

**Advisor  
Club  
and  
Organization  
Handbook**



## **Club Advisor Expectations**

- Attend club meetings whenever officer elections take place - mandatory.
- Attend club meetings on a regular basis – recommended.
- Be present for all on-campus club events for their entirety. While it is not practical for advisors to be present for the entirety of events such as bake sales and raffles that span many hours/days, they are required to periodically check-in on the event throughout its duration.
- Attend all off-campus events for their entirety regardless of length or distance.
- Attend all on-campus, after-hours events for their entirety.
- Attend the annual Club President & Treasurer training as well as any other club advisor trainings throughout the year.
- Communicate with the Student Life Office regarding any club activities, change of officers, policy questions, etc.
- Submit club officer names and contact info to the Student Life Office in a timely manner.
- Ensure that club officers meet the specified GPA requirement.
- Advise club members regarding college policies and best practices involving clubs.
- Work with club officers to direct club meeting/activities/etc.
- Oversee club budget in conjunction with club treasurer.
- Assist club in requesting meeting space, completing required paperwork, working with college departments, etc.
- Be available to club members on a regular basis.
- Forward all Student Life correspondence to club members as needed.

This list is simply a quick overview of the club advisor expectations and requirements; club advisors should read through and be familiar with the entire Club Advisor Manual as well as the Student Club Handbook. All questions/concerns should be directed to the Student Life Office.

# THE INS AND OUTS OF ADVISING A STUDENT GROUP

## **On Becoming a Club Advisor...**

Our students benefit from the advice, guidance, maturity, and organizational strengths that the advisor can offer. Student Life/Student Activities staff appreciate your willingness to volunteer your time to our students. They will benefit from your participation as we hope you will benefit from participation as well.

As we see it, the benefits to you are:

- ❖ Fulfilling a “college service” contract component
- ❖ Contributing to student involvement at MWCC
- ❖ Contributing to the potential retention of students
- ❖ Involvement in the “whole-student” experience
- ❖ Enrichment of the students’ co-curricular experience

We think you will agree that the time commitment to the club can be manageable. Ultimately, the actual amount of your time the club will require during the semester/year will depend upon the students’ involvement and your level of participation.

We hope you will find the experience enjoyable and enlightening.

## **Role of the Advisor**

A student club or organization needs a “coach”; an individual who can help guide the students during the semester. Given that every club and organization has a different purpose and student composition, the role of the advisor may be different by group. Flexibility will be important in working with the students and ‘advising’ them along the way.

The club or organization belongs to the students. This is the most important principle of advising the student group. Why? Understanding your role as a ‘guide’, ‘coach’, or ‘resource’ will help keep focus on a ‘student-run’ club or organization. Thus also reinforcing the idea that students learn valuable lessons from running their own organization and learn tremendous, transferable skills to future employment. There is potential risk that the advisor seek to ‘take-over’ offering the student less opportunity to develop a plan.

The advisor then, should help the students get the semester underway. Certainly being involved to help set the tone and goals of the club for the semester. Regularly attending meetings, actively participating and being available to club members will assist the students in constructing a favorable club structure.

## **Assessing the Needs of the Club**

The interaction the advisor has with the club will be determined by the needs of the group. The students are largely responsible for determining the direction of the club and the activities they would like to sponsor. The advisor may make suggestions and provide guidance.

## **Club Membership and Advisor: The right fit.**

It is preferable to have a harmonious blend between the club membership’s expectation of the advisor and the advisor’s expectation of the club. However, it is always important to be clear that the club membership, since it belongs to the students, is in the lead when it comes to determining the direction of

the organization. It is possible for the advisor to want the club to take a different direction creating potential friction between student membership and the advisor.

Therefore, it is very important for the club's leadership and the advisor to clearly delineate expectations of the advisor's role. Establish early on whether the role is observational, non-participatory, or participatory. Whichever the case, the semester will be more pleasant with this role defined.

### **Advising vs. Supervising**

It can be difficult for certain types of personalities to not take-over or take-charge. In an advisory capacity, the advisor will encourage students to be responsible, motivating, and foster a decision-making atmosphere. It would be inappropriate to 'supervise' as if there was an evaluative component of the activities and membership.

### **Problem Solving for Advisors**

Student groups may succumb, occasionally, to becoming mired in one or more problems. Whether the problem is task oriented (projects, activities, assignments) or process oriented (group interrelationships), it will be difficult to achieve the desired goals of the organization unless appropriate guidance or action is taken.

Ultimately, a club that is healthy is the goal. A group in which membership satisfaction is high, the group is functioning as a whole, and achieving established goals is most desirable. What is undesirable is a group that is only task oriented; a few members doing all the work making the club *appear* to be productive. In this case, club member satisfaction is likely to be low. This will impact future club recruitment and membership.

It is important, then, for the club advisor to be aware of the tensions between task and process. The skill to observe the interaction of the group during meetings taking into consideration what is being said, and not said. Working the club membership through any issues that surround the different ways in which all the members of the club operate will facilitate a better organization.

### **Techniques for Problem Solving**

If a problem exists, a determination needs to be made whether or not the problem is interfering with the group's task, or if it interferes with the group's process (group satisfaction). Whichever the case, careful observation, and careful consideration of possible remedies are a must. Likewise, it is important to realize that the solution, or the fix, may not be quick.

The following is a list of questions that may help the advisor determine the issue facing the group, and plan a course of action. This list is *not* intended for use as a checklist, rather a guide for diagnosing the problem.

Questions to ask...

- 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 club leader aware of the group's informal leaders?
- Does the leader run meetings as a facilitator or dominator?

- ❑ Does the leadership or executive body isolate him or herself and make decisions without the group?
- ❑ Does the leader influence more easily swayed members outside of meeting time?
- ❑ Do other members complain about the leader?
- ❑ Is the leader grooming others for leadership positions?
- ❑ How was the leader selected?
- ❑ Is the leadership position considered to be one of respect or is the person chosen by default?
- ❑ 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 a small group within the organization sabotaging the leader? How/why?
- ❑ Does the leader accurately perceive and acknowledge problems that 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**

What do you do when your club is experiencing poor meeting attendance; low member morale; competition; hidden agendas; unclear roles and functions; program failures; and lack of ideas? Consider the following ideas to help formulate a course of action.

- ❑ Does the group have goals?
- ❑ Have the members been involved with determining the goals for the club?
- ❑ Has any type of member training or skill development been offered?
- ❑ How do the members get involved/join the group?
- ❑ What patterns of interaction exist among the group members?
- ❑ 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?
- ❑ How are tasks assigned?
- ❑ How are agendas created?
- ❑ Is there a balance between long- & short-term group goals?
- ❑ Is the group ready to undertake stated goals?
- ❑ What reward structure exists for members?
- ❑ Is group work and membership enjoyable?
- ❑ 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?
- ❑ How does the group deal with frustration?
- ❑ What do group members expect of the leadership and advisor?
- ❑ Do member accurately perceive and acknowledge group problems?

## **Organizational Problems**

Meetings of inconsistent length (too long, too short), lack of continuity from year to year, or even meeting to meeting are just a couple of frustrating organization problems. Consider the following questions when trying to resolve issues related to organization.

- ❑ 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 evaluation, minutes, etc.) available to those who need them?
- ❑ Have job descriptions been developed for officers and chairpeople?
- ❑ 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 agendas prepared and distributed in advance of group meetings?
- ❑ Are minutes of meetings prepared in a timely fashion?
- ❑ Are all members familiar with parliamentary procedure?

## **SECTION III- LIABILITY ISSUES SECTION**

*Litigation involving colleges and university has been on the rise, especially, in the area of student clubs and organizations. This section highlights some of the more frequent concerns, but is not intended to be complete. Some of the language contained within this section has been taken from the Worcester State College Advisor Manual.*

### **Alcohol**

The consumption or possession of alcoholic beverages on campus or at off-campus activities sponsored by a MWCC student club or organization is prohibited. You should be aware of the potential for liability in serving alcohol to students and guests, even those who are of legal drinking age, under the "social host" laws of the commonwealth. A social host can be held liable if a guest is injured or causes injury to others after being served alcohol even after the conclusion of your event. The social host is considered to be the individual(s) or organization responsible for serving the alcoholic beverages.

### **Hazing**

It is a violation of Mount Wachusett Community College and the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for student groups to engage in hazing.\* Each club/organization president is required to distribute a copy of the anti-hazing policy to each member. Advisors should be aware that those participating in hazing activities will be referred for a disciplinary hearing and could be subject to criminal prosecution.

\*You can find the definition of hazing (along with the consequences for failure to report hazing and the requirement to issue copies of Chapter 269, Section 17, 18 & 19 of the General Laws to students

and student groups/organizations) in the MWCC Student Handbook or the Student Clubs and Organization Handbook.

### **Contracts**

Students and advisors are not authorized to sign contracts proposed by student organizations. Contracts must be reviewed by the Student Life office and forwarded to the Executive Vice President for his/her approval. When committing funds or arranging for a performance, the club member or advisor should make it clear to the outside party that they personally cannot enter into a binding commitment but that they will need to have a contract approved and signed by the Executive Vice President.

### **Medical and Emergency Situations**

Advisors are not allowed to dispense medications. Students are responsible for self-administration of prescription and non-prescription medication. If a student has a medical condition that would prohibit participation in a student activity, they should discuss their concerns with the program director prior to the activity.

In the case of a medical emergency, get immediate medical assistance for the individual by calling for emergency medical assistance. Once the medical assistance has been secured and the situation is under control, contact Campus Security at the college by telephoning 978-630-9111 or X1111 from a phone on campus. State your problem; give them your location and telephone number where they can get back to you. Instruct them to contact Karen Kolimaga, the Chief of Campus Police & Safety, and have her call you to provide instructions on how to proceed. Immediately on return to campus the advisor must complete a MWCC accident report that is available from Campus Police or Health Services. If a student has declined medical assistance, an accident report form should still be completed.

If your trip involves being in a place where you will not have easy access to medical supplies, you should bring along a first aid kit from which the injured individual can take and use the items that he/she needs.

### **Transportation**

Use a common carrier, meaning commercial transportation at all times. The Executive Vice President must approve the lease of all rented vehicles. Only advisors or other College employees may operate state-owned or leased vehicles. Drivers and vehicles must be insured. All vehicles should be in good operating condition. Do not overload vehicles. Drivers should be rotated to avoid fatigue. Drivers should not be allowed to drink while driving. All off-campus trips must be registered with the Student Life Office, listing participants' names and other pertinent information.

Students may travel in private vehicles (their own or others) if they sign a Private Vehicle Request form. Advisors shall not coordinate carpooling efforts between students or themselves. When you transport students in your private vehicle, you may be held personally liable in the event that an accident occurs while traveling. You will not be required or requested to transport students in your vehicle. When traveling in a state-owned vehicle or a College leased vehicle, liability shifts to the College or to the rental agency assuming there is no negligence on your part. Pre-authorization must be obtained for the use of state vehicles. Only employees of the College may drive a state vehicle. For all off-campus trips advisors must complete a College travel form in addition to the Student Life Office Trip Request form.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

If a club trip is scheduled and the college is closed due to inclement weather (including weekends) the trip **MUST** be cancelled. If the school would not normally be open such as on a holiday and the weather is questionable, the advisor should err on the side of caution and cancel the trip.

### **Disclosure of Students' Personal Information**

The distribution of students' personal information (address, SSN, grades, etc) must comply with FERPA regulations (see the College Catalog).

### **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.

Generally, you are expected to act as a “reasonably prudent person”—a fictitious individual with your attributes in a similar situation...you may also be required to provide proper supervision...proper instruction...and equipment in a proper state of repair. There are more specific standards...for instance, where danger exists, there would be a duty to warn.

On a hiking trip for example, students should be informed about the level of difficulty and should be asked to sign a liability waiver acknowledging the risk inherent in the activity. There should also be someone present who is familiar with the area and with the activity. If advisors have specific questions about their potential liability, they should contact the Student life office.

*Some of the language contained within the Club Advisors Manual sections above has been taken from the Worcester State College Advisor Manual.*