What is an Advisor?

An advisor is a faculty or staff member who provides 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 a student advocate. An advisor is one who gives ideas, shares insight, provides a different perspective, and encourages organization members.

An advisor is a full time faculty member, staff member and/or graduate assistant of TAMU that agrees to be an educational resource and consultant for an organization and its members. The advisor should be a caring individual with a genuine interest for students, the organization, and their programs and activities.

Requirements for Advisors Based on Organization Category

- **Sponsored organizations** shall have a full-time professional staff member whose job description designates them as the primary advisor to the sponsored organization.
- **Affiliated organizations** may select their own advisor in cooperation with the Department of Student Activities who must be a full-time university employee who possesses the skills and/or training necessary to advise the organization.
- **Registered organizations** may select their own advisor, who may be a faculty member, professional or associate staff member, or graduate assistant.

Recruiting an Advisor

Before approaching a potential advisor, keep in mind the following by finding someone who:

- Will have the time to devote to your organization
- Will take the role willingly and seriously
- Has knowledge or skills related to the mission and purpose of your organization

Make sure that a potential advisor has a clear understanding of the organization’s mission, activities, and your expectations for his/her duties and time commitment. Allow the person a reasonable length of time to consider his/her decision.
This Advisor Agreement Letter is included at the end of the online training session required for advisors. Should an advisor wish to make an additional agreement with their organization, they can as long as it does not contradict the online training information.

The Department of Student Activities appreciates your commitment to serve as an advisor to a recognized student organization(s) at Texas A&M University. The advisor plays an integral role in helping student leaders create an environment within their organizations that is productive, safe, enjoyable, and educational. To this end, we believe it is important to provide clear guidance and support regarding the expected role you will play as you interface with the organization.

Please affirm your understanding of the following advisor expectations with regard to advisor qualifications:

- I am a Texas A&M University employee as defined by the Texas A&M Human Resources Department, an employee of the Texas A&M Health Science Center in the Bryan/College Station area, or an employee of a Bryan/College Station-based agency in the TAMU System.
- I am employed at a level consistent with the categorization of the organization I advise.
- I am familiar with the activities of the organization and have (or am willing to obtain) an appropriate level of experience, resources, or knowledge related to those activities and mission of the organization.
- I will participate in an annually required advisor development seminar. This seminar will be aimed at enhancing my advising skills, introducing me to the resources available for student organizations, and helping me meet the expectations outlined above and below.
- As an advisor, you will perform your greatest service by facilitating opportunities for students to exercise initiative and judgment within a proper measure of autonomy when coordinating events or activities.
- I will, along with my student leaders, establish a clear understanding of the roles that each of us will play in the organization.
- I will regularly attend executive meetings, general meetings, and organizational events and be available outside of those meetings/events for advice and consultation related to the operations of the organization.
- I will review all documentation regarding student organizational events including but not limited to contracts, event forms, concessions forms, travel forms, etc. I understand that I am the final approval for organizational events.
- I will assist the organization in developing realistic goals for the year that will contribute to the educational and personal development of the students involved.
- Recognized student organizations at Texas A&M University are required to coordinate financial transactions with the Student Organization Finance Center (SOFC). Valuable information regarding fiscal management procedures and guidelines can be found online at sofc.tamu.edu.
- Please affirm your understanding of the following advisor expectations with regard to organizational finances by placing a check in the box to the left of the statement.
- I will regularly receive statement notices from the SOFC. These statements will be posted on StuAct Online.
- I will be aware of the organization’s financial status via a review of these statements and the approval of expenditures relating to the organization.
- I will ensure that the organization and its officers know where rules and guidelines are published, what the rules are, why they exist, and the consequences for choosing to operate outside their parameters.
- I will report all rule violations or potential violations to the appropriate university officials.
- I am familiar with the organization’s constitution and all other governing documents including by-laws, risk management policies, and new member requirements (if applicable).
- The organization-advisor relationship is not a one-way street, in that the student organization and its leaders also have responsibilities. These responsibilities include an appropriate level of communication, providing opportunities for advisor interaction, and a commitment to the success of the organization as a whole.
- I have read and understand the expectations of a student organization advisor and am willing to serve as the student organization advisor in this capacity. A discussion regarding these expectations has taken place between me and the student organization.
- If I feel I am unable to function in the capacity of advisor, I will provide advanced written notification to the Department of Student Activities and the organization’s officers. If my employment status changes, I will notify the Department of Student Activities immediately.
Principles & Practices of an Effective Advisor

- Develop leaders by challenging the students to strive for excellence
- Encourage and assist the student organization in setting & reaching goals
- Promote diversity within the organization and campus involvement
- Establish a consistent working relationship with leaders and members
- Guide officers in principles of good organizational and administrative skills
- Provide continuity to the organization’s polices, programs, and traditions
- Advise organization’s officers on finances and review financial statements periodically
- Ensure officer transition and orientation of new members

Best Practices of Advisors

Under the tenets of the Facilitator University Model, advisors work collaboratively with students sharing responsibility for the organization and its events. Be open to suggestions and feedback that your advisor may provide, as his/her knowledge and experience will help in exploring solutions and implementing organizational procedures. Discuss your expectations for each other, and set up regular meetings about the organization’s activities and events. Here are some additional points about the role and practices of student organization advisors:

- Advisors are trained and knowledgeable about the student rules related to student organizations, and are great resources about policies and procedures.
- Advisors should have access to the guiding documents and policies for the student organization. Make sure your advisor has an updated copy of your constitution and operations manual.
- Advisors are trained to report and follow up on any discipline issues for the organization and/or its members.
- Advisors are here to support and guide your organization, empowering you to make fair, intelligent, and reasonable decisions based on the information and guiding boundaries at your disposal.

The key point is to work collaboratively with your advisor to encourage organization success and rewarding experiences for all.
Responsibilities of the Organization to the Advisor

The following are responsibilities of organization members to their advisor:

- Keep the advisor informed about the programs, activities, and progress of the organization.
- In addition to regular organization meeting times, the organization officers should meet regularly with the advisor to discuss the affairs of the organization.
- Asking the advisor for their opinion and advice when problems arise in the organization.
- All organization expenditures must be authorized by the advisor and the organization president.
- The advisor should be recognized as an integral member of the organization. Remember, the advisor is assisting the organization on personal time beyond normal university duties. Proper courtesy should be extended to the advisor at all times.

Advisors & Officer Transition

One of the most important functions of an advisor is to assist in the transition from one set of organization officers to the next. The advisor is often the one who has seen changes, knows what works, and can help maintain continuity through the officer transition each year. Investing time in a good officer transition early on will mean less time spent throughout the year training new officers.

The key to a successful transition is making sure new officers know their jobs BEFORE they take office. Expectations should be clearly defined. There are a number of ways to conduct the officer transition.

When Leaving the Advisor Role

When leaving the advisor role, providing good transition is critical. Try to do the following before you depart:

- Inform the organization President of your intentions and explain his/her options.
- Assist the President in identifying possible new advisors. It would be helpful for you to recruit colleagues who may be willing to work with the organization.
- Meet with the new advisor and pass on valuable information about the organization. You are the best person to train a new advisor and orient him/her to the organization.
- Lastly, remove your name from the organization’s roster on StuAct Online.