

Appendix A: Advisor's Handbook

Expectations of Recognized Student Organization Advisors at UNL

Student organizations are an important facet of UNL. They enable participants to learn more about themselves, the world and the people around them. They promote thought and action, and prepare people for life beyond the University.

Each Recognized Student Organization (RSO) at UNL is required to have a faculty/staff advisor. These advisors should assist the group(s) they advise in developing a foundation of sound decision-making and productivity. The following is a list of minimum expectations for advisors of Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) at the University of Nebraska:

1. An advisor must be a current employee at UNL who is either Academic/Administrative or Managerial/Professional faculty/staff (ASUN Bylaws 5.5.2).
2. An advisor is expected to be available to the officers and/or members of the RSO for advising and required signing of documents. If an advisor will be on sabbatical, extended leave or unavailable for an extended period of time, an interim advisor should be designated.
3. An advisor is expected to have easy access to a copy of the current edition of the NU Book, a guide to policies and procedures for student organizations, the Student Code of Conduct and ASUN Bylaws governing student organizations. A hard copy or access to the web site edition of these documents fulfills this expectation. Familiarity with the contents of these documents is also an expectation.
4. An advisor is expected to assist in the process of keeping the RSO in compliance with all University of Nebraska Board of Regents' and UNL policies as well as all applicable local, state and federal regulations. Among these are 1) the UNL policy which requires all RSO funds to be held on campus in a Student Organization Financial Services (SOFS) account, 2) Board of Regents facilities policies, 3) Following UNL Vehicle and Travel Policies, 4) monitoring RSO activities to insure compliance with the University's not-for-profit classification, and 5) age of majority laws regarding the purchase, possession and use of tobacco and alcohol.
5. An advisor is expected to have a copy of the current, ASUN approved constitution of the organization(s) being advised. If the organization has ties with an off-campus organization, a copy of that organization's operating documents (particularly as they pertain to on-campus affiliates) must also be on hand. Familiarity with the contents of these documents is also an expectation. This is to help insure that the off-campus organization does not require the RSO to act in a fashion contrary to the policies governing UNL student organizations.
6. An advisor is expected to insure that regularly scheduled elections of RSO leadership positions take place in an appropriate manner. The Advisor's signature on a new Annual Review Form (which must be filed no later than three weeks after elections) is considered verification that the new officers listed on the form are the proper and duly elected new leadership of the organization. The advisor is also expected to assist both the old and new leadership in this transition and provide historical continuity.
7. An advisor is expected to approve of the financial transactions of the RSO to insure financial compliance with SOFS policies and to assure that indebtedness does not occur. The advisor's signature is necessary on all payment voucher requests to prove that the voucher has been reviewed and that the expenditure has been determined to be appropriate and reasonable. In the event that indebtedness does occur, the advisor should assist the organization in designing and implementing a Debt Reduction/Management program to resolve the debt as soon as possible.

8. An advisor is expected to allow the duly elected student leadership to exercise primary decision-making authority with regard to group goals, objectives and activities within the limitations of the expectations above.

In addition to these minimum expectations, advisors are encouraged to do the following:

1. An advisor is encouraged to meet regularly with the RSO's officers/membership. Such officer meetings should include leadership development and program planning activities.
2. An advisor is encouraged to attend all events and activities sponsored by the RSO.
3. An advisor is encouraged to assist the RSO leadership to plan events, activities and make the student leadership aware of resources available to them for these projects.

The staff in Student Involvement is available to help advisors meet these expectations and provide resources and support for student organization advising activities. If a faculty/staff's position duties include advising one or more student organizations, the Student Involvement office can help provide information on the activities of the RSO and document organization activities. Contact Student Involvement at 472-2454 or on the UNL web site at www.unl.edu/involved or at involved@unl.edu.

The Advisor's Signature: The Key that Unlocks University Resources

The University has limited resources. In order to make the best use of these limited resources, only units of the University (departments, administrative offices, etc.) and Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) can use these resources. The advisor's signature helps the RSO to claim rightful access to these resources.

Advisors must sign the Annual Review Form (ARF). This form shows the names, contact information and signature of the RSO's officers. The advisor's signature is accepted by UNL as evidence that these individuals are the duly elected new leadership of the RSO. After filing a new ARF, new officers can access funds in the

group's SOFS account, use the Event Planning and Registration (EPR) process to access many UNL facilities and resources, and the group appears on the RSO list generated by ASUN as being in total compliance with RSO requirements.

Other examples of Advisor signature powers within the Event Planning and Registration process include:

- **Travel**—All RSO travel events call for the advisor's signature to insure that the trip is an official activity of the group and can therefore use group funds for travel insurance, vehicle costs, etc.
- **Fundraisers**—The advisor's signature for a fundraiser means that the group, and not just a few individuals, is engaged in the project and that ALL of the funds generated will be placed in the SOFS account for the organization. The review of a fundraiser by an advisor should also help flush out commercial enterprises that are giving the RSO a less than profitable deal in the fund-raising agreement.
- **Raffle Authorization form**—This form is used in the SOFS office in processing a request to do a raffle. The advisor signature here, and on the Event Planning and Registration (EPR) form for the raffle, indicates that the advisor, as well as the student leadership, has read and understands the regulations and requirements that are part of conducting a raffle.

There is, in fact, only one case in which an advisor signature is not required for a student organization to register an event. Within recent years, a policy has been adapted that allows RSOs to process an Event Planning and Registration (EPR) for REGULAR MEETINGS ONLY without the advisor's signature. If the meeting calls for anything other than a room reservation, the advisor's signature is called for.

As a faculty/staff advisor with a full roster of tasks to accomplish related to holding a faculty or staff position, making time to be available to students who need an advisor signature might appear to be an additional burden. This is not necessarily so. Consider the following options:

- Establish an "in-box" in advisor's office area for RSO items needing a signature and check the box frequently to insure

that nothing ages too much in it. An “out-box” could be set up for student organization leaders to check to see if the item needing the signature has been signed.

- Set up a few office hours during the week when RSO leaders should plan to bring you items needing your signature and help them to stick to these designated times.
- Announce to the RSO that sign-offs on Event Planning and Registrations (EPR) will be available prior to/immediately after the group’s regular meeting.

Many of these approaches will force students to plan ahead to get the signature. Last minute events, calling for last minute signatures, are typically poorly planned and poorly executed. Assisting students to plan ahead to get the signature helps them to see the value of planning ahead for all of their events.

Don’t sign as a “rubber stamp”. Review each item carefully and ask questions about student group events. Without an advisor signature, the event

will not take place. When signing an Event Planning and Registration (EPR), consider the following:

- Has the event been carefully planned?
- Is there sufficient support for the event (funds, volunteers, time, ...)?
- Will additional support or follow up likely be called for (example: Post Raffle Review Form)?
- Are the students fully aware of all UNL policies, state and federal regulations that may be relevant? Use this opportunity to help the leaders in your RSO to learn how to plan ahead, organize tasks and meet deadlines. The IRS is not as flexible as UNL; students need to learn the value of a deadline just as all advisors know the value of the IRS deadline set on April 15 of each year.

* For additional resources and information on advising student organizations at UNL, contact Student Involvement at 472-2454. See also Advisor Resources at www.unl.edu/involved/studentorg/