



## LSC Student Life Organization Advisors

This advisor guide has been established for the purpose of assisting the student organization advisors with guidelines, policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities at Lake Superior College.

### **Background**

In 12 different studies conducted over the past 20 years, the authors depicted that students gain approximately 30% of their college education in the classroom. The remaining 70% is learned in out-of-classroom experiences. In two different studies, approximately 40% of the students stated that what they learned outside the classroom was the most significant portion of their college education.

Keeping this in mind, student-run organizations play a significant role in the education process. It is important to remember that students learn through doing. Whether they do things right the first time or make mistakes, students will benefit more when they are making the decisions.

This leads to a difficult challenge for an advisor. Advisors must be patient and avoid controlling the organization. Your experiences have given you a wealth of knowledge of what works, and what doesn't work. With this knowledge, it is very difficult not to step in and make decisions for the group. It is easier to simply make the decisions and provide solutions quickly for the organization. However, if you allow the students to discover the answers for themselves and to let them try different approaches to problems or group development, the students will reap the benefits. Advisors must take a back seat and allow students the opportunity to run their organization. The organization is for the students, and decisions should be made by the students. An advisor who begins to take control by making the decisions or by presiding over meetings runs the risk of students leaving the organization.

## **Advisor's Guide**

Advisors provide invaluable information and assistance to the student organization. The first step is getting off on the right foot with the current student leadership of that organization. It begins with the advisor and the student leaders sharing an open, honest relationship and having the opportunity to share ideas, receive feedback and build the trust that is needed for a productive organization. Once this relationship is established, the advisor and the student leadership together will be able to provide consistent, effective leadership to the organization.

In building this relationship, an agreement must be reached by both parties as to their responsibilities to each other. The advisor should call a meeting with the executive officers before, or very soon after, the start of the board's term of office. At this meeting, both the advisor and the executive board should agree upon certain roles and responsibilities of both the student leadership and the advisor. This will insure both parties understand what is expected of them in relationship to each other.

### **The responsibilities of the membership to the advisor should include the following:**

- Advisors must be recognized as an integral part of the organization, even though the advisor is not a voting member. This calls for special courtesies and considerations on the part of the membership. Advisors should be welcomed at all meetings and social events, and at the end of these events, should also be thanked for attending.
- Meetings should be planned with the advisor's schedule in mind. Advisors should be able to attend all meetings of the organization.
- Inform the advisor of all meeting dates, times, and locations.
- Place an advisor's report on meeting agendas.
- Insure the advisor receives copies of the meeting minutes.
- The presiding officer of the organization should meet regularly with the advisor to discuss all matters pertaining to the organization and provide an informational update on ongoing plans and activities.
- Members should ask the advisor for advice when problems arise within the organization.
- All members must work on good communication between themselves, the organization, and their advisor. Advisors will know when they are appreciated and when they can improve their services if good feedback is provided by the membership.
- Maintain a professional attitude during meetings.
- Follow through on decisions.
- Be open to constructive advice and criticism.
- Understand that the role of an advisor is that of a benefit, not hindrance.

### **The advisor should agree to the following responsibilities to the membership:**

- Become acquainted with all of the members of the organization. Let them know that you care for each student as an individual.
- Assess the organization's goals, and communicate whether or not they are achieving these goals.
- Maintain an open and honest communicative link with the officers. Schedule individual meetings with the presiding officer to share ideas and provide feedback.
- Attend as many meetings as possible.
- Advise and evaluate all of the officers on the performance of their duties.

- Be aware of institutional standards and policies as they pertain to the organization.
- Assist the membership in the development of a good recruitment plan.
- Help new members feel welcome.

A difficult challenge for students involved in clubs/organizations is time management. They have to make tough choices when it comes to their academic responsibilities and those of the organization. This is where an advisor plays an important role in the success of each member and the organization.

### **The Many Hats of the Advisor**

What is the role of an advisor for a student club/organization? An advisor wears many hats to assist the students in the organization. An advisor is a mentor, supervisor, teacher, leader, and a follower. An advisor is also accessible, patient, committed, professional, open minded, a care giver, consultant, role model, and an advocate.

**Mentor** - As a mentor, an advisor can be described as developing a one-to-one learning relationship between the advisor and a student based on modeling behavior and on an extended, shared dialogue. There are five qualities that characterize a good mentor:

1. Successful in their own profession.
2. Behave in ways worthy of emulation.
3. Supportive in working with students. They are patient, slow to criticize, and willing to work with students who are less developed in their educational goals.
4. They provide praise to those that have been successful.
5. Provide periodic, detailed, and honest feedback to students.

**Supervisor** - As a supervisor, an advisor understands the needs of the organization. This knowledge is used to assist students in running a successful organization. Six stages in the supervisory cycle have been identified:

1. Team Building. The key here is to work with the president and the executive board of the organization soon after their appointment or election to the position.
2. Performance planning. In this stage advisors assist the students in writing position descriptions, establishing and listing expectations, and setting goals for the organization.
3. Communication. This stage includes the sharing of knowledge with the students of the organization.
4. Recognition. Advisors need a knowledge of student emotions, characteristics, and backgrounds in order to act effectively in all situations.
5. Self-assessment. Assisting students to conduct a self-assessment on their skills, responsibilities, and their academic programs is another avenue to achieve success for the students and the organization.
6. Evaluation. Evaluating provides the opportunity for the advisor to contribute feedback to the organization and to the individual members.

**Teacher** - In teaching, the most important thing is not the amount of time that is spent with the students or the organizations, but it is the quality of that contact that makes it significant. Advisors want students to succeed both academically and socially. If the time spent with students or organizations is of poor quality, the student will develop a negative attitude toward both the faculty and the institution.

**Leader** - Many students join and participate in clubs/organizations to develop leadership skills. There is no one method, or sure fire course that can make a leader. There are numerous indicators of leadership, skills that a leader should possess, and an infinite number of traits that make a good leader. By encouraging students to participate in various types of leadership training and workshops, advisors assist the students in achieving their goal, and of course, it also assists the organization, the institution, and society as a whole.

**Follower** - Understanding the characteristics of followers is essential to an advisor. Followers have expectations of their leaders, and assisting the student leadership to identify these expectations leads to organizational success. If members of an organization choose not to follow the student leadership, a major catastrophe is at hand. Advisors must take this problem seriously, and assist the student leadership in identifying the expectations of the membership.

**Patient** - Remembering that Rome was not built in a day, advisors must be patient. Every election brings in different leaders. Some students are ready to take the role as a leader, while others require training and support. Advisors play a significant role in fostering the students in need, and understand that development and change takes time.

**Commitment** - Being an advisor demonstrates your commitment to students and the organization. Prosperous organizations have advisors that are willing to go the extra mile when the times get hard. They don't give up and let the students or the organization flounder during these times.

**Professional** - Being a professional, the advisor acts as a role model for the students. This sets the stage for an environment for students to emulate. Professionalism leads only to success and respect for both the students and the organization that they represent.

**Open Minded** - By being open minded, advisors can assist students in exploring and discovering new ideas and ways of thinking. By keeping an open mind, advisors can learn along with the organization, and discover great new possibilities that may have been considered impossibilities in the past.

**Care Giver** - Advisors are also care givers to the students and the organization. By having their basic needs supplied, students are able to move forward on their pathways to success. When the needs of the organization have been met, the organization has a strong foundation that will stand the pressures of constant transition, change, and development over time.

**Consultant** - An advisor is a consultant in the most basic form. Advisors constantly share their expertise in the numerous areas that require discussion. Advisors that contribute their knowledge allow the student leadership to weigh the possibilities before any type of decision is made.

**Accessible** - Advisors must be accessible to the organization and to the members. Setting aside time for all the meetings, and for the membership demonstrates your commitment to the group. This also displays a behavior for the members to emulate.

**Role Model** - Students will first look at their advisor as the person that sits high on a pedestal. Teaching by example and serving as a role model for the student membership promotes strength within the organization. The "do as I say, and not as I do" statement only leads to major problems within the organization. These problems can lead to the demise of the organization.

**Advocate** - As an advocate, the advisor defends the rights and responsibilities of the students and the organization. As the advisor champions the cause of the students, the students build self-esteem and respect for the organization. Whether the cause is won or lost, the students realize that they are an important part of the institution, the organization, and significant members of society.

**Membership** - Recruiting and retaining membership for an organization may be a challenge for some organizations. This depends on the nature of the organization. For clubs that serve as an educational link, the recruitment and retention are somewhat easy. Special interest clubs may have a much more difficult time with recruitment and retention, which is a crucial component of success.

### **Conflict Resolution**

As an advisor of a student organization, you will be in the delicate position where you will have to deal with conflict. Communication is the base which is most likely to cause conflict. It can be woven with politics, funding issues, organizational structure, and any of the other numerous factors that can cause conflict or problems within the organization. Listed below are a few tips to keep in mind when dealing with conflict resolution:

Do not take sides with anyone involved in the conflict.

- Do not become emotionally involved. This will help keep an open mind.
- From the very beginning, presume that each person involved has warranted positions.
- It is important to always listen quietly, even if things get unreasonable.
- To listen is not to judge.
- Everything should be allowed to be voiced, no matter the expressions or emotions that are voiced.
- Make sure you understand what the person is trying to say. Is the person saying one thing, but really conveying a different message?
- Avoid interrupting or arguing with the person.
- Remember that individual differences are significant.
- Avoid using your own personal experiences or using yourself as an example when dealing with conflicts.
- Be careful of making someone feel that something is common and insignificant.
- Be cautious of your own personal feelings (biases and/or prejudices) in relating to individuals whose personalities may clash with your own.
- If the two individuals cannot talk with each other, talk to each one separately.
- Communication is the key. Clarify the point, even if you think you understand. This may have caused the conflict in the first place.

### **Managing Stress (Source: University of Missouri)**

Stress is pressure from the outside that makes us experience tension and anxiety inside. Some stress is good for us as it keeps us alert and active, but too much stress can cause physical as well as psychological problems. The following strategies can help you control and manage stress, which can have a great effect on the length and quality of your life.

**Self Awareness** - Be aware of YOU ! Be aware of your needs, values, and desires. Listen to your body.

**Budget Your Time and Energies** - What are the most important things to do today? Make a list in order of importance and attack accordingly. Take on no more or less than you can handle. Learn to pace yourself.

**Operate in a Supportive Environment** - Organize your personal space so it works for you. After being around a hectic, chaotic environment, you need quiet, private space, and fill it with things that are meaningful to you.

**Change Your Way of Looking at Things** - Being positive, not negative, can reduce a lot of stress. Put problems in a broader perspective. Step outside the situation and decide how important the whole thing is.

**Work Off Stress** - Exercise regularly and often - dealing with stress calls for physical stamina. Exercise is a great way to release tension. It can lift your spirits, relax you, and increase your energy.

**Eat Regularly** - Don't skip meals. Your energy level will go down quicker without nutrition. Never think that you haven't got the time to eat. Get enough sleep and rest. Fatigue can reduce your ability to cope with stress.

**Learn How to Relax** - Learn one technique that works for you. Twenty minutes of relaxation a day can be a great help to your health and make for better decision making, increased energy, and clear thinking.

**Talk Out Your Problems** - Seek out a trusted friend, etc. You'll be surprised how it lightens your burden. Problems, when kept to yourself, tend to appear much worse than when you share them with a friend.

**Learn the Art of Mini-Escape** - When pressures begin to mount too high, give yourself some breathing room and retreat. Take time out for a walk, see a movie, read a book, learn to relax and re-energize yourself. Putting distance between you and the pressure (even if it's only temporary) sometimes not only relieves stress, but provides some helpful insight into your pressure.

**Don't Self-Medicare** - Relieving stress with cigarettes, alcohol, tranquilizers, and sleeping pills may help temporarily, but you pay a high price by impairing your health. Shouting, crying, or taking a bath may get you through, but they cannot be relied upon for a long-term solution.

**Express Your Anger** - Learn how to fight fairly - it can clear the air and relieve a lot of stress. Be sure the issue is worth fighting for; don't hassle over every little thing.

**Develop a Supportive Network of Caring People Around You** - It's a medical fact that those who have close supportive relationships with others live longer, healthier, more stress-free lives. Giving and receiving love and care are basic needs of all of us.

## **Motivation**

As an advisor, understanding what motivates students will be a valuable asset to the student organization. Some students have an internal desire to be involved, to work hard, and to make a difference within the organization. On the other hand, other students are not ambitious at all. If

you are able to understand the range of motivating elements, you will be able to help those students take on responsibility and become more involved. According to Hersey and Blanchard, "Motives are sometimes defined as needs, wants, drives, or impulses within the individual. Motives are directed toward goals, which may be conscious or subconscious.... Goals are often called incentives by psychologists." Student motivation can be divided into two major categories: extrinsic (recognition, money, and achievement) and intrinsic (desire, value, and approval).

### **Extrinsic Motives**

- **Recognition.** This is probably the most used to motivate students in an organization. Here it is important to remember that no one thing can be used for all members. Students have their own motives and their idea of recognition. It is critical that these differences be noted for each individual.
- **Money.** This is an area where caution must be taken. When dealing with any amount of money, emotions play an important role. Money always seems to bring out the worst in people. When money is used, it also takes away from the spirit of volunteerism, commitment to the organization. If any type of funds are to be used, be sure to establish certain criteria for those who are eligible.
- **Achievement.** The achievement element in motivation may be defined as a tendency to overcome obstructions, to exercise authority, to strive to do something challenging as well and as swiftly as possible. Students that are driven by achievement assume increasing levels of responsibility and authority. They may even be looking for additional power to be gained from the various positions that a student organization has to offer. They also may seek out tasks that other students do not wish to assume due to the difficulty of the task. As an advisor you must work with this type of student closely to avoid having the student become frustrated with the organization. Students that are achievement oriented may lose their motivation due to the manner of less driven students, the pace of a project, or failing to have other students involved in performing a task or a project.

### **Intrinsic Motives**

- **Desire.** Students are interested and become involved in organizations that have a desirable outcome. Students do not wish to be involved in an organization that has aversive effects. Many students who have the desire factor consider leadership positions within the organization, a special project, attending conferences, if they already know that it has a beneficial result. The perceived reputation of the organization has a lot to do with this motivational factor. If students view that an organization is undesirable, they will not consider joining the club.
- **Value.** If students recognize any type of value in participating in a student organization may be motivated to get involved. These students may wish to participate in chairing a committee, or attending a conference to receive their reward for involvement. This reward could be simple recognition of their committee being noticed by the institution. Students also would get the reward of educational value when becoming involved in an organization, or the learning experiences that they offer.
- **Approval.** Students may be motivated by earning some sort of approval or recognition from their peers and superiors. A simple pat on the back, or a job well done note travels far in students seeking approval.