

THE ROLE OF WVU STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ADVISORS

At West Virginia University student organization advisors play many roles for our students. You are often called upon to consult about organization finances, meeting agendas, student officer problems, goal setting, and at times personal matters. Students need role models and you often do your “best advising” by just listening to them and helping them make responsible decisions and choices. Often students view you, their advisor, as a mentor and someone they can talk to about academics, the organization goals, and membership issues. We know students grow and develop through involvement in organizations.

WHAT ADVISING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS OFFERS AND REQUIRES:

Rewards of Advising Student Organizations

- Facilitating student involvement and growth. You will have many opportunities to lead and teach students in a variety of leadership venues.
- Enhance the ability of the university to attract and retain students because of the amount and diversity of student organizations and opportunities to become leaders.
- Students with whom you work are given more opportunities for serving on committees and task forces that affect change campus-wide.
- Helping students participate in worthwhile causes e.g. community service projects, fund-raising activities, program development, and learning to collaborate with their peers on activities that accomplish change.
- Facilitating student leaders meeting with campus administrators, faculty, and staff on issues that enhance the quality of student life.
- Ultimately, assisting students in participating in enjoyable activities, events, and programs.
- Recognition, as an advisor, for a job well done by the University and your students.
- An opportunity to form networks with colleagues who serve as student organization advisors.

CHALLENGES OF BEING A STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISOR

- Being an advisor and not being over-committed and involved with your organization is a great challenge. Discuss early on what expectations your students have of you and you of them. This may insure a balance for you as an advisor.
- Try not to be over-controlling as an advisor. Being a student leader requires students to take some risks and make some hard decisions with which you may not agree.

- Be careful not to “run” the organization but establish a consistent consulting and working relationship with the executive officers (and other members).
- Clarifying your role at the beginning will establish clear boundaries for you and your students. Help them to learn to be leaders! There may be times when you have to provide more direction, but you should mostly “sit back” and advise as necessary.
- If you need “advising assistance,” consult with the Office of Student Activities, attend advisor seminars/training by your national office (if available), and refer to this Guide and other resources.
- Understand that being aware of all the decisions and actions of your organization is a challenge.

WHAT THE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP OFFICE EXPECTS OF ADVISORS

- Read and become familiar with all University policies and procedures related to student organizations – these can be found on the Student Engagement website (studentengagement.wvu.edu). This would include special event, trademark licensing, and general reservation policies.
- Advisors should be prepared to assist members through activities such as goal setting, conducting productive meetings, planning events, fundraising proposals, and officer transition.
- The advisor should be adequately informed about the purpose and mission of their student organization.
- Keep the Student Engagement office informed of accomplishments, honors, and awards of your organization so we may highlight your achievements in our newsletter or otherwise.
- When signing a special event form, SGA grant request, or concessions permit, make sure you are well informed as to the nature of the event. Our office will only sign off after you have given approval.
- Make sure your organization registers every academic year by completing the Officer Update Form (found at studentengagement.wvu.edu) and encouraging attendance at the monthly meeting of all student organization presidents. Dates will be sent via email to all student organization presidents and posted on the WVU calendar.
- If there are any changes to the by-laws or Constitution, they must be forwarded to this office for approval and filing.
- Stay up-to-date on WVU policies and procedures and keep the organization aware of any changes to the policies.

- Contact the Student Engagement office when there are questions of advisor liability, hosting events on campus, and the group’s rights and responsibilities.
- All violations of University policies by student organizations are adjudicated according to *WVU Student Conduct Code*. Advisors should be familiar with the Code as it relates to student organizations.
- Contact our office if you choose to terminate as an advisor. Notification of change of advisors must be submitted in writing within two weeks of such change. Please alert Kim Harrison (kim.harrison@mail.wvu.edu) as soon as possible so our office is aware a change is taking place. Please help to facilitate the transition as any organization who finds itself without an advisor for longer than the grace period will be suspended until a new advisor is selected.
- Student organizations should consult with advisors on all matters involving activities, budgeting, and policy.

RISK MANAGEMENT / LIABILITY

University employees have certain protection from legal claims. The West Virginia State law provides this protection for duties done within the scope of employment, where those duties are done without malice or gross negligence. **The duties of the advisor of a student organization will generally be considered within the scope of the advisor’s employment if the employee is officially designated as an advisor by the Student Engagement and Leadership office. This is another important reason to be sure you are listed on the officer update form with our office.**

West Virginia Board of Risk & Insurance Management:

West Virginia University and its employees are provided liability insurance coverage under a Comprehensive Liability Policy, provided by the West Virginia Board of Risk and Insurance Management (BRIM). This policy provides liability coverage via five separate sections. These include:

- Coverage A – Comprehensive General Liability Insurance
- Coverage B – Personal Injury Liability Insurance
- Coverage C – Professional Liability Insurance
- Coverage D – Stop Gap Liability Insurance
- Coverage E – Wrongful Act Liability Insurance

For each section of the policy, “who is insured” is specifically defined. *Coverage D, Stop Gap Liability Insurance, is not applicable to employees.*

The definitions read as follows:

Coverage A: “any faculty member, employee, volunteer worker or student teacher of the Named Insured while acting within the scope of their duties as such, but the insurance afforded such

individuals does not apply to bodily injury to another faculty member, employee, volunteer worker or student teacher of the Named Insured arising out of or in the course of his employment”

Coverage B: “any faculty member, employee, volunteer worker or student teacher of the Named Insured while acting within the scope of their duties as such. Employee shall not include any person working on a retainer or contractual agreement.”

Coverage C: same as definition for (B) above

Coverage E: same as definition for (A) above

These definitions are excerpted from the “Persons Insured” section of the actual policy. The Named Insured referenced is West Virginia University.

--Mike Gansor, WVU Risk Manager