



# Student Organization Advisor Handbook



GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

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# Letter to the Advisor

*Dear Faculty or Staff Member,*

Thank you for supporting Student Life's mission for students to "[Become More](#)" by serving as an advisor for a student organization. Without your continued support and encouragement, GVSU would not be able to support the more than 400 student organizations and countless opportunities they create for the student body. Advisors are at the forefront of learning as they guide student leaders through the daily decisions they make on behalf of their organizations. Your involvement in the organization provides learning experiences that are transferable to situations beyond college.

Involvement in student organizations allows students to become more than just a student and develop leadership and organizational development skills. This involvement also compliments their educational objectives with important co-curricular activities by exercising basic freedoms, and learning about human behavior. In support of these objectives, it is important that persons with experience in organizations be available to assist students in their organizational endeavors. While the range of activities or student organizations is diverse, the assistance advisors can give organizations by being responsive to students' questions on procedural matters, university policies, financial matters, and so on, can help advance the basic reasons for recognizing student organizations at Grand Valley.

This handbook should serve as a guide to many of the questions you may encounter as an advisor. If you have further questions regarding your role as an advisor, please contact the Student Organization Staff Assistant at [RSO@gvsu.edu](mailto:RSO@gvsu.edu) or (616) 331-2345. The Office of Student Life also offers Drop-In Advising on Monday thru Friday from 1-4 p.m. during the academic year.

We hope your experience as an advisor is rewarding, and our office is here for any assistance you may need.

Sincerely,

*Assistant Director of Student Organizations*



# RSO

## Relationship Statement

Grand Valley State University acknowledges the important value student organizations have in the educational process. Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) are inherently linked to the University while playing an integral role in developing student leadership and providing a quality campus environment. It is the responsibility of each student organization to adhere to the mission of the university and its supporting values. An organization's goals, objectives, and activities must not deviate from established University policies or regulations. Participation in any given RSO by a student is voluntary, and any risk associated with participation is assumed by the student alone. Grand Valley State University does not assume liability for a RSO's financial transactions, group activities, or the actions of an individual or its group members. Decisions may be made by a student organization without any authorization of appropriate university staff.

Because of their importance, student organizations are granted special privileges and benefits. These privileges include use of university facilities and services, the privilege of participating in certain university-sponsored student activities, and access to the established student governance funding process. In order to exercise the privileges accorded to RSOs, a student organization must register with and be recognized by the Office of Student Life through the Student Organization Review Board (SORB). The provision of University benefits to RSOs should not be misinterpreted as meaning RSO's activities are controlled by the University. The Office of Student Life reserves the right to grant, suspend, or deny any Registered Student Organization status at any time.

**"Choosing to advise a student organization is a rewarding and exciting experience that allows you to educate and mentor passionate students while making a positive impact on the GVSU and surrounding communities."**

# Defining Your



# Position

## **GVSU requirements and policies that every advisor must adhere to.**

Advisors must be full-time faculty, staff, or graduate students who are invested in the purpose of the organization and officially listed on OrgSync. The role of an advisor to a student organization is one of consultation and resource. Therefore, with the assumption and completion of the duties and obligations outlined herein, an advisor shall not be held accountable for the individual conduct of the organization's members and their activities.

Advisors are responsible for familiarizing themselves and the organization's members with all university procedures and policies pertaining to the organization's activity. This includes, but is not limited to: The GVSU Student Code, RSO Handbook, Event Services Policies and Procedures, Office of Student Life Policies and Procedures, Fraternity and Sorority Manual, and the Club Sport's Policies and Procedures.

### **Advisors are expected to adhere to the following policies and procedures:**

- Meet with student officers at the beginning of each term to discuss their role and involvement within the organization.
- Periodically attend meetings and activities as needed by the organization.
- Assist the members in balancing their extra-curricular activities.
- Intervene in high-risk situations and challenge student decision-making when necessary.
- Participate in the mandatory reporting of crimes for statistical and timely warning requirements of the Clery Campus Security Act.
- Assist with forming/revising the organization's constitution and bylaws.
- All off-campus accounts must have a minimum of two signature authorities on their accounts. It is strongly suggested that the advisor be one of these signature authorities and that they audit off-campus accounts on a regular basis and before new executive boards begin their duties.
- Organizations such as club sports and fraternities and sororities have special needs and considerations. Advisors should become familiar with these additional policies.
- During Student Senate funded travel-related activities, participants are required to complete the Travel Release Statement. Advisors should make sure all participants review the risk of the off-campus activity and complete the form. All travel [forms](#) are available on OrgSync.

**Advisors are prohibited from the following activities:**

- Participating in hazing of any kind.
- Purchasing alcohol for the organization or members.
- Signing ANY contracts on behalf of Grand Valley State University.
- Pledging financial backing for the debts of the student organization; for example, using personal funds to reserve a ballroom for a formal.
- Enabling or encourage students to break any GVSU Student Code, local, state, or federal laws.
- Releasing any student's Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protected information regarding student educational records or personally identifiable information.
- Permitting or participating in any discrimination regarding student organization participation.



ies • Regulations  
stitutions • Bylaws  
gement • Mediation  
nc • Travel Release

Reporting • Policies

Meetings • Constitution

Costs • Risk Management



# Being a **Successful** Advisor

As an advisor to a student organization, it is important to define your role and advising style so that you may work effectively and make the most impact.

## A successful advisor:

- Allows the organization to succeed and/or fail, within reason
- Knows their limits and the limits of the organization
- Is visible by attending events and meetings
- Is a resource for information regarding campus policies, procedures, and programming
- Helps members stay accountable
- Acts as a liaison between student organizations and the university
- Advocates on behalf of the student organization
- Acts as a mentor and offers advice and suggestions
- Is available to support officers

# DO

# DON'T

## A successful advisor shouldn't:

- Take ownership of the organization or the responsibilities of officers
- Assume the organization is running smoothly
- Dominate the organization
- Only serve as a signature

Every student organization provides a unique experience for our student body. For this reason, each organization may have varying expectations on their advisor and what a successful relationship could look like. To establish a successful relationship, we highly recommend you complete the “Advisor Expectation Checklist” found on the Student Organization Support page on OrgSync with your Executive Board at the beginning of each new term.

# Proper Reporting

The following section outlines proper reporting techniques.

As a student organization advisor, your members may feel safe enough to approach you as a confidant or a mentor. Unfortunately, this may include students who have experienced stalking, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, incidents of violence, or illegal activities. These situations can often be difficult to respond to. Stalking, sexual assault, and dating and domestic violence can happen to anyone. Your supportive response to someone sharing this information is paramount.

Student organization advisors are Campus Security Authorities (or CSAs) and are mandated reporters at GVSU. Advisors are required by federal law to report incidents involving sexual assault / harassment incidents and any violent / illegal activities. Advisors are required to complete a training on reporting, which is found in the annual OrgSync renewal training form. As a CSA, you should notify any student who begins to divulge information to you that you may be required to report the information. You are required to report regardless of the incident location (on or off campus) or your opinion of the severity of the incident.

Your role is to collect any data the student feels comfortable sharing and report what you know on the reporting form; not to investigate the incident. For more information on CSA and Title IX incidents that require reporting, or to file either one of these reports, please [click here](#).

## What to expect when filing a report:

**Step 1:** Notify the student that you need to report the incident.

**Step 2:** Refer the student to appropriate resources on campus (see page 9 for a list).

**Step 3:** Submit a detailed report.

**Step 4:** Expect a call from either the Title IX Coordinator and / or the Grand Valley Police Department within 24 hours of filing a report.

**Step 5:** Be prepared for potential follow-up contact from authorities regarding the incident.

# Additional Advisor Resources

The Office of Student Life has many additional resources to help you and your organization succeed.

## **Drop-In Advising**

Stop in to our office, KC 1110, between 1 and 4 p.m. M-F to ask us any questions you have.

## **Common Challenges & Questions**

This provides information on funding, risk management, managing student organizations, and event planning.

## **Student Organization Support (SOS) OrgSync Page**

This resource includes FAQs, funding guidelines, “To Do” lists, and an expectation checklist to review with your student organization!

## **Student Life Website**

This website has events coordinated by Student Life and ways for students to get involved.

## **Event Services**

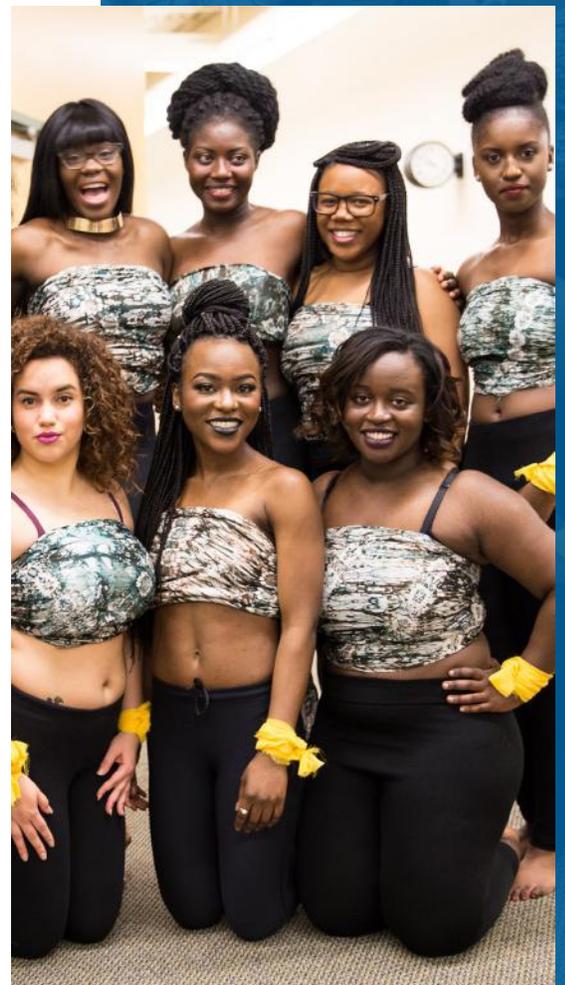
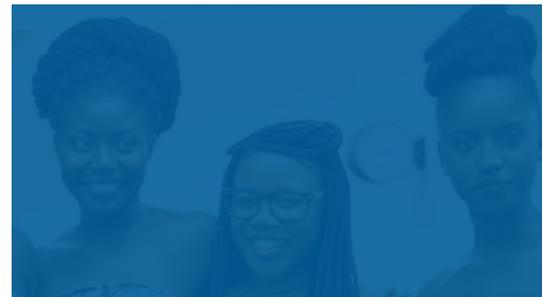
Visit this website for information regarding room reservations and events.

## **Student Organization Website**

Visit this website to see RSO policies, procedures, misconduct process, and more.

## **Student Organization Review Board (SORB)**

Visit this link for information regarding the governing body of student organizations.



For More

# Information

This section contains valuable resources you may need for your students.

## **Grand Valley State University Police Department (GVPD)**

Responds to and investigates incidents on the Allendale Campus, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

1011 Service Building

Emergency: 911

Nonemergency: (616) 331-3255

## **Ottawa County Sheriff's Office**

Responds to and investigates incidents in Ottawa County

Nonemergency: (800) 249-0911

## **Grand Rapids Police Department**

Responds to and investigates incidents in the city of Grand Rapids, including the Robert C. Pew Grand Rapids Campus.

Nonemergency: (616) 456-3400

## **Pew Campus Security Grand Rapids**

Responds to incidents on the Pew Grand Rapids Campus

Eberhard Center on the 1st floor

Nonemergency: (616) 331-6677

## **Division of Inclusion and Equity**

Individuals who experience sexual discrimination are encouraged to file a Title IX complaint.

4035 James H. Zumberge Hall

(616) 331-9530

## **Campus Victim Advocates**

Trained campus victim advocates assist those who have been a target of relationship violence or sexual assault. The campus victim advocate provides resources independently of an individual's decision to report or not report the incident to law enforcement or the university disciplinary process.

Gayle R. Davis Center for Women and Gender Equity

1201 Russel H. Kirkhof Center

(616) 331-2748



# Contact Us

**Eric Stevens**

Assistant Director of Student Organizations  
stevenel@gvsu.edu  
(616) 331-2345

**Tyler Wayne Clark**

Graduate Assistant for Student Organizations  
clarktyl@gvsu.edu  
(616) 331-2345

**Jenna Reinhold**

Student Organization Staff Assistant  
rso@gvsu.edu  
(616) 331-2345

\*Content in this manual was adapted from various resources including “Advising Student Groups and Organizations” by Dunkel & Schuh and Central Michigan University’s Advisor Manual\*

STUDENT  
ORGANIZATION  
DEVELOPMENT