

Assisting with Officer Transition

One of the most important functions of an advisor is to assist in the transition from one set of student organization officers to the next. As the stability of the student organization, the advisor has seen changes, knows what works and can help maintain continuity. Investing time in a good officer transition early on will mean less time spent throughout the year nursing new officers. The key to a successful transition is making sure new officers know their jobs before they take office. Expectations should be clearly defined. There are a number of ways to conduct the officer transition. The following examples demonstrate two commonly used methods.

The Team Effort

The team effort involves the outgoing officer board, the advisor, and the incoming officer board. This method involves a retreat or series of meetings where outgoing officers work with incoming officers on:

- Past records/notebooks for their office and updating those together.
- Previous year projects that have been completed
- Upcoming/Incomplete projects
- Challenges and setbacks
- Anything the new officers need to know to do their jobs effectively

The advisor's role may be to:

- Facilitate discussion and be a sounding board for ideas.
- Organize and provide the structure of a retreat.
- Offer suggestions on various questions.
- Refrain from telling new officers what they should do.
- Fill in the blanks. If an outgoing officer doesn't know how something was done, or doesn't have records to pass on to the new officer, you can help that officer by providing the information he or she doesn't have. The advisor's role in this process is to provide historical background when needed, help keep goals specific, attainable and measurable and provide advice on policies and procedures.

One-On-One Advisor Training with Officers

While it is ideal to have the outgoing officer team assist in training the incoming officers, often it is left up to the advisor to educate the incoming officers. In this case, there should be a joint meeting of the new officers. The advisor should then meet individually with each officer; examine the notebook of the previous officer (or create a new one). The notebook should include items such as forms the officer may need to use; copies of previous meeting agendas; and a copy of the student organization's constitution and bylaws.

In this meeting, the advisor and officers should talk about what the officers hope to accomplish in the forthcoming year. Assess the officer's role in the student organization. What are the expectations of each position? What are the student's expectations of the position and his/her goals?