

Registered Student Organization Advisor Guide



Prepared by the
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Student Activities Office
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*Information in this guide is adapted from the Ferris State University Office of Student Leadership & Activities and University of South Carolina Student Organization Advisor Handbook.
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The Role of an Advisor

By accepting the position of advisor to a student organization, you have chosen to become involved with campus activities. An advisor is a consultant to an organization and assists in the growth and development of the group by providing direction, advice, understanding and clarification.

As an Advisor to a Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University Registered Student Organization (RSO), you should:

- ◆ **Clarify your role** as an advisor to the group members before each semester begins. A simple conversation at a meeting where expectations are discussed can prevent problems due to misunderstandings regarding roles and responsibilities.
- ◆ Be able to **interpret University policies** governing RSOs. See the RSO Handbook. The RSO Handbook is updated every summer and updates are highlighted at the first Student Leadership Meeting of the fall semester.
- ◆ **Ask questions** about events the group is planning or about any forms the group asks you to sign. If you feel uncomfortable with the group's plans or requests, make your concerns known to the officers of the group.
- ◆ **Provide continuity** to the group by assisting with the transition of officers each year.
- ◆ Encourage and assist the group in **setting organizational goals**.
- ◆ **Challenge members to set high goals**, then support their efforts.
- ◆ **Be available** to the officers of the organization for consultation.
- ◆ Encourage the officers to **maintain accurate records** (including financial), and review those records periodically.
- ◆ **Stay up-to-date** on what is occurring within the organization.
- ◆ **Assist officers** in understanding their duties and organizing programs.
- ◆ **Attend** regular organization meetings and officer meetings whenever possible.
- ◆ Provide **constructive feedback** when appropriate.
- ◆ **Promote diversity** within the organization.
- ◆ Recognize that **failure is as much a learning process** as is success in many instances.

Every student organization is required to have a campus advisor who is a full-time faculty or staff member. The advisor agrees to assist the organization, to serve as a resource for its individual members and to be familiar with the programs and activities of the RSO. The staff of the Student Activities Office (616-451-2787) is available to assist advisors with questions concerning their organizations.

Policies & Procedures

Be aware of the policies and procedures concerning RSOs.

Registered Student Organization Handbook

This booklet is available in the Activities & Resource Center and the updates are highlighted at the first Student Leadership Meeting of the fall semesters. The handbook is your guide for student organization policies, guidelines and responsibilities. It is important that students be aware of their responsibilities to

Registered Student Organization Advisor Guide

the College as an officer or a member of a student organization.

Campus Postings

To alleviate complaints about inappropriate postings and clutter on campus bulletin boards, the Activities & Resource Center student employees post all RSO notices. RSOs may also request distribution of flyers or other notices to all RSO mailboxes. Materials must be approved by the Activities & Resource Center at least 3 days in advance of the desired posting date and 10 days in advance of the event.

Space Reservations

RSOs must obtain approval before utilizing indoor or outdoor campus space. The advisor's signature is required for space requests. Campus space is at a premium and is reserved by different offices, so request space as early as possible. Contact the Student Activities Office for space requests.

Funding

Each student organization is granted \$300 per academic year. The funds must be used within the academic year and do not roll-over to the next academic year. In order to use the funds, the organization must see the Coordinator of Student Activities. These funds cannot be used to purchase alcohol or food for regular organizational meetings.

Financial Management

Organizations with a checking account must use a two-signature check system, and it is suggested that the advisor serve as a signatory and regularly review financial records.

Annual Checklist for RSOs

Make sure your organization is on track to maintain registration and enjoy RSO benefits!

Keep Information Current with the Student Activities Office

- ◆ **Remind the group to send a representative to the Student Leadership Meetings.** The dates are listed in an email sent to all advisors and student organization presidents at the beginning of the academic year. They are also available in the Activities & Resource Center.
- ◆ **Help the officers complete the RSO Update Form.** This form must be submitted at the beginning of each fall semester before the first Student Leadership Meeting and any time information changes in order to confirm that the organization is active and has student officers and a confirmed campus advisor. The advisor's signature is required on this form. Please do not give students permission to sign your name. We want to see your signature on the form.
- ◆ **Make sure students are eligible to hold office.** Information on the RSO Update Form is verified by the Student Activities Office. Officers must be enrolled students for the semester, have at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA, and be free of current judicial sanctions to hold office. If students do not qualify for their positions, the advisor is asked to remove students from office. The verification process takes several weeks, so proactive measures by advisors are appreciated.
- ◆ **Review and help the group submit an RSO Constitution.** Each RSO must keep a copy of their constitution on file in the Student Activities Office. It is recommended that the constitution be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to meet the needs of the RSO.

Staying Informed

- ◆ The advisor should meet regularly with RSO officers and attend organization meetings whenever

possible.

- ◆ The group should check their RSO mailbox in the Activities & Resource Center regularly.
- ◆ The group should provide at least one working e-mail address on the RSO Update Form so student leaders can stay informed through regular e-mails sent by the Student Activities Office.
- ◆ E-mails to advisors are sent to the advisor's Lotus Notes address.

Liability Q&A

When you accepted the position of advisor to a student organization, you also accepted an added responsibility. There are some basic questions that arise concerning liability issues. If you have further questions or concerns, consult the Student Activities Office at (616) 451-2787.

What is my liability as an advisor to a student organization?

With roughly 20 student groups on the Kendall campus, the type of liability or risk will vary depending upon the type of organization you advise and what activities are involved. Rather than address specific organizations or activities, a generic list of suggestions is included here to assist you with your responsibilities as an RSO Advisor.

How will I know I am officially an advisor?

Your signature is required on the RSO Update Form each semester, which verifies your involvement as an advisor. If you are not asked to sign this form by the organization, contact the Student Activities Office at (616) 451-2787.

When should I anticipate risks?

You should anticipate risks which may arise out of any decision or situation. Regardless of what organization or activity is involved, there will always be an opportunity for something out of the ordinary to happen—a risk. However, if decisions are made consistently and in good faith, and reasonable precautions are taken, the risk involved can be minimized.

How can I reduce my personal risk?

Clearly and consistently voice your expectations and standards to the group; stay informed about their activities and ask lots of questions. If you don't agree with the actions of the officers or members, put your concerns in writing. If you feel uncomfortable about a situation and the group is not cooperating, promptly report your concerns to the Student Activities Office. The most extreme measure would be to resign your position by sending a resignation letter to the organization and Student Activities Office.

How can I voice my expectations?

Put your expectations in writing to the group on at least an annual basis. Include your expectation that the officers and members will adhere to University policies and procedures. Send a letter to the organization (keep a copy for your records) that will be read at a regular organization meeting and recorded in organization minutes.

What type of authority do I have?

Without an Advisor, the RSO will lose valuable campus privileges. The RSO must have your cooperation and endorsement to engage in many activities. This gives you the authority to voice your concerns about risky activities. Thoroughly discuss the implications of activities the group is planning, and never sign a blank form or check. If you have concerns and you aren't sure how to handle the situation, consult with the Student Activities Office.