



Second Place

Professional Staff or Faculty

Enhancing the Role of Student Organization Advisers in Building a Positive Campus Community

By Debra Floerchinger
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The importance of faculty and staff interactions with students in building a positive campus community is indisputable. A variety of authors specifically have referred to the importance of faculty and staff interactions with students as a critical variable in building community. As a published topic, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990) elaborated on six principles that its members defined as the kind of community every college and university should strive to be. The first principle reflected



its" as in Colestock and Carstie's 1992 article. Carnotter et al. (1990) elaborated on building a positive campus community in various ways. Areas such as advising barriers to quality education, a combination between academic and student affairs were examined by Zeller, Himm and Fuson (1985) and strategies for overcoming these barriers were outlined. The ACU-I Bulletin (March 1991) listed "33 Ways to Tell Your Story" in an article that provided suggestions for communicating how the union or activities program contributes to a sense of community, including numerous faculty-stu-

Student involvement and interaction with faculty members, both inside and outside of class, have been considered to be determining factors in a student's satisfaction, intellectual and personal development, and persistence in college (Astin and Dancy, 1969; Astin, 1977; Chickering, 1972; Endo and Harp, 1990; and Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980). Astin (1977) is discussing his research that found that the relationship between student involvement and interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or institutional characteristic. Thus, finding ways to encourage greater student involvement with faculty (and vice versa) could be highly positive activity on most college campuses" (Page 204).

On many college campuses, all student organizations are required to have a professional faculty member assigned to establish university responsibility. Many advisers work with several groups, and often faculty and staff members have never advised a student organization. The desire to

The third important way to involve faculty and staff is by linking them with student organizations as advisers. This is often not an easy task, but by examining the issues involved and positively structuring these connections, one can expect exceptional results. This paper will focus on the role of student organization advisers in building and enhancing the developmental sense of community on the college campus.

Active Developmental Problems

On many college campuses, all student organizations are required to have a professional faculty member assigned to establish university responsibility. Many advisers work with several groups, and often faculty and staff members have never advised a student organization. The desire to

desire to be granted tenure or full professor status;

- Family involvement including responsibility for children, elderly or disabled parents, and serious medical problems;
- Commuting distance that affects one's ability to commit to late meetings or activities;
- Dislike for, or fear of personal involvement

with students or dislike for particular students

- Fear of financial or legal repercussions based on an organization's off-campus liabilities;

- Concern about lack of university support—that is, the rewards do not outweigh the costs of involvement in terms of money or time;

or professional organization commitments as well as personal hobbies.

- Disagreement or conflict with the goals or philosophy behind the organization;

- Previous experience with student organizations or groups that resulted in one or more of the above outcomes. Also, contact with other faculty or staff persons who relate bad or negative experiences with organizations will be bad publicity and

With minority group professionals, another fear could be concern about advising a minority student group or vice versa. Individual prejudice does exist, and some persons may limit their involvement based on this factor. Other professionals may appear unapproachable. Because of this, student groups may not have asked them to advise.

Factors Influencing Adviser Retention

Another problem that may occur is with certain group advisers. Some persons will be honest about their reasons to terminate the relationship, but others may find it easier not to confront the relationship. An effective way to "turn off" an initially enthusiastic adviser:

- 1) Like all persons, advisers' interests and expectations change. The satisfaction gained from several years of advising one particular group may dissipate. The adviser may terminate the relationship because of a concern for the group and the desire to influence change

- 2) As laws and policies change, advisers may feel the need to remove themselves from involvement. Many advisers on our campus have ended their involvement because of the amount of negative publicity on minority factors

- 3) Many groups do not inform their advisers of their responsibilities. An easy way to

responsibility is to expect that advisers must be involved with an organization as actively as members. Some groups exert pressure on advisers to purchase group memorabilia, attend showers for members, and actually be involved with money-making projects.

5) Groups may actually falsify information provided to advisers. This may include financial information, member recruitment or meeting activities and information concerning meeting times and dates. Groups sometimes forge their adviser's signature and may falsify information after they have acquired their adviser's signature.

As advisers' responsibilities to their families and professional involvement may change.

Young, unmarried staff and faculty members are often hit hardest with requests for organization involvement. As responsibilities change, so does the adviser's ability to adequately respond to a group's needs.

"On many college campuses, all student organizations are required to have a professional faculty or staff adviser to establish university recognition."

7) Advisers sometimes have personality conflicts with individual students that decreases their ability to function effectively

with the entire group. Personalities may clash and because of this, attendance at meetings or

other activities may be difficult or uncomfortable.

8) Organization traditions are hard to change. An adviser may have to work with a group for years to remove deeply ingrained, wise stereotypical goals, behavior and activities. After years and numerous suggestions, change can't help but set in when no change occurs. The statements: "We've always done it that way" or "I had to do this when I was a student" are hard to change. A change that can utterly destroy an organization is agent. When an organization refuses to give up

interest is also a fairly frequent reason for adviser turnover. If an organization's members can't motivate member recruitment, this task should not be left up to the adviser, but it sometimes is.

Diversity and Student Organizations

Many current research studies also comment on the special needs of minority students on predominantly Caucasian campuses and the lack of minority role models on the professional staff. This can seriously alter their perceptions of the campus community and student organizations.

Carputer, Peterson, Kiblar and Peterson (1991) described the increased expectations of minority students (particularly black and Hispanic) attending research university campuses. These increased expectations create an almost impossible situation with limited time involvement as adviser role models for minority students.

The influence of mentors in improving the satisfaction of minority students during the college experience is documented by Braddock (1981); Pollard (1982); Fleming (1984); Nettles, Thoeny and Gosman (1980); Hughes (1967); and Malmgren (1988). Sadlock (1987) related the concern black students expressed concerning the lack of black faculty and staff as role models on many predominantly white campuses. A lack of variety of viewpoints or cultural perspectives relevant to black students can result in a range of feelings of loneliness and isolation to a lack of learning, development and identification with an institution.

Some authors have focused on the importance of multicultural programming and other interventions in developing an inclusive community to assist in retaining minority students and maximizing their collegiate experiences. Excellent examples of these articles include Quatrone (1989); Green (1987); Murray (1987); Garcia (1989); Green (1987); Murray (1987); Ianno (1987); Manning (1988); Rasch (1988); Loppo (1987); and Johnson (1989).

A major question is whether we can be effective working as an adviser and student who do not identify with us racially. Are interracial as effective as utilizing advisers from the same racial background as group members? Research in this area is also limited. Steele (1989) noted that universities should emphasize commonality as a proper name than "diversity and pluralism" those latter words are perceived as "otherness" for the purpose of difference. Kish and Mackay (1980) supported interactive pluralism beyond

student affairs staff. The faculty and staff must recognize environmental factors that inhibit development and revamp the environment to better support their development. Practitioners should be sensitive to the needs of all students that are alike. Faculty and staff members, whether black or white, can become effective if they possess good human relations skills and use them to understand students' needs. There must be a delicate balance between adequate support and the scrupulous avoidance of patronizing.

If initiated through self-awareness and institutional support of faculty and staff training as well as training for advisers, Savio (1990) stressed the importance of advisers in "redefining the norms" of campus organizations. Jackson (1984) provided self-evaluation instruments for educators by which they can identify behaviors they may display in and out of the classroom that are interpreted by students as prejudicial, hostile and discriminatory. In addition, his 1986 checklist was designed to assist advisers, counselors and teachers in evaluating their readiness to work with students of disadvantaged backgrounds.

Experiences between advisers and organizational experiences. Education is important, especially in relation to communication and cultural differences (Gilliam and Van Den Berg, 1980). The emphasis must also want to focus on minority faculty/staff recruitment and retention as an advance first step in the process. Run (1980) recommended changes in developing an agenda for the '90s in regard to staff issues such as recruitment. By increasing the total number of personnel from diverse backgrounds, the odds of having a non-minority background, the odds of having contact are better as well as the facilitation of positive student/adviser contact. If the lack of positive minority role models hampers your efforts, do not hesitate to develop or expand peer-counselor or mentoring programs in addition to structuring your organization adviser program as suggested by Lewis (1986) and Watson and Clark (1984). Students often rely on peers for support. The research of Rice and Brown (1980) indicated that prospective members preferred a peer mentor one to three years older than themselves more than they preferred other administrators.

Spaights, Dixon and Nickolai (1985) stressed that campuses must look beyond their policies and check the practices that are occurring. Practices on the part of students, faculty and admin-

istrators that are of a racist nature must not be overlooked or condoned. In relation to student activities, the U.S. Department of Education (1988) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (1986) addressed areas of programmatic activities for minority student and staff development. Workshops designed to facilitate discussions about diversity and discrimination have been described by Vickie Dine and Nathan (1990), Robinson and Brown (1984) and Dittman and Muschio (1980). The Cultural Environment Transitions Model (Manning and Coleman-Boatwright, 1991) is a means to assist in defining and working towards the goals of multiculturalism. Sue (1991) described a model for diversity assessment and training.

The influence of mentors in improving the satisfaction of minority students during the college experiences is documented...

Appendix A	
Adviser Luncheon Topics (1991-1992)	
September:	Paperwork and Policies (Resources: adviser handbook, organization president's manual, university center handbook)
October:	The Horror of Hazing (Newspaper clippings, articles, videotape)
November:	Your Advising Style (Allen [Programming, May 1981], adapted to fit in with your organization members' and adviser's tasks on specific campus)
December:	Relaxing Before Finals
January:	The Officer Transition (Handouts and other educational materials)
February:	Communicating Across Cultures (Handouts and inventories listed in article by Jackson and videotape concerning faculty/student stereotypes)
March:	The Adviser's Perceptions of Their Role (Featured questionnaire and discussion between advisers concerning what's important and what's not)
April:	Improvements to Our Organizations and Our Office's Services (Featured discussion about what's good, what could be better and

Structuring Effective Adviser/Organization Interactions

Advisers and groups often have no choice in the match, so it is best to focus on the development of their relationship in order to maximize effective interaction. Several authors have commented on this interaction. Gwost (1982) listed five basic assumptions about student/adviser relationships. These included shared responsibility for relationship building, the importance of open, direct communication, recognition of additional commitments, focusing on human value systems and individual styles of interaction, and the process of growth and development. She also discussed strategies both parties should consider when beginning and maintaining the process.

Mamarchev and Williamson (1990) focused on role clarification and fair rules of confrontation in dealing with individual conflicts between members and advisers. Research by Fitch (1991) indicated some individual differences in interpersonal values of differing levels of extracurricular involvement. Advisers may want to examine these levels and motives for individual group members and alter the advising style accordingly.

By actively involving faculty and staff organization advisers in student development issues and leadership training, the limited outreach of a small, organized student activities staff can be

Right for Telling the Union's Story"

...at the...
 understanding of unions. Many faculty didn't have that experience. So we have to prepare them for whatever it is we're asking them to do and not assume they know. We complain in student affairs when people assume that anybody can do anything. Many people assume that anybody can do our jobs, that it doesn't take any special training. And then we ask all kinds of people to help and

ing. It's a mixed message" (Page 30).

Silken, Lucas and Wells (1997) contend that "we now rarely focus on training women and incorporate the values-oriented, collaborative approach illustrated in a community-based style of leadership" (Dane 75). This same skill building relates to adviser leadership training as it does to student leadership training. Campus activities and organizations offices can no longer assume an inactive role with their adviser program. Adviser training is vital in creating an involved and perceptive advising staff. Advisers the more specific, the better.

Just as the range of student problems has changed in the last decade, so has the range of skills needed by effective and community-oriented-organization advisers. Some suggestions include:

- 1) Providing an adviser notebook, guide or contract would be minimal expectations. Sandeen (1983) recommended that the chief student affairs administrator should write a clear policy statement defining roles and responsibilities of faculty advisers in conjunction with a list of faculty advisers or consultation with a major faculty group on campus.
- 2) Advisers also want to receive copies of any correspondence sent to their group, whether it is a financial statement, administrative paperwork request or judicial charge.
- 3) Providing leadership training in the form of a student officer workshop may take some of the pressure off of the adviser as will a monthly leadership newsletter addressing issues such as conducting a meeting or rewarding group members. Officer transition training should also be provided.
- 4) Providing extra assistance to organizations in terms of skill building, recruitment and retention of advisers and facilitating interaction are all important for struggling groups. Craig and Warner (1991) delineated a variety of additional services that the "forgotten majority" of student organizations and their advisers desperately need.
- 5) Providing incentives for advisers

advisers who promote positive...
 ing positive contributions in the form of letters and sending copies to department chairs and administration should also benefit the faculty adviser.

**"By increasing the...
 diverse backgrounds, the...
 odds of increasing contact...
 are better, as well as the...
 facilitation of positive...
 student/adviser contact?"**

6) In addition to student leadership training, adviser training on specific student development issues should be provided. McManus

Wisconsin/Stout as liability issues, roles and responsibility, goal setting with new officers, budget planning, and other program activities at the request of the advisers.

article.

7) Maintaining a library of recent and pertinent information may facilitate discussion and promote continual examination of issues relating to student groups and their needs. Our office just finished a resource directory that contains resources available to student

ary and leadership issues. It includes books, subscriptions, video and audio tapes and a...
 who are interested in speaking on certain topics. The materials are located in a variety of department...

8) If all else fails, and yours is one of the lucky campuses that has excess funds, finding money to supplement faculty travel to student services or faculty academic conferences would work well as an incentive.

Conclusion

The university must take a more active role in...
 training more effectively in supervising the cam...

Annendix R

Adviser Luncheon Topics

1992-1993

September:	Liability Issues for Organizations (Features system legal counsel) Student Leader Weekend Workshop (Open to advisers)
October:	Warning Signs of Student Crises and the Services Offered by the Counseling Center
November:	Alcohol and the College Student (with a faculty member's help) Materials provided by the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP)
December:	Human Winter Imminent
January:	Sexual Harassment on Campus (Videotape and materials prepared from other resources)
February:	Black Students at Predominantly Caucasian Campuses/Black calls, Black Campuses and What They Expect That "We" Don't (Materials compiled by literature review and presented by guest speaker)

more responsibility for their actions. They need to recognize the concerns that advisers face when working with student groups, and show appreciation and consideration for their adviser(s).

the factors of their organizations. They also need to be held accountable for their actions. They need to be held accountable for their actions. They need to be held accountable for their actions.

Wells (1990) concluded his discussion of campus community and leadership by noting that it is design,

student affairs and the professoriate lies in the

of principles and goals that give meaning to the

(Davis 9). A social contract between student

leaders is the glue that binds this distinctive

The 1000+ places on the college campus could

very well be the shrinking number of student

commitment to the development of a positive

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The Green Ink

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By Steve Frash