

NORTHERN VERMONT UNIVERSITY-LYNDON CLUB ADVISOR HANDBOOK

**DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT LIFE
UPDATED JULY 2019**

Adapted from: "Organization & Advisor Manual," California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, "The Student Organizational Manual-Supplement for Advisors," Simmons College, Boston, MA, and "The Role of the Advisor", Colby Sawyer College, New London NH.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Letter to Advisor | 2 |
| Role of the Advisor | 3 |
| Before You Agree to Advise | 4 |
| Minimal Expectations for Advisors | 5 |
| Annual Procedure for Student Clubs/Organizations | 5 |
| Summary Guidelines and Policies for Student Clubs and Organizations | 7 |
| Constitution | 8 |
| Budgets | 9 |
| Liability Issues | 10 |
| The Student Activities & Leadership Center | 12 |
| Problem Solving for Advisors and Executive Board | 13 |
| Questions | 18 |
| Appendix A: Discussion Guide for Role Definition | 19 |

Dear Advisor:

Thank you for agreeing to take on this role. As an advisor to a club/organization you have the power to connect with the students you work with on a different level than what can be achieved within the classroom. This role can be tremendously rewarding for both you and the organization which you oversee.

In an effort to assist you in this undertaking the Department of Student Life has developed this handbook outlining important information we feel would be helpful to you as an advisor. This manual covers topics ranging from the role of an advisor, to forms used by clubs and organizations, a timeline of events throughout the year as it pertains to maintaining recognized club status, and strategies for dealing with potential conflict.

I hope you are able to take full advantage of this handbook and the resources within it. I also encourage you to make suggestions for things which could be included in the future.

In addition to this handbook, I am available to assist you with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have. The Student Activities and Leadership Center, located on the second floor of the Rita Bole Complex (in the hallway off of the lounge) exists as a resource for you as an advisor and active member of the community.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our students. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Michael Secreti
Assistant Director of Student Life/Advisor to the SGA

THE ROLE OF THE ADVISOR

The faculty or staff member involved in advising a student group often wants to know exactly what role they should take. While there is no one specific answer to this question, it is the hope of the Department of Student Life to provide some basic concepts that may be of help in your role as advisor.

It is our belief that advisors should be an integral part of every student organization. Often they have been affiliated with the organization longer than any of the current officers and can offer greater experience in dealing with many issues. An advisor is just that...they **advise** the organization on what their goals and direction should be. Students should listen to and consider the advisor's input and then make their decisions. It is important that advisors not make all decisions for the organization. Neither should the advisor be someone students seek out only when they need a signature. Officers need to encourage advisors to become active participants within the organization; however, the advisor should also want to become active in the organization as well. A good advisor will work closely with the students in order to improve the organization and the individual skills of the students. ***A good advisor will offer suggestions and a different perspective without demanding that the organization follow everything they say, thus creating dialogue among members.***

When choosing an advisor, we encourage our students to seek someone who is interested in the purpose of the club/organization, has appropriate expertise, is compatible with the officers, and has similar ideas concerning what an advisor's role should be. Advisors must be full-time faculty or an administrator at Northern Vermont University. Some clubs are assigned a specific advisor because it is part of that particular employee's job description to advise that club. Advisors can often bring different perspectives or have expertise in areas related to the organization.

There are times that an organization may want to consider adding an advisor or replacing a current one. Remember that ***the members of a student organization select their own advisor*** (except as mentioned above). It is up to the students to find an advisor who is going to be supportive and helpful. Each organization's constitution should have the means for selecting and replacing advisors. When students are dissatisfied with an advisor they should discuss it with them and reassess whether the advisor should continue in that role. The Discussion Guide for Role Definition is a tool that is helpful for this; it is located after this overview. This advisor checklist, when done openly and honestly, can also help to determine if an individual is a good fit for a particular organization. ***An advisor, when utilized effectively, can be one of the most valuable members of the organization.*** When not utilized or utilized ineffectively, the organization suffers greatly. It is to the organization's advantage to find a good advisor and to take advantage of their skills in achieving the goals of the organization.

Sometimes an advisor is asked to step down or is replaced. This happens for a variety of reasons, changing needs of the organization, personality differences, etc. It does not mean that the advisor is doing a bad job. It just might not be a good fit. Other times as an advisor you may request to no longer advise a club. Your job responsibilities may change, your goals may change or you may be having personality differences with the students. Whatever the reason, you should not be pressured to remain a club's advisor if you no longer feel you should be in that role.

BEFORE YOU AGREE TO ADVISE

Advising an organization can be a large undertaking. To assist you in your decision making process we have developed a series of questions and answers. The following are things you should consider if you are contemplating advising a club or organization.

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF THE GROUP?

The nature of the advisor's interaction with a student group will be determined largely by the type of needs the group has. It is important to remember that it is the student members' responsibility to determine what their needs are; the advisor may make valuable comments and suggestions, but primary responsibility for group leadership rests within the student membership.

DOES THE ADVISOR'S PERSONALITY MESH WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE GROUP?

It is important that there be a clear understanding between advisors and advisees regarding the expectations, needs, interests, etc. A student group may expect their advisor to play a very specific role for them. On the other hand, the group may wish the advisor to take more of an observing, non-participatory role. If these aspects of advisement are not addressed beforehand, conflicts may arise.

A very simple process, which can be used to prevent any potential difficulties, is to have a prospective advisor meet with a group on several occasions before accepting the position. This allows for the students to get to know the faculty or staff member and they can make observations about the appropriate style of advisement that should be used. After several meetings, the potential advisor and the student organization's general membership or Executive Board can meet to discuss the observations and the expectations of the group for the advisor.

An additional resource is the Discussion Guide for Role Definition in this manual, found on page 19. Reviewing this with club members can help eliminate trouble areas.

IS THE ADVISOR AN APPROPRIATE RESOURCE PERSON FOR THE GROUP?

It is important that the advisor and the organization's students recognize that the advisor can be a valuable resource for the group, both in content areas (such as speakers about a certain topic) and in process areas (such as effective communication skills). However, advisors should not ignore the basic consideration that a student group is just that- a student group. An advisor who sees their advisory role as an extension of their professional role loses effectiveness as an activity advisor. By the same token, an advisor who sees their role as just another member also loses effectiveness as an advisor.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ADVISING AND SUPERVISING?

The experience of acting as an advisor to a student organization can be frustrating at times, especially if the faculty or staff member is a "take charge" person. It is important to differentiate appropriate advisory attitudes and behaviors from supervisory attitudes and behaviors.

While it may be expected that a supervisor be responsible for the actions of the group, telling the group what should be done and playing the major decision-making role, it is more appropriate and productive for an advisor to be aware of the actions of their group, sharing with the group various options of what might be done and encouraging group members to take decision-making roles.

A supervisor acts as the leader of an organization and takes responsibility to evaluate not only the success of group projects, but also the effectiveness of individual group members. An advisor, on the other hand, acts as a primary resource person and role model for the group and takes responsibility to assist the group in self-evaluation.

See Appendix 1 for a Discussion Guide for Role Definition.

MINIMAL EXPECTATIONS FOR ADVISORS

The Department of Student Life values the time and energy put into student clubs and organizations through your role as an advisor. In an effort to assist in this role we have established a set of minimal expectations for advisors.

- Read and be familiar with the club/organization's constitution
- Be familiar with the contents of this manual
- Establish regular meetings with the executive board at least once a month, or according to club's constitution
- Be available to sign paperwork as needed
- Be aware of club budget and subsequent spending
- Make an effort to attend at least one general meeting per semester
- Be supportive of events and programs sponsored by your organization, attend when possible
- Mediate conflict when necessary
- Act as an emergency contact for club members at events off campus

ANNUAL PROCEDURE FOR STUDENT CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

These procedures must be followed by all student organizations and clubs. Only active recognized groups may receive funding and conduct events. This is to provide a guideline, for you as an advisor, to be aware of expectations placed on each club/organization. This does not mean that you must complete each task but merely assist the students in ensuring that they are completed as requested.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

- Sign up for the Student Involvement Fair
- Recruit new members
- Establish regular attendance at the Student Government Association General Assembly Meetings by a student representative
- Send an updated organizational list of officers to the Assistant Director of Student Life and SGA Executive Board (LyndonSGA@NorthernVermont.edu), complete with e-mail addresses.

DECEMBER

- Tie-up all loose ends (such as paying any outstanding bills) before leaving for the semester break

JANUARY

- Submit updated officers/member list to the Assistant Director of Student Life and SGA Executive Board (LyndonSGA@NorthernVermont.edu)

FEBRUARY

- Hold executive board elections for the following academic year, and submit club registration to the Student Activities office (per club constitutions)

MARCH

- Submit proposed budget for upcoming year
- Participate in the budgeting process for the upcoming year

APRIL

- Hold Executive Board Elections for the following academic year (per club constitution) and send updates to the Assistant Director of Student Life and SGA Executive Board (LyndonSGA@NorthernVermont.edu)
- Current and new executive board members should meet to transition the new members into their roles while the current executive board member is available and on campus.

MAY

- Pay all outstanding bills before leaving for the summer
- If there is work that must be completed over the break, establish who is to complete these tasks and follow up on a consistent basis to ensure progress.

SUMMARY GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR STUDENT CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

There are a number of policies, procedures, and guidelines for activities of student organizations. The summaries below are intended to highlight the specific areas of policy and the process. More detailed information is available through the Student Activities Office.

ALCOHOL: All events involving alcohol must be approved by the Dean of Students, Director of Student Life, and the Assistant Director of Student Life. An officer of the group must meet with the individuals listed above at least 4 weeks prior to the event.

Alcohol is prohibited on any College sponsored activity or trip unless specific permission is given prior to said activity by the Dean of Students.

OFF-CAMPUS EVENTS: Any group traveling off-campus for a club or organization event must complete an Emergency Travel Form indicating who on-campus will be contacted by students in the event of an emergency. This must be signed by the club advisor as well as the Assistant Director of Student Life.

CONTRACTS: Any type of speaker or performance must be contracted. Contracts for any performer must be completed and submitted at least four weeks before the event. The Assistant Director of Student Life must review all contracts prior to being signed. Contracts must be signed by college officials and should not be signed by students.

COPYING: Organizations may use the copying machines in the Vail Copy Room charging services to their organizational account. The copy room has the account listings for all clubs that need to utilize this service. If a club does not have a line item specifically related to copying, these funds will be taken out of their fundraising account.

CO-SPONSORING: Organizations may co-sponsor events with other Northern Vermont University organizations. Co-sponsoring of events is highly encouraged by the Department of Student Life.

FOOD SERVICES: In order to obtain food from Sodexo, an organization must make this request when reserving the space with the Assistant Director of Student Life. Forms are available in the Student Activities and Leadership Center. It would also be in your best interest to follow-up with Sodexo to see if there are any questions or concerns at least 72 hours prior to the start of the event.

FUNDRAISERS: Any group wishing to host a fundraiser must complete the Fundraising Approval Form (available on www.LyndonSGA.com) prior to the beginning of the fundraiser. This form must be signed by the Dean of Students, Director of Student Life, OR Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities and then must be turned in to the Office of Institutional Advancement for approval. As a general rule, at least two weeks lead-time is desirable when seeking permission for a fundraiser. The Fundraising Approval Form must be completed ANY time the club is collecting money from individuals – this includes club dues if applicable, apparel orders, etc.

BULLETIN BOARDS: Organizations may use any of the SALC bulletin boards in ASAC or Vail to promote their club or advertise events. SALC bulletin boards contain the SALC logo in the bottom corner of the board. Any advertisements posted on these boards must contain the SGA logo on them, be pinned up to the board using push-pins, and be promptly removed upon the completion of the event. Clubs who repeatedly break these rules will lose privileges to post on the SALC bulletin boards. Additionally, clubs may also advertise events on any of the bulletin boards within their own department as long as permission is granted.

SGA RECOGNITION: Each student club at Northern Vermont University-Lyndon is recognized by the Student Government Association. In order to maintain recognition an organization must:

- Give the Student Activities Office a list of officers and their contact information each September
- File all financial reports as requested by the SGA Guidelines
- Maintain regular representation at the SGA General Assembly Meetings

RESERVATION OF ROOMS AND FACILITIES: All space requests must go through the Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities. Requests should be made at least two weeks in advance and large scale space requests should be made at least one month in advance.

LYNDON VAN USAGE: All drivers of a college van must complete a defensive driving course with Public Safety **in order to be eligible**. Drivers' licenses are also checked each year for violations. Public Safety reserves the right to deny any student or employee access to driving a college van. To reserve a van you must ask the Assistant Director of Student Life to contact the Physical Plant. Vans are assigned on a first come first serve basis. All clubs seeking the use of a van must first have a designated driver(s) and share that information with the Assistant Director of Student Life. For a complete set of van usage rules and regulations please go to the Public Safety Office and request a copy of the Fleet License Guidelines.

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT: In order for any person who uses their own vehicle for club/organization business to be reimbursed for their mileage they must have a current fleet license on file with the Director of Public Safety in accordance with the Fleet License Guidelines included in this manual. Without the proper authorization no compensation may be collected.

CONSTITUTION

As an advisor, there will be times that you are asked to assist in the interpretation of the club/organization's constitution. For this purpose, the Student Activities and Leadership Center and the Department of Student Life suggest that you keep a copy of the most current Constitution for your records. If you have any questions about your organization's constitution, please do not hesitate to ask.

BUDGETS

All student organization funds, regardless of their source, ***must be kept in a College account.*** ***Absolutely no outside bank accounts are permitted.***

Club money is allocated through the budgeting process which occurs every spring as part of the Student Government Association. Recognized clubs and organizations submit their proposed budget to the Student Government Association and then see it through the entire process of the SGA General Assembly. However, final approval is reserved by the President of the College.

Fundraising, which can be carried over from year to year, may also be generated in a number of ways: admission charge at an event, bake sales, raffles, businesses, and purchase of items for resale such as t-shirts or sweatshirts. Advisors should know that groups are required to generate sufficient funds before an item can be **ordered**.

The Assistant Director of Student Life and the Student Government Association Financial Controller monitor all students' accounts. Club treasurers may ask for a report from either individual to ensure their records match the college's records of their account.

CLUB FINANCES - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Each club must monitor their own budget. It is the responsibility of the treasurer to make sure that bills are paid, deposits are made, and the money is spent on what it was allocated for. The president is responsible for overseeing the treasurer and making sure all of this is being done appropriately. The president in conjunction with the treasurer is usually responsible for developing a budget to propose to the club and to the SGA during the budgeting process. However, this may vary from club to club and should be stated in the constitution or by-laws.

The club budget is to be used as a guideline for the future plans of the organization. It does not need to be complicated; it just needs to fit the needs of the individual organization. Done over a period of time the budget will provide a historical reference that can be used for future planning. As an advisor, you may be the one who helps provide this historical reference.

Once the club has received a budget it is very important to maintain and follow the budget as allocated, making sure that accurate records are kept of all transactions. This includes keeping all receipts and invoices. The club should only reimburse previously approved expenses. Each project chair should maintain a record of income and expenses to assure that they are staying within their budget. If a club needs to reallocate funds from one line item to another, they must make this request through the SGA prior to making purchases.

BUDGETING/ALLOCATIONS

Only clubs that are recognized at the start of the budgeting season will be allowed to participate in budgeting. Clubs that fail to submit the appropriate budget application will not be eligible to go

through the budgeting process and will start the year solely with the funds they earned through fundraising. Any allocated funds not spent at the end of the year, will be rolled back into the general fund however, fundraising money will carry over to the next year.

ORDERING MERCHANDISE

All purchases must go through the Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities unless another exception has been made (i.e. clubs with advisors who have college credit cards). Individuals will not be reimbursed by the colleges for any purchases that are made using their own personal funds.

PAYING FOR OUTSIDE ARTISTS OR VENDORS

In order for a check to be processed to pay outside vendors or artists, the invoice for the merchandise must be submitted along with a completed W9 form with the appropriate paperwork to the Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities or the SGA Financial Controller. Once the correct paperwork is received, the invoice will go through the proper procedure to ensure payment.

DEPOSITING FUNDS

When your club receives money for any reason, it should be deposited to the club's account within 3 business days. Clubs should not be keeping cash on hand. Please bring all monies received to the administrative assistant in the Business Office along with the Club Deposit Form with the club's account number to ensure accurate processing. The money will then be deposited to the club's account and the SGA Financial Controller will receive a copy of the receipt.

LIABILITY ISSUES

During the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in litigation involving colleges and universities. Much of that litigation has involved student groups and their activities. This section highlights some of the more frequent concerns, but is not intended to be a complete review of all liability issues you may be faced with.

ALCOHOL

All recognized organizations and sponsors of registered social events are prohibited from providing alcohol to minors. Consistent with, and related to this restriction, the serving of kegs, beerballs, and alcohol/punch drink may only be done by a licensed caterer (Sodexo).

The sponsoring organization must meet with the Assistant Director of Student Life, Director of Student Life, and/or the Dean of Students at least 4 weeks prior to the event in which alcohol will be served. Upon approval, the organization must work with Sodexo to ensure the proper sale and distribution of alcohol and will be responsible for covering all costs associated (sheriff, license, etc.).

For any event serving alcohol, the designated person(s) is responsible for the safe conduct of the event. Staff persons involved in clearance procedures are responsible for ensuring that the event is conducted in a safe and acceptable fashion and for monitoring the event for the general safety of the participants. Situations determined to be in noncompliance with regulations of the Alcohol Policy may be immediately suspended by appropriate college staff. Responsibility for any adverse consequences that may occur as the result of an event may implicate any person or group involved with that event, in particular those planning and monitoring its outcome.

For more information on this, please see page 52 of the Northern Vermont University-Lyndon Code of Conduct.

HAZING

It is a violation of Northern Vermont University-Lyndon policy for student groups to engage in hazing* activities. Each student must be aware of what constitutes hazing and should read about it in the Student Code of Conduct. Advisors should be aware that those participating in hazing activities will be referred to the Director of Student Life and could be subject to criminal prosecution.

Hazing as defined in the Student Code of Conduct: "Hazing means any act committed by a person, whether individually or in concert with others, against a student in connection with pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any organization which is affiliated with the Vermont State Colleges or any member College thereof; and which is intended to have the effect of, or should reasonably be expected to have the effect of, humiliating, intimidating or demeaning the student or endangering the mental or physical health of a student. Hazing also includes soliciting, directing, aiding, or otherwise participating actively or passively in the above acts. Hazing occurs regardless of the consent or willingness of a person to participate in the activity. Hazing may occur on or off the campus of a member College of the Vermont State Colleges. Hazing shall not include any activity or conduct that furthers legitimate curricular, extracurricular, or military training program goals, provided that:

- A. the goals are approved by the member College; and
- B. the activity or conduct furthers the goals in a manner that is appropriate, contemplated by the member College, and normal and customary for similar programs at other educational institutions.
- C. Organization means an athletic team, association, corporation, order, society, corps, cooperative, club, or other similar group, whose members primarily are students at a member College, and which is affiliated with the College."

CONTRACTS

Students and advisors are not authorized to sign contracts proposed by student organizations. The only individuals eligible to sign contracts are the Dean of Students, the Director of Student Life, and the Assistant Director of Student Life. Contracts must be reviewed by the Assistant Director of Student Life and processed accordingly. When committing funds or arranging for a performance, advisors should

make it clear that they are acting as advisors to a Northern Vermont University-Lyndon organization and do not have the authority to commit to a legally binding contract.

OFF CAMPUS TRIPS

Whenever a club or organization leaves campus for a school/club sponsored trip each club must complete a Club Emergency Contact Travel Form. These are available on www.LyndonSGA.com.

OTHER AREAS

A major concern of many advisors is their personal risk in the case of an accident or injury to a student during a student event. These cases are most commonly based on allegations of negligence. Negligence requires that a duty of care be breached, either by an act of omission or commission.

If advisors have specific questions about their potential liability, they should call the Student Activities and Leadership Center or the Department of Student Life.

THE STUDENT ACTIVITIES & LEADERSHIP CENTER

The Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities serves as de facto advisor to all recognized student groups and organizations. Should the club's advisor not be available or is unable to assist the club, officers/members of an organization are encouraged to seek the guidance of the Assistant Director.

The Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities is the advisor to the Student Government. If a club is having difficulties with their treasurer or with preparing for budgeting, and the SGA Financial Controller is unavailable to assist, the treasurer and/or president is encouraged to seek the guidance of the Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities.

The Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities is also available for support and guidance as your club makes decisions and/or struggles with conflict. Not all clubs will have an easy year free of conflict, power struggles, disagreements etc. If you are unable to work through your conflict with your advisor the Assistant Director can help you work through these challenges. The Assistant Director of Student Life for Student Activities is available to meet with individuals or the entire club. Please feel free to set up an appointment to discuss any issues your club may be struggling with.

PROBLEM SOLVING FOR ADVISORS AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

Generally speaking, problems associated with student groups can be divided into two categories: **task** problems and **process** problems. While the division may not always be clear or precise and may seem artificial, it is helpful to think about group problems in these terms.

Task functions refer to those programs, projects, and activities, which the group was formed to accomplish. Thus, if a club was unsuccessful in planning and implementing programs due to **disorganization**, it could be said there was a problem related to task.

Process functions, also known as group building and maintenance functions, refer to the **interrelationships** among group members. Process functions relate to **how** group members interact. Advisors need to be alert to process problems in the group since they often hinder the group's completion of task. For example, if students cannot plan programs because members do not like/trust each other, the advisor could conclude that the problem was related to the process.

Task and process functions are closely interrelated, and the advisor must try to be aware of both. Some groups often have warm and healthy member interaction, but productivity and accomplishment are minimal. Stated simply, these are happy groups that do little. On the other hand, there are groups that are task-oriented and ignore process functions. In such cases, often due to the efforts of only a few individuals, the group accomplishes a great deal, but member satisfaction is low. This group might be characterized as productive but unhappy.

It is likely that in most groups, there will be individuals who possess differing inclinations toward task and process. Many of the problems and issues that advisors encounter focus on the tensions that surface between high and low task people and high and low process people. An awareness of both task and process can be helpful to an advisor who is attempting to diagnose and resolve group problems.

The most opportune time to observe problems of task and process in groups is during meetings. It is a process in which the advisor must gather a total picture of the task and process events that occur. Observation involves not only paying attention to what is being said but, as importantly, listening to what is not being said. Silence is a dynamic that an advisor must understand. The advisor must be able to identify silence that ignores or buries important task issues and silence that denotes anger, boredom, frustration or other important emotions.

Body language and facial expressions of group members are often indicators of thoughts and feelings. The advisor who uses these indicators to recognize feelings of disgust, confusion, apathy, anger or resentment can address them at a time when they are more manageable. Feelings of this nature that are not addressed and are allowed to grow may lead to difficulties that are much harder to correct.

INDIVIDUAL TECHNIQUES

Once the advisor has determined that a problem exists, they need to intervene to help the group resolve the problem. Depending on the problem, intervention can be as simple as suggesting changing the meeting time or as complex as trying to help two members resolve interpersonal conflicts. Often, advisors must decide when it is appropriate to intervene. In making this decision, the advisor must ask two questions.

The first is: **“To what extent does the problem interfere with the group's task?”** For example, side conversations are unavoidable and may even be desirable in helping members gather information or clarify issues. At some point, however, they can be distracting. The problem for the advisor is to decide if the group's progress toward completion of its mission is being compromised by the side conversations. It should be noted that these decisions usually do not need to be made right on the spot, and it is important for the advisor to consult with the leader or group members before anything is done.

The second question is: **“To what extent does the problem interfere with the group process or the satisfaction of group members?”** Decisions that are made by a few members of the group often cause those not involved to feel left out. This issue is one that the advisor ought to discuss with the leaders.

On the following page there is a list of questions that advisors may find valuable in dealing with group problems. These questions will lead the advisor to appropriate diagnosis and intervention. Depending upon the nature of the group and the problem, it may be useful for the advisor to involve the leaders and members in this process. It should be remembered that **problem diagnosis and intervention** is a process which requires careful observation, thought and consideration of the impact of alternative remedies. Quick solutions rarely occur. The advisor must assess the situation, scrutinize the ramifications of the intervention and be flexible enough to make alterations or changes when necessary.

Before advisors can make appropriate interventions, they must understand the source or root of the problem. Many groups experience the same overt problems, but the causes and best resolutions may differ dramatically. In order to assist the advisor in problem analysis and solution, the following guide offers problem areas, specific examples of these problems, and questions which the advisors can then answer to assess the situation and arrive at an appropriate response.

Please note this listing is not intended to be a checklist. It is a guide containing many options, which the advisor may pursue and may select the questions or conditions that are most relevant to a particular group. The guide is not intended to be used directly with the group. The advisor should determine the areas of concern and then use the relevant questions to either initiate individual or group discussions, or choose some other method of intervention. If at any point the advisor needs assistance in deciding how to approach a problem the Assistant Director for Student Life for Student Activities is available to discuss and assist the advisor in developing a plan to guide the club to resolution.

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS

Specific Examples: Leader fails to consult with group before making significant decisions. The elected leader lacks self-confidence, is non-assertive, lacks interest in-group, and therefore appears to be incompetent. A rivalry exists between elected leaders. The leader has time conflicts and is suffering from work overload.

Questions to consider:

- Was there a transition period during which outgoing officers trained the new leaders and provided them with supervised experience?
- Has the leader received training regarding leadership skills, job descriptions, group goals, and the group's background?
- Does the leader know how to delegate?
- Is the leader aware of the group's "informal leaders?" How does the leader use them?
- How does the leader run the group's meetings – as a facilitator or a dominator?
- Is the leader more interested in developing a personal social network than in pursuing the goals of the group? Does an "I-they" relationship exist?
- Does the leader or executive body isolate itself and make decisions apart from the membership?
- Is the leader motivated by selfish goals wherein the leader may win but the organization and membership may lose (negative power motivation)?
- How willing is the formal leader to give the floor to members and, especially, informal leaders?
- Do other members complain about the leader? What do they complain about? Is there direct confrontation or is the hostility "behind closed doors?"
- Is the leader grooming others for leadership positions? If so, how does the leader select these people and what type of mentoring is being done?
- How was the leader selected?
- Is the leadership position considered to be one of respect or is the person chosen by default?
- Has the leader established priorities regarding personal, academic and extracurricular activities?
- Are other aspects of the leader's life in order?
- Have the leader and members discussed leader expectations?
- Is the leader personally committed to the group's goals?
- Is the leader being sabotaged by a small group within or from outside the organization? How/why?
- Does the leader accurately perceive and acknowledge problems which confront him/her?
- What methods of feedback or evaluation are available to the leader? Who provides the feedback?
- Does the leader identify more with the advisor than with the group?
- Does the advisor meet regularly with the leader to discuss the group's health and task performance?
- Can the advisor identify leadership skills and attitudes which might be lacking?
- Is the advisor willing and able to confront the leader about problems regarding leadership style?

- How receptive is the leader to constructive criticism?
- What resources dealing with leadership are available to the leader and advisor?

MEMBERSHIP PROBLEMS

Specific Examples: Poor meeting attendance; low member morale and satisfaction; boredom; poor communication; members feel left out; dysfunctional behavior; apathy; members appear to be incompetent; hidden agendas; competition for attention; individual and group goals differ; members stray from task; unclear roles and functions; lack of trust among members; disparate levels of commitment among members; program failure; lack of ideas.

Questions to consider:

- Does the group have goals?
- Have the members been given the opportunity to determine the group's goals, methods of achieving these goals, and expectations and norms of membership?
- Are group goals understood and accepted by all members?
- Has any type of member training or skill development been offered: communication skills, task performance, etc.?
- How do members get involved in the group? Are they appointed, elected or, do they join because of mutual interests?
- How representative of the constituency are the members? (Does not apply to interest groups.)
- What patterns of interaction exist among group members and leaders?
How are group decisions made?
- Is the organization composed of so many small groups that the total organization never makes a decision?
- What is the functioning style of the group? Are all members involved? Do they have specific duties? How are duties or tasks assigned?
- How are agendas created? Are members involved in their creation?
- Is there a balance between long- and short-term group goals?
- Is the group progressing toward goal achievement? If not, what are the roadblocks?
- Is the group ready to undertake the stated goals?
- What reward structure exists for members?
- Are affiliation needs being met?
- Is group work and membership enjoyable?
- Has the group been given the opportunity to interact informally in or out of the meeting setting?
- Are specific topics disruptive to the group process and why?
- Who dominates the group and why?
- If there are hidden agendas, can they be incorporated into the group process?
- Are opportunities for leadership or skill use available to all?
- What type of climate exists in the group? Is risk-taking allowed? Can people experiment?
- Are group members testing the boundaries of what they can do, or do they or others limit them?
- How does the group deal with frustration?

- What do group members expect of the leadership and advisor?
- Do members accurately perceive and acknowledge group problems?
- What method of feedback or evaluation is available to the group? Who provides the feedback?
- Is the advisor willing and able to discuss problems with the group?
- How receptive is the group to discussion of problems?
- What resources dealing with group process are available to the members and advisors?

ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

Specific Examples: Disorganized meetings; lengthy meetings; financial problems; uninformed constituency; lack of continuity from one year to the next; failure to complete required administrative tasks; no plan of action.

Questions to consider:

- Does the group have a charter (constitution, bylaws), mission statement or plan of work?
- Is the group familiar with this document?
- Does the group have a valid understanding of its authority, responsibility and tradition?
- Does the group have adequate opportunity to reassess its purposes and goals, taking into account intervening variables?
- Are prior years' records (financial reports, program evaluations, minutes, etc.) available to those who need them?
- Have job descriptions been developed for officers and chair people? Is there sufficient support to perform necessary clerical and managerial functions?
- Is there a method for ensuring personal accountability?
- Are the organization's policies and procedures documented and followed?
- Does the group have a budget and regular financial statements?
- Are policies regarding fund appropriations and disbursements adhered to by all group members?
- Are legal and institutional requirements known and adhered to by group leaders and members?
- Are agendas prepared and distributed in advance of group meetings?
- Are minutes of meetings prepared in a timely fashion and available to all constituents?
- Are all members familiar with parliamentary procedure or other guidelines under which meetings are to be conducted?

INTER-GROUP PROBLEMS

Specific Examples: Disagreement with other student groups; disagreement with institutional policies or procedures.

Questions to consider:

- Is the disagreement a rivalry or a conflict?
- What impact is the disagreement having on the group?

- Is the group progressing toward its task achievement or is it spending all of its energy on the conflict?
- What is the potential for serious problems stemming from the disagreement?
- Why does the conflict exist?
- Can this disagreement be dealt with in a constructive and mutually beneficial manner?
- Is the conflict the result of misinformation or poor communication?
- What resources can be used in resolving the differences?

ADVISOR CONCERNS

Specific Examples: Advisor is avoided; advice is not heeded; advisor is overwhelmed by responsibility and task; advisor is assuming leadership function; there is conflicting advice/disagreements between two or more advisors.

Questions to consider:

- Is the advisor well versed on the group's background, goals and procedures?
- Is the role and function of the advisor determined in consultation with the leaders and members?
- Does the advisor make use of resources: references, supervisors, other group advisors, the Department of Student Life?
- Will the advisor allow the group to determine its own goals even if the group disagrees with the advisor's own?
- Does the advisor enjoy working with the group – why or why not?
- Does the advisor allow and encourage questions regarding their advice and suggestions?
- What method of feedback or evaluation is available to the advisor? Who provides it?

Adapted from "The Role of the Advisor", Colby Sawyer College, New London NH

QUESTIONS?

If you ever have any questions or concerns regarding your role as advisor, please do not hesitate to stop by the Student Activities and Leadership Center, located in the Rita Bole Complex, Suite 214 or send an email to Michael.Secreti@NorthernVermont.edu. We are here to help and greatly appreciate the work you do with our students.

APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR ROLE DEFINITION

Listed below are some possible expectations student leaders may have of their advisor. The advisor and leaders should each respond to the following items then discuss answers and resolve any differences. Items which are determined not to be the responsibility of the advisor should be clarified as to which role/officer will assume that responsibility.

For each of the statements, determine whether the function is:

- 1:** Essential for the advisor to do
- 2:** Helpful for the advisor to do
- 3:** Nice, but advisor does not have to
- 4:** Would prefer the advisor not do
- 5:** Absolutely not an advisor's role

THE ADVISOR SHOULD:

- ___ I. Attend all general meetings.
- ___ II. Attend all executive committee meetings.
- ___ III. Call meetings of the executive committee when they believe it is necessary.
- ___ IV. Explain College policy when relevant to the discussion.
- ___ V. Explain College policy to the executive committee and depend upon the officers to carry them out through their leadership.
- ___ VI. Explain College policy to the entire membership at a general meeting once a year.
- ___ VII. Reserve an appointment with the president/chairperson before each meeting.
- ___ VIII. Help the president prepare the agenda before each meeting.
- ___ IX. Serve as parliamentarian for the group.
- ___ X. Speak up during discussion when he/she has relevant information.
- ___ XI. Speak up during discussion when he/she believes the group is likely to make a poor decision.
- ___ XII. Remain quiet during general meetings unless asked for advice.
- ___ XIII. Exert their influence with officers between meetings.

- ___ XIV. Take an active part in formulating the goals of the group.
- ___ XV. Initiate ideas for discussion when they believe they will help the group.
- ___ XVI. Be one of the group - except for voting and holding office.
- ___ XVII. Attend all group activities.
- ___ XVIII. Require treasurer to clear all expenditures with him/her before commitments are made.
- ___ XIX. Request to see the treasurer's books at the end of each semester.
- ___ XX. Check the secretary's minutes before they are written in final form.
- ___ XXI. Check all official correspondence before it is sent.
- ___ XXII. Get a photocopy for all official correspondence.
- ___ XXIII. Be custodian for all group paraphernalia, records, etc. during the summer and between changeovers of officers.
- ___ XXIV. Keep the official files in their office.
- ___ XXV. Inform the group of infractions of their bylaws, codes and standing rules.
- ___ XXVI. Keep the group aware of its stated objectives when planning events.
- ___ XXVII. Veto a decision when it violates a stated objective, the bylaws, codes, standing rules for College policy.
- ___ XXVIII. Mediate interpersonal conflicts that arise.
- ___ XXIX. Be responsible for planning leadership skills workshops.
- ___ XXX. State what their advisor responsibilities are, or as they see them, at the first meeting of the year.
- ___ XXXI. Let the group work out its problems, including making mistakes and "doing it the hard way."
- ___ XXXII. Insist on an evaluation of each activity by those students responsible for planning it.
- ___ XXXIII. Take the initiative in creating teamwork and cooperation among the officers' group.

- ___ XXXIV. Let the group thrive or decline on its own merits; do not interfere unless requested to do so.
- ___ XXXV. Represent the group in any conflicts with members of the College staff.
- ___ XXXVI. Be familiar with College facilities, services and procedures which affect group activities.
- ___ XXXVII. Recommend programs, speakers, etc.
- ___ XXXVIII. Take an active part in the orderly transition of responsibilities between old and new officers at the end/start of the year.
- ___ XXXIX. Cancel any activities when they believes they have been inadequately planned.
- ___ XL. Have a strong understanding of the organization's constitution and the Northern Vermont University-Lyndon Rules of Order.

Please add any other expectations you have for the advisor's role:

Adapted from: "Organization & Advisor Manual," California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, "The Student Organizational Manual-Supplement for Advisors," Simmons College, Boston, MA