Since its inception, Pacific has recognized the significant learning that takes place outside the formal classroom. In addition to the knowledge gained in class sessions, the ability to communicate well, to develop, promote, implement, and evaluate ideas and activities, and to initiate desirable change are necessities for each educated person. Pacific graduates are expected to function effectively in teams, both as leaders and as members. Clubs and organizations offer the laboratory experiences to develop these skills.

The out-of-the-classroom experience can and does play a crucial part in student development. There are many facets of education and development that crystallize within the co-curriculum helping students become competent, mature individuals, and fully responsible citizens. This area deserves critical attention as an area where students are invited and challenged to live out what they are learning in the classroom.

Each year, over 200 faculty and staff volunteer to serve as advisors for these clubs and organizations. Each is a valuable partner in the personal development of the students involved. While providing a formal link with University administration in interpreting State laws and University policy, their most important contribution is in advising about organizational effectiveness, finances, communication, interpersonal effectiveness, and personal growth. It is through the aid of the advisors that individual students develop the qualities of effective leadership that are commensurate with their abilities.

This section has been assembled by the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement to answer the questions most commonly asked by students, faculty, and staff when considering serving as an advisor. We hope this answers your questions, if not, please call the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement at (209) 946-2174.

An advisor’s primary responsibility is to make a strong commitment to the group and to aid in the personal growth of the individuals in that group. Above all, advisors should be available to students on an individual and group basis, maintaining an open and honest relationship with the members. It is expected that an advisor will attend as many of the group’s meetings and other functions as possible.

When the advisor cannot attend a meeting, a sincere effort to determine what occurred should be made. (There is a concomitant responsibility for the students to take into consideration the advisor’s schedule when planning activities.) Groups which schedule a full slate of activities may want to consider having more than one advisor to limit the load on any one.

Advisors are also expected to interpret various University policies, rules, and regulations to assist the students in their interactions with Pacific. Interpretation of various state and system policies and laws is also helpful and expected. However, the role of an advisor is not one of “police officer.” As adults, club or organization officers are responsible for their own actions. If an advisor has advised club officers of appropriate parameters and the students choose to act contrary to that advice, the advisor should not hesitate to consult the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement.

Throughout this process the advisor serves as an authorized signature for the appropriate financial expenditures of the club. Finally, the annual rechartering packets for clubs and organizations are sometimes sent in care of the advisors, to be passed on to club officers.
Advisor Eligibility

Any full-time employee of the University or one of its recognized auxiliaries who is at least 21 years old and not on leave of absence during any part of the year is eligible. Students nominate an advisor, who, through the appropriate dean or director, is considered by the Director of the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement. The Director appoints the advisors, whose term of office is one year, with options for unlimited renewal.

Advisor’s Liability

Entering into an agreement to serve as an advisor should not be taken lightly, as advisors share some liability for the actions of the group. However, a well-informed advisor who is visibly involved with the group, should have no undue concern for possible legal action.

By completing the advisor appointment process, a faculty or staff member is provided a record that she or he is fulfilling a university-related duty. Those advisors who fulfill that duty in a non-negligent manner are indemnified by the State of California for their actions. That is, if legal action is taken against a group and its advisor, the Attorney General of the State of California will defend the advisor at no cost to the advisor and any financial judgment (except punitive damages) will be paid by the State.

However, an advisor who is familiar with appropriate laws, policies, and procedures and is aware of the planned activities of the group, ensuring that they fall within the limits of appropriate laws, policies, and procedures is clearly acting in a non-negligent manner and no punitive damages should be assessed.

If the advisor informs the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement when the club fails to heed his or her advice regarding activities not in accordance with policy, she or he is even more
protected. To educate advisors on liability issues, the Office of Student Leadership & Involvement offers an informative workshop each year. It is required that advisors attend this workshop at least once every two years.

RESOURCES

Resources Available to Advisors

The University recognizes the commitment of time and effort made by faculty and staff who choose to serve as advisors and provides an assortment of resources for those advisors. The Office of Student Leadership & Involvement and its staff are available for consultation. The Leadership & Involvement Office staff has years of experience in organizational management, co-curricular activities, and club management. They are knowledgeable about current legal activity involving clubs and organizations and about other resources available to advisors and their organizations.

The staff routinely conduct workshops open to all students and advisors involved with clubs and organizations. An annual leadership conference is held for student leaders. The Leadership & Involvement Office maintains a Leadership Library of books and magazines as well as audio and video tapes dealing with organizational development and interpersonal relations. The Office also keeps an archives of each club’s charters, names of presidents and advisors, and other club information for current as well as past years.

The officers of the group should assist the advisor by providing:

- Names, addresses, phone numbers, and schedules of all officers
- Meeting schedules (including agendas) in advance of the meetings
- Help in finding a substitute advisor when the primary one is unavailable
- The courtesy of being asked well in advance of an activity at which the advisor is expected to participate.