

# Advisor Handbook

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Lake Superior State University



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# What is an Advisor?

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## **The Role of the Advisor**

Lake Superior State University mandates that each officially recognized organization must have a faculty or staff member serving as an advisor to the group. The organization is free to choose their advisor, pending approval from Campus Life. The advisor must be a full-time employee of Lake Superior State University and not currently serving as an advisor to more than two (2) non-Greek campus organizations and one (1) social Greek organization.

The advisor serves as an important resource for the organization, providing the basis for long-term stability, as well as growth and development for the students. As the students change from year to year, the attention and guidance of an advisor can have a marked impact on the group he or she works with.

The duties of the advisor, as detailed below, may be interpreted differently depending on the nature of the organization; specific areas of knowledge and expertise will vary among advisors. Each advisor's personal style will affect the degree of direct involvement he or she has with the group, and the extent to which responsibility for certain organizational functions are shared among the advisor and chief officers.

Ideally, organizations are to be initiated, developed and maintained by the students. It is important for each advisor to provide support and guidance while encouraging the student themselves to supply the primary source of organizational leadership and initiative for the planning of programs and events. The appropriate balance of leadership exerted between the advisor and student leader often depends upon the mix of personalities involved. In instances when the student leadership may be weak or underdeveloped, the advisor is encouraged, through their guiding role, to help develop the appropriate skills in the student while communicating with Campus Life their concerns for the organization.

By sharing both knowledge about the university and personal experiences, the advisor can assist the organization in the conduct of its activities. In addition, valuable, mutually rewarding, co-curricular relationships between students and advisors are fostered.

The relationship between an advisor and an organization will vary from year to year and individual to individual. However, the student/advisor relationship can be crucial to the success of the organization. The list that follows contains possible roles of an advisor. It is important that the advisor and the organization communicate their expectations to each other. The advisor should be very clear about the things he/she will do, and the things he/she will not do. Of course, the expectations will vary according to the needs of the organization and the advisor.

## **How Organizations Select an Advisor**

When selecting an advisor, the organization has to find a Lake Superior State University faculty or staff person who will have the time to devote to the organization. Making sure that this person will take the role willingly and seriously, and find someone who has knowledge or skills related to the mission and purpose of the organization. Discussing with the potential advisor what is required of him/her, his/her duties, and the time commitment involved. Organizations are to be open and honest with the potential advisor about the

types of activities in which the organization may participate, and allowing the person a reasonable length of time to consider his/her decision. If possible, the organization should choose someone who shares some of the same interests, and who has had previously interacted with the leadership of the organization.

### **Advisor Agreement**

The advisor should be recognized as an integral part of the group; he or she is not a member. Therefore, additional courtesies and considerations should be extended to him or her. The advisor should be welcomed at all meetings and social events and thanked for coming at the close of the event. Officers should plan their meetings at a time when the advisor is able to attend. Members should invite him or her to all activities. The president should also meet regularly with the advisor to discuss organizational matters. Check all dates with your advisor before scheduling special meetings or social activities. Members should consult with the advisor for his or her opinion and advice when problems arise in the organization. The advisor's background and experience within the organization and the university should be used. No one should go "over their head" or bypass advisors when working out problems and plans. Officers and members should talk over plans with him or her first. Officers must keep the advisor fully informed of the programs and activities of the organization and the progress being made in carrying out plans. Necessary expenses of the advisor for social affairs and activities of the organization should be paid for by the organization. Proper social procedures and courtesies should be observed toward the advisor at all organizational functions. Show appreciation for your advisor's services by a thank-you note, appropriate comments at meetings and on other occasions, and through personal thank you messages. A copy of the organization's constitution should be given to the advisor before completing the Student Organization Advisor Agreement.

### **Advisor Expectations**

Please keep in mind the advisor is voluntarily associated with the organization.

### **Responsibilities of an Advisor to the University shall include:**

1. The advisor to a student organization must be familiar with university policies and regulations and the particular organization which he/she advises.
2. Lake Superior State University recognizes that the definition of the role of advisor to a student organization is that of consultant or resource person. Therefore, with the assumption and completion of the duties and obligations outlined herein, he/she should be assisting the organization's members be accountable for their conduct.
3. Because academic success is important to the University's mission, the advisor may wish to work closely with the students concerning their academic progress.

### **Responsibilities of Advisors to Recognized Student Organizations**

1. Maintain regular contact with officers and members.
2. Assist in scheduling meetings. Serve as a resource person at executive and regular meetings. Attend functions of the organization.
3. Assist with the formulation and/or revision of the organizations bylaws.
4. Encourage and assist the organization to plan active and significant programs. Work with the officers to promote efficient and effective administration of the organization.

5. Assist the treasurer in maintaining accurate accounting procedures and in formulating an annual budget.
6. If it is necessary for an advisor to resign his or her position as advisor, he or she will notify the organization and the Associate Director of Campus Life and Housing.

### **Advisor's Expectations to the Organization**

It is very important that the advisor and the organization communicate their expectations to each other. The advisor should be very clear about the things he/she will do, and the things he/she will not do. Of course, the expectations will vary according to the needs of the organization and the advisor. It is recommended that when you first become an advisor you have a meeting with the officers of the organization to discuss expectations and goals for both parties. It is also helpful to have these meetings once a year or when there is a turnover in the officer positions. Feedback and evaluation are a good way to see if expectations are being met. Some suggested expectations are listed below:

- Members' attendance at programs and meetings
- Advance notification of meetings or cancellations
- Written organization goals and objectives for each semester
- Written calendar of events for each semester
- Consultation regarding planned events or programs
- Accurate record-keeping
- Commitment to a smooth officer transition
- Awareness of University policies
- Sensitivity to the academic nature of University life (i.e. no meeting scheduled during Finals Week) and support the University's mission
- Willingness to provide feedback to each other
- Open communication
- Commitment to the organization
- Honesty
- Mutual respect
- Ethical behavior
- Support and utilize OrgSync

Adapted from *Student Organization Advisor Handbook*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009 (7-8).

### **Benefits of being an Advisor**

Being an advisor to a student organization not only benefits the group, but also provides great rewards to the advisor. While each person may have a different experience and gain different things from being an advisor, some benefits are:

- Feeling the satisfaction of seeing and helping students learn and develop new skills.
- Watching a group come together to share common interests and work towards a common goal.
- Developing a more personal relationship with students than would otherwise be possible.

- Furthering your own personal relationship with students than would otherwise be possible.
- Furthering your own personal goals and interests by advising a group that shares those same interests and goals.
- Enhancing students' experiences and lives by sharing your knowledge with them.
- Witnessing the progression/growth that students go through as members of student organizations.
- Being recognized for your service to the student organization.
- Having the opportunity to network with colleagues with whom you may not have had the opportunity to before.

Adapted from *The University of Michigan Guidebook for Student Organization Advisors*. The Office of Student Activities & Leadership, 2010 (4).

### Attributes of a Good Advisor

**Aware:** Knows what is happening within the group at all times (problems, dates of functions, etc.).

**Dedicated:** Willing to assist the organization when necessary. Enjoys being associated with the group and is very involved.

**Visible:** Attends meetings, social functions, and other special activities of the group.

**Informed:** Familiar with the rules, policies, and regulations of the University and the by-laws and constitution of the organization. Is prepared to render assistance with their interpretation.

**Supportive:** Provides encouragement and praise to group members.

**Open-minded:** Willingness to consider new ideas and approaches although s/he may not totally agree with them.

**Respected:** Earned respect through being trustworthy, honest, and demonstrating a genuine interest in the welfare of the group.

Adapted from *Student Organization Advisor Handbook*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009 (4).

### Guidelines for Successful Advising

1. **Maintain a good rapport** with the group while observing standards of professionalism.
2. **Suggest**, don't impose.
3. Work with the student leaders and help **delegate**. An advisor should not do the work of the student leaders.
4. Help ensure that the **group examines all sides** of an issue. Student leaders may need you to help them see differing viewpoints.
5. Help **develop team spirit** and cooperation. An advisor should do their best to ensure that the group doesn't become a one-person operation.
6. Have a relationship with the group that will **allow growth and development**. An advisor should not be a parent or a reactive administrator.
7. **Attend** the group's meetings and programs whenever possible. An advisor should not assume that the group can handle everything, but even if they can, your presence and support is appreciated.
8. **Treat members as individuals**. An advisor should not assume the group attitudes, needs, issues, and personalities will remain the same year to year, or semester to semester. It is important to get to know the students on an individual basis.

9. **Communicate with members often.** Understand that there are many communication styles and each student will need you to adapt to some degree. Some students may need direction and guidance, while others will be more autonomous.
10. **Be available** and approachable for your group members. Have regular office hours or meeting times to insure open communication.
11. **Observe** the effectiveness of leaders and group members.
12. Help the group **develop a realistic plan** of action concerning goals/mission statement.
13. **Know the group members** and understand their needs.
14. **Be committed** to the group.
15. Provide appropriate **critical feedback**. Offer an evaluation of all programs and activities and encourage members to do the same.
16. **Share** in the group's success and failure. Help **guide** the group to success.
17. **Know available resources** and provide this information readily.

Adapted from *Advisor Handbook*. University of Minnesota, 2009 (4).

## **Inappropriate vs. Appropriate Advising Roles**

### **Appropriate Responsibilities**

- Serving as a resource to the organization.
- Sharing specific knowledge in the development and implementation of programs.
- Interpreting and clarifying university policy and procedure to student organizations.
- Suggesting program ideas.
- Providing historical continuity for the organization.
- Serving as a role model.
- Advising officers in decision-making matters.
- Providing feedback about officers' performance.

### **Inappropriate Responsibilities**

- Running the student organization meetings.
- Assuming ultimate responsibility for the group's decisions, problems or failures.
- Assuming veto power over group decision.
- Governing content and ideas expressed in programs.
- Serving as primary recruiter for new members for the organization.
- Stepping in to "solve" problems; remember, mistakes can be good learning opportunities.

Adapted from *Faculty Advisor Handbook*. University of Florida (7-8).

# Working with Student Organizations

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## Working with a Student Group Leader

Working with the student group leaders means more than just making sure you have an election. A new student group leader will need to know how to run a meeting, prepare an agenda, understand group dynamics, make critical decisions, make ethical decisions and develop relationships. Not everyone elected to office will have already developed these skills. If you find yourself needing to conduct officer training, here are some basics to get you started:

1. **Develop Relationships:** It is critical that the student group leaders maintain positive relationships with the group members. Take the opportunity to express the importance of the officers honoring and respecting contributions from each member. Also, discuss the necessity of recognition. The officers can and should recognize the work done by members of the group both publicly and privately. One of the most important ways that the officers can develop good relationships is to adopt the motto, "Don't delegate anything you wouldn't do yourself." Also, help the officers understand how crucial it will be to delegate some tasks. It's easy for group leaders to risk burn-out because they try to do everything themselves. Group leaders (and their advisors) should remember that they're working as an organization, not a sole proprietorship.
2. **Ethics:** Develop ethical decision making with the officers. A fresh leader with a newfound sense of power can be tempted to make decisions that enhance that power. Impress upon the officers the importance of maintaining the basics of ethics; including respecting autonomy, doing no harm, benefiting others, being just, and being dependable. With these tenets, you can assist the officers with setting foundation for the group and creating a base for future leadership positions.
3. **Preparing an Agenda:** Preparing an agenda is something that could be in an officer's position description, but other groups may have their administrative secretary organize it. When working with the officers, suggest that s/he look a head in the calendar, and help him/her work out a plan of action for organizing certain big events or discussion topics. This might include elections, major campus activities, conferences, etc. Developing a planning calendar will help student leaders feel more prepared and organized when running their meetings.
4. **Facilitating a Meeting:** This may be the first time your officers have facilitated a meeting. It can be a very challenging task for anyone, but especially for new student leaders. They may find it helpful to sit down and work through or even role-play their first few meetings. Others find it helpful for the advisor to sit near the officers to help them through sticky situations until they feel more comfortable in their role.
5. **One on Ones:** One on One meetings are very important in developing your relationship with the other group officers and in helping to develop student leaders. Here are some suggested questions that you might use in your one on one meetings:



- How are you doing academically?
- How did you think the last meeting went? Any concerns or potential problems?
- What are you thinking about for the next meeting?
- What are some upcoming dates or programs that we need to plan for?
- How are the other members of the executive board doing? Do you see any issues?
- What are the group dynamics as you see them?
- How is your progress towards your personal/academic goals?
- What are you learning from your position?
- Are you having fun?

Adapted from *Advisor Handbook*. University of Minnesota, 2009 (8-9).

## Motivating Students

Some students perceive an intrinsic value, while others perceive extrinsic value in being involved. Understanding what motivates each student will help you enable him/her to take on responsibilities and become involved in the organization.

**What are motives?** Needs, wants, drives, or impulses that are directed toward goals. Motives may be conscious or unconscious. Of course, each individual is motivated by different things, and students join an organization for a variety of reasons. Doing an activity with students may be beneficial when helping identify what motivates them. Some students may indicate that they are motivated by the attention received by others for a job well done; some may say they are most motivated by inner desire. There is no one right answer, but an advisor should be turned into the variety of factors that affect motivation so that he/she may better predict what will work and what may not.

**What motivates?** A student may be motivated by a variety of factors, and no form of motivation will be 100% effective. The following is a list of different forms of motivation. Some examples are extrinsic (motivation comes from an outside source) others are intrinsic (motivation that stems from the internal desire or goal of the student).

Recognition: Recognition is used frequently by advisors. Recognizing a member's contribution verbally or in print, in front of the organization or alone. This is an easy and effective way to motivate someone- almost everybody appreciates a "Thank you!" or recognition of a job well done. Also note who enjoys public and private recognition.

Achievement: A student motivated by the need for achievement may have a tendency to overcome obstacles, to exercise power, or to strive to do something difficult as well and as quickly as possible. Achievement is often tied to positive recognition from outside sources. In a few cases, there can be an internal desire to achievement, so the person would be satisfied by completing a task to the best of his/her ability.

Desire: Some students are interested in becoming members of organizations or organizations that will lead to a desirable outcome. So, if the outcome of organization activity is known to be desirable, the student may be

more likely to participate.

Value: If the student perceives value in participation, he/she may be more motivated to participate (friendship, professional goals, personal interests, etc.).

Peer Approval: A student can perceive approval, and may be more likely to participate if provided with appropriate recognition. Caution: There are many students that join organizations to gain approval/acceptance from their peers to cover up personal issues. Watch for students who are struggling with self confidence or that stop showing up. Follow-up with students who leave to make sure they are doing okay, and ask them back if appropriate.

Adapted from *Student Organization Advisor Handbook*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009 (16).

## **Setting Goals with your Organization - How to use the S.M.A.R.T. Methods to help your organization reach its goals**

**Specific-** Goals should be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen. A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set specific goals, you must answer the 6 “W” questions:

- Who: Who is involved?
- What: What do I want to accomplish?
- Where: I identify the location?
- When: Establish a timeframe.
- Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- Why: Specific reasons, purposes or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

**Measurable-** Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goals. Ask questions such as “how much?” “how many?” and “how will I know when it is accomplished?” to determine if your goal is measurable.

**Attainable-** You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a timeframe that allows you to carry out those steps. When you list your goals, you build your self-image and see yourself as worthy of these goals. You grow and expand to match your goals.

**Realistic-** To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic: your organization must decide how high your goal should be. Some ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you truly believe it can be accomplished, if you have successfully done anything similar in the past, or to ask yourself what conditions would need to exist in order to achieve your goal.

**Timely-** A goal should be grounded within a timeline. Putting an end point on your goal gives you a clear target to work towards. If you don't set a time, the commitment is too vague, and it tends not to happen because you feel you can start at any time. Without a time limit, there's no urgency to start taking action now. Time must be measurable, attainable and realistic.

Adapted from *The University of Michigan Guidebook for Student Organization Advisors*. The Office of Student Activities & Leadership, 2010 (28).

Arina. "SMART Goal Setting: A Surefire Way To Achieve Your Goals." *Goal Setting Guide*. N.p., 20 Feb 2010. Web. 26 Jun 2012. <<http://www.goal-setting-guide.com/goal-setting-tutorials/smart-goal-setting>>.

## Characteristics of a Good Student Organization

- A good organization has a clear mission, sense of identity, and direction.
- It communicates effectively both within the organization as well as externally.
- It continually maintains strong, competent leadership.
- It stays committed to the organization's shared values.
- It sets out to accomplish clear, measurable goals.
- It has a desire to continually evolve and create new visions to enhance the mission of the organization.
- It continually works to meet the needs of its membership as well as its community.
- It makes thoughtful, purposeful decisions based of the organization plans.
- It manages its resources wisely.
- It takes time out to reflect on actions and reward itself for outstanding efforts.

Adapted from *The University of Michigan Guidebook for Student Organization Advisors*. The Office of Student Activities & Leadership, 2010 (18).

## Lake Superior State University Hazing Policy

Since the time of its founding, Lake Superior State University's primary goal has been to provide excellent instruction and an educational environment which will produce broadly educated responsible citizens who are prepared to serve and to lead in society. Academic instruction and co-curricular activities couple to meet the goals of Lake Superior State University. All members of the University community must be provided the opportunity to function to the best of their individual abilities. One activity that has been an inhibiting factor in achieving the above stated purpose is the practice of hazing. Although hazing has concentrated itself in the social Greek community, other recognized student organizations are not untouched by this unacceptable practice. Therefore, this policy shall apply to all organizations and clubs at Lake Superior State University.

**Hazing is defined as:** committing any intentional, knowing or reckless act, occurring on or off the Lake Superior State University campus, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in or maintaining membership in any organization or athletic team whose members are or include students at an educational institution. A person commits an offense if the person engages in hazing, encourages another to engage in hazing, knowingly permits hazing to occur or has knowledge of hazing and fails to report said knowledge to an appropriate official of the university. It should be noted that it is not a defense to prosecution of an offense that the person against whom the hazing was directed consented to or acquiesced in the hazing activity.

Lake Superior State University will not condone or tolerate any acts of hazing, harassment or humiliation. Any such acts which interfere with scholastic activities, which are not consistent with fraternal law, state or

federal law, or the University regulations and policies are expressly forbidden. Students or organizations found responsible for any infractions are subject to disciplinary action.

### *Hazing Policy Enforcement*

Should hazing activities come to the attention of any member of the University, the activity should be reported to Campus Life and the Director/Associate Director of Campus Life and Housing. All allegations of hazing will be investigated by the Campus Life. The judicial process, as outlined in the Lake Superior State University student handbook, serves as the guideline for handling allegations of hazing.

In special circumstances, a student organization may be placed on interim suspension pending an investigation. This action will be taken only in those situations where there is reasonable cause to believe a student organization's actions are of such a nature as to pose a clear and present threat of harm or injury to persons and/or damage to property. During the interim suspension, the organization is required to cease all organizational operations and activities.

Should the student organization have national affiliation or incorporation, the national office shall be notified of the alleged incident and the results in writing within one (1) week. Notification will be made by the Associate Director of Campus Life.

Should the judicial investigation substantiate an occurrence of hazing, the Associate Director of Campus Life will assign the appropriate sanction, as listed below:

- **CENSURE** - Censure may include the required completion of a program designed with the intent of eliminating hazing. The program will be devised by the Associate Director of Campus Life, and the organization's officers and advisors. The program will be monitored by Campus Life.
- **PROBATION** - The organization will be placed on probation for a specified period of time. Conditions of probation will be determined by Campus Life and outlined in writing for the organization. The probationary term will be monitored by Campus Life.
- **SUSPENSION** - The organization will be suspended. The terms of the suspension shall be defined in the sanction, including criteria that the organization must meet within a specified period of time to be considered for renewal of University recognition status.
- **REVOCATION** - The organization will have its status as a recognized student organization revoked, with loss of all University recognition and privileges. If applicable, the national office of an organization so affiliated will be requested to revoke the charter of the organization.

In addition to enforcement of this Hazing Policy regarding student organizations, the University may initiate appropriate disciplinary action against individual students for violations of the Student Conduct Code arising from the incident.

### *Alternatives to Hazing*

Sometimes, organizations that haze new members are confused about how to change these practices. There are many creative ways to change from a hazing to a non-hazing organization. The following are some specific examples of ways to eliminate hazing and make membership a challenging but positive experience. In many organizations, the very term "pledge" is often equated with hazing practices. Many national

organizations have sought to eliminate this term in order to foster more positive attitudes toward the new members. Some substitute terms include “associate members” and “new members.”

When organizations are challenged to eliminate hazing practices, some members may be resistant to this change. In many cases, those who are most vocal against eliminating hazing are those who are bitter and angry about the hazing that they themselves endured (but don’t admit this publicly) and expect that others should be abused in order to gain “true” membership in the organization. You will also find that some of these folks are likely to be bullies of the organization – people who enjoy a “power trip” at the expense of someone else.

Of course, if you try to eliminate hazing in your group, you will likely encounter many elaborate reasons for why this will be devastating for your organization. While there will be some staunch supporters of the status quo, there will be many who can be convinced of the negative effects and potential risks of hazing. Believers in the supposed “benefits” of hazing may be more likely to change their opinion if they can envision some alternatives. The supposed “benefits” of hazing are listed on the right with non-hazing alternatives to accomplish the same goal listed alongside.

### *Educating to Eliminate Hazing*

#### ***Foster Unity***

Have the members of your organization work together on a community service project. Visit a ropes course to work on group cohesiveness, communication and leadership skills. In organizations with houses, the group might work together on a room improvement project. Another option for fostering unity without hazing is for the members to work together to plan a social or athletic event with another organization.

#### ***Develop Problem Solving Abilities***

Have new members discuss organization weaknesses such as poor recruitment, apathy, and poor scholarship, and plan solutions that the organization might then adopt.

#### ***Develop Leadership Skills***

Encourage participation in campus activities outside of the organization. Encourage new members to get involved in organizational committees and/or leadership roles. Develop a peer mentor program within your organization for leadership roles. Invite university/community/business leaders into the organization to share their experiences.

#### ***Instill a Sense of Membership***

Plan special events when the entire organization gets together to attend a movie, play, or religious service. Plan a “membership circle” where students participate in a candlelight service in which each person has a chance to express what membership means to them.

#### ***Promote Scholarship***

Take advantage of your university academic and tutoring services. Designate study hours for members of your organization. Invite university or community experts to discuss test-taking skills, study methods, time management, etc.

#### ***Build Awareness of Organization’s History***

Invite an older member to talk about the organization’s early days, its founding, special traditions, and prominent former members.

***Support Career Goals***

Use university resources for seminars on resume writing, job interview skills, and for information on various careers.

***Involve All Members in the Community***

Get involved with campus and community service projects. Plan fund raisers for local charitable organizations.

Adapted from StopHazing.org, *Educating to Eliminate Hazing*. Copyright StopHazing.org 1998-2001. [www.stophazing.org](http://www.stophazing.org)

# Resolving Organizational Issues

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## Types of Problems

The following lists are provided so that an advisor may have a better idea of the types of problems he/she may face with their organization. This list is not all inclusive, but hopefully the suggestions can serve as a guide. Under each listed problem are suggestions for addressing and fixing the problem.

### Leadership Problems

- *The leader does not consult with the organization before making significant decisions.*  
Have a meeting with the leader to discuss the importance of consensus building and developing ownership in members by letting them be part of the decision making process.
- *The leader appears incompetent because he/she does not have self-confidence, is non-assertive, and lacks interest in the organization.*  
Since the rest of the organization looks to the leader for direction and support, try to work closely with the leader to develop his/her skills and confidence. If the leader lacks interest in his/her position, ask why he/she is in the position and help him/her to see how he/she is affecting the organization.
- *A rivalry exists between leaders in the organization.*  
Depending on the situation, the advisor can meet with the leaders to talk through how things are working within the organization and lead the conversation to the leadership of the organization and have them reflect on their roles and effectiveness as leaders. Highlight some of the issues within the organization and ask each of them how they can help to resolve what is going on. Let them take ownership of their actions. A more passive way to handle this situation is to do a team-building exercise with the leaders or a personality assessment (i.e. Myers-Briggs), which will allow the leaders to see the various roles that are needed to make a group work, as well as the preferences of each personality type.
- *The leader is overloaded with work, and has too many time conflicts.*  
Many student leaders take on too much. When you see that a leader is overloaded, talk about it and see how you can help, but don't take on the student's responsibilities for him/her. Teach him/her about the importance of delegation or time management, or selecting the most important things to be a part of... even if it means you'll lose him/her as the leader of the group.

### Membership Problems

- *Low attendance at meetings.*  
There are three basic reasons why attendance at meetings can be consistently low: (1) the organization has not recruited many members; (2) the meetings are not well run; or (3) the members do not feel a vested interest in the organization because they have not helped to produce or do anything. It could also be a combination of these things. The first step is to identify what is, or is not, happening, and then determine how the organization can fix the problem.

- *Members have low satisfaction and morale, are bored, do not communicate well, feel left out, are apathetic, or appear to be incompetent.*

Start with the leaders because these are the students that the other members look to for morale and motivation. Discuss with them what is going on and how they can turn things around.

- *An individual member's goals differ from those of the organizations.*

Have a mission and goal-setting meeting. It is important for the organization individual member's goals to match for the group to move forward. In this process, the group should change or reaffirm its goals, or students could lose interest and leave.

- *There exists a lack of trust among members.*

- Do an exercise for team-building or trust-building.
- Figure out the root of the problem and work on that

- *Programs fail.*

When a group does not work together or know how to do something, failure is right around the corner. If a program fails, reflect with the organization on why it happened and what can be learned for next time.

- *Program succeeds, but only a few members do the work.*

- This is a common situation, and it is not necessarily a problem. Some events/activities only require the support of a few members. Problems arise when the whole organization needs to pull together to produce an event and members do not pull their weight or let the team down.
- Following up with the individuals that did not pull their weight to see what went wrong. During that conversation, and at the general body meeting, highlight the importance of teamwork and being dependable, as well as the negative effects of not being a team player. Understanding consequences is an important step of personal development.

- *There is a lack of ideas.*

- Lack of ideas comes when members are not interested or they do not feel their ideas are valued. Help them feel valued and interested.
- The brainstorming process is a delicate one. There is no bad idea in the brainstorming process, so treat this process as a safe zone for ideas.

### **Organizational Problems**

- *Meetings are disorganized.*

Assist the leader in creating an agenda and how to delegate tasks effectively during the meeting.

- *Meetings are too long.*

See above suggestion

- *There is no continuity from one year to the next.*



Changing membership is part of the ebb and flow of student organization, but this does not mean the organization needs to start over each year. Work with the current leaders to recruit and cultivate new members and leaders who will take over the next year, and ensure that each officer/leader creates a transition manual/binder to pass along to his/her successor.

- *There is a failure to complete the organization's administrative tasks.*  
Review duties with each officer so they know what their responsibilities are, and if they do not choose to fulfill those responsibilities, find another member who can.
- *The organization has no "plan of action."*  
It is a good idea to have a goal setting meeting at the beginning of each semester. This gets everyone on the same page. There should also be a few reassessment/evaluation meetings during the semester to modify or create new goals.

### **Intra-organization Problems**

- *Disagreement between an organization and other student organizations.*  
Talk with the advisor of that group, or if they do not have an advisor encourage the student leaders of each organization to meet and discuss what is happening and act as the moderator. If the problem is not resolved, see the Associate Director of Campus Life and Housing.
- *Disagreement with institutional policies and procedures.*  
Set a meeting with the Associate Director of Campus Life and Housing.

### **Advisor Problems**

- *Organization members avoid the advisor.*  
Do not take it personally. Find a student or two whom you can connect with and slowly work to integrate yourself into the organization.
- *Organization members do not pay attention to the advisor's advice.*  
The members will not always listen to the advisor. As long as the decision the students make is not against organizational, institutional or governmental policies/laws, there is not much you can do. Sometimes students need to learn from their mistakes. If the students are always disregarding your advice, reflect on how you are offering your words. Are you trying to run the organization or are you looking into the best interest of the organization and offering your thoughts at appropriate times?
- *The advisor is overwhelmed by the responsibility.*  
The advisor's job is not to run the organization. Work with the students to balance tasks and responsibilities.
- *The advisor assumes a leadership function.*  
Advisors are part of a student organization to advise, not to assume leadership functions/positions.

## Conflict Management

The ability to resolve conflict is one of the most important skills a student leader can develop. Conflicts arise in everyday situations between leaders and members over both organizational and personal issues. It is often the responsibility of the advisor to ensure the conflict is managed in the most effective way possible. First, it is important to identify some different ways in which individuals handle conflict:

1. **Avoiding:** Individual pretends conflict is not there or ignores it. This tactic is often used when the person believes it is not worth the effort to argue.
2. **Competing:** Individual pursues his/her interests at another's expense. (Examples: Standing up for one's rights, defending one's position or belief, or trying to win).
3. **Accommodating:** Individual neglects his/her own interests to satisfy another. (Examples: side-stepping an issue, postponing issue until another or better time, or withdrawing from the situation).
4. **Compromising:** Individual seeks to find expedient, mutually acceptable solution which somewhat satisfies both parties' needs. (Examples: splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking mutual ground).
5. **Collaboration:** Individual seeks to find a solution which fully satisfies both parties.

Collaboration is the style most recommended for student groups. Collaboration allows both parties to be fully satisfied, it allows for creativity in developing resolution, and it gives participants a sense of accomplishment that they together have resolved the issue without losing anything. Advisors should provide guidance to help their organizations' deal effectively with conflict. Here are the steps for collaboration:

1. Assist student with determining the nature of the conflict.
2. Help the student's state the real effect the conflict has on them.
3. Encourage the students to listen carefully to each other.
4. Foster initiation of the problem-solving process. Help the students:
  - a. Clarify the issue.
  - b. Discuss each person's wants and needs.
  - c. Generate a list of all possible solutions. Be creative.
  - d. Decide together on the solution most acceptable to both parties.
  - e. Discuss how the solution will be implemented.
  - f. Develop a process to evaluate the solution after a specific time.
  - g. Discuss how discrepancies/problems with the solution will be handled.

## **Failure: A Problem or a Teaching Tool?**

Many advisors struggle with the question, “should I let (fill in the blank activity or program) that the organization is planning fail?” The general rule of thumb is if the event/activity can fail without creating a huge financial deficit or negatively affecting outside groups, and can be used as a learning tool afterwards, it can be okay to let it fail.

People learn from their mistakes, usually. A prompt and detailed evaluation of each activity/program coordinated by the organization will reveal ways to improve upcoming endeavors or show minor mistakes that can be avoided in the future. However, if major mistakes are allowed to happen, the impact on the organization could be detrimental or create a poor image of the organization on campus. Major mistakes may be something the organization or the University cannot afford since they may result in loss of volunteers, budget cuts and negative press. The organization stands to lose the most, so assist them in avoiding these mistakes.

Advisors can act as a mediator for members to minimize the number of events that may fail. Training programs for students can provide discussion about the prevention and ramifications of failure. The organization needs to know that cancelling organization traditions may result in the loss of funding, a decrease in the number of future events, or a decrease in membership because of bad publicity. Organization members need to understand that each of their events extends beyond the scope of the active members. As a result of training, success, rather than the acceptance of failure, will be the criterion established for events.

Advisors can make failures a learning situation by emphasizing the positive and asking students how the process can be improved. At times students may be too hard on themselves if the event did not meet the group’s expectations. As an advisor, it is important to help students set realistic goals and evaluate the positive and negative factors that affected the event. Encouraging students to make checklists and timetables can help create a successful program for future years. Students also learn how to handle complaints as well as examine their own personal skills. As a result, leadership may change within an organization, or students may decide that they want to participate in activities in a way that is more suited to their abilities. Generally, it is recommended that advisors limit their input about the selection of programs and events the organization may choose, but ensure that the production and planning of the activity is handled well since mistakes seem to occur most often in this phase of event planning.

There will often be times when advisors are faced with the dilemma of deciding if they should intervene or if an event should fail. Advisors need to understand the organization’s members, the campus environment and the expectations of the University community before the decision can be made about letting an activity fail. Advisors can assist by setting goals early, and they can seek advice from fellow professionals/advisors who have faced other similar situations. If the organization does fail, advisors can help students learn by not ignoring problems and by rationally evaluating what has taken place. Advisors then can make the experience beneficial and the program will not have been a total failure.

Adapted from *Student Organization Advisor Handbook*. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009 (20-21).

## Resources

### Student Hand Book

Information about University policies, procedures, and resources for all students attending the University. You can find the student hand book at <http://www.lssu.edu/campuslife/handbook/>.

### Campus Life Handbook

The official guide to the departmental policies and procedures for all student activities and organizations at the University. You can find the Campus Life handbook at <http://www.lssu.edu/campuslife/OfficeofStudentActivitiesHandbook.php>.

### Office of Campus Life

The central hub for all student organizations.

### LSSU Website

<http://www.lssu.edu/>



Lake Superior State University

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## Advisor Agreement

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student involvement in campus organizations provides an opportunity for students to develop leadership and organizational development skills. This involvement also complements their educational objectives with important out-of-class activities by exercising basic freedoms and learning about human behavior. In support of these objectives, it is important that persons with experience in organizations be available to assist students in their organizational endeavors.

While the range of activities of student organizations is diverse, the assistance advisors can give organizations by being responsive to students' questions on procedural matters, university policies, financial matters, and so on, can help advance the basic reasons for recognizing student organizations at Lake Superior State University.

All recognized student organizations must have a full-time faculty or staff advisor. In special cases, the Associate Director of Campus Life and Housing will direct certain organizations to use an appropriate advisor. These persons may be chosen because of their capabilities in a specific area. In such cases, the student organization shall follow the guidelines of the advisor assigned. In all other cases, the organization may choose an advisor according to bylaw requirements.

### Responsibilities of an Advisor to the University

1. The advisor to a student organization must be familiar with university policies and regulations and the particular organization that he/she advises.
2. Lake Superior State University recognizes that the definition of the role of advisor to a student organization is that of consultant or resource person. Therefore, with the assumption and completion of the duties and obligations outlined herein, he/she should be assisting the organization's members be accountable for their conduct.
3. Because academic success is important to the University's mission, the advisor may wish to work closely with the students concerning their academic progress.

### Responsibilities of Advisors to Recognized Student Organizations

4. Maintain regular contact with officers and members.
5. Assist in scheduling meetings. Serve as a resource person at executive and regular meetings. Attend functions of the organization.
6. Assist with the formulation and/or revision of the organizations bylaws.
7. Encourage and assist the organization to plan active and significant programs. Work with the officers to promote efficient and effective administration of the organization.
8. Assist the treasurer in maintaining accurate accounting procedures and in formulating an annual budget.
9. If it is necessary for an advisor to resign his or her position as advisor, he or she will notify the organization and the Associate Director of Campus Life and Housing.

#### Advisor Agreement Statement

I have read and understand the above information. I accept these terms and conditions for this student organization.

Advisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_