

**\*\*Please print this packet for your advisor.**  
Your advisor will be able to use the information within this packet to assist them in effectively working with your organization throughout the coming year.

# ADVISOR PACKET

THIS PACKET IS FOR ADVISORS OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS TO REFERENCE  
PROCESSES, POLICIES, AND ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

# Thank You!

Thank you for your commitment to the development and growth of our student organizations. To our first-time Advisors – welcome and thanks for joining us. To our returning Advisors – welcome back and thanks for your commitment.

It is an honor to be selected by the students as an Advisor; it indicates the students' respect and trust for you. This position can be tremendously rewarding for both you and the organization. Advisors act as role models to students and provide a vital link between students and the faculty and staff. Advisors provide continuity and a voice of experience to the organization. As an Advisor, you will serve as an integral part of the student experience and have the opportunity to impact the growth of students in many ways. The position also provides an opportunity to offer advice, be in contact with students outside of the normal working environment, and be involved.

A strong Advisor can make a difference in the Activities of a student. This position can be challenging and fun; however, with the position also come several responsibilities. The purpose of this handbook is to assist you in understanding and fulfilling these responsibilities and to provide some direction for you. Information has been assembled here to help you get started and to serve as a resource throughout the year. Should you need further reference or assistance, please feel free to contact the Office of Student Activities, 126 Schine Student Center. If you have further suggestions for the handbook, please let us know by email at [stulife@syr.edu](mailto:stulife@syr.edu) or by calling (315) 443-2718.

## WHAT IS ADVISING?

### Advising IS...

- *working with student leaders*
- *attending meetings/functions*
- *assisting in program planning*
- *maintaining regular contact with organization*
- *being available for counsel*
- *being a valuable resource*
- *explaining and enforcing university policies*
- *being a liaison between students and administration*
- *allowing students to learn from their mistakes*
- *having an enjoyable time with students*

### Advising IS NOT...

- *forcing personal belief systems onto students*
- *making all the decisions for the organization*
- *a full-time job (but is a fulltime commitment)*
- *“holding hands” or “spoon feeding” students*
- *“a signature on a line”*
- *babysitting*
- *ignoring the concerns of the students*
- *perfected without training*
- *A Bad Idea!*

# The Role of the University Advisor

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Each advisor perceives his/her relation to a student organization differently. Some Advisors play very active roles, attending meetings, working with student officers, and assisting in program planning and development. Others maintain a more distant relationship to the organization. It is hoped that each Advisor will maintain some regular contact with his/her organization. An Advisor accepts responsibility for keeping informed about activities of the organization and for advising officers of the organization on the appropriateness and general merits of policies and activities. However, Advisors are not responsible for the actions or policies of student organizations; students are solely responsible. Advisors should be both accessible and interested and should provide whatever counsel a group or its members might seek. Given the myriad of purposes, activities, and objectives of various student groups, the role of the Advisor will vary in some degree between groups. The purpose of this section is to outline basic functions of an Advisor. As groups vary in their expectations and needs, it is important that you, as an Advisor, develop an understanding with the organization you are to represent as to the nature of your involvement. The Advisor and group should agree on a set of expectations of one another from the onset and should write this list down as a contract between the group and the Advisor.

A University Advisor should:

- Build a good rapport with students in the organization they advise. Only through building good relationships with group members can advisors be effective and influential. Advisors begin building rapport simply by knowing everyone in the organization and attending group functions.
- Find a good balance between being overly involved and under-involved. Advisors set principles and offer guidance and do not directly do the work which is the responsibility of the students.
- Strive for the group to be self-sufficient where the members resolve their own conflicts and solve their own problems. Students grow more from their own choices than following orders.
- Allow the group to fail. Although this is often a difficult thing to watch, it is a very powerful in developing student leaders. Failure can be the best learning experience. It is also important that the advisor not take responsibility for an organization's failures. The choice of whether or not to act is the students' decision. An advisor feeling overly responsible is most likely too involved in the group.
- Model the behavior they would like to see repeated. When a good rapport has developed students will model themselves after their advisor.
- Provide members with constant support but also challenge leaders to continue developing themselves and the organization.
- Develop a presence at organization meeting and functions.

The relationship between the University Advisor and an organization will vary, not only with each organization, but from time to time within an organization. Nevertheless, the general concerns of the UA remain constant. Below is an outline of expectations of a University Advisor in order to give both the UA and the organization a base from which to develop a mutually beneficial relationship.

# Basic Expectations of the University Advisor

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- The UA recognizes and supports participation in student organizations for its contribution to the educational and personal development of students.
- UAs should work with student organizations but should not direct or dictate the organization's programs or activities. UAs should be frank however, in offering ideas, considerations, or ideas for the group's discussion.
- The UA should stay well informed about the plans and activities of the group. It is expected that advisors will attend as many meetings and activities of the group as possible and will consult frequently with the student officers.
- The UA must be aware of the goals and directions of their organization and help the group evaluate its progress toward reaching those goals.
- The UA can provide continuity within the group from year to year. He or she should be familiar with the constitution and bylaws of the organization and be prepared to assist with the interpretation of such.
- UAs ensure the group's compliance with University policies and procedures.
- UAs should provide financial supervision to the organization. Advisors should also be aware of the general financial condition of the organization and make sure the group is keeping accurate and accessible financial records.
- The UA should assist in orienting new officers and assist in developing the leadership skills of members.
- The UA should be prepared to deal with major problems or emergencies within the organization.
- UAs monitor group functioning and encourage members to fully participate, assume appropriate responsibility for group activities, and maintain a balance between academic activities and extra commitments.
- The UA must be a link to the University administration and serve the group as a resource person.
- The voluntary association between a UA and an organization should continue as long as both parties believe the relationship is productive and mutually satisfying.

## Active University Advisor Characteristics:

*Integrity* - It is important for you, as a role model, both to do things right and to do the right things. Students need your guidance to assist them in becoming responsible leaders.

*Good Judgment* - Advisors should understand the mission of the university, respect university and community rules when assisting with the planning of events and should use foresight to help the organization avoid problems.

*Experience* - The most valuable resource you can provide is your Activities experience. The collection of experiences you can share will assist your group in planning events that work and locate support materials and personnel. You may be able to offer new ideas and strategies that the group has not yet considered.

*Support* - Give the group autonomy but offer feedback, even when it is not solicited. Let the group work out its problems, including occasional failures, but be prepared to step in when called upon to assist. Take the initiative in promoting teamwork and cooperation. Offer encouragement and praise for a job well done, and suggest possible future improvements when things don't go so well. Support the organization's functions and events as much as possible. This gives the students a sense that you are interested and supportive of what they are doing. We encourage you to use campus resources when you enter into uncharted waters.

Remember, you don't know what you don't know!

## Specific Duties of the University Advisor

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- Be informed about the organization and what the organization will require
- Provide advice when called upon or when the situation warrants
- Ensure that the organization registers each year with the Office of Student Activities
- Regularly attend general and executive board meetings; if you can only attend one, we recommend attending executive meetings
- Serve as a resource for planning and organizing as well as knowledge of the campus community
- Become familiar with the purpose and structure of the organization by reviewing the constitution
- Familiarize yourself with the group's financial structure, from where the treasury is derived (dues, fundraising), for what the money is used, how money is allocated, and how the money is budgeted; assist in budget development and execution
- Familiarize yourself with Student Association guidelines, including SA recognition and guidelines and due dates for allocation requests
- Explain and enforce university policies when necessary, including policies on hazing and alcohol
- Inform the group of infractions of their bylaws, codes, and standing rules
- Act as a resource on parliamentary procedure
- Attend group activities and functions and assist when necessary
- Be familiar with university facilities, services, resources, and procedures which might affect or be of benefit to the organization
- Function as a liaison between the organization and the campus administration and assist the group in developing an ongoing, beneficial relationship with the university
- Supervise the transition of officers and assist in new officer training and leadership development
- Assist officers in general operations when necessary
- Ensure that officers know and understand the obligations of their position and that they are working to fulfill these obligations
- Mediate interpersonal conflicts that arise, when necessary
- Monitor the group's activities and correspondence to ensure that it is appropriate and in keeping with accepted standards
- Maintain a close relationship with the executive board and attempt to meet as many members as possible

## Questions You May Want to Ask Your Organization

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1. How much involvement is expected or needed?
2. How often does the group meet?
3. How many major activities does the group plan per semester?
4. How experienced are the student leaders?
5. How do your skills match the needs of the organization?
6. What are some of the problem areas that your organization specifically needs advisory assistance in dealing with? Ask for past examples.
7. What are some of the ways the Advisor can be more helpful to the group?
8. Will the Advisor be a silent observer at meetings or an active participant?
9. Should you interrupt during meetings if you think the group is getting off track? How? When?
10. If things get unruly, should you interrupt or remain silent?
11. Is the Advisor expected to give feedback? How? When?
12. Are there areas of the organization that are “hands off” to the Advisor?
13. Does the national organization (if applicable) require an affiliated Advisor? If so, what is their role?

## Basic Expectations of the Organization

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As in any contract, there should be mutual responsibilities, and this is true with the Advisor position as well. The following lists common responsibilities of the organization to the Advisor. It is expected that the organization will:

- realize that the Advisor has a life outside of the organization and respect his/her time accordingly.
- orient and keep the Advisor informed of all organization functions, activities, and/or problems.
- provide the Advisor with regular minutes and the financial condition of the organization.
- respond promptly to the Advisor’s inquiries and requests.
- respect decisions of the Advisor made in the interest of the organization or university.
- comply with university, municipality, state, and national laws and policies.
- understand that the Advisor, too, will make mistakes and will have an individual personality and style; accept and discuss this, and move on.
- be honest and up front with the Advisor regarding organization operations; nothing is to be gained from a relationship that is not completely open.
- provide clear expectations. Nothing is more frustrating than attending meetings with no idea of why you are there. Find out what the group is looking for in an Advisor and in what areas the advisor can be of assistance.
- confirm the appointment of the Advisor each year and be certain the Advisor will serve.

# Advisor Contract

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A useful instrument for sharing expectations and clearly identifying an Advisor's role is the Advisor's contract. Please take a moment to review and sign this advisor contract. Please note, that duplicates of this signed document have the potential to be copied to the dean, director, or department head of the advisor's home unit. This will inform your school or department area of the commitment you are making to SU and the student organization.

The members of (organization) request  
(name) to serve as Advisor of the organization for a  
period not to exceed (time frame) beginning with  
(semester).

Duties, responsibilities, and expectations of the position are as follows:  
(List the responsibilities and expectations of the Advisor and organization. Duties and responsibilities may be reconsidered at the request of the Advisor, president, or majority vote of the membership in a regular meeting.)

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- .
- .
- .
- .
- .

Presidents/Chairperson's Name: (print)

(signature) (date)

I have met with the president of the above-named organization and discussed the duties and responsibilities of Advisor as listed above. I understand that this responsibility falls within the scope of my employment at Syracuse University. In addition, I agree to serve as Advisor and will fulfill these duties and responsibilities to the best of my abilities.

Advisor's Name: (print)

(signature) (date)

This contract is effective for the time frame listed above and must be renewed each year thereafter upon the agreement of both parties.

# ADVISORS CHECKLIST

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This checklist will help you remember the most important aspects of advising. Reference this list often and check things off as they are completed.

- The organization I advise has re-registered.** Organizations can re-register by completing the appropriate re-registration forms on OrgSync. Please be sure they have done this by the re-registration date.
- The organization I advise has turned in a recent copy of their constitution.** A new copy must be turned in to the Office of Student Activities each academic year by the re-registration date.
- I, the Advisor, have placed all Advisors training and forum dates on my calendar.**
- I have added the new executive board information to my *Advisor Handbook*.**
- My organization's executive board meetings this year are \_\_\_\_\_.**
- My organization's general body meetings are \_\_\_\_\_.**
- I know where the Office of Student Activities is located.**
- I have worked with my organization on a budget request from the Student**
- The organization and I have reviewed and signed the document for the upcoming fiscal year.**
- I have a new roster of my organization's members.**
- I know the goals, events and plans of my organization for the academic year.**
- I know what my organization expects of me this year.**
- My organization knows what to expect from me.**