

Student Organization Handbook 2004-06

Appendix A: Advisors' Information and Resources

Editor's Note: This Appendix is about advising student organizations at the University of California, Riverside and is written to be valuable to both the organization advisor and the student leadership of the organization being advised. This Appendix is not "For Advisors Only."

Introduction: Advising student organizations at UCR

Registered student organizations at UCR are not required to have staff/faculty or alumni advisors in order to register and be in good standing. However, it is to the benefit of the organization to seek out one or more interested advisors who have experience and characteristics that the organization values. Advisors can help organizations reach new heights of programming and productivity, ease officer transition difficulties and provide a sense of historic continuity since they generally stay with an organization longer than the student members do.

What an advisor is and does

A student organization advisor is a person, selected by the organization, to provide guidance and advice in the operations of the organization. Advisors are educators outside of the classroom setting and a resource person for the organization. Advisors have a variety of roles with an organization including being a mentor, teacher, leader and follower.

Ideally, the advice of the advisor to the organization's membership and leadership is welcome and seen as valuable. The decision making and goal setting for the organization should remain in the hands of the student membership but should be tempered with the valuable insights of the advisor.

What an advisor is not and does not do

Unfortunately, some student organizations have a misinformed notion of what an advisor does and does not do. An advisor is not someone who cleans up after a major event or makes sure that regular meeting rooms for the organization have been reserved; these are responsibilities of the student leadership of the organization. An advisor is not someone to invite to events but otherwise exclude from the business of the organization until the organization is in trouble; the advisor should be informed about and consulted with regard to the on-going business of the organization. An advisor does not take control of the organization; this is the responsibility of the student membership and if the organization ceases to exist due to inaction by the student membership, this is an unfortunate but appropriate outcome. Organizations should not look to their advisor to do crisis intervention on behalf of the organization but only to seek to do so in conjunction with the student leadership.

Types of advising

When considering advising for a student organization, the following distinctions in types of advising can be useful.

Technical Advising: This type of advising has to do with using UCR processes and procedures, compliance with policies, ordinances, safety regulations and laws. The area of finances is a special area of Technical Advising which requires information on tax codes and financial regulations applicable to organizations. This type of advising is typically provided by the professional staff in Student Life.

Event Planning: This type of advising provides students with challenging questions as to the purpose and expected outcome of an event as well as organizing and implementing a successful program. This type of advising may be provided by a staff/faculty advisor, an alumni advisor or a member of the Student Life staff.

Developmental Advising (Internal affairs): This type of advising covers two key areas. The first is the internal affairs or operations of the organization. The second is membership and organization development and growth processes. Examples of *operations issues* include following the organization's constitution, conducting fair elections for positions, development of financial checks and balances and dispute resolution. Examples of *developmental items* would include such things as team building within the organization, retreats, leadership development experiences and the like. This type of advising may be provided by a staff/faculty advisor, an alumni advisor or a member of the Student Life staff.

Requiring an advisor as part of corrective action

From time to time, the university will require an organization to secure a staff/faculty advisor as part of a corrective action, typically as a term of probation or sanction for inappropriate conduct. The purpose behind this action is not to force the organization to give up its autonomy to an advisor but rather to assist the organization in making better decisions in the future with the help and guidance of an advisor.

It can be difficult for an organization that is not in good standing to find a member of the university staff or faculty who is willing to advise them. It is awkward to ask someone to serve as your advisor after your organization has been found responsible for violations of UCR policy. However, the staff in Student Life can assist organizations in this situation in locating short term and long term advisors.

As with all advisor/advisee relationships, the guidance and support offered is only as good as the level of sharing and trust between the parties involved. Organizations that withhold information and/or plans from their advisor are likely to create far more difficulties for themselves in the long run. Efforts must be made to develop a trusting relationship to insure the best quality of experience can be had for all parties involved.

Support for UCR organization advisors

Student Life provides resources and support for staff/faculty members who wish to be organization advisor as well as organization alumni that wish to be advisors. Appointments with key student organization support staff, use of the Leadership Library resources, "IT Kit" and online information at www.studentlife.ucr.edu are all encouraged.