

Office of Student Activities and Leadership Advisor Office of Handbook

**356 Shriver Center
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio**

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Dear Student Organization Advisor,

College is a time that encourages exploration and risk-taking to help determine life's direction. The principles, values, people, places, organizations, activities, and events encountered will become a road map that marks the student's journey.

Through their co-curricular activities, students have the opportunity to develop personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, and expand the way they learn. As an advisor you can assist in this growth by supporting the abilities a student has in these various areas and challenging students to expand their abilities through risk-taking.

We've put this handbook together with you, the advisor, in mind. We hope that it will serve as a reference guide throughout your tenure as an advisor. The influence and impact you have on students outside of the classroom can be dramatic. The development of the "total student" can be encouraged by your positive guidance during the college years. In return, you can develop close and rewarding relationships with members of your organization. The memories of your involvement with student organizations will last a lifetime. We thank you for dedicating your time and energy to such a worthy cause.

If you can be of assistance or if you have any questions or concerns please contact us at 529-2266 or email us at studentactivities@muohio.edu

The Office of Student Activities and Leadership

MIAMI'S LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Miami University is committed to cultivating the leader in all students. Miami's leadership commitment is founded on the following leadership values:

- Be responsible for your actions
- Think critically and take time to reflect
- See potential within yourself
- Take purposeful risks; learn from success and failure
- Be flexible and open to change
- Understand and serve the needs of others
- Respect the dignity and potential of others
- Celebrate and embrace diversity
- Communicate directly, honestly, and with civility
- Support and challenge each other to live by these values

These values are a framework for active and informed citizenship. Advisors work with college students to help them identify their own values and act accordingly. When people and values collide, we provide support and encourage open dialogue. A variety of programs, designed specifically to promote skills for leadership and cooperation, are available through various programs and offices. The Office of Student Activities and Leadership can provide more information of these kinds on resources for organizations.

ADVISOR'S ROLE

The role of an advisor varies according to the needs of the group. It is important to remember that an organization and its members want and need different things at different times. It is helpful to talk early in the year with organization members to determine what roles, style, and functions you may use that year.

Most groups prefer an active advisor. Being active does not mean serving as the leader, but it does mean being invested in the mission, purpose, and goals of the group as well as taking an interest in the development of group members. In order to be effective, the advisor should serve as a resource person. The most effective advisor is one who is able to convey his/her experience to the group while respecting the unique perspective each student brings to an organization.

To be an effective advisor requires different time commitments for different groups. The number and size of activities, as well as the maturity level of each organization will impact the number of hours needed to be an effective advisor. It is important for the advisor and the officers of the organization to meet early in the year to develop a set of expectations for each other. This will allow for a clear-cut understanding of the advisor's role and time commitments that are involved.

The following guidelines have been established by the Association of College Union-International in order to provide a better understanding of the multi-faceted advisor role.

1. Advisors should attend the regularly scheduled and special meetings of their respective organizations. Advisors should meet with the executive officers of their organizations for the following purposes:
 - A. To assist with the development of organizational programs
 - B. To discuss organizational goals and directions
 - C. To discuss the financial status of the organization
 - D. To discuss internal organizational difficulties and to assist the officers with their resolutions
2. Advisors should be available to meet organization officers and/or members when they need help.
3. Advisors should be familiar with the constitution and bylaws of their respective organizations and be prepared to render assistance with their interpretation.
4. Advisors should be familiar with the institution's policies and rules, which govern registered student organizations.
5. Advisors should strongly encourage their respective organizations to adhere to the policies and rules of the University as well as to obey local, state, and national laws.
6. Advisors are encouraged to attend the various functions of their organizations.
7. Advisors should not hesitate to contact the Director of Student Activities, or his/her staff members to discuss organizational status, which may be of interest or importance to the University.
8. The advisor should not hesitate to provide constructive criticism when deemed necessary; likewise, positive organizational accomplishments should be appropriately acknowledged.
9. It is important for an advisor to attain and maintain the "pulse" of his/her group by developing a sense of the group's personality and priorities.
10. The advisor should be aware of the fact that at times he/she will be called upon to serve as a personal confidant in organization-related matters.

11. Advisors have access to the University-maintained financial records of their respective organizations. Periodically these records should be reviewed.
12. At times the advisor must be willing and prepared to tell his/her group that what it is doing is wrong or inappropriate. This should be documented in a letter to the organization, with a copy being sent to the Office of Student Activities. Alternate suggestions should be offered when feasible.
13. An individual assumes an advisor's role voluntarily; however, even though serving as a volunteer, he/she can be expected to uphold the best interests of Miami University.
14. The advisors can expect to be asked to provide quick solutions to problems, which he/she will be unable to render as rapidly as the group usually would like.
15. An individual should not accept an invitation to serve as an advisor, or continue to serve, if he/she is not prepared to fulfill those expectations.
16. It would be advantageous to accept a position as an advisor to a group whose interests parallel those of the advisor.
17. An advisor should not hesitate to engage in the general discussion of organizational matters at meeting. However, he/she normally should not dominate discussions or become the focus of attention
18. An advisor should attempt to learn the names of the organization members as quickly as possible.
19. An advisor should not feel offended if he/she is not asked to be involved in all of the organization's activities.
20. An advisor should realize that students often may not accept his/her advice.

The appropriate role of the advisor is not to become "one of the gang," nor is it to remain conspicuously aloof from the group. The effective advisor is one who will render advice when it is requested and offer counsel, even though it may not have been sought.

The voluntary association between advisors and their respective groups should continue as long as both parties believe the relationship is productive and mutually satisfactory. When such a relationship no longer exists, the advisor should consider resigning.

Below is some information we hope you will find helpful. It will tell you where/how to get things done on campus.

LIABILITY AND THE ADVISOR

Liability has become an increasing concern for colleges and universities throughout the country. You, as a student organization advisor, should be mindful of sound risk management principles.

Questions advisors should ask themselves as they consider the potential liability of a group's activities include:

1. What is my duty of care?
2. Am I following reasonable standards of care?
3. Am I doing what a prudent person would do in this situation?
4. Are there special rules to follow?
5. Are the group's activities being properly supervised?
6. What are foreseeable risks with the group's activity?
7. Are the equipment and premises safe?

8. How will I deal with injuries, which might result from the group's activities?

Four areas where liability can occur:

TRAVEL - In terms of group activities, which require travel, additional things to check include:

- a. whether the student drivers are licensed
- b. whether they have sufficient auto liability insurance
- c. whether they have a known record of reckless driving or traffic citations
- d. whether the cars being driven are safe

The Office of Student Activities and Leadership has available a "Planning Off-Campus Activities" packet that should be completed by each organizational member traveling.

ALCOHOL - In terms of damages resulting from the misuse of alcohol, there is a dichotomy between how the courts treat the licensed liquor and how they treat the social host. The Ohio Supreme Court has come down hard on the vendor, but not so hard on the social host. However, the laws are rapidly changing in this area. The situation is totally different however, if the social host serves liquor to a minor. In this situation, the courts are likely to be quite critical.

HAZING - Hazing is defined as any planned action, created situation, requirement, request, or obligation placed on any person anywhere which does not contribute to the positive development of the person. Hazing is strictly prohibited by University policy and state law.

SPECIAL RISKS SITUATIONS - When dealing with any situation involving special risks be sure to take special precautions to limit risks and be sure that all participants know what the risks are. This can be accomplished through signing an "acknowledgement of risks" form which, though not a waiver of liability, constitutes an assumption of risk. "Acknowledgment of Risks" forms are available in Office of Student Activities and Leadership.

Faculty and staff who act as advisors to student organizations are acting within the course and scope of their employment and are covered by Ohio's immunity laws for public employees. The University carries a General Liability Insurance for work done within the scope of employment, or performance of duties related to the conduct of University business. Advisors who are not employees of the University are also covered as "volunteers." They are covered for activities or work conducted or performed within the scope of their duties for the University.

As an advisor of a student organization, you are the University's representation regarding the organization's activities. As such, you are expected to give reasonable and sound advice to your organization related to the programs conducted, use of facilities, and organizational procedures. If you ever have reason to question an action of your organization, please speak to them about the concern, and express your concern in writing, along with the date and alternate suggestions, to the organization and the Office of Student Activities and Leadership.

Greek Organizations are different from other student organizations because they have separate legal existence apart from the University. Please contact the Director of Greek Affairs (529-1462) and/or National/International Headquarters for further information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For Information on University Policies, see the Student Handbook @
http://www.units.muohio.edu/secretary/policies_guidelines/student_handbook/

For Guidelines for Student Organization Funding, see the ASG Funding Website @
<http://www.muasg.com/student-organizations/funding>

To plan events, advertise, etc. please see the Student Activities & Leadership Website @ <http://www.units.muohio.edu/saf/sac/>

CONCLUSION

This handbook has been developed with you, the advisor, in mind. The Office of Student Activities and Leadership hopes that it will serve as a reference guide throughout your tenure as an advisor. The influence and impact you can have on students outside of the classroom can be dramatic. The development of the “total student” can be encouraged by your positive guidance during the college years. In return, you can develop close and rewarding relationships with the members of your organization. The memories of your involvement with student organizations will last a lifetime. We thank you for dedicating your time and energy to such a worthy cause.