



Leading a Student Organization
A Users Guide

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Understanding Student Organizations at OSU – The Process

Rome was not built in a day, and neither will your student organization. In order to have a new student organization approved on campus you must go before the Committee on Student Organizations (CSO). This committee is a university committee reporting to the Student Government Association Senate. The membership of the CSO is composed of the Director of Campus Life (acting as a non-voting permanent secretary), two members of GPSGA, two administrative staff members, three faculty members, five student senators and one student-at-large. One of the senators will serve as chairperson.

In order for staff members to become a part of CSO, the staff members shall be appointed by the President of the University. The President chooses these staff members based on recommendation(s) submitted by the Vice President for Student Affairs. The GPSGA members shall be appointed by the President of GPSGA. The faculty members shall be appointed by the President of the University from recommendation(s) by the Faculty Council. The student-at-large shall be appointed by the President of the Student Government Association and shall not be a member of the Senate. The senators shall be appointed by the Senate Chair as he/she assigns members of the Senate to their respective committees. The committee chairperson shall be elected from the Senate members by the entire membership of the Committee on Student Organizations near the end of each semester.

Faculty, administrative staff, and appointed student members of the committee will serve for two years. The five senators and two GPSGA members shall be appointed or reappointed each semester.

The Committee on Student Organizations is responsible for either recommending issuance or denial of registered or recognized status to student organizations that request University designation. The CSO shall also make recommendations for other changes in organizational status. CSO has adopted guidelines for registration that are available at the Office of Campus Life. CSO recommendations are made to the Student Government Association Senate for action on those organizations whose members are primarily undergraduate students. For organizations whose members are primarily graduate students, the CSO will make recommendations to the Graduate and Professional Student Government Association for its review and recommendations. The recommendations from the CSO and SGA or recommendations from CSO and GPSGA will be sent to the Director of the Campus

Life for final approval. If no action has been taken by CSO, SGA or GPSGA within a six week period (to include only the regular academic semesters), the Director of Campus Life may take action. Any subsequent appeals are to be made through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The CSO will approve or deny any constitutional revisions or name changes recommended or made by any student organization. The CSO shall serve as a hearing panel for considering complaints against student groups. The CSO can also take corrective action against student groups when necessary. The CSO shall serve in an advisory capacity for the Director of Campus Life in policy matters related to student organizations and their activities. CSO shall make public through the Student Government Association Senate all decisions concerning registration, recognition, and any other status changes made in any student organizations.

**Information for this section of the Handbook was provided by Section XI of the Conduct, Rights and Obligations of Student Organizations which can be located at:*

<http://www.okstate.edu/ucs/SCEA/sectionXI.htm>

Recognized or Registered?

An individual being asked to serve as an advisor for a student group may be told the group is “registered,” or “recognized.” To the faculty or staff member, these distinctions may be unclear as to their significance or have no apparent meaning with regards to the operation of the organization.

Recognized groups are those which:

- Have a purpose which relates directly to the academic mission of the University as demonstrated through it’s affiliation with a college student council, departmental sponsorship, or is an organization recognizing scholarship or leadership; or
- Have been granted status by the University administration via the OSU Board of Regents. These groups are the Student Government Association (SGA); Graduate and Professional Student Government Association (GPSGA); Interfraternity Council (IFC); Panhellenic Council (PHC); National Panhellenic Council (NPHC); Multicultural Greek Council (MGC); the Off-Campus Student Association (OCSA); Residence Halls Association (RHA); and the Student Union Activities Board (SUAB)

Registered groups are those which:

- Are affiliated with the University because their membership is made up of students, faculty, or staff, but do not qualify for recognized status.

The primary differences between recognized groups and registered groups are related to the use of the University's name and the opportunity to request student fees.

Recognized groups may:

- Use the name of the University to show their academic affiliation;
- Request the use of student fees from the Student Activity Fee. This is also known as the Activity Fee Allocation Process or AFAP (Group 1).

Both recognized and registered groups may:

- Apply for co-sponsorship funding through the Student Government Association.
 - Recognized groups can apply for up to \$1500/semester (until fund is depleted)
 - Registered groups can apply for up to \$500/semester (until fund is depleted)
- Use University facilities (normally at no cost), for regularly scheduled business meeting in designated areas;
- Use the unrestricted bulletin boards on campus with proper approval from the Department of Campus Life;
- Opportunity to schedule use of grounds, Chi-O Clock tables, etc.

Recognition or registration of organizations does not mean that the University supports or adheres to the views held or positions taken by such groups. Responsibility for any action which violates federal, state, or local laws or University regulations must be assumed by the individual groups and their individual officers and members.

All student organizations are required to maintain their funds in University banking service.

Relationship with Advisor

In your role as a leader, one of the great benefits is having the opportunity to get to know this person on a professional and personal level. Like most good relationships, those developed with your advisor should involve an open and honest relationship. This type of relationship allows both yourself and the advisor to receive feedback, share ideas, and build

trust. As you get to know your advisor better it is important to understand that he/she may develop their relationship with you for a distinct reason.

Some advisors may become a mentor. A mentor/mentee connection can develop into a long lasting relationship. Mentoring typically happens in a one-on-one environment with a student. The advisor in this role typically can aid in your growth both personally and professionally. Even if the advisor's field of study or career pursuit is different from your own, he/she may provide you with valuable professional advice. Sometimes the advisor can serve as a sounding board for your ideas and goals. Additionally they may be able to review your resume, or assist in making connections with resources either in the institution or the community.

The advisor may also be looked at as a leader, providing help and guidance to both you and the members of the organization. Frequently these advisors can help you and other members develop your leadership skills. As a leader you can collaborate with the advisor to help find new ways to improve the organization and help it grow. A strong leader also will challenge you to meet your academic goals and maintain a successful grade point average.

Be sure to consider the kind of relationship that you wish to develop with your organization's advisor. Any form of relationship takes effort from both parties to develop and enhance. A positive advisor relationship can be one that you keep with you for years to come.

You are in Charge: Be Accountable

As a leader of a student organization you are in charge of directing your members and providing guidance while helping them learn and develop. You must be accountable on both a personal and organizational level.

Remember that you set the tone and provide the example for your student organization. It is crucial that you treat all members fairly and hold them to the same standards. By showing that you are motivated and committed you can help to inspire and energize your constituents.

Leadership 101

As a leader not only will you grow over time but you are responsible for helping to develop the members of your organization. The members are the backbone for all of your programs and activities throughout the semester. Make the most of your members as they will help you achieve at a high level.

Embrace your leadership role and take ownership of your responsibilities quickly because you are largely responsible for the direction the group takes. One of the most basic but essential tools for success when overseeing an organization is getting to know your members. If you invest in them and help them feel they are valuable, they are more likely to be excited and involved in the group.

While you get to know your organization's members as individuals consider how each person functions in the group. Meaningful icebreakers or leadership development activities can help you better understand yourself as well as your members. This can be invaluable if you are putting together members or committees to work with assignments or other important tasks.

Maintaining a positive attitude is an essential tool for success as a leader. The outlook that you adopt will be mimicked by your members. This is helpful when it comes to creating excitement about an upcoming program. If you are excited for a program, then your members will be as well. If you approach the program with a negative attitude, your members will adopt the same mentality. While this does not mean that you must always be happy, you should consider what you say and how it is said when discussing your organization.

Membership Recruitment

Aside from having a structured organization and supporting officers the most vital component of a student organization is membership. Some students like organizations due to their academic or professional interest; others join to become more social and find like-minded people. There are a number of reasons why students become a part of an organization. Something to consider when recruiting, is why they should be a part of your organization. Also, how does being a member of your organization benefit their collegiate experience? Students often are looking for an organization that they know they can benefit from and visa-versa.

All of these skills lead up to one of the most vital parts of an organization, recruitment. As a leader you need to be able to evaluate your organization's structure both physically and also in the make up of your members. For example, if your group is composed of introverts, consider recruiting extroverted and outgoing people. If there are communities on campus that you would like to see more of in your organization consider making special promotions geared toward that population. Make sure your members are involved with the recruiting process. A

positive attitude can have a substantial impact on successfully being able to recruit new members. If members speak positively about your organization and their experiences it can help create a positive buzz about your group. Also consider if your group needs any specialized skills in order to facilitate programs. Your members will develop and grow over time and be a crucial part of your group's success not just for this year, but for years to come.

Running a Meeting:

A critical element of maintaining a strong organization takes place during your meetings. While this may seem like a basic task, it is more challenging than it appears. However, do not fear, there are several things to keep in mind to ensure a smooth and successful meeting.

Make sure that you have a confirmed time and location for your meeting. Keeping members informed of changes can instill in them a sense of belonging and value.

Be sure that you are frequently communicating with your organization. Make a deliberate effort to ensure that the members have a chance to discuss upcoming events and be involved in the meeting. No member wants to be talked down to regularly and never have the opportunity to contribute to the group.

Communication is an essential element of having a successful meeting. Create an agenda to ensure that your meetings run smoothly. Consider sending the agenda to your members in advance so they can come prepared. Stay on task and make sure you do not get distracted by side conversations.

Be sure that your meetings do not become monotonous. Do things that are fun and unexpected from time to time such as a fun activity to begin a meeting. Or if you have just held a big event or have had a great accomplishment, recognize either an individual or the whole group for the positive work. By altering how meetings are held, you can help maintain the interest of your members and keep them excited about meetings.

Having a positive meeting experience can help people maintain a good outlook for your organization. Do your best to cultivate a cohesive and friendly environment. Provide members opportunities to get to know each other and to have fun. By enhancing their network of friends they will be more likely to stay motivated and involved.

While there is no perfect way to hold a meeting, it is important to try your best to make sure that each meeting is a success. Members want to feel that their time is valued and that they are part of a worthwhile organization.

Cultivating Successful Marketing

Advertising and marketing your program, while simple, takes a great deal of planning and forethought. All of the great ideas and hard work preparing a program will be in vain if nobody is aware that your program is going on.

One of the keys to successful marketing comes in the planning stages. Ensure that you look at your marketing at least one month ahead of time. While this may seem like an unnecessary process, there are many departments that your organization may work with across campus that must be given enough time to prepare. Meet with your members and advisor in advance to discuss your ideas and obtain feedback on how to enhance your marketing. If you are unsure of what you want to do, make an appointment to meet with a member of the Student Union Marketing department to help brainstorm ideas.

There are several consistent methods of marketing that are utilized by many organizations across campus. CampusLink serves as a simple and cost free method of advertising events for the entire OSU community. If you have questions creating an advertisement on CampusLink contact 405-744-5486. Many organizations will utilize Library Lawn and Chi-O Clock to have members hand out fliers and handbills with information about upcoming programs. Additionally, the OSU Headlines is a great alternative that reaches all faculty, staff, and students. If you have information about an event or activity at OSU that you wish to submit for OSU Headlines, please e-mail it in a text format (no posters or PDFs) to jim.mitchell@okstate.edu. OSU Headlines will be e-mailed on Tuesdays and Thursdays, except for the weeks that OSU Regents meet when headlines will run on Wednesdays and Fridays. Each item runs once, so designate a date when submitting the information. Please include contact information and submit event news a week in advance.

Some of the smallest events can experience great success with the right marketing. Get your members involved by having them contribute their ideas. Special tables, promotions or give-a-ways at Chi-O Clock are just some ways to build excitement about your event. Marketing incentives (giveaways, prizes, etc.) can be a great asset for your advertising. These incentives help attract people to your program and increase appeal of the event across campus. If you have a specific group on campus that you are interested in advertising toward, reach out to them. Whether it's attending a club meeting or working with Residential Life, there are great ways to target specific populations of people. Also, don't be afraid to try new

marketing ideas that OSU has not seen before. The organization needs to evolve with the campus culture and make sure that you are attracting students in a variety of ways.

Program advertising can also be a great way for helping to develop ideas for decorating and creating atmosphere. Plan your decorations ahead of time so that you can incorporate the ideas in your marketing. Make sure that if you use images on your marketing that they can be seen clearly during your program. By maintaining consistent imagery throughout your advertisements and events there will be a cohesive experience for those in attendance.

In addition to these great resources the Student Union Marketing Department serves as a great asset for all student organizations. You can find out more information about the services offered at their website listed below:

<http://union.okstate.edu/campuslife/CampusLifeGraphicDesign.htm>

Risk Management

When planning programs or before bringing a speaker or event to campus that you consider the inherent challenges that may be involved. Considering the risks that a program may have is crucial before bringing it to life on the campus.

Student organizations typically don't fall under the protection of the University's liability coverage so I encourage organizations to consider purchasing a small liability policy to protect the organization and the members. Occasionally, a student organization's event may fall within the protection of the Governmental Tort Claims Act. The key is whether an event is considered "Official University Business" and is event dependent. The office of OSU Risk Management is available to assist in determining whether an event is "Official Business" and will be happy to provide suggestions on making events safer for students and participants.

If you are unsure about a program or if you ever have questions about what your event may qualify as or if there are risks involved contact the Director of Risk Management, Mike Bale at mike.bale@okstate.edu for more information.

Financial Management

As a student leader, working with a budget provides you with a great experience to apply and improve upon an essential real life skill. Recognized student organizations at OSU who are current on their required information to Campus Life may be eligible for a student fee appropriation through the Activity Fee Allocation Process. Should your group desire to apply,

you should watch CampusLink in early January for the announcement that applications are available. The President and/or Treasurer of Recognized organizations applying for Activity Fee Allocations are required to attend a Treasurer's Workshop usually scheduled in September or October. The Advisor is notified of the workshops and they are also advertised in the O'Collegian.

When preparing a program, you must be mindful of the budget. Proper budget management is easier to accomplish when you plan ahead. Spend some time comparing prices of items online. This manual is compiled to assist organization treasurers in setting up books and explains the procedures for making deposits and withdrawals. Copies are available to all organization treasurers and can be obtained from the Department of Campus Life. You can also view the information online through the following website:

<http://vpaf.okstate.edu/UA/StudentOrganizationInfo.htm>

Collaborating, a Key to Success

The saying, "no man is an island," is crucial to keep in mind while serving as a student leader. Collaboration will play a substantial role in your ability to develop and enhance not only your student organization but the campus community as a whole. Working with others can be challenging but very beneficial.

It is important to consider your own leadership style and how that will interact with the other leadership styles. Throughout the collaborative process, take the time to consider another person's leadership style. Consider how she/he interacts with the members of her/his organization. What can you learn from that person's organization with her/his organization (good or bad)? How can this experience help you to develop your own skills? With twice as many people to work with and coordinate it means that you will need a strong sense of your own leadership style. This can play an important factor when you consider the size of an organization that you are sponsoring an event with.

Organizations that are small have unique and different strengths than larger organizations; consider these when you are distributing the workload of your event. Pick an organization that you know can complement yours, if you are in a larger organization, work with a smaller organization or one with a different purpose. This can help to diversify your organization's audience and help you develop or enhance relationships with other areas of campus.

Remember that two organizations equal two times the resources. Use this opportunity to explore the other organization's strengths. This could come in the form of a good connection with a vendor or in teaming up with an organization that is great at raising funds. With a greater number of people to work with you can also promote and advertise on a larger scale, making it easier to host an event, find donations, or places to advertise within the Stillwater community. Be sure that you are evenly distributing the workload between the two organizations to help ensure that there is an equal partnership. Be aware that in any organization there are some members who will be unwilling to put forth a great deal of effort, this may become two times as challenging when working with another organization.

In order to enhance your work with the other organization consider picking a representative to be the point person with the other group. This will help to ensure that there is one reliable source acting as the liaison and also can provide additional opportunities for other members to get involved. If the program is large in scale consider creating a contract with the other organization to ensure that the specifics, expectations, and requirements are laid out. The Department of Campus Life has a form that is available at this [link](#).

There are a variety of co-sponsorship opportunities that can be utilized across campus. One organization that offers co-sponsorship for student organizations is the Student Union Activities Board (SUAB). It is encouraged that you apply for co-sponsorship early in the semester. You can apply to receive monetary support or you can rent equipment, decorations, or other items that SUAB may have. If you have any questions or would like to apply for co-sponsorship visit the SUAB Office, currently located in 018 Classroom Building. Additionally, the Student Government Association's Multicultural Affairs Committee has the ability to allocate funds from a special fee established by the Student Government Association. This committee's purpose is to promote multicultural events on campus. For more information check out the Student Government Association website, <http://osusga.com/> it is under the Resources section in the Forms and Applications Folder.

Recognizing Your Organization's Members

Recognizing your members is essential for your work as a leader. It can be easy to get caught up in planning events, but don't forget to recognize the work that your members are doing along the way. Appreciation does not have to be anything large or extravagant. Nobody expects sky writing or red carpets, but there are lots of little ways to show your members that

you care. Remembering their birthdays is a great way to make them feel appreciated and special. Make sure to always thank the members for their work after events or when they do something great. Don't be afraid to buy a snack for them or bake something and bring it to a meeting. There are many ways that recognition can be done, just do not forget to show your gratitude. This can help in member retention and improving members' experience with the organization.

Officer Transition

Transitioning into or out of a position/office is an essential duty for any leader. In order to ensure that you are helping the organization to successfully transition and maintain momentum you should work with your advisor. An advisor has a strong sense of the dynamics of the organization, the progress and challenges it has faced, and can help maintain continuity and stability throughout the group. Collaborate with the advisor to help the new student leaders get acclimated with the organization and with their new roles. Spend time with the person taking over your role. Review the position requirements to ensure that he/she fully understands all of the duties that the position holds. There are steps that you can take before vacating your position to aid in the transition process.

- Develop and maintain a student organization binder which contains
 - Constitution and by-laws
 - Officer descriptions
 - Be sure to update these as the organization evolves
 - Contact information for members of the organization and other officers
 - Minutes/agendas from past organizational meetings
 - List of programs that have been done previously
 - Contact information for different areas of the university that the students might work with; Meeting and Conference Services, University Dining Services, etc.
- Hold a meeting with the outgoing and incoming organization officers
 - Allow the old and new officers time to speak one-on-one
 - Provide an opportunity to discuss challenges, successes, and allow the incoming officers to ask personal questions

Managing Conflict

As an evolving and dynamic entity, student organizations frequently experience fluctuations with members that have a variety of personalities and styles. Conflict is part of every group and it is not uncommon for members or leaders of an organization to disagree. Address these conflicts early so that they do not impede the organization's progress. Find the root cause of the conflict, take charge and work to resolve the issue.

Conflict is not black and white but has the potential to be both positive and negative. Positive conflict can act as a catalyst for communication and allow members to relieve pent-up feelings. It can also allow for opportunities of personal growth and contribute to change. The conclusion of the conflict may lead to a stronger and more effective group environment. Negative conflict has an equal number of drawbacks. It can push members away from the group and cause unnecessary stress. Dramatic situations can occur depending on what has instigated or created the conflict. Conflict of this nature also diverts time and energy away from the group's goals and work. Understanding the nature of a conflict and the specific ramifications that may arise based on the nature of the incident and the people involved can help to drastically increase the odds of resolving the issue.

Not every conflict that occurs in a group is monumental and needs to be resolved in a large manner. Sometimes differences in opinion are just that and will not lead to any more serious dilemmas or problems. Not addressing a minor disagreement immediately can allow those involved to take the time needed to calm down and address the issue from a rational perspective. Be sure to discuss with your advisor what is happening in the organization. Advisors can provide you with advice on how to manage challenging situations. However, this attitude does not work in every situation.

For certain conflicts, one of the worst things that can be done is to try and avoid the situation all together. Taking time to manage a major conflict in the early stages can prevent it from becoming greater and bogging down the organization with tension and problems. Attempt to work out the problems in as small a setting as possible, either one-on-one, or in a small group. Work with the organization's executive officers to address the conflict and try to resolve situations before they escalate.

A leader is often needed to overcome the emotions involved in a conflict. Sometimes you must step back and allow your organization's members or officers to try and work through the dilemma themselves. This helps to show your trust in their abilities and gifts. Remember

that positive change can come from almost any member. Any individual in the group can provide that leadership, so it's helpful for all members to learn how to cope with conflict to be healthier, happier and more effective in groups.

As a leader you may be placed in a challenging predicament having to be both a peer and a leader. You want to be respected by the members of the organization, but you also need to be vigilant of problems and challenges. It will take time for you to determine the balance. Keep your opinions and comments unbiased to ensure that your organization members realize that you have the best intentions for the group and will come back to you for advice and help.

The Department of Campus Life is able to help you resolve issues within your organization. A staff member can attend a meeting and act as a consultant to observe the challenges and provide the group with feedback. Additionally, Campus Life can help coordinate efforts with a member of the University Counseling Center to have a mediation session between specific members or the group as a whole.

Learning to manage conflict will lead to a more productive team and more satisfied group members who feel welcome to communicate openly, take risks and exchange ideas.

Challenges of a Student Organization

Student organizations face frequent challenges throughout the semester. Some experiences may be anticipated whereas others may be unanticipated. This section will provide you with information regarding the variety of challenges that you may face in your role as a student leader.

The Challenge of Change

As a student leader, the other executive members of your organization will be one of your strongest assets. Be aware that this group will provide its own unique challenges. When considering making changes to your organization regarding its structure, constitution, or to a program, it is vital that you consult the officers in your organization as well as the members. This ensures that each member is able to have input and allows the group to cultivate unity in a natural and healthy way.

It's All about Attitude

In working with the members and officers of organizations you will experience a range of issues and challenges in your leadership role. One of the challenges that can happen when working in a group is managing conflict and tension. This may be a result of rise between other members of your executive team or with you and another person. If this tension is not managed it could become hazardous to the organization's health as a whole. Either you or another executive member may go through a rough patch where you feel less confident or assertive when dealing with each other or members. Also at times either you or other members may lose enthusiasm about the organization. This may come from feeling overworked or being overly committed to too many organizations or responsibilities and are unable to dedicate the time to work with the organization. If you start to feel this way do not be afraid to speak to your advisor. They may be able to help better delegate responsibilities if you are feeling overwhelmed. If you see this in your executive members try to find a way to motivate and re-energize them about the organization. Along with the leadership of your organization, the membership may also struggle.

The organization may experience challenges when trying to obtain a strong turnout for meetings. This can be particularly challenging if a vote needs to be held and there are not enough members present to decide on an issue. Low meeting attendance may relate to how members feel about the organization. Members may feel dissatisfied with their experiences and have grown bored or apathetic about the organization. If there is a lack of camaraderie or a feeling of disconnection within the group it can increase members' lack of interest in the group. Sometimes the goals of the members have differed from that of the group and they are no longer looking to be involved. Additionally, if members present new ideas and they are rejected for being different it can lead them to feel that their input is not valuable and keep them from being invested. Membership challenges may also be correlated to organizational challenges that exist.

Another issue to consider is whether or not the organization has a well defined mission. Consider if the goals are understood and followed through on by the members and leaders. Without a strong foundation, the organization will have a challenging time following through with programs, meetings, or making any progress at all. If meetings run too long or have become disorganized members may grow impatient and dissatisfied with the experiences within the organization.

Evaluating Your Skills and Performance

As a student leader your interactions with your organization, its members, and the advisor will provide you with a wide range of experiences. Taking time to reflect on your experiences is beneficial and can help you to develop your skills and grow. Listed below are sample questions that can help you reflect on your progress.

- How much effort have I put into being a leader?
- Have I given the organization enough/too much/too little time?
- Have I met and discussed concerns or issues with my advisor?
- Have I been available to talk to members and executive board members?
- What can I do to help the student organization, members, and other executive board members succeed?
- If I were to rate myself from 1-5 (1 being the lowest, and 5 being the highest) how would I rate myself?
- What would the executive board members rate me and why?
- How would the organization's members rate me and why?
- What do I enjoy the most about being a student leader?
- What would I change about my experience?
- Have I asked for help when I needed it?
- Am I still enjoying the experience?

This evaluation can be done independently or you can speak with your advisor and your executive board members to gain input. By being open to constructive criticism you can further develop your skills and forge stronger connections.