

STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISOR
HANDBOOK



STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT
Division of Student Affairs • University of Florida

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in being a faculty advisor to one or more of the 975+ student organizations at UF. To be a faculty advisor, contact Solange Douglas at sdouglas@studentinvolvement.ufl.edu and go to <https://www.studentinvolvement.ufl.edu/> for more information. All registered student organizations at UF are required to have a faculty advisor, but your role is more important than a name on a piece of paper. Classroom learning is central to the college experience; however, students also gain valuable skills and knowledge from co-curricular involvement. As an advisor you will have a great impact on student learning.

In order to best serve students and get the most out of your experience, it is important that you fully understand your role as an advisor and are aware of the many ways in which you can encourage student development. It is important to think of every encounter with students as a learning opportunity, and how you shape those encounters will depend on a lot of personal factors, such as your advising style and your relationship with the students. Student Activities and Involvement has created this manual to provide you with advising tips and resources to help you understand the role of an advisor, but much of your role development will be up to you and the organization.

Student Activities and Involvement staff is available to assist and help you and the organization you advise to be as successful as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us at 392-1671 or e-mail Solange Douglas, the Program Coordinator for Student Activities and Involvement at sdouglas@studentinvolvement.ufl.edu.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

The Department of Student Activities and Involvement is committed to providing innovative programs to help students get involved on campus, giving Gators opportunities to develop leadership skills and pursue their passions through experiential learning. Our team supports over 975 registered student organizations, a vibrant and diverse Greek Community, TRiP an outdoor adventure program, the Involvement Team (I-Team), and advises Student Government.

ADVISOR ROLES

What is an advisor?

A student organization advisor is a faculty or staff member who is requested to provide support and guidance to officers and members of a student organization. The advisor not only serves as a representative of the group in an official capacity, but also as an advocate for the group.

Why serve as an advisor?

Advising a student organization can be a very rewarding experience for faculty and staff. Working with students outside structured classroom experiences or staff roles allows faculty and staff an opportunity to share information and resources and to teach hands-on skills such as leadership styles, organizational ethics, and program planning.

How to become an advisor?

There are three ways to become a student organization advisor at the University of Florida.

1. Ask a student organization that you are interested in (mission, purpose, events, etc.) if they would like you as an advisor
2. Be asked by a student to advise his or her organization
3. Give your name and contact information to Student Activities and Involvement and they will match you up with a new organization looking for an advisor. Email your contact information to Solange Douglas at Sdouglas@studentinvolvement.ufl.edu.

Time Commitment

The amount of time required to serve as a student organization advisor varies based on the needs of the group. Minimally, Student Activities and Involvement expects advisors to spend two to three hours per month on student organization issues during the academic year. A very active advisor for a large student organization could expect to spend as many as two to four hours per week engaged in related activities. These activities can include:

- Attending meetings (executive and all-member)
- Attending various events sponsored by the student organization which you advise
- Meeting with the president(s) or leader(s) of the student organization to discuss event programming, organizational development, and reflection

Advising Functions

Faculty and staff advisors assist organizations with four broad areas:

- **Maintenance:** Serve to maintain the existence of the student organization and to help provide continuity with the history, activity, and tradition of past years.

- **Growth:** Provide advice about activities that improve the operation and effectiveness of the group and help it progress towards its goals
- **Education:** Stimulate group members' learning and skills development, contributing to their intellectual development and the enrichment of campus life
- **Networking:** Help group members develop new contacts for programming and mentoring

In order to support these broad areas, advisors engage in the following functions:

1. Believe in the organization and have the enthusiasm necessary to help the organization reach its potential.

- Students will look to the advisor for encouragement, and your belief and support are important.
- Advising can be a fulfilling role, but it can also be challenging – keeping up your enthusiasm and sense of humor, especially in difficult times, is vital.

2. Be familiar with the organization's constitution, understand its mission and purpose, be aware of its history, and know its personnel.

- The more you can be familiar with the organization's functions, the more effective you will be in your role of advisor.
- Given membership turnover, it's not surprising that many organizational leaders are unfamiliar with their constitution. It's helpful to them if you refer to it when necessary.
- Knowing the history and recent activities is helpful to maintain institutional memory and consistency. It can also help to keep a group on track, especially if the leadership is relatively new.
- Getting to know the leadership is time well-spent. You can be of much greater assistance to the group if you develop relationships with the leaders and members.

3. Help the organization to maintain continuity.

- Students come and go, but hopefully your tenure is a bit more consistent. You have the opportunity to help students be consistent and respectful of their organization's past.
- Institutional memory is an often overlooked responsibility of student leaders. Help them to find a way keep organizational records and to transition them to future organization leaders.

4. Assist the group in developing realistic goals for the academic year.

- If you're familiar with the organization's purpose, history, and leadership, hopefully you can be an effective resource in this regard.
- Having a conceptual understanding of solid goal development strategies may also be helpful.
- While you influence the process, it's still their process and their goals – but you can work to keep them on track and realistic.

- When necessary, play devil's advocate.

5. Assist officers in understanding their duties, and help them to grow as leaders.

- This is a great opportunity for students to stretch themselves and grow.
- Understanding the strengths and talents (and deficits) of the leaders is important for you to be of most assistance to the individuals.
- Having a balanced, caring approach can open doors for you when a serious conversation needs to take place.
- Ideally, this experience should open new doors for the leaders and create opportunities for the organization.
- Emphasize the importance of a thorough transition of officers.

6. Help the current leaders develop an eye for the future and devote time to developing their membership.

- Work with the leaders to tap the leaders of the future.
- The current leadership should think about providing developmental opportunities to their members.

7. Clarify your role with the organization. Define expectations.

- In your role as an advisor, you should be clear with the leaders about your expectations and their expectations. It is the responsibility of the organization to communicate its needs to the advisor.
- Be sure to understand the distinction between advisor and supervisor.
- Be willing to be flexible with your role depending upon the stage of the group's development or the current leadership.
- One year may look very different from the next.
- Be patient. It's easy to begin stepping outside your appropriate role.

8. When possible or appropriate, attend organizational meetings and organization-sponsored events.

- Your visibility and presence show that you are committed and care.
- Attending meetings and events gives you the opportunity to meet and know students on neutral ground. It can provide a great avenue for conversation and discussion about the organization or larger matters.
- By being present, you also can get a first-hand look at how the leaders function, as well as how the group is coming along.
- Your presence can also help you be proactive in many issues relating to the organization's functioning.
- Remember that it's all right not to attend all meetings and events. You have other responsibilities that do not always permit you to give undivided attention to the organization.

9. Be a resource with regard to institutional policies and practices as they pertain to the organization and its events.

- Take time to explain and clarify such policies and practices to students. Your knowledge of University policies can help the group avoid problems and/or address emergencies. Click here for some pertinent UF policies.
- If students can gain the ability to grasp the complexities of an organization, they will be better prepared when they join a new organization.
- Students can also help to point out inconsistencies in policies and practices, so conversations with them about these issues can be helpful to the college.
- If there are questions about policies, remember to utilize resources at SAI.

10. Help to provide ample and regular opportunities for reflection.

- Growth in individuals and in organizations includes taking stock of where things are.
- Assessing events and practices may be an undesirable process, but it typically is one of the most important.
- If you can help students to reflect and think about things – meetings, interactions, events – they will become more skilled leaders and learn to draw upon the membership for assistance.
- Reflection should take place after meetings, events, and each semester.

11. Encourage students to find a balance between their academic and co-curricular commitments.

- Students who assume too much responsibility risk burning out – thereby letting down both themselves and the organization.
- Help officers delegate responsibilities to members, which helps to distribute accountability and serves to engage members in meaningful ways.

As you reflect upon your roles and functions as an advisor, remember that it's the students' organization. Though it may be tempting to intervene every time students are veering from their goals and tasks, allowing them to make and learn from mistakes can help to prevent similar situations in the future. Trust your instincts, knowledge, and experiences – the students in your group have asked you to advise them because they trust you.

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 decisions
- 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

ADVISOR EXPECTATIONS

The Department of Student Activities and Involvement expects that at a minimum, advisors should be in communication with the organization's president on a regular basis to have a pulse on the status of the organization.

It is very important that the advisor and the organization leaders communicate their expectations to each other. The advisor should be clear about he or she will do or not do. It is recommended that you have a meeting at the beginning of your term as an advisor to determine these expectations. The handout below is helpful for you to begin the discussion about advisor roles and expectations. The advisor should fill one out and the student leaders should fill one out so that you can compare and discuss.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND LIABILITY

In general, faculty advisors are not liable for an organization's actions unless the advisor had prior knowledge of the group becoming involved in an illegal or dangerous activity, and/or condoned or participated in such activity. Student organizations must not violate UF policy or local, state, or national law. Many policies and laws concerning student organizations are listed in the [Student Organization handbook](#). An advisor who utilizes best judgment and appropriate techniques to insure the safety of the participants will usually not be judged liable should a participant become injured.

Although it is not necessary, you may want to purchase specific insurance that covers your duties as an advisor. Visit this [website](#) to learn more about liability insurance. The University's liability insurance policy covers faculty advisors for actions arising from your work as a faculty advisor only if the advising of the organization is within your written job description.

As the advisor to a student organization, you can also assist student organizations with risk management for their events. Please refer to the student organization [Program Planning Manual](#) for more information about reducing risk at student organization events. For specific questions on risk management, please feel free to contact Solange Douglas at Sdouglas@studentinvolvement.ufl.edu.

FINANCES AND FUNDING

Student Government Funding



The [Student Government Finance](#) Office (SG Finance) administers the allocation of Student Activity and Service (A&S) fees. A&S fees are allocated by the Student Senate through the budget process, where annual budgets are allocated to meet the needs of student groups throughout the fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Allocation may also occur through the Special Request process, which furnishes emergency funds for needs not anticipated during the budget process. Once these allocations are approved by Student Government, the SG Finance Office administers the lawful spending, auditing and reconciliation of A&S fees.

General Information

- New student organizations must be registered with Student Activities and Involvement for a spring and fall semester before they can apply for funding.
- SG funded organizations may not charge membership dues, fees or charge any UF student to participate or attend an event.
- A&S Fees cannot be used for support of fundraising events.
- ***Organizations may not expend A&S Fees without the prior approval of the Student Body Treasurer. They do this by submitting a Student Activity Request (SAR).***

Outside Revenue

- External Income is commonly referred to as Outside Revenue or OSRV.
- This income consists of funds received from sources other than Student Government.
- External income must be reported to the Treasurer's Office within fifteen (15) days of receipt.
- The funds are put on deposit with the University and available upon request, using a Student Activity Request (SAR).
- Please refer to Student Government's [800 Codes](#) for more information on SG funding.

The SG Finance Office is available to answer any questions, concerns or problems you may have. Visit the office in Room 337 of the J. Wayne Reitz Union, or call 392-1623, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Off Campus Checking Accounts

It is up to Registered Student Organizations to set up their own bank accounts with two names on the account. The Student Government finance office is required for use by organizations that receive SG funding. The SG Finance Office is in Room 337 of the J. Wayne Reitz Union, or call 392-1623, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you do not receive SG funding, you may use any bank of your choice including but not limited to Suntrust, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, Capital City Bank, Florida Credit Union, and Campus USA Credit Union. Make sure to include the banking information in your transition reports so the new leaders of your organization will have access to the funds.

Please note that SAI does not maintain any records or information about student organizations' off campus checking accounts. All of those details must be maintained within the organization. It is highly recommended that the student organization advisors are involved in the creation and maintenance of the account.

Fundraising

Student organizations at the University of Florida have the privilege of fundraising on campus in limited situations. Any student organization wishing to coordinate fundraising activity via the sale or donations of any items must complete a [Permit](#) with Student Activities and Involvement, via the online request. The following rules apply to fundraising by student organizations:

- All organizations wanting to conduct fundraisers that may require financial expenditures as part of the program must initially have sufficient funds to cover all expenses.
- Registered student organizations may not engage in sales and fundraising projects unless the proceeds from such sales and projects are used for educational, charitable, or philanthropic purposes.
- Raffles are prohibited by state law.
- Fundraising events are subject to state statutes for commercial activity.
- Student organizations may be allowed to sponsor for-profit companies or businesses on campus in limited situations and only if the product or service has a significant educational mission. SAI will not recommend the names of student organizations or their contacts to "for-profit" companies or businesses.

Fundraising Activities that ARE allowed:

- Penny Voting
- Silent Auctions
- 3-5K Run
- Walkathon
- T-shirt, button, hat, etc., sales (ONLY if item is personalized for event or student organization)
- Face tattoos or painting (organization must work w/ the University Athletic Association if for an athletic event)
- Speed Dating (No Dating Games or Dating Auctions)

- Volunteer at Gator Nights (food scholarship)
- Dunk booths
- Photos with famous people (UF faculty, sports figures, president)
- Collection of dues (only for non SG funded organizations)
- **Funds raised must be donated to a charitable cause or be used for educational purposes (conference travel, programs, competition, lectures or forums, etc.).**

Fundraising activities that are NOT allowed:

- Raffles or gambling
- Bake (or any food) sales
- Flea markets
- Car bashes
- Date auctions
- Food eating or drinking contests
- Live animals or petting zoos
- Slip n slide or homemade novelties
- Hair cutting (with the exception of Locks of Love)
- Makeovers
- Credit card, phone card, or discount card sales
- Product sales such as magazines, clothes, CDs, or software
- Garage sales with donated items

PROGRAM PLANNING

To plan an event on campus, the first step is to fill out a [program permit](#) found on our website. The purpose of the permit is to help student organizations run their event more smoothly and to assist organizations in identifying what areas of campus need to be notified about an event. They are required for any on campus event other than a regularly scheduled meeting. For a detailed walk through of the program planning process, please refer to the student organization [Program Planning Manual](#).

Reserving Space

Reserve your space directly with the office responsible for that area. Submitting a program planning form does not reserve your space.

Reservation Office	Controlled Spaces
Reitz Union Event Services Office	Union meeting rooms, Auditorium/cinema, Orange and Brew, Ballrooms, Colonnade, North Lawn, South Terrace, Amphitheatre (duck pond), Reitz Union Game Room
Office of the Registrar	Classrooms

SAI	Plaza of the Americas, Turlington Plaza, and banner space
RecSports	Norman Field, Flavet Field, Hume Field, Maguire Field and other instrumental fields.

Amplified Sound

Food

Contracts

Tips for Programs and Events

RESOURCES

Student Organization Handbook

Event Planning Manual

Involvement Team (I-Team)

Student Activities and Involvement

APPENDIX

Advisor Expectation Questions	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
ATTENDANCE			
Attend all regular meetings			
Attend all officers meetings			
Attend organization's campus-wide activities			
Attend organization's off-campus activities			
Attend organization only activities			
Attend controversial events			
MEETING INVOLVEMENT			
Assist in preparing the agenda			
Ability to call emergency meetings of the officers			
During meetings, inform officers and members about possible violations of University Policies.			

During meetings, inform officers and members about possible violations to organization constitution and bylaws.			
Provide personal viewpoint during discussions at meetings			
Be quiet at meetings unless asked for input			
Review minutes before they are distributed			
GOAL SETTING PROCESS			
Participate in goal setting process			
Provide feedback to officers on progress toward goals			
Require committees to follow up with advisor on progress towards goals			
ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT			
Coordinate workshops based on topics chosen by the officers			
Research and present leadership development opportunities available on campus			
Explain University policies and procedures to the membership			
Cancel events when advisor believes they are poorly planned			
Instill teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration within the officers and membership			
Engage in conflict mediation when conflict arises among officers or membership			
REPRESENTATION			
Speak on behalf of the organization to the campus community			
Speak on behalf of the organization to the general public			
Assist with mediating conflicts with the University administration, other organizations, or other entities			
ELECTIONS			
Attend all elections			
Provide officers feedback on each candidate			
Count all ballots with non-candidate student			
ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES			
Receive copies of all official correspondence			
Review and proof all official correspondence before being distributed			