The Rights and Responsibilities of a Student Organization Advisor

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With thanks to Dennis Gregory
Organizational Advisor Responsibility

- **Responsibility to the Organization and Its Members**
  - Fiduciary Responsibility to the Organization
  - If you volunteer or accept responsibility as part of your job, you owe a responsibility of activity
    - Don’t be an absentee advisor
    - Don’t be a “signature” advisor
    - Model the behavior you want your members to exhibit
    - “We must become the change we want to see in the world”
    - Mahatma Gandhi

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On a college campus, there is a direct correlation between the quality of the advisor and the long term health of the organization.

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Organizational Advisor Responsibility

- Know the policies of the national/international organization and University
- Get to know University officials responsible for student organizations
- Get to know the members on a personal as well as professional level
- Ask good and frequent questions and expect full and timely answers
- Have higher expectations for officers than you do for general members
Organizational Advisor Responsibility

- Understand issues of liability and risk management if you are involved in an organization which is involved with inherently risky activities
  - Fraternal organizations
  - Sports and related clubs and teams
  - Organizations which travel as part of their activities
- Understand the other legal issues which may be related to your organization
Organizational Advisor Responsibility

- **Responsibility to the University**
  - Understand your responsibilities to the organization
  - If you are a university employee, make sure your supervisor knows you are involved and is comfortable with your role
  - Understand that when the responsibility to the University and to the organization conflict, the University always has to come first
  - Understand University policies related to student organizations
Organizational Advisor Responsibility

- Keep University officials informed about the status of your organization and its members
  - academic issues
  - conduct issues
  - health issues
  - Family issues
  - Issues which may result in some danger to members or others
  - Potential liability or other risks
Organizational Advisor Rights

- A clear description of the expectations which the University and the organization have in your role as advisor
- Receive training about how to serve as an advisor
- Ability to reach university officials in a timely way when needed for advice, support and information
- Ongoing advice and support
- If a formal part of your duties, appropriate recognition and compensation
- Indemnification for legal support if acting in the scope of your duties
Challenges

- Working with College students is rewarding and also potentially hazardous
- There is always a possibility for controversy no matter how benign the purpose of your organization
- Make sure you understand the scope of your duties and ALWAYS stay within them
Current Issues Facing Student Organizations

- Funding Issues
- Controversial speakers
- Membership requirements
- Hazing and other liability issues
- Issues around travel and budget
- Alcohol and other substance abuse
- Student organizations as part of the “Student Success” Initiative begun by President Broderick
Other Issues

- Are there other questions that you have that we have not discussed?