



OKLAHOMA STATE
UNIVERSITY

Best Practices for Student Organization Advisors

We understand that issues may arise that are not covered in this document or within the links listed below, so please feel free to contact campuslife@okstate.edu to ask questions or set up a meeting to discuss specific issues.

The Advisor's Role

- Advisors *advise and assist* organizations.
- Students have many exciting and grand ideas that may not be realistically developed into events and programs with the time and resources available. You've seen many things in your career, so use your experience and expertise to help refine the organization's members' excitement and ideals into attainable, accessible goals.
- Help them use SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) goals for each meeting, program, or event they run.
- Advisors should also model good meeting etiquette whether or not the organization uses [parliamentary procedure](#) in meetings. *Follow the agenda closely and save side conversations for the informal discussion portion at the end of the meeting.*
- Review the organization's constitution to understand the role and duty of each officer or committee chair.
- Develop relationships with your club officers and members, preferably at the beginning of the year, by having a retreat or a long meeting where some ice breakers, games or other fun activities can develop bonds.
 - *There are many fun, free activities that members can participate in as a group like on campus movies, events, intramural teams, etc.*
 - *Some paid activities include attending a sporting event together, the [ropes course](#), [paddle boarding](#) at the lake etc.*
- Advisors are also usually responsible for the club's financial health. Advisors should review the treasurer's training and be sure to sign accounting signature card each year when new officers are elected or any other time those roles change. See **Helpful links and contact information** at the end of this document.

Know your organization

- Know your organization's constitution, and keep it available. It is your best tool for specific information about the organization, its purpose, and procedures.

- Your constitution can be found on the organization's CampusLink page under the "documents" tab.
- If you do not see it filed there, please contact us. We may have a paper copy or we can help you rewrite it. **Some Greek letter organizations and Sports Clubs do not have a constitution on file within Campus Life. Contact Fraternity and Sorority Affairs or the Sports Club Council for assistance.*
- There are many different types of organizations on campus – some are very large, well established, and well-funded, but most are small, student funded, and close-knit.
- Student organization members and leaders obviously want to see their club grow and flourish, but it is not realistic, *or even desirable*, for some clubs to have large memberships.
- Each club is unique and should focus on its *purpose as outlined in its own constitution and bylaws*.

Keep things realistic

- At the beginning of the year, remind your club's members that the *academic year is actually quite short and moves quickly*.
- Each semester is only 16 weeks long.
- Of those 16 weeks, two are pre-finals and finals weeks during which clubs cannot require attendance at meeting or events.
- Student organizations also usually do not meet during Fall or Spring breaks.
- With this in mind, most clubs still try to do too much! This can cause burnout among members and lead to some members resenting those who they do not think commit enough to the club.
- Discuss this with your members early in the year (maybe during a retreat) and emphasize that while club membership is important to them, they need to keep their commitments in perspective and focus on academics first.
- Failure is an option
 - There are only a few things that an advisor truly *needs* to do for an organization such as signing required paperwork (accounting signature cards, transportation requests etc.) but most functions of a student organizations can and should be managed completely by students.
 - Sometimes student organization events or programs fail to meet expectations. It is difficult but important to strike a healthy balance between advising students and doing things for them.
 - College is an ideal place for people to learn about failure on a small scale and how it can be prevented in the future.
 - If something fails, seize the opportunity to allow your students to learn from the experience.
 1. Acknowledge that expectations failed to be met.

2. Tell your students that it's OK and it is another learning opportunity.
3. Arrange for a time in the near future, maybe in a few days, to discuss the problems that occurred.
4. Remember, there's no use blaming anyone; people are usually well aware of what caused the failure and focusing on it will only do further damage.
5. The past has already occurred, focus on the future and what was learned through this particular failure.

Meetings

Most organizations have the following types of meetings throughout the year.

- Kick-off meetings and retreats - These should early in the academic year and be longer "get to know you" meetings where everyone can commit to a 3+ hour meeting that should include:
 - Ice breakers and other social games.
 - A business meeting that includes goals and plans for the full year including discussing regular meetings, special programs, and annual events that need to be planned.
 - Everyone should bring their calendar.
 - A break that might include snacks or a meal.
 - A wrap up that includes specifics on when and where your next meeting will be.
- Recruitment meetings and events – these are usually informal meetings where a few members either table on campus or attend the Student Organization Fair to meet prospective members. Ideal activities are:
 - A 1.5 to 2 hour time span tabling on campus (Chi-O clock or near the library)
 - Passing out flyers or sharing QR codes about upcoming meetings and events.
 - Share a QR code that takes prospective members to the organization's CampusLink page where they can click "join".
 - Host a walk-by service project.
 - Ask people to write a post-it note of encouragement and leave it at the table for someone else to pick up and share. Collect small toiletries for a local shelter and ask people to assemble a small Ziploc bag for people in that shelter.
- Business meetings
 - A business meeting usually takes place on a regular basis at a standard place and time and may also be held at the beginning or end of another meeting or event.
 - It is where ideas, goals and plans can start to take shape.
 - A business meeting should be highly structured, follow a short, specific agenda, and focus on business or planning that needs to occur in advance of an upcoming program or event .

- *Check the constitution to confirm that quorum has been met if members need to vote on business during the meeting.*
- It will very often involve a *To Do* list where tasks are assigned or reports on tasks are given.
- This is an ideal meeting for the regular members to have their voices heard, have issues resolved, questions answered, and for them to ask for help on tasks when needed.
- Service events
 - A service meeting can take place at any time, but for most organizations these may only occur twice per year when the Student Government Association hosts Into the Streets.
 - Students can record their service hours on CampusLink and be recognized for their service. For a full list of what counts as community service see
 - A service meeting is usually simply about getting together as a club to serve the community and get to know each other better. This is a great time to also have a pot luck or other social event to celebrate a job well done.
- Annual or traditional events
 - Several clubs are known for annual programs that they host each year.
 - These usually take a great deal of planning and organization to succeed.
 - It is important to maintain records of the planning, funding, and reviews of these programs so future club members can access this knowledge year to year.
 - You can store these records on CampusLink in the documents section
 - Review annual programs each year and decide what needs to change or if the program should continue.
 - Consider hosting larger programs with other organizations. Another club may be able to help plan, staff, or fund the event through co-sponsorship
 - Just because an organization has always done a program does not mean it needs to continue the program. If the program is no longer meeting the *organization's purpose or goals* it can be changed or suspended.
- Social meetings or events
 - Most people join clubs to meet people who have similar interests.
 - These meetings are where your members can get to know each other in a relaxed setting and build their network.
 - Social meetings are fun, but they still need to be planned, usually within a business meeting or at a kick-off meeting at the beginning of the year.
 - You don't need a lot of money to plan a social event but if you do spend money on supplies etc. you can use a [disbursement voucher to be reimbursed from the organization's on-campus fund \(account\).](#)

- A social meeting is a great opportunity to invite a guest speaker to talk with club members about their career or experiences in a field related to the club's interest or to watch a film or share an article followed by a discussion.
- Trips, conferences, and tours
 - Some organizations take trips for various reasons.
 - If you leave the city of Stillwater you need to [submit a form](#) to be covered by OSU's student organization trip insurance prior to leaving for the trip.
 - If you intend to use a university vehicle you must also complete and submit a [Transportation Request Form](#) to Risk Management at least two weeks prior to leaving. This form is found within the trip insurance form on CampusLink.

Reserving rooms, lawns, tabling and tailgating space

- Most organizations will reserve meeting space through the Student Union's Meeting and Conference Services or the Registrar's Classroom Reservations.
- To reserve space in the Student Union, most lawns in the academic core area of campus, student group tailgate space, and tabling near Chi-O clock or the Classroom Building (CLB) area stop by 179 Student Union or visit meetings.okstate.edu and click **Reserve a Space**.
 - Login with your **SHORT User Id** and OKEY password
- For student organizations non-profit organizational meetings: General University GU classrooms can be requested by the top four officers (Pres., VP, Sec., Treas.) of an official student organization listed on [CampusLink](#).
- If you do not qualify to schedule a GU room based on the criteria above, there are several other excellent [meeting resources](#) in the Student Union.
- To reserve a GU room, submit your request by completing the [GU Room Request Form](#) and submit it via email to gurooms@okstate.edu.
- **To reserve a GU classroom during pre-finals or finals week, submit a completed [Pre-Finals/Finals Week Form](#) via email to gurooms@okstate.edu, but **please note that these requests are rarely approved.***

Helpful links and contact information

- [Student organization fair](#) Usually held in August and January.
- [CampusLink User Guide](#)
- Student Organization accounting signature card - <https://campuslink.okstate.edu/> (Available on CampusLink – **required after each election or when officers or advisors change**)
- [Training sessions](#) Held monthly during the academic year, see CampusLink's events page for dates and times.
- [Treasurer's training and manual](#)

- [Student organization resources](#) or <https://lcl.okstate.edu/resources-student-organizations.html>
 - **Leadership & Campus Life**
211 Student Union
(405) 744-5488
campuslife@okstate.edu