

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
CLUB RESOURCE CENTER



Club Advisor Handbook

RIT – Club Resource Center (CCL)

As Updated Fall 2011



Dear Advisor:

Welcome Aboard!

Thank you for considering being an advisor of a student club at R.I.T.! Our clubs are engaging, full of potential, and most of all fun! Regardless of your experience, advising is a great opportunity to work with students in a capacity outside of the classroom, and to guide them in building upon their leadership potential.

The expectations of advisors are based upon several premises. Faculty and staff members are generally familiar with the policies and procedures of RIT, and therefore can assist students in the accomplishment of goals and objectives by helping them to work effectively within the framework of our community. Advisors can aid in growth and leadership within the group, help with both transition and continuity between the shifting of academic years, and contribute to the total education and leadership ability of our students. Many ask the question of what being an advisor entails, and the answer is simply that as an advisor you have an active role, **but not a controlling one**. You have the responsibility of promoting student growth and education, helping our students to enjoy their work, but also realizing the success and failure of the group should **belong** to the group and the advisor should provide an atmosphere for learning and educational conversations to occur. Your position is voluntary – but futile.

Therefore again – thank you for considering to be an advisor for our student clubs, and if you ever have any questions please feel free to contact me or anyone in the Club Resource Center to help you provide the best possible support and guidance for your group. Your willingness to help our student succeed is much appreciated, and I look forward to working with you this year! It's going to be great!

Sincerely,

Sarah Griffith
Club Administration Coordinator

CONTACT INFORMATION

Club Resource Center

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RESOURCES AND REFERRALS

Club Issues

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Advising Issues - Clubs

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Advising Issues – Greeks

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Additional Funding – Student Government

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Budget Questions – Clubs

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Club Travel

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Event Registration Procedures

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Leadership Training - RLI

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Risk Management

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THE BASICS

Purpose of the Advisor

Advisors wear a variety of hats within the organization they advise. The advisor is a **volunteer** mentor of the organization that provides direction, advice, guidance, and stability to the members and officers in order to develop cohesion and involvement.

Every club at RIT must have an advisor that is either a current full time faculty/staff that is well-informed (institutionally and within the individual club/organization) and involved in club activities and dealings.

The advisor is a representative of RIT administration that serves as a resource to the organization, assists with goal-setting, provides counsel and guidance, and approves paperwork as necessary.

An advisor is ALL of the following:

- **Mentor** – An advisor is more than just a figurehead for the club and a reference for the executive board. Often, students seek out advisors for issues both relating to club practices and those of a more personal nature. Be prepared to make lasting connections with students, challenge them intellectually/emotionally, and encourage leadership in the organization. Always be a guide to the organization and the executive board and understand needs/perspectives of all those involved.
- **Team Builder** – An advisor is, often, the glue that assists in holding the organization together and assists in creating cohesive teams and building positive relationships.
- **Conflict Mediator** – Sometimes, when necessary, the advisor must step in and hold the role of mediator with members or leaders who have different agendas, opinions, goals, etc. The advisor is expected to be unbiased and represent what he/she feels is best for the organization/its members.
- **Educator/Interpreter of Policy** – As a representative of RIT administration, an advisor may have to interpret and intervene when institute policy is in question. In these instances, the advisor is expected to guide the group within these standard operating procedures and notify appropriate authorities of any activities that may occur outside institute policy.
- **Motivator** – A key role of the advisor is to motivate students to excel, carry out their plans, set stretch goals, and dream big! As a motivator, advisors should encourage the club to continue with their goals despite failures and always offer constructive feedback/support.

An advisor is NONE of the following:

- **Uninvolved** – As stated in “Expectations” (below), an advisor is expected to attend events on an as-available basis and is required to attend executive board meetings as necessary to provide guidance and support in whatever way they can.
- **Controlling/manipulative** – An advisor is NOT the leader of the group. As an advisor, it is crucial to remain unbiased and look out for the well-being of the group despite the advisor’s personal beliefs.
- **Omnipotent** – Advisors are NOT expected to know everything. If the advisor utilizes this handbook effectively and communicates with the Club Staff, however, the advisor should be able to provide enough guidance to point the club/organization leadership in the right direction.
- **Just there to sign paperwork** – The advisor is NOT just around to sign club documentation and requests for financial resources. The advisor should know the inner workings of the club and have a strong idea of past initiatives, present standing, and future goals. If the advisor notices that they are not being as involved as they should, it is their responsibility to approach the club leadership or (if necessary) the Club Staff to intervene.

HINTS AND TIPS

- Communicate regularly and meet at least once a quarter with your executive board members
- You are NOT just a signature on a paper – always check to see what paper you are signing!
- Make sure your students have your most up-to-date information for contacting you!
- Try to attend at least one meeting or event a quarter, to show your club support
- Look for a co-advisor! Advising can be fun but to help find balance at busier times it’s nice to have someone else the students can rely on!
- If you’re unsure – ask! Email Sarah Griffith, Club Coordinator, at sbgccl@rit.edu with any club or advising questions you may have!
- You can advise more than one club at a time!
- If you don’t hear from your club don’t assume they’re doing well – make the intentional effort to outreach to the members to see where the club is at and to try and set up a meeting to touch base

EXPECTATIONS

Advisors will develop their own styles for interacting with their club depending on the executive board's needs, the status of the club, its purpose, activities, etc. In addition to this regular involvement, advisors are held to the following expectations:

- Communicate regularly and effectively with club members, officers, and Club Staff
- Make sure proper documentation is submitted properly and on time
- Make every effort to meet with your executive board during their regularly scheduled meetings (or as often as necessary)
- Oversee club meetings and supervise activities (especially major events/programs) when possible
- Explain and represent institute policy/procedure
- Offer financial advice (in accordance with Club Financial Office policy)
- Provide continuity for the club through the years and assist with executive board turn-over and new officer training
- Approve financial and club documentation paperwork
- Assist the treasurer in the monitoring of and adhering to the club's budget
- Assist club officers in the planning, promotion, and facilitation of events/activities
- Engage in annual planning (budgets, calendar, goals, etc.)
- Act as a resource and liaison to institute staff and convey problems, successes, questions/concerns as necessary
- Be familiar with national structure, services, and procedures (if applicable)
- Know your group's limits and help students find a balance between activities and academic responsibilities
- Maintain consistent contact with the Club Staff and the Center for Campus Life
- Attend as many advisor trainings and meetings as possible

Tools for a Successful Advisor

Advisors will need to utilize the following tools to effectively advise their organization. Though it will not be necessary to memorize the following documents or the information therein, it is crucial to the advisor's success that he/she knows where to find necessary information or how to contact individuals that do.

Some tools advisors will find helpful:

- **Organization constitution/by-laws** (the Club Resource Center has these on file; if your club/organization does not have an updated copy, they need them!)
- **Contact list of officers/members** (to be kept by officers and updated through Club Connections website)
- **Club Resource Center “Important Dates to Remember”** (Available online under Advisor Tab at clubs.rit.edu, labeled “Important Dates”)
- **Calendar of club events** (Continuous event reel on clubs.rit.edu)
- **Required Paperwork** (Online on clubs.rit.edu, under Resources, the required paperwork is due for all clubs. These include waiver forms, Club Recognition Packets, Budget Paperwork, etc.)
- **History and understanding of club/organization** (Can be achieved by speaking with Club Staff and student executive board)
- **President's Handbook** (available online at the clubs.rit.edu webpage under the “Resources” tab; this document contains everything an officer could ever need to know about managing their club)
- **Club Finance Manual** (available online at the clubs.rit.edu webpage under the “Resources” tab; this document has information about Club Resource Center financial procedures – i.e. budgeting, travel accommodations, etc.)
- **Individual Focused Meetings** (if necessary, advisors are encouraged to contact Sarah Griffith, Club Coordinator sbgccl@rit.edu, to set up a focused intentional meeting to discuss role as advisor and questions)
- **Understanding of Club Resource Center** (it is encouraged all advisors are aware of the services provided through the Club Resource Center, and make sure they take an opportunity to visit the center to know where students come)

Establishing a Good Relationship

Executive Board

Having a strong relationship with the leadership of your club/organization is crucial to success as an advisor. Above all else, it is important to have a clear understanding of the organization's goals and the roles of all individuals in the organization. As well, there is a great deal of turn-over every year between executive board members, and it is imperative that the advisor follow up with graduating members to make sure they're aware of who new students coming in are.

Encourage open dialogue and make sure that both the executive board and the members understand that you are there to assist in guiding the organization to accomplish its goals and provide support – not just the executive board members count, or need support! Someday, members WILL be executive board themselves! There should be a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and agendas within the organization and within the structure of the Club Resource Center.

In addition to these tips, be sure to do the following:

- Encourage open dialogue with both members and officers
- Have a clear understanding of expectations
- Encourage membership and executive board to develop specific, manageable goals and look to the future; support these goals
- Allow for failure and learning to occur
- Respect all in the group and encourage feedback to be given both to the officers from the advisor and vice versa

For effective goal setting:

- Begin early in the year
- Ask the group: What is our purpose? What are we hoping to accomplish? Use probing questions to evaluate how well the group feels they performed previously, what can be improved, etc.
- Use consensus to develop group norms and goals
- Encourage continuous goal-setting and evaluation of progress in relation to group goals, objectives, and expectations

Club Staff

Having a strong relationship with the RIT Club Staff is important for the advisor and the success of the organization overall. It is the responsibility of the advisor to make sure the club is performing adequately and to remain in contact with club administration.

Reminders

The Do's and Don'ts of Advising

- ✓ DO serve as a resource for the organization
- ✓ DO suggest ideas and goals
- ✓ DO serve as a personal and professional role model
- ✓ DO interpret institute policy/procedure
- ✓ DO exemplify leadership
- ✓ DO allow group to succeed AND fail to learn from their mistakes!
- ✓ DO advise group decision-making and provide consistency
- ✓ DO provide continuity and structure to organization
- ✓ DO trust yourself and the group
- ✓ DO have a sense of humor and have FUN with the students! 😊

- ✗ DON'T control the group/organization
- ✗ DON'T hold veto power over decision
- ✗ DON'T pretend to "know it all"
- ✗ DON'T be the sole recruiter/marketer
- ✗ DON'T break promises
- ✗ DON'T manipulate the organization toward your own goals

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can be a club/organization advisor?

A. *Anyone! It's completely volunteer! The only requirement to being an advisor for a club/organization on RIT's campus is to be a faculty/staff member and agree to fulfill the responsibilities within this document and listed through Student Government.*

Q. What documentation needs to be on file for my club to stay "active"?

A. *Every year, a club must submit a Club Recognition Form online at the clubs.rit.edu website to be officially "recognized." (UNLESS they are a Tier 1 club, which you can find out through our office). If they fail to do this, their club is put on Hold and therefore they are unable to hold events and to continue acting. In addition to this, every club must have a constitution/by-laws on file within one year of operation, must submit a budget proposal in April, and fill out a yearly report at the end of the year. Email notification and reminders will go out well in advance of these deadlines.*

Q. What is my liability/risk associated with being a club advisor?

A. *If a club advisor is acting to the best of their knowledge and not violating any institute policies/procedures (or knowingly turning a blind eye to operations that might do so), the advisor has no liability. If there are any questions in this regard please direct them to the Club Resource Center or Center for Campus Life.*

Q. How does my club go about fund-raising?

A. *Members of the club can get "financially certified" on the clubs.rit.edu website; once this certification has taken place, the member or officer can request funds in the organization's budget through Student Government. If the club does not have any funds in the budget, refer to the Club Finance Certification Manual and/or visit the Club Resource Center for ideas. Students are able to be very creative with fundraising techniques – bake sales even work!*

Q. How does my club plan an event?

A. *Members of clubs need to be proactive when considering event planning. Events should be planned at least 2-3 weeks in advance. Consideration needs to be given to what type of event the club is looking to hold, what the needs and amenities are, and what budget considerations need to be taken into effect. To reserve a room on campus clubs need to stop by the Welcome Desk at the Campus Center, and from there they can register their events and event needs on our Event Registration website.*

Q. Can I travel with my club?

A. *Advisor expenses cannot be covered by club funds – as this position is voluntary, the advisor assumes any travel related costs*