



Student Organization Advisor Handbook (2018-2019)



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Introduction and Purpose

What is a recognized student organization?

A recognized student organization is a collective group of Bloomsburg University (BU) students with a shared interest, goal, or purpose who have successfully fulfilled and sustained the requirements of the organization recognition process and have been approved through the Committee on Student Organizations (COSO) and Community Government Association (CGA). While student organizations are associated with the university and must have an on-campus (BU employee) advisor, they are intended to be student-run, student-focused, and student-driven. Student organizations are in place to give Bloomsburg University students an opportunity to learn and grow in a variety of ways outside the classroom, including having the chance to gain valuable leadership experience.

What is an advisor?

An advisor is a Bloomsburg University faculty or staff member who is available to provide student organizations with guidance and support. The role of an advisor is voluntary and unpaid, however, it is often integral to the success of student organizations. Advisors are encouraged to share ideas and feedback, provide different perspectives and historical context, encourage members, suggest resources and collaborations, and advocate for their students. Advisors should **NOT** lead student organizations or be in charge of the group's decision-making.

Who provides organizational support to student organizations?

The **Center for Leadership and Engagement (CLE)** at Bloomsburg University works collaboratively with the **Community Government Association (CGA)** and the **Community Activities Office** to oversee and provide organizational support for student organizations on campus. The CLE provides support in a multitude of ways including, but not limited to:

- Educating executive board members/officers on the roles and responsibilities involved in running a group
- Providing organizational training on topics like leading meetings, marketing and branding, recruitment and retention, member recognition, event planning, budget management, and more
- Administrating HuskySync and the portals contained within HuskySync
- Helping students troubleshoot issues with HuskySync and answering pressing questions
- Training students and student organization leaders on the use of HuskySync
- Keeping up-to-date records on student organizations via HuskySync
- Providing organizational support via leadership development opportunities
- Helping navigate fundraiser/service project request forms
- Planning and organizing an Activities and Involvement Fair each semester
- Serving as a mailbox hub for all student organizations



CGA and the Community Activities Office also provide support in a variety of ways including, but not limited to:

- Managing Husky Fund accounts for all student organizations
- Providing monetary funding for open recognized student organizations
- Renting vehicles for use by student organizations



Center for Leadership and Engagement:

Location: Northumberland Hall (ground floor) | **Phone:** 570-389-4354 | **Email:** stcle@bloomu.edu

CGA and Community Activities:

Location: 421 Kehr Union Building | **Phone:** 570-389-4462 | **Email:** cga@bloomu.edu

Roles of Advisors

While student organizations are to be primarily student-run, it is important for each organization to have an advisor who can provide guidance, advice, and support to the students within the organization. While we have many active and engaged student leaders at Bloomsburg University, it is beneficial for each organization to have an advisor who is knowledgeable about the inner-workings of the University and its policies and can provide insight from their experience that the students may be needing.

What might be asked of me as an advisor?

The roles of an advisor may differ in each organization and should be determined collaboratively by the advisor and the members of the organization. Being an advisor is not intended to be an exhaustive commitment, however, it is important for advisors to be actively involved in at least some capacity. *Some* of the things advisors may be asked by student organizations to help with are:

- Identifying and locating campus resources
- Interpreting university policies for students (including procedures for forming and maintaining an organization on campus)
- Assisting with elections and officer transitions
- Providing advice on the planning of fundraisers or events, as well as opportunities for collaboration
- Assisting with financial decision making
- Aiding in recruitment and developing a strong campus presence
- Reviewing, providing feedback, and approving various campus forms
- Mediating potential conflicts between members
- Discouraging the dominance of the group by any one individual
- Helping with training or activities to develop effective leadership teams within the organization
- Providing historical context for group decisions
- Attending meetings, activities, programs or events

Who can be an advisor?

Any BU faculty or staff member is permitted to be an advisor and, beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, all organizations are required to have at least one primary “on-campus” advisor. Secondary advisors can be anyone the organization chooses and can include off-campus affiliates. BU faculty and staff members are limited to advising five or fewer student organizations (special exceptions can be made based on approval by the CLE, the Committee on Student Organizations (COSO), CGA, and the faculty or staff member’s immediate supervisor).

How does an organization appoint or remove an advisor?

Each organization may have their own system for appointing, removing, or replacing an advisor. If the organization decides to replace their advisor, the procedure to do so should be outlined in the organization’s individual constitution; if it is not, then it would be up to the organization’s executive board and voting body to determine whether, and how, to replace the advisor. Similarly, it would be wise for the organization to then amend their constitution to include this type of procedure; however, any amendments to an organization’s constitution must be submitted and approved by COSO. Advisors may choose to vacate their role at any time and the organization then has a grace period of 30 days to find a new faculty or staff member to serve as advisor.

Responsibilities of Advisors

What are some things all advisors need to do?

As an advisor, it is important to understand the organization you are advising, which includes getting to know the students in the organization each year, especially the students on the executive board. This also includes being knowledgeable about what is contained in the student organization's constitution and HuskySync portal. If you do not possess a readily available copy of the constitution, you can access a copy through HuskySync, as all student organizations should have a copy of their constitution uploaded to their portal. Some other important responsibilities for advisors include, but are not limited to:

- Joining the student organization's portal on HuskySync and being listed as "Advisor" in the portal
- Updating, if necessary, the student organization's officers on the roster (though, this should mainly be done by the out-going officers each year or semester)
- **Joining the Student Organization Advisor Resources (SOAR) portal on HuskySync**
- **Completing the Advisor Agreement Form on the SOAR portal of HuskySync**
- Reading and familiarizing yourself with the Student Organization Handbook (located on the homepage of HuskySync)

It is also important for advisors to be knowledgeable about university rules and policies, as well as federal, state, and local laws and ordinances and inform the group of relevant policies, as applicable. Student organizations that violate policies or laws are at serious risk of losing their active status, so it is important for advisors to help guide organizations to stay within all necessary parameters. If you are unsure about a decision the group wants to make and whether it might be a violation, help the group gather more information before carrying out the decision.

What should I expect from the students in the organization?

While advisors have certain responsibilities to the organizations with which they work, **the organizations also have certain responsibilities to their advisors**. Some of the responsibilities that student organizations have to their advisors include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing and sharing a "position description" for the advisor that clearly defines specific expectations
- Notifying the advisor of all meetings, activities, programs and events
- Sharing copies of meeting minutes in a timely manner
- Meeting regularly with the advisor to discuss organizational matters (at least a few times per semester)
- Consulting the advisor before making significant changes to the organization or its constitution
- Soliciting thoughts and feedback from the advisor
- Showing respect for the advisor and their time by scheduling meetings, as well as notifying of cancellations, well in advance
- Making sure the advisor is aware of important issues or problems

Are there things I should ask the organization?

As the advisor, some things you may wish to ask the organization are:

- How much is needed or expected of the advisor?
- How often, when, and where does the group meet?
- Who in the organization is responsible for updating the HuskySync portal and completing the annual re-registration?
- How many major activities, programs, or fundraisers does the group intend to do each semester?
- In what format would the organization prefer to receive feedback from the advisor?
- What are the expectations of the advisor at organizational meetings?

HuskySync

HuskySync is an online communication platform designed to serve as a centralized resource for student organizations. HuskySync has many features, some of which will be outlined below, and student organizations are encouraged to actively utilize HuskySync in the maintenance of their organizations. Some of the features of HuskySync that are most useful to student organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Having an individual organization portal where they can list meeting times/locations, mission statements, and information about how to join
- Listing all members in their “Roster” on HuskySync **and designating specific members as officers or advisors (officers and advisors have administrative access to the portal)**
- Having a readily accessible (and up-to-date) copy of their organization’s constitution uploaded to the portal
- Using the portal to create and advertise upcoming events or meetings
- Tracking attendance at those meetings or events directly into HuskySync to ensure consistent reporting on the co-curricular transcripts of their members
- The ability to record service hours for the organization and its members
- The ability to create “Forms” on their portal, which allows the organization to collect specific information necessary for running an effective organization (*examples: officer nominations, registrations for events, etc.*)

Are there mandatory requirements for HuskySync?

Please note, student organizations are required to follow a few requirements regarding HuskySync each year in order to ensure that they maintain their active recognition status. These requirements are extensively outlined in the Student Organization Handbook, but some of the most pertinent include, but are not limited to:

- **Completing an annual “Re-Registration” of the organization’s portal (by October 1st) to ensure accuracy of information**
- **Maintaining a roster on HuskySync of at least 5 active members (Bloomsburg University students)**
- **Updating HuskySync to reflect current officers and advisor(s) as they occur**

What resources can be found on HuskySync?

HuskySync is also the place where many student organizational resources are housed, including, but not limited to:

- Student Organization Handbook
- Student Organization Advisor Handbook
- Fundraiser and Service Project Request Form
- Link to Weekly Blog submissions (a weekly e-newsletter for student organizations)

How do I access HuskySync?

URL for HuskySync: <https://bloomu.campuslabs.com/engage/>

You can also access HuskySync via the “Current Students” or “Faculty and Staff” tabs on Bloomsburg University’s main website, or via the Center for Leadership and Engagement’s website (cle.bloomu.edu). **Anyone with Bloomsburg University single sign-on credentials is able to access HuskySync.** If it is your first time signing on to HuskySync, you will be prompted to fill in information to complete your profile. Aspects of HuskySync are available to view without signing in, but this includes very limited information.

What if I have questions about HuskySync?

If you ever have issues with HuskySync or just wish to learn more about its features, you can visit the Campus Labs support website at: <https://engagesupport.campuslabs.com/hc/en-us/categories/200246814-Using-CollegiateLink>

Liability and Risk Reduction

University employees acting as authorized advisors to students and/or student groups at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania are recognized as performing such advisement within the scope of their university employment. Accordingly, employees engaged in these authorized activities enjoy the same benefits of protection from liability, legal representation, and indemnification otherwise available in the normal course of their duties.

As an advisor of a student organization, you are the university's representative regarding the organization's activities. As such, you are expected to give reasonable and sound advice to your organization about such things as programs, events, meeting, use of facilities, and operational procedures. If you have reason to question an action taken by the organization, it is wise to immediately request a meeting with the executive board members to discuss the issue and get clarification. If you still have concerns after this meeting, express your concern directly to the organization in writing, including the date, a suggested alternative to the questionable action, a warning, etc.

It is important to remember that, in general, while we need to be concerned about liability, we can seriously damage the educational process by being paranoid about it. Just as there is no specific statement that explains faculty liability for every possible classroom incident, there is none that covers all the possible situations student organizations might encounter. If you have concerns about a situation unique to your organization or to a specific event sponsored by the organization you advise, please contact the Center for Leadership and Engagement, and we will put you in contact with the appropriate liability and risk management staff member.

Although there is no way to completely eliminate risk and legal liability associated with a program or event, there are ways to reduce risk and provide a safer environment for program participants. Here are a few things that your organization can do to identify and reduce risk.

Prior to an event clarify needs and expectations and identify specific risks involved in the event. These could include physical, health, wellness, safety, liability, or travel-related risks. Options for reducing risks include, but are not limited to:

- Hiring a third party vendor or contractor
- Purchasing additional liability insurance
- Assuming a 'worst case scenario' and preparing for it in order to reduce likelihood of it occurring.
- Providing advanced training
- Utilizing waivers that outline the specific nature and risk associated with the event
- Canceling the event if the conditions are dangerous or the group is not prepared to assume full responsibility for the risk involved
- Assessing the capability of the group to manage risk
- Identifying the challenges in managing risk, as well as, resources to assist in your planning.
- Developing a plan of action in reducing risk
- Arranging for BUPD to be present at the event (additional costs may apply)
- Communicate with everyone involved (officers, members, advisors, participants, facilities staff)

Helpful Reminders, Tips, and Suggestions

What are some things advisors should always keep in mind?

There are some important things that advisors should always keep in mind when working with student organizations. Below are some general “do’s” and “don’ts” to remember.

DO:

- Be knowledgeable about the organization’s purpose and its constitution
- Be aware of general university policies and procedures that impact student organizations
- Develop a strong working relationship with executive board members
- Encourage member attendance at various leadership and personal development programs
- Learn and comply with federal, state, and local laws/ordinances
- Address situations with members that could lead to negative perceptions of the organization
- Develop clear expectations about your role as advisor and your relationship with the organization
- Be consistent in your actions
- Encourage integrity and respect among all members
- Advocate for the group and its interests on campus
- Ask for help or clarification if you are unsure about something

DON’T:

- Try to direct or dictate the activities or decisions of a group
- Be afraid to let the group try new ideas, events, or initiatives
- Become such an advocate that you lose your objectivity
- Assume that the group doesn’t need you or your support
- Say “I told you so” if the group tries something you advised against
- Take disagreements personally
- Miss events, meetings, or programs you committed to attending

What kind of an advisor am I?

There is no perfect formula for being an effective advisor and all advisors do things a little differently. That being said, it is important to reflect on your advising style and consider ways to improve or adapt your style to the benefit of the group(s) with which you work. Some examples of advising styles are included below for your consideration:

- **Developmental:** Provide guidance in decision making, but empower students to make decisions and provide them with opportunities for growth
- **Administrative:** Focus primarily on organizational structure, policies, budgets, etc.
- **Coach:** Closely supervise and offer many suggestions for group decisions, but explain reasoning behind decisions and solicit suggestions along the way (good for newly formed groups or groups with few leaders)
- **Supporter:** Facilitate and support efforts towards achieving goals; share responsibilities for decision making when asked and support decisions the group makes
- **Motivational:** Enhance the potential of the group through encouragement, recognition of achievement, and praise of success; use positive reinforcement and appreciation when applicable
- **Director:** Provide specific instructions or tasks for the group and supervise task accomplishment (useful with groups that are at a low level of readiness; style can be phased out as the group grows and develops)

Additional Resources

Where can I learn more?

If you have an interest or desire to learn more about effective advising for student organizations, the below list of published resources is a good place to start!

- Astin, A.W. (1984). Student Involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 297-308.
- Dunkel, N.W. and Schuh, J.H. (1997). *Advising student groups and organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Floerchinger, D. (1992). Enhancing the role of student organization advisors in building a positive campus community. *Campus Activity Programming*, 26(6), 39-46.
- Greenwall, GNA. (2002). Learning the rules of the road: A beginning advisor's journey. *Campus Activities Programming*, 35(2), 62-66.
- Johnson, D.W. and Johnson, F.P. (1991). *Joining Together Group Theory and Group Skills*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Lorenz, N. and Shipton, W. (1984). *A Practical Approach to Group Advising and Problem Solving. A Handbook for Student Group Advisors*. Schuh, J.H. (Ed.) American College Personnel Association.
- Vest, M.V. (2002). Years of experience are not enough: Seasoned advisors must continually adapt. *Campus Activities Programming*. 35(2), 62-66.

****Please note, once you have finished reviewing the information included in this handbook, please go to the SOAR portal on HuskySync and complete the "Student Organization Advisor Agreement Form"***