

STUDENT ACTIVITIES OFFICE

Advisor Handbook

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Lisa Magnarelli '96

Assistant Dean of Students for Campus Life / Director of Student Activities

(315) 859-4194

lmagnare@hamilton.edu

Dave Eng

Assistant Director of Student Activities

(315) 859-4516

deng@hamilton.edu



Hamilton

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If you have questions about the content of this publication, please contact:

Lisa Magnarelli '96, Director of Student Activities
Dave Eng, Assistant Director of Student Activities

Student Activities Office

315-859-4194

315-859-4196 (fax)

https://my.hamilton.edu/college/student_activities/
Sadove Student Center at Emerson Hall, 2nd Floor

MANY THANKS TO DOUG ADAMS AND MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE FOR ALLOWING US TO REPRINT SECTIONS OF THEIR ADVISOR MANUAL AND CALL THEM OUR OWN. WE OWE YOU MAN.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the world of advising student organizations. Advisement provides a wonderful opportunity for you to get to know students better and to gain the satisfaction of knowing that you helped guide students in the development of a successful organization or program. Advising an organization does require additional time demands; however, the rewards gained by advising are great, and more than compensate for these demands.

Advisors for student clubs are important catalysts for the learning that happens out of the classroom and have the potential to influence and develop that learning. Student clubs and organizations are effective avenues for students to implement theories they have learned in class, to dialogue about what they are learning in the classroom, to develop friendships, to network with professionals, and to improve their interpersonal, communication and leadership skills. Student involvement and interaction with faculty are considered determining factors in students' satisfaction, intellectual and personal development, and persistence (Floerchinger, 1992), and student organizations are one way to encourage student-faculty relationships.

PURPOSE OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The purpose of student organizations is to provide students with opportunities to participate in activities that develop their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical, and professional abilities. These organizations are important components to the academic life of the College. To meet all the different developmental needs of students, Hamilton offers a multitude of student groups. Every student is encouraged to become a member of those clubs that appeal to their interest. Floerchinger found that involvement in student organizations:

- Improves students' interpersonal skills
- Has a positive influence on skills in leadership, communication, teamwork, organizing, decision-making and planning
- Gives students a greater satisfaction with their college experience
- Provides useful experience in obtaining a job and providing job related skills
- Develops lifelong values of volunteerism and service to others

ADVISING TIPS

1. At the beginning develop clear expectations about the role of the advisor and your relationship to the organization.
2. Read the group's constitution.
3. Get to know all of the members and attend their events.
4. Develop a working relationship with the president and other officers.
5. Discuss concerns with officers in private and praise them in public.
6. Remember to let the students make the decisions while you provide guidance and advice.
7. Be familiar with College policies.
8. Meet with the officers and help them set goals.
9. At all times, keep your sense of humor.

DEFINING ADVISOR

All student organizations are encouraged to have a faculty or staff advisor. An advisor should be either a full-time member of the faculty (not on sabbatical) or a full-time member of the staff or administration. The extent of involvement with an organization must be determined by the advisor and the organizer's officers. Some general guidelines include:

- Meeting with the organization's chair or president once a month
- Meeting with the group's executive board at least once a semester. (Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed or desired.)
- Attending at least one meeting/event with the entire organization. (Additional meetings may be attended as needed or desired.)
- Requesting and receiving regular updates from organization meetings.
- Acting as a liaison between the organization and the administration.
- Attending an advisor's workshop (sponsored by the Student Activities Office) once a year.

Advising is a developmental process in which an advisor shares ideas and insights, provides a different perspective, counsels students, and facilitates learning to assist students in their academic, personal, and professional development.

An advisor facilitates the maintenance of a strong organization by providing continuity and keeping new members and officers informed of the history of the organization.

The advisor does not control the organization or make all the decisions for the students but provides a balanced perspective so students can make the most informed decisions possible.

What does it mean that advising is a developmental process? A developmental advising approach:

- Is concerned about human potential and growth.
- Requires establishing caring relationships with students.
- Encourages students to take responsibility for their actions.
- Provides opportunities for students to explore their ideas.
- Encourages values of volunteerism, civic engagement, and social responsibility.
- Builds connections between academic and student affairs to assist students in achieving goals.
- Engages the advisor and the student with both making equal contributions to the relationship.

The above description of the developmental advising approach was adapted from *Academic Advising for Student Success and Retention* (Hovland, Anderson & Associates, 1997).

ENHANCE YOUR EXPERIENCE AS AN ADVISOR BY:

- Getting to know students on an individual level. Learn what they want to get out of the organization
- Attending the organization's meetings and events
- Reaching out to other advisors or departments (i.e. Student Activities) for assistance and support
- Empowering students to take action and to take satisfaction in seeing the student organization succeed

Advisor Functions

It may be helpful to think of the advisor's role in terms of three major areas: (1) maintenance or custodial functions; (2) group growth functions; and (3) program content functions. Within each of these broad areas, the group advisor may perform certain duties that call for considerable activity on his/her part in some specific situations and instances or none at all.

Maintenance Functions

Here are those advisory activities that serve to maintain the existence of the student organization and to keep it out of difficulty:

- Providing continuity with the history and tradition of past years
- Preventing the group from breaking the university's rules
- Heading off situations that might give rise to poor public relations for the organization or the institution
- Serving as an exemplar of intellectual virtue
- Providing advice when called upon
- Arbitrating intra-group disputes

Group Growth Functions

Those advisory activities that improve the operation and effectiveness of the group and help it progress toward its goals may be referred to as group growth functions. They are facilitating functions that are useful without particular reference to the program content. Related advisory activities might include:

- Teaching the techniques and responsibilities of being a good leader and follower
- Teaching the elements of effective group operation
- Coaching the officers in the principles of good organizational and administrative practice
- Developing procedures and plans for action
- Developing self-discipline and responsibility among group members
- Keeping the group focused on its goals
- Stimulating or even initiating activities and programs

Program Content Functions

Obviously, a student organization should exist for other purposes than to perpetuate itself and improve its internal operation. It is in the area of program content that the faculty advisor assumes a genuinely educational function and one that can parallel, complement, or supplement the formal curricular offering of the college. Here the advisor answers the question, "For what?" It is here that the advisor can stimulate the intelligence and ability of the student participants and

help them to plan activities that will contribute to their own intellectual development while enriching campus life. Advisory activities related to program content might include the following:

- Introducing new program ideas with an intellectual flavor
- Providing opportunities for the practice of classroom-acquired skills
- Helping the group to apply principles and concepts learned in the classroom
- Pointing out new perspectives and directions to the group
- Supplying expert knowledge and insights of experience

Keep in Mind

Here is a list of some things to keep in mind when working with student leaders.

1. It is important to not direct the activities of the club. Allow students to make their own decisions and learn from their experiences.
2. Failing is part of the learning process. Mistakes and poor decisions will happen. While it may be your first reaction to intervene and fix all the mistakes you see, this is not the role of the advisor. You can help students to think through their actions and to consider various possibilities but the final decisions must be theirs. Take advantage of failures and use them as teachable moments with students.
3. Remember, it is your responsibility to ensure that students understand what the consequences are for their decisions. Be pro-active when a controversial situation arises but let them make the decision. Help students take ownership of their decision and responsibility for any consequences that may follow.
4. Assist students with the development of a budget and the spending of their funds. Do not control the finances of the club. Your primary role is to monitor the expenses, provide feedback on the budget, and review expenditures.

OK, SO WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

1. Be There. College students are adults; every meeting does not need your attendance. Still your frequent presence is important at executive board, officers' meetings and/or general meetings. If possible, set up a regular meeting with the president to plan agendas for executive and general meetings. It demonstrates your interest and provides continuity.
2. Help Plan. Successful activities take planning. Encourage foresight. Help the group think through its event plans. Pay attention to other College activities and dates and help the group be realistic. The staff of the Student Activities Office can help in planning.
3. Know College Policies. The College Handbook and the *Club Manual* gives the regulations and procedures for student organizations covering these topics:

- Use of college name.
- Use of campus facilities.
- Use of a student organization mailbox.
- A financial account through Student Assembly or Student Activities.
- Ability to establish membership dues and raise funds.
- The opportunity to request funds from Student Assembly.
- The ability to use Student Activities supplies to publicize programs, events and activities.
- Utilize the Student Activities Office website to make information available.
- The opportunity to create an organization campus email address.
- Use of campus e-mail listservs.
- Use of College vehicles (when available).
- Use of College Print Shop.
- Opportunity to schedule events through the Campus Activities Coordinating Committee (CACC).
- Campus server account in SSS.
- Cashbox lending, storage and security.
- Computer printer use.
- Assistance in developing programs.
- Sound and technical support for programs.
- Artist and event contacts.
- Tabling and Fundraising in Beinecke Village / Martin's Way

4. Scheduling and Event Planning. Student organization planning events that will be attended by anyone outside the organization's membership, events that involve expenses, income, or contracts, should work through the Student Activities staff. The student in charge of the event should contact Dave Eng Assistant Director of Student Activities (deng@hamilton.edu, x4516) in Student Activities at least two weeks in advance of the event.

Student Activities staff will help students with accessing their student accounts, schedule space, request funds, and plan the event.

5. Manage Risk. As an advisor of a student organization whose finances Student Activities and the SA Finance Committee manage and as a member of the Hamilton faculty or staff, you are included in the liability coverage provided by the College for student organization activities. Encourage students to plan safe events and manage their risks. Insist that all plans consider state law and *College Policies*.
6. Use Available Facilities. The College attempts to make facilities available to student organizations, and reserving them is described the *Student Organization Manual*. Advance planning is the key to reserving space. There is much competition for rooms on some nights

and weekends. Student organization scheduling is done through the online Events Calendar available here: https://r25.hamilton.edu/wv33p/wv3_servlet/urd/run/wv_request.Request

7. Know About Money. Encourage a treasurer's report in each executive board meeting. Student Activities will help give current student leadership account information.
8. Encourage students to keep their online registration and the Student Activities Office informed with:
 - up-to-date officers' lists with names and contact information
 - any changes in officers
 - additions to advisory committee problems the group is having
 - national or international conference opportunities
 - awards or honors received by individuals or the group

Updates to the organization's registration can be made online here: http://my.hamilton.edu/college/student_activities/studentorgs/

Please note that access to the club's registration is available only to two students: 1) the current president and 2) the current treasurer. For more information on how to access the organization's registration online please contact Dave Eng Assistant Director of Student Activities (deng@hamilton.edu, x4516)

9. Understand Commercial Sponsorship. College policy does not allow the financial support of student organizations by commercial sponsors.
10. Mentor Others. You may not be the advisor forever. Mentor an adjunct advisor or an advisory committee, giving each member a specific task or officer to advise. Trade off the role of senior advisor with other committee members.
11. Use Available Services. Lists of students' directory information are available on request with some limitations. Student organizations may fundraise through Student Activities, maintain a free College-based website, telephone access, and email address. Ask Student Activities or consult the *Club Manual* for a complete list of services available.
12. Blow the Whistle on Hazing. Hazing is prohibited. Hazing is defined as any action or situation that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of another person for the purpose of membership, advancement, or continued good standing in any organization or group recognized by the College. In addition, any requirement by a member or pledge which compels a member or pledge to participate in any activity that is against College policy or New York State Law is defined as hazing.

Hazing behaviors include but are not limited to the following:

- forcing or requiring an individual to drink alcohol or use other substances or consume unreasonable amounts of food;
- engaging in activities that compel an individual or group to remain at a certain place, or transporting anyone anywhere without their knowledge and/or consent (road trips, kidnaps, etc.);
- creating excessive fatigue or distress through the deprivation of privacy, sufficient sleep, or decent and edible meals;
- participating in morally degrading or humiliating games and activities;
- participating in or creation of situations that cause physical harm or emotional strain, such as causing a member or non-member to be the object of malicious amusement or ridicule;
- using brutality or force.

Any of these activities, if a condition either directly or indirectly, of membership, advancement, or good standing in a College-recognized organization, shall be presumed to be a forced activity, the willingness of an individual to participate in such activity notwithstanding.

Hazing is a violation of the New York State Law when such action by a group or organization recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or involves the forced consumption of liquor or drugs for the purpose of initiation or affiliation with any organization. Any individual/group or organization found responsible for hazing will be subject to disciplinary action, which may result in probation, suspension, or revocation of College recognition.

Spending a considerable amount of time questioning whether or not a particular activity violates the hazing policy is usually a good indication that the activity may indeed be considered hazing. For additional clarification, or to discuss the matter further in a safe and confidential setting, feel free to contact Lisa Magnarelli in the Student Activities Office (x4194).

13. Give praise. Students can get useful positive feedback from you. Don't hesitate to tell them they've done well. Your opinion means a great deal.

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. As the stability of the organization, the advisor has seen changes, knows what works and can help maintain continuity. Investing time in a good officer transition early on will mean less time spent throughout the year nursing new officers through the semester. Student Activities staff is here to help.

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. The following two methods are examples of two commonly used methods.

The Team Effort The team effort involves the outgoing-officer board, the advisor, and the incoming-officer board. This method involves a retreat or series of meetings where outgoing officers work with incoming officers on:

1. Past records/notebooks for their office and updating those together
2. Discussion topics should include:
 - Completed projects for the past year.
 - Upcoming/incomplete projects.
 - Challenges and setbacks.
 - Anything the new officers need to know to do their job effectively.

TIP

In April, take the time to meet as a group to review events and programs, do an inventory of supplies and equipment and decide what direction you will take in the fall.

The advisor's role may be to:

- Facilitate discussion and be a sounding board for ideas.
- Organize and provide the structure of a retreat.
- Offer suggestions on various questions.
- Refrain from telling new officers what they should do.
- Fill in the blanks. If an outgoing officer doesn't know how something was done, or doesn't have records to pass on to the new officer, you can help that officer by providing the information he or she doesn't have.

The structure of a team effort retreat can take many forms. The advisor's role in this process is to provide historical background when needed, help keep goals specific, attainable and measurable and provide advice on college policies and procedures. This is an outline of a team effort retreat:

1. Icebreakers and team-builders
2. Officer meetings
 - New/old officers pair off (president with president, treasurer with treasurer)
 - Update each section of notebooks, or talk about what should go in a new one. If officers do not have a notebook, take the time to create one!
 - Each pair of officers should discuss the following:
 - Who did the outgoing officer interact with most in Student Activities, Catering; Facilities, Scheduling, and other student organizations, College administration and in the community?
 - With the departments/areas listed above, what capacity did the outgoing officer work with them on?
 - What College paperwork is this position responsible for completing?

- What did the outgoing officer have to do with the organization's Finance Committee funding requests?
 - What College procedures did the outgoing officer have the most trouble with and how can the incoming officer avoid those troubles?
 - What were the biggest challenges the outgoing officer faced and how did they overcome them?
 - What goals did the outgoing officer have, and which were achieved and which were not.
3. Joint officer meeting
- Gather as a group; write everyone's notes on a board or flip chart. Note similarities. For instance, the president and treasurer may always interact with the Assistant Director of Student Activities or the Student Assembly Treasurer.
 - Generate a discussion on similarities, challenges and how challenges can be overcome.
 - Review the *Club Manual*. Have outgoing officers talk about helpful sections.
4. New officer meeting (This could be a separate meeting, or the next phase of the retreat.)
- Goal review. What did the past officers accomplish?
 - What is left to do from the past goal list? Revise list or eliminate it if the officers choose. Provide new officers time to list goals for their position on their own.
 - Reassemble and share updated goals.
 - Brainstorm new goals for the organization and ideas for programs, fundraisers, and social events.
 - Make an exhaustive list of everything the group could possibly accomplish.
 - Narrow down that list to what they can reasonably accomplish.
 - Assign tasks to specific officers. If no one wants to do it, take it off the goals list.

One-on-One Training, Advisor with Officers

While it is ideal to have the outgoing officer team assist in training the incoming officers, often it is left up to the advisor to educate the incoming officers. In that situation, there should be a joint meeting of the new officers to learn about their positions. You can be very helpful in this situation. After that meeting, the advisor should meet individually with each officer; examine the notebook of the previous officer and/or help create a new one.

Things to include in a new notebook:

1. A copy of the organization's constitution and by-laws
2. Copies of previous meeting agendas
3. Past years financial ledgers and relevant documents and receipts
4. Organizational financial account numbers (student assembly, liability, etc...)
5. Past years rosters and membership information
6. Organizational e-mail addresses and passwords

Talk about what the officers hope to accomplish in the forthcoming year. Assess the officer's role in the organization. What are the expectations of each position? What are the student's expectations of the position and his/her goals? If they deal with programming, go through the guidelines in the *Club Manual* for event planning or visit the Student Activities web page at https://my.hamilton.edu/college/student_activities/.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A very important area where you can lend your expertise to student organizations is in the realm of financial situations. Student organizations at Hamilton are eligible to receive funds from the Student Activities Fee through the Student Assembly Finance Committee. Detailed guidelines are updated regularly and may be found in the *Club Manual*.

Where Do Problems Happen With Money and Student Groups?

1. Contract Preparation

This is an area where you need to be involved. Any negotiation with outside vendors, speakers or performers must be reviewed and approved by Student Activities.

STUDENTS OR ADVISORS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SIGN A CONTRACT – this must be done by a Student Activities staff member. Remember, by signing a contract they are legally obligating the College, and may be obligating themselves.

Contracts are legal obligations and you should help them read the fine print. If a group defaults on a contract, consequences could be severe.

2. Proper Documentation For Reimbursement

Disbursements of funds must be handled according to the procedures outlined by Student Activities and the Student Assembly Finance Committee.

- Reimbursements are normally made by either check or cash.
- An **original invoice** or **receipt** from the vendor must accompany the reimbursement.
- All original invoices and receipts must be supplied to Student Activities. If additional copies of the invoices or receipts are needed, copies should be made prior to visiting Student Activities.
- Goods and services purchased must be described in sufficient detail before the Student Assembly Finance Committee approves the request. An explanation must be given about how the expense relates to the student organization.
- Reimbursements made via Cash or Check may require a countersignature from the organization's advisor. Student leaders should seek you out in order to approve the reimbursement otherwise the process could be unnecessarily delayed.

Good Financial Ideas for Groups to Follow

Set up a system of internal checks and balances. The knowledge about where money is coming from and going should not be limited to just one person. Come up with realistic budgets prior to events and then follow them. While it may be unrealistic to try to plan down to the penny, it is important to have direction. The Student Assembly Finance Committee requires a budget prior to its approval of an event or activity. Student groups are not required to collect dues, but frequently dues provide sufficient income for club operations.

Further Reading

For more in-depth information on advising student organizations please see:

Advising Student Groups and Organizations (ISBN#0-7879-1033-3)
by Norbert W. Dunkel (Author), John D. Schuh (Author)

