



Second Place

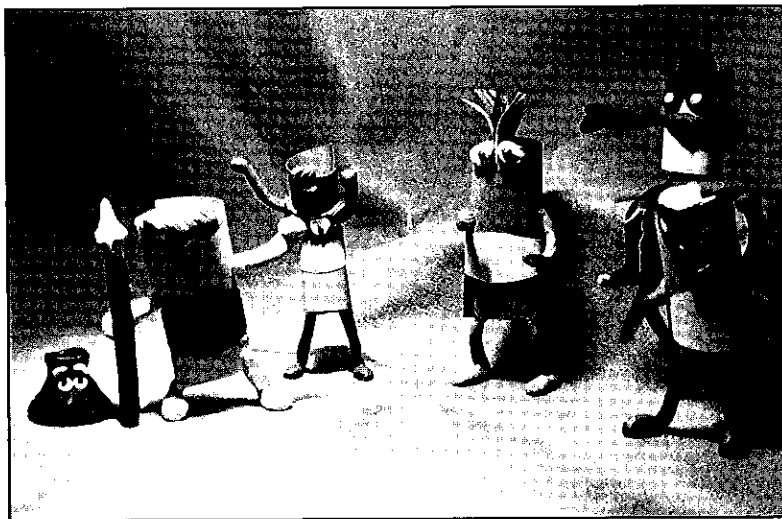
Professional
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Enhancing the Role of Student Organization Advisers in Building a Positive Campus Community

By Debra Floerchinger

The importance of focusing attention on a positive campus community is indisputable. A variety of authors specifically have referred to the importance of faculty and staff interactions with students as a critical variable in building community. As a published topic, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1990) elaborated on six principles that its members defined as the kind of community every college and university should strive to be. The first principle reflected the goal that a college or university should be what's considered an "educationally purposeful community, a place where faculty and students share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on the campus" (Page 7).

In their book, *Involving Colleges* (1991), Kuh, Schuh, Whitt and Associates spent a large portion of their discussion on the positive roles that faculty and staff interactions with students have on developing and maintaining a sense of community. Further, student involvement on campus has been stressed as relating positively to numerous variables such as satisfaction with college, retention, academic achievement and loyalty to an institution. Morrissey (1991) discussed the role of student activities in building community and argued that a comprehensive approach is needed to strengthen community, including a system of assessing and developing student involvement in campus life. Schlossberg (1989) coined the terms "marginality and mattering" as key issues in building community. These terms relate to students as well as to faculty and staff involvement.



Student involvement and interaction with faculty members, both inside and outside of class, have been considered to be determining factors in a student's satisfaction, intellectual and personal development, and persistence in college (Astin and Panos, 1969; Astin, 1977; Chickering, 1972; Endo and Harpel, 1982; and Pascarella and Terenzini, 1976). Astin (1984), in discussing his involvement theory, noted that "frequent interaction with faculty is more strongly related to satisfaction with college than any other type of involvement or, indeed, any other student or institutional characteristic ... Thus, finding ways to encourage greater student involvement with faculty (and vice versa) could be a highly productive activity on most college campuses" (Page 304).

One way to promote these interactions is through off-campus activities that promote student-faculty interaction as described by Stuart Brown (1992) in discussing the Columbia University Urban New York Program. Another way is to work to develop partnerships in programming with academic departments or "collegial-

ity" as in Colestock and Garside's 1992 article. Carpenter et al., (1990) elaborated on involving faculty in student affairs areas such as advising. Barriers to building educational partnerships between academic and student affairs were examined by Zeller, Hinni and Eison (1989) and strategies for overcoming these barriers were outlined. The *ACU-I Bulletin* (March 1991) listed "33 Ways to Tell Your Story" in an article that provided suggestions for communicating how the union or activities program contributes to a sense of community, including numerous faculty-student activities coalitions.

student activities coalitions.

The third important way to involve faculty and staff is by linking them with student organizations as advisers. This is often not an easy task, but by examining the issues involved and positively structuring these connections, one can expect exceptional results. This paper will focus on the topic of utilizing organization advisers in building and expanding the developmental focus of community on the college campus.

Adviser Recruitment Problems

On many college campuses, all student organizations are required to have a professional faculty or staff adviser to establish university recognition. Many advisers work with several groups, yet other faculty and staff members have never advised a student organization. The desire to commit to involvement with a student group is influenced by a variety of factors. These factors include:

- A heavy teaching load that requires much advance preparation and late or early hours;
- Heavy research requirements based on the

desire to be granted tenure or full professor status;

- Family involvement including responsibility for children, elderly or disabled parents, and serious medical problems;
- Commuting distance that affects one's ability to commit to late meetings or activities;
- Dislike for, or fear of personal involvement with students or dislike for particular students;
- Fear of financial or legal repercussions based on an organization's off-campus liabilities;
- Concern about lack of university support — that is, the rewards do not outweigh the costs of involvement in terms of money or time;
- Conflict with other community, church, civic or professional organization commitments as well as personal hobbies;
- Disagreement or conflict with the goals or philosophy behind the organization;
- Previous experience with student organizations or groups that resulted in one or more of the above outcomes. Also, contact with other faculty or staff persons who relate bad or negative experiences with organizations will be bad publicity; and
- With majority-group professionals, another fear could be concern about advising a minority student group or vice versa. Individual prejudice does exist, and some persons may limit their involvement based on this factor. Other professionals may appear unapproachable. Because of this, student groups may not have asked them to advise.

Factors Influencing Adviser Retention

Another problem that may arise is with retaining group advisers. Some persons will be honest about their reasons to terminate the relationship, but others may find it easier not to confront the real offense. A variety of factors may "turn off" an initially enthusiastic adviser:

- 1) **Like all persons, advisers' interests and expectations change.** The satisfaction gained from several years of advising one particular group may dissipate. The adviser may terminate the relationship based on true concern for the group and the desire to influence change.
- 2) **As laws and policies change, advisers may feel the need to remove themselves from involvement.** Many advisers on our campus have ended their involvement because of the amount of negative publicity on liability factors.
- 3) **Many groups do not inform their advisers of their responsibilities.** An easy way to recruit an unknowing adviser is to verbally minimize their duties as adviser. Advisers must take an active role in conflict mediation and development of members in areas of leadership. Advisers check grades of members. Advisers also frequently are called upon by the administration to explain behaviors or incidents prompted by the organization (Henley, 1990; Shriberg, 1983; Turner 1985).
- 4) **The opposite side of minimizing adviser**

responsibility is to expect that advisers must be involved with an organization as actively as members. Some groups exert pressure on advisers to purchase group memorabilia, attend shows or other parties for members and actually be involved with money-making projects.

5) **Groups may actually falsify information provided to advisers.** This may include financial information, member recruitment or pledging activities and information concerning meeting times and dates. Groups sometimes forge their adviser's signature and may falsify information after they have acquired their adviser's signature.

6) **Advisers' responsibilities to their families and professional involvement may change.** Young, unmarried staff and faculty members are often hit hardest with requests for organization involvement. As responsibilities change, so does the adviser's ability to adequately respond to a group's needs.

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7) **Advisers sometimes have personality conflicts with individual students that decreases their ability to function effectively with the entire group.** Personalities may clash and because of this, attendance at meetings or other activities may be difficult or uncomfortable.

8) **Organization traditions are hard to change.** An adviser may have to work with a group for years to remove racist, sexist or otherwise stereotypical goals, behavior and activities. After years and numerous discussions, discouragement can't help but set in when no change occurs. The statements: "We've always done it" or "I had to do this when I was pledging" are two that can utterly destroy an enthusiastic change agent. When an organization refuses to give up traditions, in spite of national mandates, a loss of adviser is to be expected.

9) **Some organizations are especially good at thanking and rewarding advisers.** Other groups are notoriously poor at showing appreciation. All people have basic needs and some have a stronger need for reinforcement than others. Likewise, a college or university's lack of support can also drive away an excellent adviser.

10) **The decline of group membership or**

interest is also a fairly frequent reason for adviser turnover. If an organization's members can't motivate member recruitment, this task should not be left up to the adviser, but it sometimes is.

Diversity and Student Organizations

Many current research studies also comment on the special needs of minority students on predominantly Caucasian campuses and the lack of minority role models on the professional staff. This can seriously alter their perceptions of the campus community and student organizations. Carpenter, Paterson, Kibler and Paterson (1990) described the increased expectations of minority (particularly black and Hispanic) faculty on research university campuses. These increased expectations create an almost impossible situation with limited time involvement as adviser role models for minority students.

The influence of mentors in improving the satisfaction of minority students during the college experience is documented by Braddock (1981); Pollard (1982); Fleming (1984); Nettles, Thoeny and Gosman (1986); Hughes (1987); and Mallinckrodt (1988). Sedlacek (1987) related the concern black students expressed concerning the lack of black faculty and staff as role models on many predominantly white campuses. A lack of variety of viewpoints or cultural perspectives relevant to black students can result in a range of feelings of loneliness and isolation to a lack of learning, development and identification with an institution.

Some authors have focused on the importance of multicultural programming and other interventions in developing an inclusive community to assist in retaining minority students and maximizing their collegiate experiences. Excellent examples of these articles include Quevado-Garcia (1983); Green (1986); Marcy (1986); Leppo (1987); Manning (1988); Rasch (1988); and Johnson (1989).

Another concern is whether we can be effective working as an adviser with students who do not identify with us racially. Are interracial professional adviser/organization relationships as effective as utilizing advisers from the same racial background as group members? Research in this area is also limited. Steele (1989) noted that universities should emphasize commonality as a higher value than "diversity and pluralism." These latter words are described as buzzwords for the politics of difference. Kuh and MacKay (1989) supported interactive pluralism beyond cultural awareness. To these authors, "Interactive pluralism" denotes a campus community in which people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds engage in meaningful interactions based on trust, appreciation and respect" (Page 52).

Pounds (1987) discussed black students' needs on campus. She noted that for black students to succeed on predominantly white campuses, they must learn to trust white peers, faculty and

student affairs staff. The faculty and staff must recognize environmental factors that inhibit development and revamp the environment to better support their development. Practitioners should be careful not to generalize that all black students are alike. Faculty and staff members, whether black or white, can become effective if they possess good human relations skills and use them to understand students' needs. There must be a delicate balance between adequate support and the scrupulous avoidance of patronizing.

Improved interaction on a multicultural level can be initiated through self-awareness and institutional support of faculty and staff training as well as that of advisers. Sardo (1990) stressed the importance of advisers in "redefining the norms" that exist on campus to discourage multicultural student organizations. Jackson (1984) provided self-evaluation instruments for educators by which they can identify behaviors they may display in and out of the classroom that are interpreted by students as prejudicial, hostile and discriminatory. In addition, his 1986 checklist was designed to assist advisers, counselors and teachers in evaluating their readiness to work with students of disadvantaged backgrounds.

There are several other positive things the university can do to facilitate positive multicultu-

ral experiences between advisers and organizations. Education is important, especially in relation to communication and cultural differences (Gilliam and Van Den Berg, 1980). The university may also want to focus on minority faculty/staff recruitment and retention as employees first, then as advisers. Barr (1990) recommended changes in developing an agenda for the '90s in regard to staff issues such as recruitment. By increasing the total number of personnel from diverse backgrounds, the odds of increasing contact are better, as well as the facilitation of positive student/adviser contact. If the lack of positive minority role models hampers your efforts, do not hesitate to develop or expand peer-counselor or mentoring programs in addition to structuring your organization adviser program as suggested by Lewis (1986) and Watson and Siler (1984). Students often rely on peers for support. The research of Rice and Brown (1990) indicated that prospective mentees preferred a peer mentor one to three years older than themselves more than they preferred other "adult" mentors.

Spaights, Dixon and Nickolai (1985) stressed that campuses must look beyond their policies and check the practices that are occurring. Practices on the part of students, faculty and admin-

istrators that are of a racist nature must not be overlooked or condoned. In relation to student activities, both the U.S. Department of Education (1988) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (1986) addressed areas of programming and facilitation for minority student programs and services. Workshops designed to facilitate discussions about diversity and discrimination have been described by Vickio, Dings and Leopold (1989); Fukuyama and Horner (1984); and Pittman and Muschio (1989). The Cultural Environment Transitions Model (Manning and Coleman-Boatwright, 1991) is a means to assist in defining and working towards the goals of multiculturalism. Sue (1991) described a model for diversity assessment and training.

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Appendix A

Adviser Luncheon Topics (1991-1992)

- September:** Paperwork and Policies (Resources: adviser handbook, organization president's manual, university center handbook)
- October:** The Horror of Hazing (Newspaper clippings, articles, videotape)
- November:** Your Advising Style (Allen [Programming, May 1981], adapted to fit in with your organization members' and adviser's tasks on specific campus)
- December:** Relaxing Before Finals
- January:** The Officer Transition (Handouts and other educational materials)
- February:** Communicating Across Cultures (Handouts and inventories listed in article by Jackson and videotape concerning faculty/student stereotypes)
- March:** The Adviser's Perceptions of Their Role (Featured questionnaire and discussion between advisers concerning what's important and what's not)
- April:** Improvements to Our Organizations and Our Office's Services (Featured discussion about what's good, what could be better and what's intolerable)
- May:** End of the Year Evaluation and Review of Upcoming Events

Structuring Effective Adviser/Organization Interactions

Advisers and groups often have no choice in the match, so it is best to focus on the development of their relationship in order to maximize effective interaction. Several authors have commented on this interaction. Gwost (1982) listed five basic assumptions about student/adviser relationships. These included shared responsibility for relationship building, the importance of open, direct communication, recognition of additional commitments, focusing on human value systems and individual styles of interaction, and the process of growth and development. She also discussed strategies both parties should consider when beginning and maintaining the process.

Mamarchev and Williamson (1990) focused on role clarification and fair rules of confrontation in dealing with individual conflicts between members and advisers. Research by Fitch (1991) indicated some individual differences in interpersonal values of differing levels of extracurricular involvement. Advisers may want to examine these levels and motives for individual group members and alter the advising style accordingly.

By actively involving faculty and staff organization advisers in student development issues and leadership training, the limited outreach of a small, overworked student activities staff can be multiplied by the total number of advisers on campus. As Elizabeth Nuss noted in the *ACU-I Bulletin* (January 1991) article "The Time is

Right for Telling the Union's Story":

"We got through higher education with an understanding of unions. Many faculty didn't have that experience. So we have to prepare them for whatever it is we're asking them to do and not assume they know. We complain in student affairs when people assume that anybody can do our jobs, that it doesn't take any special training. And then we ask all kinds of people to help and we give them no special training for understanding. It's a mixed message" (Page 30).

Silien, Lucas and Wells (1992) contend that "we need to re-focus on skill-building to embrace and incorporate the values-oriented, collaborative approach illustrated in a community-based style of leadership" (Page 35). This same skill building relates to adviser leadership training as it does to student leadership training. Campus activities and organizations offices can no longer assume an inactive role with their adviser program. Adviser training is vital in creating an involved and perceptive advising staff. Advisers themselves want to know what is expected of them and the more specific, the better.

Just as the range of student problems has changed in the last decade, so has the range of skills needed by effective and community-oriented organization advisers. Some suggestions include:

1) **Providing an adviser notebook, guide or contract would be minimal expectations.** Sandeen (1989) recommended that the chief student affairs administrator should write a clear policy statement defining roles and responsibilities of faculty advisers in conjunction with a major faculty group on campus.

2) **Advisers also want to receive copies of any correspondence sent to their group, whether it is a financial statement, administrative paperwork request or judicial charge.**

3) **Providing leadership training in the form of a student officer workshop may take some of the pressure off of the adviser as will a monthly leadership newsletter addressing issues such as conducting a meeting or rewarding group members.** Officer transition training should also be provided.

4) **Providing extra assistance to organizations in terms of skill building, recruitment and retention of advisers and facilitating interaction are all important for struggling groups.** Craig and Warner (1991) delineated a variety of additional services that the "forgotten majority" of student organizations and their advisers desperately need.

5) **Providing incentives for advisers (Christensen and Myers, 1979; Pruitt, 1983) and rewarding volunteer efforts should be considered mandatory.** Three specific suggestions include providing monthly adviser luncheons (free meal and brief training on relevant issues), sponsoring Adviser Appreciation Month programs, and promoting adviser awards (including Human Relations Award to organization

advisers who promote positive intergroup relationships and programs on campus). Documenting positive contributions in the form of letters and sending copies to department chairs and administration would also benefit the faculty adviser.

"By increasing the total number of personnel from diverse backgrounds, the odds of increasing contact are better, as well as the facilitation of positive student/adviser contact."

6) **In addition to student leadership training, adviser training on specific student development issues should be provided.** McManus (1992) listed topics utilized at the University of Wisconsin/Stout as liability issues, roles and responsibilities, goal setting with new officers, budget planning, and other programs offered at the request of the advisers. Specific adviser

training topics utilized on the author's campus are outlined in the appendices following this article.

7) **Maintaining a library of recent and pertinent information may facilitate discussion and promote constant examination of issues relating to student groups and their needs.** Our office just finished a resource directory that contains resources available to student organizations and their advisers on contemporary and leadership issues. It includes books, subscriptions, video and audio tapes and a speaker's bureau of faculty and staff on campus who are interested in speaking on certain topics. The materials are located in a variety of departments across campus, and not just the University Center.

8) **If all else fails, and yours is one of the lucky campuses that has excess funds, finding money to supplement faculty travel to student services or faculty academic conferences would work well as an incentive.**

Conclusion

The university must take a more active role in relating to organization advisers in order to contribute more effectively in structuring the cam-

Appendix B

Adviser Luncheon Topics 1992-1993

September:	Liability Issues for Organizations (Features system legal counsel) Student Leader Weekend Workshop (Open to advisers)
October:	Warning Signs of Student Crises and the Services Offered by the Counseling Center
November:	Alcohol and the College Student (What faculty members need to know) Materials provided by the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP)
December:	Finals Week Luncheon
January:	Sexual Harassment on Campus (Videotape and materials prepared from other resources)
February:	Black Students at Predominantly Caucasian Campuses/Historically Black Campuses and What They Offer That "We" Don't (Materials compiled by literature review and presented by guest speaker)
March:	Stress and Time Management for the Professional
April:	Total Quality Management and Your Organization (Handouts and presentation developed from a review of literature specifically addressing the needs of student organizations)
May:	End of the Year Evaluations/Recognition

pus community. Student groups need to take more responsibility for their actions. They need to recognize the concerns that advisers face when working with student groups. They should show appreciation and consideration for their adviser(s) and positively reinforce actions that help ensure the future of their organizations. They also need to be factual and persistent in their concerns about prejudicial treatment and make a concerted effort to realistically appraise their organizations' reputations, activities and goals.

Wells (1990) concluded his discussion of community and leadership by noting that it is design, not default, that will help higher education in meeting the challenge of community. Klepper (1992) noted that "the beginning link between student affairs and the professorate lies in the articulation of a social contract — a common tie of principles and beliefs that give meaning to the collective work of each person in the community" (Page 8). A social contract between student activities staff, organization advisers and student leaders is the glue that binds this distinctive aspect of campus community.

The 1990s plague on the college campus could very well be the shrinking number of student-centered faculty and staff. Unfortunately, if we ever expect to motivate student involvement and commitment to the development of a positive campus community, we need to analyze the ailment and seek a cure.

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T i p S

By Steve Trash



• **Do something to make yourself sweat.** Don't use your air conditioners all the time. Currently, most air conditioners use chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that are harmful to the ozone layer, the portion of our atmosphere that protects us from ultraviolet radiation. You can't always go without air conditioning, but you can sometimes. Reduce your impact on the environment — sweat a little!

• **Leave the lights off — and get romantic!** Why burn lights when you don't need them? It wastes energy, natural resources and valuable time you could be spending "sparkin'" (a charming Southern expression meaning "to kiss some-

one you love passionately" — with the lights off!)

• **Watch the "green" ink.** Advertisers have discovered they can make big bucks with "green" advertising. You see, people have a natural sympathy for the environment because we are all a part of it. We want to do something helpful. We want to do what is right. So, we search for products that have the least environmental

impact. But, sometimes there is a catch. Just because a product says it's "environmentally friendly" doesn't necessarily mean it is. Some products appear to be more environmentally friendly than they actually are. And some that are friendly don't let us know that they are. Here are some examples. The word "recyclable" is not at all the same as "recycled." Many things are "technically" recyclable, but only if you can recycle them in *your neighborhood recycling center* are they truly recyclable. As for the word "recycled," a "recycled product" is either made from, or packaged in, material that was used before. Always buy products that are recycled.

They actually create a demand for the stuff we are recycling. The best type of recycled product to buy is one that contains "post-consumer waste."

• **Try to use water-based paints.** Water-based paints are less toxic than oil-based paints.

• **Wash your car at a self-serve car wash.** It saves a lot of water and is a great place to meet new people.

• **Buy your eggs in paper cartons.** It creates a demand for recycled papers!

• **You've got a friend.** Sometimes it may seem that you're the only person who cares about the environment, but that's not the case. There are many others out there who are also very dedicated to good old "Mother Earth." Whatever you may be doing to help, keep it up! You may be the one who makes the difference!