

REGISTERED STUDENT ORGANIZATION ADVISOR INFORMATION

What is a registered student organization? A “registered student organization” (RSO) is defined as a registered group of 6 or more currently enrolled Nova Southeastern University students who unite to promote a common interest. Only enrolled students may serve as officers of the organization and vote on organizational matters. The University’s approval of a RSO should not be interpreted as an endorsement of its purpose and/or activities.

What is an advisor? The main objective of an advisor is to be available to guide and assist the officers or members in the mission/goals of the group and to make choices within the boundaries established by state, federal, and local laws, University policies, and the educational mission of Nova Southeastern University. Advisors play an integral role in helping student leaders create an environment within their club/organizations that is productive, safe, enjoyable, and educational. Advisors are essential in helping their students facilitate the coordination of club/organization events and help student leaders take corrective actions and proactive steps to minimize accidental injury and loss.

Benefits of being an advisor. There are many benefits associated with being an advisor to a student organization.

- The satisfaction of seeing and helping students learn and develop new skills
- Watching a disparate group come together to share common interests and work toward common goals and an understanding of differences
- Developing a personal relationship with students
- Furthering personal goals or interests by choosing to work with organization(s) that reflects one’s interests
- Sharing one’s knowledge with others

Responsibilities of an advisor. Faculty/staff advisors are meant to serve as the first line of communication between the University and the students involved in each club and organization on campus. The goal of the faculty/staff advisor system is to give each student ready access to a designated individual at the University who can help maximize the benefits of their co-curricular experience and who can help with problems directly or refer them to an appropriate individual in the University or community.

- Carry out the duties assigned to the advisor by the organization’s approved constitution.
- Serve as a liaison between the University and the student group, to interpret university policies and procedures and to be an official “guest” at the organization’s functions.
- Be aware of and assist the organization in the management of its financial operations.
- Assist the organization in planning its programs and events and refer organizational leaders to appropriate University resources which may aid in the planning process.
- Be aware of deadlines and announcements for registration, budgets, etc.
- Approve the organization’s room/event/meeting reservation requests on OrgSync and approve all financial and funding requests for the organization through the Student Activity Account Fee Office.
- Consult periodically with the Director or Assistant Director of Campus Life and Student Engagement or designated staff concerning the student organization’s direction, programs and function; notify designated staff in the event the organization has decided to disband or has ceased to function as a student organization.
- Assist the organization in the periodic examination of its progress toward the goals specified in the organization’s constitution and to suggest alternatives, which may aid in goal attainment.

Role of an advisor. An advisor can play a variety of roles for a Registered Student Organization (RSO). An advisor can act as a mediator, team builder, reflective agent, mentor, policy interpreter, motivator, and many more. Overall, an advisor consults with the RSO and assists the group in its growth and development. He/she provides direction through advice, understanding and clarification. Here are key roles that advisors should play for an RSO:

1. Clarify his/her role as an advisor to the group members to minimize misunderstandings regarding roles and responsibilities.
2. Become familiar with the group's constitution and by-laws and the University's policies and procedures.
3. Be available to meet with the organization's president and executive board on a regular basis for consultation.
4. Be reasonably available to meet informally with members to maintain open lines of communication.
5. Attend organization meetings whenever possible and promote involvement.
6. Hold a goal-setting meeting for the executive board at the start of the term.
7. Monitor the progress of the student group and show genuine interest in their goals and work.
8. Advise through a process of challenge and support (challenge the students to strive for more, then support them in their efforts).
9. Provide constructive feedback where appropriate; it is generally preferable to provide such feedback after rather than during the club meetings.
10. Assist the organization with election concerns and help transition new officers.
11. Respect and encourage all organizational functions.
12. Assist with risk management decisions.
13. Incorporate classroom learning into group activities when possible.
14. Recognize that failure is as much of a learning process as success, in many instances.
15. Do not let personal goals interfere with or influence group decisions, activities or goals.

Liability concerns for advisors. When you accept the position of Advisor to a student organization, you also accept an added responsibility. There are some basic questions that arise concerning this added responsibility, which will be briefly covered below. One question often asked is, "What is my liability as an advisor to a student organization?"

With over 100 undergraduate student organizations on NSU's campus, the liability or risk will vary greatly depending upon the type of organization for which you are an advisor and what activities are involved.

The advisor is expected to be knowledgeable about federal, state, local laws and university policies and to dissuade organizational officers from activities that seem hazardous or would violate university policies or laws. As employees of the University, faculty/staff advisors are encouraged to act within the scope of their duties to minimize the potential liability.