



Overview

A chapter advisor is exactly what the name implies: an advisor, not a teacher, director or dictator. Your primary role is to offer advice, either when it is requested or when it is critical that the chapter hear it. Those two situations do not always occur simultaneously.

The bottom line: if you are able to establish rapport and credibility with the collegiate members, they will come to you and ask for your opinion!

Advisor Responsibilities

While this may seem obvious, it is critical to remember that this is likely your students' first time volunteering in/for a professional organization. Be sure that your onboarding process, resources and governing materials provide:

- Clear expectations and responsibilities for their individual role(s) and board
- A channel for support outside of their advisor (what board positions in your Unit support their operations/role? How will student members contact those board members?)
- Background information of your Unit
- Historical & general CEC information
 - CEC's Board structure
 - CEC's strategic plan
 - Units vs. Divisions vs. Sub-Divisions
 - Any professional chapters in your state/province
 - Your Unit's goals/strategic Plan

What if they're about to make a Mistake?

As members with more experience, we may be able to see when things are starting to go awry sooner than a collegian can. One of the toughest things to do as an advisor is to allow the chapter to learn from their mistakes. When you sense that something is not going to go well, discuss with your Unit leaders what is a "small mistake" worth letting collegians experience and learn from, vs. when you should intervene. Some examples may include:

- Small mistakes the chapter can learn from:
 - Not balancing their chapter calendars
 - Delaying communications
 - Delivering their plans for an event to the chapter at the last minute
- When you should intervene:
 - If they are about to break Unit guidelines or policies
 - Delays in electing new board members
 - Risk issues (liability concerns)

Ultimately, it is important to remember one of the greatest advantages of their experience is the opportunity for leadership experience. What distinguishes a motivational and supportive advisor from an over-protective or over-involved advisor is the ability to gauge the impact of the results that intervening would cause. When is it just desired, and when is it absolutely essential?

Advisors should be aware of the following guidelines for working with college students:

- Get to know as many chapter members as you possibly can, and know them well. No real lasting impact can be made without these individual relationships.
- Treat each member with the dignity and respect you would expect for yourself
- Deal with the important and relevant aspects of your position.
- Be honest with yourself and others. It does no good to tell students what you think they want to hear.
- Recognize that the value and attitudes you take to your position will, to a great extent, determine the way the members react.
- Understand that you work more by persuasion and the power of your personality than any amount of formal authority.
- Remember your position is, at best, non-descriptive. No job description will ever suffice for your intelligence and the qualities that led to your selection for this task.
- Accept the fact that you should not be a necessity for the members in order for them to run chapter operations smoothly. With each new program and member, we should work to the end of eliminating our necessity.
- Finally, never underestimate the power of your influence on a member. Your conduct and conversation are what you are – a model for others.

List inspired by Dr. David Ambler, former vice-chancellor for student affairs at the University of Kansas and well-respected higher education leader.

Always remember: as a chapter advisor, you are a role model. You are a professional with valuable experience and connections and they want to experience something similar

