

# Advising an MHC Student Organization

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# Student Organizations

MHC's 130+ Student organizations and groups contribute powerfully to the vibrant co-curricular life of Mount Holyoke College and represent an incredible array of community interests.



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## Student Involvement

The Office of Student Involvement works in with the Student Government Association (SGA) to support the efforts of our student organizations. SGA provides much of the funding and political representation for these groups, and Student Involvement recognizes and advises student organizations, club sports, SGA and its committees, and the Class Boards. The SGA Business Office, which handles all student group and residential life staff banking transactions, is also managed by a Student Involvement staff member.

## Support

Questions about your role or want further support? Contact the Office of Student Involvement at [student-involvement@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:student-involvement@mtholyoke.edu) or call (413) 538-2478.

## Contacts

Director of Student Involvement  
[Laura Sattler](#)

Associate Director of Student Involvement  
[Jaime DeCaro](#)

Associate Director of Orientation & Transition Programs  
[Tasia Clemons](#)

Technical & Event Production Manager  
[Tim Dietrick](#)

Coordinator of Student Involvement & Events  
[Justin Terlisner](#)

SGA Student Business Office Coordinator  
[Kimberly Lavoie](#)

# ADVISOR: One who advises another, especially officially or professionally: consultant, counselor, mentor.



Faculty and staff advisors play an important role in the success of the student organization by serving as mentors and advocates who offer guidance and support, acting in the best interest of the students, and offering continuity from one year to the next.

As a resource for the whole group – and especially the group leaders – the advisor can support experiences that encourage student development. Watching and listening, being available to assist when asked, acting as a sounding board, consultant, mentor, and enthusiast: the role of an advisor can be dynamic and rewarding.

## Negotiating Expectations

Each advisor will bring a unique perspective to their student organization, and their role is negotiable. We recommend that advisors have a conversation with the students in the organization to decide:

- How the advisor supports the group.
- How much input the advisor provides.
- How involved / active the advisor is in meetings and events.
- How and how frequently the student groups correspond with the advisor
- How the student group involves the advisor in group decision-making.

As groups vary in their expectations and needs, it is important that you, as an advisor, develop an understanding with the organization about the nature of your involvement. The advisor and group should agree on a set of expectations. Here are some questions you should ask to help you define your role as an advisor.

- How much involvement is expected or needed from me?
- How experienced are the student leaders?
- What are the needs of the organization?
- How do my skills match the needs of the organization?
- What are some of the ways that I can be more helpful to the group?
- Are there areas of the organization that are "hands off" to me as the advisor?

# **Advisor Roles**

## **Respect the group's autonomy**

Students learn by experimenting. Instead of stepping in to give direction or to fix problems, wait to see if the students figure out the issues themselves. What you see may surprise you. And of course, as an advisor, you are there if the students ask for your help.

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## **Be reliable**

Be responsive when group leaders and members seek your advice. Come to an agreement about how and how often you will communicate to the group so you can stay informed about their plans and aspirations; ask helpful questions so you understand the processes and group dynamics. This way when students seek your advice, you'll be prepared to give it -- or better yet, to guide their own understanding. Attend events when you can.

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## **Be supportive**

Get to know group members as well as group leaders, so you can be an advisor for the whole group. Serve as a sounding board, counselor, motivator, and resource person. Above all, share your enthusiasm for the group and the individual students. Let them know when they're doing a great job, and encourage them when they're struggling.

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## **Know how to access resources and information**

Take a look through the sections below so you know where to find resources and support before they're needed. And if you'd like something more, ask the helpful staff at the Office of Student Involvement.

**Embark**



[Quick Guide for Advisors](#)

[Embark Resources Site](#)

[Student Involvement Site](#)

# **Resources**

[RSO Handbook](#)

[Funding](#)

[Annual Recognition](#)

[Event Planning](#)

[Student Group Travel](#)

[Political Activities Policy](#)

[Marketing & Promotion](#) [Creating a New Student Organization](#)



# Advisor Agreement

Mount Holyoke College requires that all recognized student organizations have an advisor. An advisor must be a full- or part-time employee of Mount Holyoke College, either as a faculty or staff member. Student organizations are run and managed by students themselves, but advisors can play a key role in offering guidance and advice.

By accepting the advisor role, advisors agree to:

- Act in the best interest of the student organization leaders and its members
- Offer guidance to the student organization to make sure the group is following Student Involvement and College procedures and policies, in accordance with the RSO Handbook and Student Handbook
- Review the advisor handbook and resource page
- Maintaining regular contact with the officers
- Being familiar with the activities of the group

In turn, the organization should:

- Make efforts to consult with the advisor
- Consistently update advisor with organizational activities
- Invite the advisor to group meetings and events

Together, the President and the Advisor:

- Have reviewed the organization's constitution
- Have set general expectations for the advisor and student relationship

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The signatures on this form indicate that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of advisor) has agreed to serve as advisor for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organization) for the \_\_\_\_\_ academic school year. The signatures also verify that members of both parties have read the above information regarding the role of the student group advisor and accept the responsibilities entailed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Advisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
\_\_\_\_\_ Advisor Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization President Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
\_\_\_\_\_ Organization President Print Name

Thank you for considering serving as an advisor to a student organization. Please contact the Director or Associate Director of Student Involvement with any club questions. Current organizations should send this signed form to [student-involvement@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:student-involvement@mtholyoke.edu). Groups that are applying to become a student organization should include this signed form in their application materials.