The Role of an Advisor

Many student groups plan small and large-scale events during the course of a school year. Some have traditional, yearly events; some organizations do not hold any events at all and some groups hold very small events. Once you understand the purpose of the organization, it is always good to ask them what events they hold that are related to the group’s purpose. You might find out that they sponsor a program that you have enjoyed attending for years. You may also realize that they have many ideas for what they want to do, but are not sure how to get started.

Be a resource
In any case, it is important to help the students you work with realize that they are responsible for any event they decide to undertake. You are there to help them find their way, utilize their resources more effectively, and help them cut through “red tape” whenever possible.

Help ensure that they are following university policies and guidelines
As student organizers, the students that you work with may only see what they want the event to be. As their advisor, your challenge is to ensure that they are following the guidelines for planning an event. Depending on the size, or the nature of the event, you may need to attend the event. This is particularly true when an event involves alcohol, is a large scale event or involves a controversial figure.

Again, you are not expected to memorize policies but knowing where to find the information that you, and your students, need will make your life easier. The Eagle Source, Student Government Association website and the Office of Student Leadership & Service website can assist.

More specific guidelines on planning a Small, Medium or Large Scale event can be found in the Eagle Source. Please direct your students to the Eagle Source: A Guide for Student Organizations. www.osls.emory.edu/.

Ask questions
Asking questions of student leaders helps them realize that you are taking an active role in their events. It also helps them to slow down and think about the details that would likely be important to an audience member or student interested in attending their event. Asking tough questions will help your student leaders learn to think proactively, creatively and critically about their event.

Some consistently good questions to ask include (but are not limited to):

- What are the goals of this event? How will you know if you have succeeded?
- How many volunteers will you need in order to make this event happen?
• Are there other events going on that will conflict with this one? Have you checked the university calendar?
• Are there any religious holidays going on at that time? (Check with the Office of Religious Life for this information.) Is there anything special listed on the academic calendars?
• Do we need to issue tickets for this event?
• Why would a student come to this event? What makes this event different from any other?
• How much will this cost? Have you completed the Budget Worksheet?
• Does the facility allow for handicapped accessibility? What other services could be provided to address disabilities?

The simple act of asking questions will become increasingly important as an event draws closer. In order to help prepare the students you are working with, help your student group brainstorm “Worse Case Scenarios” and create a plan for dealing with each scenario. Questions, like the ones below, will always be helpful.

• What if the artist cancels?
• Do we have a rain location? Is it listed on all of the publicity?
• What happens if FEWER people than expected show up for the event? What happens if MORE people than expected show up for this event?

A good time for brainstorming worse case scenarios would be 4 weeks prior to the event for small/medium sized events and 8 weeks prior to the event for large sized events.

Remember, student organizations are completely responsible for their events from planning and set up to funding, execution, and clean up. Work with your student leaders to make sure that they have the people power and finances to hold the event before they make any commitments. The more thought they put into the front end of an event, the higher the likelihood that it will succeed!

*For more specific guidelines on planning an event, a Small/Medium Scale Event Planner and a Large Scale Event Planner can be found in the, “Forms and Policies for Advisors” section of this manual, as well as on the OSLS website.*

**Be present!**
If your schedule permits, it is always a good idea to volunteer to attend an event sponsored by your organization. If you volunteer to attend an event, show up! An advisor must consider how many events the organization plans to implement, as well as the size and scope of those events.

It is understandable if you choose not to attend every event an organization does. If you are involved in the planning phase, your presence will be felt by everyone who does choose to attend.

Occasionally, your presence may be necessary for an event to occur. The two main reasons this would be necessary are:

• Alcohol is present at an event. (The Alcohol Policy dictates that an advisor be present as long as alcohol is present.) -OR-
• The event is a large scale event, possibly featuring a controversial figure.