Involvement Office, CTR 215. Please allow at least two weeks for completion of request.

Use of Helium

Balloons make an ideal addition to any event, and Engagement and Involvement can assist by providing the helium. The fee is \$1.00 per dozen balloons, and the tanks, located in the Marshall Center, are available during Engagement and Involvement office hours. Reservations, a request form and payment, must be received in the Office of Student Engagement and Involvement, CTR 215, prior to use of the helium tank, to ensure helium will be available.

Mailboxes

RSO's can have access to their own U.S. Post Office mailbox right in the convenience of the Marshall Center. Engagement and Involvement has 130 available boxes that can be obtained by a written request to the Engagement and Involvement office, CTR 215.

Clubtalk, E-mail & Web Space

Clubtalk is a moderated forum for student organization activities, announcements and concerns. The listserve is designed to serve the needs of student organization members, their advisors and interested observers of student organization life at USF.

To Subscribe to CLUBTALK...

To subscribe you must have an e-mail computer account.
At the "To" line type: LISTSERV@ADMIN.USF.EDU.
Leave the "Subject" line blank.

Display cases: Promote your organization and get new members.

Leadership Center Library: Check out Leadership books for two week time periods.

Signage: Put your signs around campus to promote your event.

Bank Accounts: Set up an organization bank account through the USF credit union.

Web and E-mail: Set up an organization web site.

Advice and guidance

THE FOLLOWING HAVE A NOMINAL CHARGE

Posters: Make a poster from your flyer. 23x36.....\$1.00 each poster

Lamination: Laminate your poster to last a lifetime.....\$5.00 each poster

Buttons: Purchase supplies and make your own buttons.\$0.05 each

Helium: Bring your own balloons and string.\$1.00 per dozen

Banner Paper: Available in green, gold, red and white.\$0.25ft.

The do's and don'ts of advising

- ✓ Do serve as a resource to the organization.
- ✓ Do interpret and clarify university policy and procedure.
- ✓ Do suggest program ideas.
- ✓ Do serve as a personal role model.
- ✓ Do advise officers in decision-making matters.
- ✓ Do provide historical continuity for the organization.
- ✓ Do act consistent with what you say.
- ✓ Do allow the group to succeed.
- ✓ Do allow the group to fail.
- ✓ Do teach leadership.
- ✓ Do keep your sense of humor.

- ⊗ Don't control the group.
- ⊗ Don't run the organization meetings.
- ⊗ Don't have veto power over decisions.
- ⊗ Don't be the sole recruiter for new members.
- ⊗ Don't know it all.
- ⊗ Don't say "I told you so".
- ⊗ Don't break promises.
- ⊗ Don't take ownership of the group.
- ⊗ Don't be the leader.

THANK YOU!

The Office of Student Engagement and Involvement appreciates your willingness to serve as a student organization advisor. We realize that this is a significant commitment that takes time and energy and hope that you realize that by working with students outside of the classroom, you significantly further student learning. Please do not hesitate to contact our office with any questions you may have regarding your role as a student organization advisor. The Office of Student Engagement and Involvement is located on the second floor of the Marshall Center in room 215, and we can be reached at 813-974-7595. Our website, ctr.usf.edu/sa has lots of great information as well.

We thank you for your commitment to students!