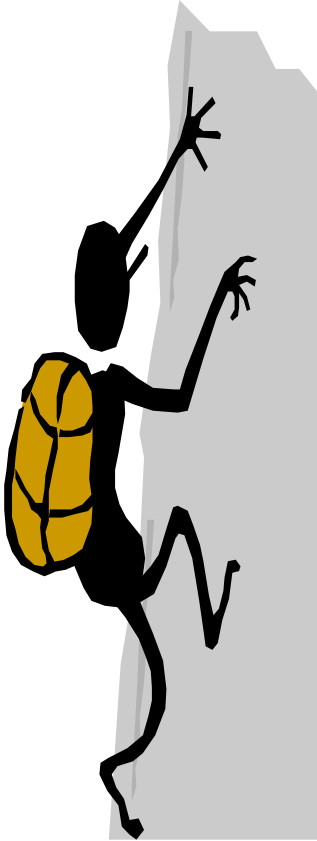




**MESSIAH  
COLLEGE™**

**Messiah College Student Organization  
Advisor Handbook**

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## What You've Gotten Yourself Into

Actually, what you've gotten yourself into is a great opportunity to interact and have a positive impact on students at Messiah College. Thank you for taking this step and taking an active role in our campus community in this way! Consider yourself a "sherpa" as you journey with the club or organization you advise.



According to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), "sherpas have achieved world renown as expert guides on Himalayan mountaineering expeditions." Many people have the potential to climb Mt. Everest but not without some expert guidance along the way. Students have unlimited potential to succeed as members and leaders of organizations but they can benefit from the guiding presence of an advisor.

### Definition

Advising means providing support and direction to students as they accomplish specific tasks set before them and to help them grow both as a group and as individuals.

### Why be an Advisor?

Research shows that students benefit significantly from relationships with faculty and staff outside of the classroom. One study showed that students were encouraged to succeed academically and complete their intended degree, they had a better concept of self, and women gave more thought towards careers typically pursued by men. This is a unique opportunity for you to interact with students and contribute to the learning that occurs throughout the college experience. Consider the statement that Winston et al. made in their study on student organizations.

**"...Student organizations have the potential to make far-reaching developmental impact in students' lives. Poorly functioning organizations, however, seldom have that power."**

You, as the advisor, have the opportunity to help clubs and organizations have that "far-reaching developmental impact" on students. Simply helping the organization function properly and excel is a significant contribution to a student's college experience. "...The opportunity to participate in leadership roles is related to continued growth for students... Thus, leadership roles appear to provide the opportunity to sustain and further develop developmental skills."



Advising will give you the chance to meet and play a significant role in the lives of students as they grow as people, leaders, and community members. It will also allow students to see a different side of the faculty and staff here at Messiah College.

The benefits of advising are not only for the students involved but also for you as the advisor. Some of the benefits for you are the knowledge that you have made a difference with students,

the opportunity to be more involved in campus life, and the privilege of mentoring students both formally and informally.

(Winston, et. al, *Journal of College Student Development*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1997, p. 417-428)

(Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; as cited in Winston et al., 1997, p. 417).

(Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, *Journal of College Student Development*, vol. 35, 1994, p.101)

Messiah College's mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society. Our mission can be realized in part through student involvement in organizations. You, the advisor, can help make the experience one that students will learn and grow from. Just like Mt. Everest climbers have a sherpa to be a guiding presence, organizations need to be led as they move forward as a group and as a functioning organization on campus.

### **Advisor Job Description**

You will be many things for the students you advise—information provider, mediator, teacher, and reminder. You will sign forms, answer questions, mediate conflict, and give advice when asked for it. All those things are important but the following list should be the job description that guides your interaction with the group you advise.

- 1) Be available
- 2) Be a role model
- 3) Listen and Motivate
- 4) Inspire



Quality advising is more of an attitude than a definition. For the sherpa leading a team of inexperienced Everest climbers, there is not a formula that will get them to the top quickly and safely. The sherpa assesses the needs and abilities of the group and proceeds from that point. The same is true of the student club or organization that you advise. The ultimate goal of student organizations is the growth and development of students through the function of their club or organization. The service their group provides is a means to that end.

### **Here are some questions to ask yourself throughout your time as an advisor:**



- ❖ *Does my leadership allow the group to figure things out on their own?*
- ❖ *Do I provide the necessary support to the group while still giving them their autonomy?*
- ❖ *Does the group seek me out for advice or consultation on important issues?*
- ❖ *Are the group and its leaders growing from this experience?*

### **Never Underestimate the Role of the Advisor...it is more than signing budget requests**

You will play a significant role in the group that you advise. It is important for you to be aware of group dynamics and how your group is developing. The stages of group development are a helpful tool. Although the stages may overlap or repeat themselves, being aware of them will help you adjust and advise the group wisely.

**Forming:** Group members figure out their place in the organization. There is typically harmony at this stage. This is a good time to have ice-breakers, get-to-know-you activities, and set goals.

**Storming:** This is the process the group goes through to establish norms. They discover they do not all share the same opinions and ideas about the group. Conflict may arise but the group will need a strong sense of support from the advisor as their organization takes shape.

**Norming:** The group emerges from the storming stage with a new sense of cohesiveness. They have established normative ways of behaving and communicating as well as what their direction is as a group.

**Performing:** After storming and norming the group is ready to operate with a new level of unity and consistency. It is also a time, however, when group members may become complacent in their role. The advisor plays a significant role as role model and support to the group at this stage in order to keep them on track and moving forward with their goals.

**Adjourning:** This is the last stage where the group is terminated and closure must be brought to the tasks and relationships that have developed. The advisor may assist in a variety of ways with this transition depending on the type of group he/she advises. Some group and students may need more formal closure while others will naturally end without any need for formal endings.

Adapted from

“Group Development” by Sara Boatman in *Programming*, vol. 15, no. 4.

*Groups: Theory and Experience* by Napier and Gershenfield, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1985.

Copeland, T.R. (1996, November). Successful matches depend on advisor’s style, group stage. *The Bulletin*, 8-12 as seen in *KSU Student Organization Advisor’s Handbook*, 2002-2003.

## **Campus Resources**

You may not always be able to answer all the questions that your students ask but there are people on campus that will be able to help.

### *Student Government Association*

Breon Well, VP of Student Clubs and Organizations

Larsen Student Union, x5093

Maggie Arnold, VP of Finance

Larsen Student Union, x5093

### *Student Programs Office*

Rob Pepper, Director of Student Programs

Larsen Student Union, x5240

Cindy Secrest, Secretary, Student Programs Office

Larsen Student Union, x5240

## **Resources for Advising**

### **Books**

*Advising Student Groups and Organizations*

by Norbert Dunkel & John Schuh

Jossey-Bass, 1998

### **Articles**

*Describing the climate of student organizations: The student organization environment scales*

Journal of College Student Development, vol. 38, July/August 1997

*Student development through involvement: Specific changes over time.*

Journal of College Student Development, vol. 35, March/April 1994.

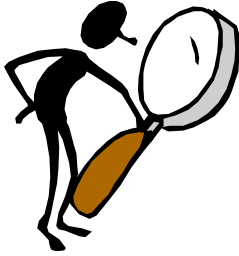
*Academic and co-curricular involvement: Their relationship and the best combinations for student growth.*

Journal of College Student Development, vol. 45, July/August 2004.

### Tips for Advisors

- ❖ Know the students!
- ❖ Have the goals or objectives of the group firmly in mind
- ❖ Express a sincere interest in the group and its mission
- ❖ Express a sincere interest in each individual within the group
- ❖ Assist the group in setting realistic, obtainable goals
- ❖ Assist the group in developing evaluation tools
- ❖ Assist individuals in achieving his/her goals while helping the group towards its goals
- ❖ Assist the group in understanding group dynamics and interpersonal communication
- ❖ Realize the importance of the peer group and its effects on the individual
- ❖ Assist the group in determining the needs of those that the group is serving.
- ❖ Don't allow yourself to be placed in the position of chairperson
- ❖ Don't usurp the role of chairperson
- ❖ Develop a style which affects a balance between being an active and passive group member
- ❖ Be aware of the various roles you will be filling from time to time
- ❖ Be aware of the institutional power structure—both formal and informal
- ❖ Provide continuity for the group from year to year
- ❖ Challenge the group to grow and develop

*Adapted from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Advisor Handout, 1994*



## What You'll Need to Know

In this section you will find all the necessary explanations and forms for procedures relating to planning and carrying out activities, managing the funds of the organization, and general responsibilities/obligations of the student organization that you advise.

The SGA VP of Clubs and Organizations, Breon Wells, and the Director of Student Programs, Rob Pepper, are valuable resources if you have any questions or need assistance with your group.

### Procedures

**Guidelines for Advisors of Recognized/Chartered Student Organizations  
Organization Obligations to Student Government Association**

#### **Frequently Used Forms**

**SGA Monthly Report  
Application for Recognition  
Instructions for Chartership  
Chartership Application  
Chartership Petition  
SGA Organization Budget Transcript**

