

# ***I Dream of... a Great Advisor***

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Have you ever heard students talking about the advisor that they absolutely love and don't know what they would do without? The advisor who attends all of their meetings and events? The advisor who has them over for a BBQ? All the while wondering if you even have an advisor? Before you succumb to waves of jealousy, take a moment to figure out what kind of advisor you *do* have and how to make that person the advisor of your dreams.

## ***What Kind of Advisor Do You Have?***

In figuring out what kind of advisor you have, it is important to remember that most advisors are either full-time faculty members or administrators who advise clubs/organizations in their "free" time. Just as your involvement in an organization has its highs and lows, so does being an advisor. Some semesters, it will be easier for your advisor to be involved and other semesters they will struggle to attend a meeting. So with that said, what kind of advisor do you have? Advisors fall into three categories: Those That Do, Those That Wish They Could, and Those That Don't.

- **Those That Do**

You meet with your advisor weekly. Your advisor attends meetings and events on a regular basis. The advisor contributes to the legacy of your organization. Your advisor offers support and guidance when needed. If these statements ring true, then you have an advisor who fits into the category of "Those That Do." Congratulations! Cherish that relationship and use the tips in this article to guarantee both a happy advisor and happy organization. It's important that you foster this relationship and make sure that your advisor does not burn out.

- **Those That Wish They Could**

You meet with your advisor once in a while. They support only some of the programs you want to host. You contact them when it comes time to sign paperwork. They show up at budget and election time. If your advisor is one of "Those That Wish They Could," then read on. There are steps you can take to enhance the working relationship with your advisor, benefit from their involvement, and make your current advisor the advisor of your dreams.

- **Those That Don't**

You are not sure who your advisor is. You have never seen them at a meeting. You have to dig around to try to find their phone number. If these statements ring true, then you have an advisor who is one of "Those That Don't." It is time to find a new advisor. Please do not think that you are going to hurt anyone's feelings. You are more than likely doing that person a favor by ending the association. At the same time, you are taking a healthy and beneficial step towards the success of your organization. Remember not to confuse a "Those That Don't" advisor with an advisor who may not let you do every thing you want. There is a distinct difference. If advising your club/organization is part of the advisor's job description, you can suggest that another advisor get involved. This way you get the best of both worlds: an advisor who is interested in your organization while maintaining the relationship with the assigned advisor.

- **The Dream Advisor**

The dream advisor, from the organization's perspective, is one that has a vested interest in the organization. The advisor attends meetings and events, participates in retreats and trainings, offers advice and supports the effort of the organization. Advisors are asked to be teachers, coaches, counselors, programmers, coordinators, best friends, disciplinarians, liaisons, role models, mentors, leaders, supervisors, references, comedians, optimists, realists, available and human! Whew! For as monumental as this may sound, the great part is that having a dream advisor is possible.

## ***10 Steps to a Dream Advisor***

**Step 1** - Sit down and discuss the role of the advisor in the organization with everyone. Every student leader will have a different level of support from the advisor. It is vital to the strength of the advisor/organization relationship that you establish this level of involvement as early as possible. No involvement by the advisor is NOT an option, but having a "hands off" or "Behind the scenes" approach is very acceptable. Remember that you need them; it's better to have them in your corner earlier than later.

**Step 2** - Invite them to all of your meetings. This is the best way to guarantee a high level of commitment by your advisor. By participating in the meetings, the advisor will know all the background information and can provide valuable insight early in the process. Schedule your meetings with your advisor in mind. Late evenings are often hard for advisors who have to go home and come back to campus. Host the meetings at a decent hour and in an accessible location. For as much as you have a life, so does your advisor.

**Step 3** - It may seem obvious, but make sure to invite your advisor to all your events. Since many advisors have families, invite the families as well. Having your advisor at an event can be beneficial in case an issue arises, whether with the venue or the artist. Your advisor will be better apt to handle such crises and it will take the pressure off of you. It is also nice to have your advisor see firsthand how all of the hard work has paid off.

**Step 4** - Schedule weekly, one-on-one meetings with your advisor. This will provide valuable mentoring time, as well as an opportunity to work out logistics and policy issues before heading off to an organizational meeting. This is a great time to establish the agenda for the next meeting and discuss any personnel or financial issues the organization may be dealing with. This weekly meeting will help keep you organized and will help the advisor feel that they know what is going on with the organization.

**Step 5** - In addition to providing copies of your organization agendas and minutes to your members, make sure that you route one to your advisor. This will allow for your advisor to keep a complete file of information on the club. It will also provide a great reference tool for issues that may arise down the road. At the very least, it's one more person who knows what went on in case organization files are lost during leadership transitions.

**Step 6** - Involve your advisor in all financial areas, not just the signing of check requests and reimbursements. Seek their assistance in establishing a budget, in generating weekly treasury reports, and in saving money. Because of your advisor's relationship with the university, chances are very good that they have connections with people that will help save you time and money.

**Step 7** - Involve your advisor in rewrites of your organizational constitution or charter. This will make your advisor a very valuable resource down the road. Knowing where the organization started and where it is headed will provide legitimacy to how the organization operates.

**Step 8** - Since your advisor has played a larger role in the organization and a working relationship exists between the leaders of the organization and the advisor, it is important to include your advisor in the selection/election process of new leaders. Your advisor will provide an objective viewpoint when it comes to putting the most qualified people into leadership roles. Use it!

**Step 9** - Do fun stuff with your advisor. Go to conferences, go out for dinner, invite them to your recitals or athletic matches and go shopping for prizes and supplies together. Include your advisor in the fun and games that make being part of the organization worth it.

**Step 10** - Recognize your advisor. Many advisors do not get paid extra for their work with your organization. For some, it is part of their job description. You need to make sure you let them know that you value their involvement. Present them with an award at the end of the school year. Make sure that you order them the latest organization T-shirt. Write an article in the school paper about how great your advisor is. Include them in the club photo for the yearbook. Write a letter to their supervisor letting them know about the important role this person plays in the success of your organization (make sure to send one to your advisor as well). Send them a card on Bosses Day or just a quick note to say thanks for all they do. The littlest things mean the world to your advisor. Most of them do the job because of you. Remember that.