

Welcome to the RSO Advisor Network (RAN) Newsletter!

Each month you will receive information about Registered Student Organization requirements, tips and tricks from the Center for Student Involvement, resources for your student organizations to use, as well as information to aid you in being a great advisor.

IN THIS EDITION....SEPTEMBER 2018

- ⇒ RSO Resources
 - ◊ SOLAR
- ⇒ Highlights from the RAN Roundtable
- ⇒ Get Involved Access
 - ◊ Events
- ⇒ Advisors Corner: Risk Management & Advisor Liability

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We shared that setting expectations and having an expectations conversation between advisor and student leaders is critical. This helps to establish what the expectations are on both sides so the relationship is mutually beneficial. Once a conversation is established it ensures advisors are supporting students in the way they need it and students are keeping advisor included in a way that works for the advisor. We also shared about resources available to conduct this conversation. On our website, we have an [Expectations Assessment](#) available.

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What are challenges you are facing as an advisor?

- Students doing/needing things last minute

Chat: Understanding that as advisors we are there to guide students and that often they have more on their plate than just their student organization. Working with the students to give reminders and check in on progress helps them to keep their organization responsibilities in check.
- Advising multiple groups

Chat: Taking a step back and evaluating what each group needs from you as an advisor and determining if you are able to adequately meet the needs of each group is sometimes necessary. Based on your availability you may be making decisions about if you need to step back from a group, or reevaluate how you can successfully support them.
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Chat: It is necessary as an advisor to help the students think through the risk management of the event and understand more than just the apparent risks, but reputational risks as well as emotional risks that their events could potentially have. Also, understanding what signing a sponsorship form means— your department or area accepting responsibility for the event along with the student organization if something happens. Per the Sponsorship Verification Form “Active involvement is indicated when the department assigns staff to supervise, publicly advertises sponsorship of, funds, and/or otherwise exercises significant control over and accepts responsibility for a particular event or activity.”
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Chat: It is important to make sure that you take time to help your organization retreat or meet to determine new goals and norms for the organization each year. This helps new members feel like they have influence and ownership within the organization. It can also curb any negative influence, because everyone will have contributed to the direction of the organization.

Seasoned advisors, do you have any words of wisdom you could share with new advisors?

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Adapted from Campus Labs Engage Support

ADVISORS CORNER: RISK MANAGEMENT & ADVISOR LIABILITY

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Faculty and staff at the University of Houston that advise registered student organizations are expected to adhere to University policies and state and federal laws in all their advising interactions with student organizations. It is imperative to understand that most activities associated with student organizations come with some level of risk. Some of the more common legal issues that student organizations may face include negligence or personal injuries sustained while attending an activity sponsored by a student group. It is your students' responsibility to take steps to ensure that risks are minimized. The Center for Student Involvement also monitors event registration for events with higher levels of risk and meets with students to work through mitigating. Although there is no way to fully eliminate risk and legal liability associated with a program or event, there are ways to reduce risk and provide a safer environment for all involved.

Listed below are a few ways you can work with your students to identify and reduce risk:

- Review the risks associated with the event/program in the following categories and identify ways to mitigate the risk
 - ◊ **Physical Risk** (i.e. food poisoning, injuries from physical activities, or travel related incidents)
 - ◊ **Reputational Risk** (i.e. negative publicity for your organization, UH, your advisor, venue where you are holding your event)
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(We also have a [Risk Management Matrix for Student Organizations](#) on the CSI Website)

- Review University policies regarding alcohol and ensure compliance
- If necessary for the event, assist your students in the process to purchase additional insurance
- Consider having students participating in risky activities complete waivers

There are additional risks that organizations may face including hazing, financial negligence and risk associated with travel. We have created a video to train our student leaders on risk management, that is available [here](#).

If you have reason to question an action taken by your student organization, express your concern directly to the organization in writing, including the date, and a suggested alternative to the questionable action. We generally advise RSO advisors to engage and ask their students questions to help them stay informed and aware of the groups plans and to make sure the students are abiding by University policies. If you have concerns about a situation unique to your organization or to a specific event sponsored by the student organization you advise, please contact us in the Center for Student Involvement so we can assist with the issue.

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It is important to remember that, in general, while we need to be concerned about liability, we can seriously damage the educational process students experience in running a student organization by being fearful of it. Therefore it's best to be prepared, ask questions, and guide our students in their decision making, so that we are aiding them in creating a safe, fun, and enjoyable environment for everyone.

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