Gonzaga University Club Advisor Handbook 2014-15
Advisors

A significant amount of research has been done to show that the student’s experience outside of the classroom can often times be just as significant towards his or her development as the time spent within the classroom. The advisor role offers professionals opportunities to facilitate student development outside of the classroom. Often students will point to their experience in a student organization as the most meaningful experience in their college career. With that in mind, it is important to note that the role of the advisor is a very important one. Information or assistance of any kind is always available to faculty or staff members seeking more resources on advising.

From Academic Clubs to Sports Clubs, Gonzaga University is host to 100 different student organizations. This array of activities contributes to Gonzaga’s strong sense of community and provides opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills. This guide is designed to provide the advisor with concrete information on how to be a successful advisor.

The Definition of an Advisor
How the Advisor Can Assist the Organization
General Advising Tips
Roles and Responsibilities of an Advisor

The Definition of an Advisor
Adapted from Northern Illinois University

The real definition of an advisor floats somewhere between being a counselor, supervisor, educator, and mentor, in which no single label applies entirely to the role. An advisor is one who gives ideas, shares insight, provides a different perspective, and counsels. In general, advisors have three main functions:

1. To help with the growth and development of students.
2. To add to the continuity of the groups as members graduate.
3. To assist in the area of program content and purpose.

Resources available to advisors and student organizations:

The Office of Student Involvement and Leadership offers a variety of student organizational services to advisors. To find out more information about advisor training programs or other information related to student organizations please contact our office at 313.6123.

Additionally, the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership houses a variety of printed materials that cover a wide range of topics including: meetings, icebreakers/team builders, communication skills, leadership styles, ethics, recruiting members, fundraising, problem solving, multicultural awareness, presentations and programming, publicity, stress management, volunteerism, training, delegation, conflict resolution.

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How an Advisor Can Assist an Organization
Adapted from Northern Illinois University

In addition to the previously mentioned roles and responsibilities, an advisor can assist an organization in many ways:

• **Maintenance functions:**
The advisor can help maintain the existence of the student organization by providing continuity with past history and traditions. Such activities may include consulting on University policy, serving as a role model, arbitrating group conflicts, and keeping files on past organizational functions.

• **Group growth function:**
The advisor can improve the operation and effectiveness of the group and help it progress toward its goals. Such activities might include: teaching the techniques of good leadership and fellowship, coaching the officers in the principles of good organizational and administrative practice, developing self-discipline and responsibility among members, teaching the elements of effective group operation, developing plans and procedures for action, keeping the group focused on its goals, and stimulating or even initiating activities and programs.

• **Program content function:**
The advisor can question the educational rationale for the organization's existence and lead its members into activities that will contribute to their intellectual and social development. Such activities might include introducing new program ideas, helping group members practice skills and concepts learned in the classroom, pointing out new perspectives and directions, and supplying expert knowledge and insights.

• **Networking Opportunities:**
The advisor can help provide opportunities for organization members to interact with different people in their field of interest, helping them to develop new contacts for possible future careers. Such opportunities to network might include identifying guest speakers, field trips or site visits, or attending conferences related to their area of interest.

Advising Tips
Adapted from Northern Illinois University

Every student organization will differ and may require a different approach by the advisor. The following information can serve as a beginning point:

• In the beginning of the advising relationship, agree on clear expectations about the role of the advisor and the role of the student organization. Discuss philosophies and reach a consensus.

• Read the constitution of the group, get to know the members, attend events, and generally make yourself seen so that they know who you are.

• Assist in the establishment of responsibilities for each officer and member.

• Develop a strong relationship with the president or chairperson and other officers. This is key because these students will be your main contact with the group.

• Discuss concerns with an officer’s performance in a one-on-one setting. Whenever someone does something extremely well, be sure to let others know.

• Maintain a sense of humor—it’s college, not rocket science. Unless, of course, you are the advisor to the Rocket Science Club.

• Be honest and open with all communication. The students need to feel that you are just in your dealings with them.
Realize that you have the power of persuasion, but use this judiciously. The students sometimes need to learn how to deal with failure. Help them to see alternatives and provide an outside perspective. Remember: praise in public, criticize in private. Find a balance between being the strict naysayer and the laissez-faire friend. The students must feel that you are supportive of them and yet that you will hold them accountable for their actions.

Club Advisor Responsibilities
Adapted from Fordham University

Responsibility to the Student Organization
- Be familiar with the organization. Read its constitution, learn how it was formed, and understand its expressed mission.
- Learn about pertinent University policies and procedures and advise officers and general members on adhering to them.
- Attend club meetings and/or executive meetings, as needed. Discourage domination of the group by any individual or subgroup.
- Attend club meetings to get to know as many members as possible.
- Assist the group with the development of realistic goals, strategic planning, and training for the academic year.
- Act as a resource person for the organization, sharing your knowledge of internal and external networks and information that may be helpful to your student group.
- Be aware about all plans and activities of the group, including programming, trips, expenditures, etc.
- Be present at the events or activities sponsored by the group.
- Encourage student interest in evaluating programs.
- Provide insight and assistance with the orientation of newly elected student leaders, thereby providing long-term continuity within the group.

Responsibility to the Student Leaders
- Develop opportunities for the personal development of student leaders; encourage more involvement from all individuals.
- Be available to the members of the club. At times, they will need advice and guidance. Help individuals balance academic and work commitments with program development.
- Meet with club officers on a consistent basis to gain an understanding of the club’s progress toward its goals, and learn how you can foster leadership development. If you are unsure how to help, just ask the club leadership – they’ll tell you – and seek support from the Student Activities Office.
- Encourage members to play an active role in the governance of their organization.
- Encourage students to reflect on what they have learned from being a part of a student organization.

Responsibility to the Institution – Gonzaga University
- Guide the group in accordance with the goals of the organization and the educational mission of the University.
- Educate the campus community about the importance of student involvement.
• Consider yourself as a person who works with students, not one who controls or directs the group’s events and/or operation. Always remember, this is a student organization.
• Become familiar with University policies and procedures, particularly those pertaining to programming.
• Do not advocate, promote or encourage violating or violations of the Universities policies, procedures or processes.
• Meet with the Office of Student Activities, as needed.
• Review club finances.
• Help establish traditions and a positive reputation.