

ADVISING 101

WHAT IS A RSO ADVISOR?

A Registered Student Organization advisor is a faculty or staff member who has a relationship with a student organization and has agreed to provide support and guidance to officers and members of the student organization. The advisor serves as a liaison for the group in an official capacity and as an advocate for the group.

WHY BECOME AN ADVISOR?

Advising a student organization can be a very rewarding experience for faculty and staff. Working with students outside structured classroom experiences or staff roles allows faculty and staff an opportunity to share information and resources and to teach hands-on skills such as leadership styles, organizational ethics, and program planning.

WHO CAN BECOME AN RSO ADVISOR?

The University of Houston allows any full-time or part-time University benefits eligible faculty or staff members to serve as advisors to Registered Student Organizations. TAs, IAs, Gas, or Guests of the University are ineligible to serve as Primary advisors for student organizations.

HOW TO BECOME AN OFFICIAL ADVISOR?

Here are 2 easy steps to become a student organization advisor at the University of Houston:

1. Be asked by student leaders to advise their organization or approach an organization that you may be interested in advising and offer to be an advisor.
2. Complete the state mandated Advisor Risk Management training at least once during your time at the University of Houston and submit the required [Advisor Agreement](#) to the Center for Student Involvement each academic year during annual registration.

THE ROLE OF ADVISOR

By sharing both knowledge about the university and personal experiences, an RSO advisor can assist the organization in the conduct of its activities. In addition, valuable, mutually rewarding, co-curricular relationships between students and RSO advisors are fostered.

The list that follows contains possible roles of an RSO advisor. It is important that the RSO advisor and the organization communicate their expectations of each other. The RSO advisor should be very clear about the things he or she will do, and the things he or she will not do. Of course, the expectations will vary according to the needs of the organization and the individual advisor.

- The RSO advisor can recognize and support participation in student organizations because participation contributes to the educational and personal development of students.

- The RSO advisor may guide the student organization but should not dictate the organization's programs or activities. RSO advisors should be frank in offering suggestions, considerations, ideas, and discussing possible consequences.
- The RSO advisor should be well informed about the plans and activities of the organization. The organization should expect is that the advisor will attend some meetings and will consult frequently with the organization's officers.
- The RSO advisor should know the goals and direction of the organization and should help the organization evaluate its progress.
- The RSO advisor should be aware of the constitution and bylaws of the organization and help with interpretation, if applicable.
- The RSO advisor should provide a source of continuity within the organization and be familiar with the organization's history.
- The RSO advisor should be familiar with university policies and procedures and help the organization comply with them.
- The RSO advisor should be aware of the general financial condition of the organization, and encourage good record keeping.
- The RSO advisor should help in training new officers and help them develop their leadership skills.
- The RSO advisor should be prepared to resolve major problems or emergencies within the organization.

Inappropriate Responsibilities:

- Running the student organization meetings
- Assuming ultimate responsibility for the group's decisions, problems or failures
- Assuming veto power over group decisions, unless decisions could lead to harm or violate laws and/or University policy
- Governing content and ideas expressed in programs
- Serving as primary recruiter for new members
- Stepping in to "solve" problems; remember, mistakes can be good learning opportunities

THE ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE ADVISOR

Advisors serve voluntarily. It is the organization's responsibility to inform the RSO advisor about the activities of the organization.

Student organization officers can use the following checklist to help establish a working relationship with their advisor.

- Notify the RSO advisor of all meetings and events.
- Consult the RSO advisor in the planning of all activities.
- Consult the RSO advisor before making any changes in the structure or policies of the organization, and before undertaking major projects.
- Understand that although the RSO advisor has no vote that he or she should have speaking privileges.
- Remember that the responsibility for the success or failure of the organization project rests ultimately with the group, not the RSO advisor.
- Talk over any problems or concerns with the RSO advisor.

- Acknowledge that the RSO advisor's time and energy are donated and express appreciation.
- Be clear and open about your expectations for your RSO advisor's role.
- At the end of each semester, evaluate your RSO advisor and give appropriate feedback.

Adapted from the ACPA Commission for Student Involvement (2005). [Advisor Manual](#).