



**Student Clubs and
Organizations
Faculty/Staff Advisor
Manual**

**Wesleyan University
Office of Student Involvement**

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Welcome to Student Involvement

Dear Faculty or Staff Member,

We would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your assistance and service as an advisor to a student club or organization. We have more than 200 active groups on campus. At Wesleyan University, education goes beyond the classroom. It includes involvement in political, social, and cultural organizations that encourage individual creativity and develops leadership skills. The Office of Student Involvement (OSI) is committed to supporting students in personal and organizational development and growth.

This handbook is designed to help assist and guide you through your role as an advisor. If you have any questions, visit the Student Involvement website at www.wesleyan.edu/studentinvolvement or email the Office of Student Involvement at involvement@wesleyan.edu.

Role of Student Involvement

The Office of Student Involvement (OSI) provides advice, guidance and acts as a resource for students and student organizations. Our goal is to promote collaborative relationships between student group leaders, the campus community, and their affiliates by providing valuable information about the university's financial policies and administrative procedures that affect their extracurricular activities. We help student organizers to successfully plan and execute social, cultural, intellectual, political, and recreational programs. The office enhances out-of-classroom experiences that promote personal development and leadership training.

The purpose of the Student Involvement Program is to empower Wesleyan students to increase their impact, not only as leaders but ultimately, as citizens of the world. By offering unique opportunities for leadership education, we strive to foster personal and group development while also enabling students to share this knowledge with their peers.

Student leaders can make use of these resources for their own personal development and bring activities and programs to their organizations to help foster relationships, responsibility, and growth in our communities.

The Role of an Advisor

The role of an advisor can differ in any organization based on several key elements, including individual and group expectations, organizational needs, and personal interests. Many advisors play very active roles by attending meetings, assisting in program planning, and meeting with student officers on a regular basis, while other advisors have a more distant relationship with an organization. There is no "correct" advising style; the main requirement is to be aware of the expectations and needs of each organization.

At least once a semester, an advisor should meet with the student group officers to discuss what the needs and expectations are for the advisor and what the advisor will expect to experience in their role. Discussing expectations from both sides will not only set a precedent of clear communication but will also assure the advisor is capable of committing to this role.

It is important as a Wesleyan University faculty or staff member to be aware of your role as an advisor. As their advisor, you are an important resource and role model for our students, but you should not be acting as the leadership of that organization.

You are not responsible for the final decisions or actions taken by the group you advise.

Expectations of an Advisor

- Be familiar with the structure of the group, its history, and how it operates.
- Be aware of the expectations the group has for you and share your expectations of the group.
- Be knowledgeable on University and WSA policies and procedures.
- Encourage the group to take an active role in goal setting.
- Attend at least one of the group's general and executive meetings.
- Attend at least one of the group's events or activities.
- Be available and approachable to all members. Treat all members with courtesy and respect.
- Encourage teamwork, unity, cooperation, and communication within the group.
- Be positive and tactful with the group but maintain realism. Be straightforward.
- Offer praise and recognition where you think it is deserved.
- Offer your opinion if you feel the group is moving in the wrong direction or is about to make a poor decision. Ensure your criticism is constructive.
- Empower members to take ownership for their own group.
- Assist members in learning about themselves, group dynamics and processes.
- Be impartial and do not take sides between members.

Adapted from the *Office of Student Activities at Worcester Polytechnic Institute*.

Questions You May Want to Ask the Group

- How much involvement is expected or needed?
- How often does the group meet? When?
- How many major activities does the group plan per semester?
- How experienced are the student leaders?
- How do your skills match the needs of the group?
- What are some of the problem areas that your group specifically needs assistance? Ask for specific examples.
- What are some of the ways an advisor can be more helpful to the group?
- Will an advisor be a silent observer at meetings or an active participant?
- Should you interrupt during meetings if you think the group is getting off track? How? When?
- If things get unruly, should you interrupt or remain silent?
- Is an advisor expected to give feedback? How? When?
- Are there areas of the group that are “hands off” to an advisor?

Adapted from *Office of Student Activities at Smith College*.

Benefits of being an Advisor

- It provides an opportunity to work with and interact with students outside the classroom. There is a great deal of satisfaction derived from mentoring students as they develop into professionals.
- Sharing your own knowledge with students, faculty, and staff bridges the gap between practical and academic work. Serving as an advisor creates networking opportunities to connect students' intellectual and practical lives.
- Observe the transformation of diverse populations when students come together and work toward common goals while both individual students and the group itself grow.
- Engage in your own personal interests by working with a group that reflects what is important and valued by you.

Skills to Help Become a Successful Advisor

As an advisor you wear many hats, one of which is a teacher. As a teacher, you can help students develop skills that will make the group more effective and successful, and give those students skills that will last a lifetime.

Dr. Kathleen Allen (A Higher Education Consultant and former Vice President of Student Development at the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota) outlined eleven skills that can be taught to students through advising. Divided into three categories, accomplishing tasks, improving relationships, and self-improvement, her outline provides a lesson plan for advisors to utilize in their efforts toward student skill development.

SKILLS FOR ACCOMPLISHING TASKS

1. **Problem Solving:** the ability to solve problems creatively. The process includes these components: identify the real problem, assess all components of the problem, weigh what is relevant, pursue alternatives, and identify a solution. Example: developing a policy.
2. **Planning and Organization:** the ability to set goals and coordinate a variety of human and material resources to accomplish these goals. Example: producing a specific event.
3. **Delegating:** the ability to identify or develop a task, and then share the responsibility, authority, resources, and information needed to accomplish it. Example: committee leader assigning a member a task.
4. **Decision-making:** the ability to evaluate existing information and be willing and confident enough to make a choice of what should be done. Example: choosing a speaker for a lecture.
5. **Financial Management:** the ability to plan, develop and implement a budget, including cost and expense estimates, budget implementation, and budget evaluation. Example: implementing a budget for each event.

SKILLS FOR IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS

6. **Persuasion:** the ability to identify our own opinions and use logic and communication to change the opinions of others. Example: choosing between two programs.
7. **Relationship Building:** the process of creating, developing, and maintaining connections between groups or individuals. Example: scheduling frequent casual meetings with organization members.
8. **Adaptability:** the ability to cope with a variety of situations and kinds of people. Example: working with people with different cultural backgrounds or values.

SKILLS FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

9. **Stress Tolerance:** the ability to cope with taxing situations, while getting the job done, and having a satisfying life. Example: performing leadership responsibilities while anxious about a personal relationship.
10. **Initiative:** the ability to take responsibility for originating new projects, ability to think and act without being urged, the ability to develop new ideas or methods. Example: initiating a recruitment campaign for new members.
11. **Risk-taking:** the willingness to try something new or make a decision without the assurance of success or improvement. Example: planning a program that has not been attempted before.

Planning Events

The following is information provided to students who are planning an event. Note: It is not the advisor's responsibility to perform these tasks; this section is to act as a guide.

The Office of Student Involvement (OSI) is the primary resource when planning a student event. Everything from reserving your space to contracting the performer may be handled through our office. If, however, you nor the student group has never planned an event on campus before, we encourage you to set up an appointment with an OSI team member via email involvement@wesleyan.edu. Event planning can be a daunting task and our office is here to help guide you through it.

The following are some general guidelines to use when planning an event on campus for the first time. As long as the student group plans well in advance and follows these steps, event planning at Wes can be an easy, fun, and exciting experience.

1. What type of event are you planning?
2. How long in advance should you start planning for your event?
3. How many people do you think will attend?
4. What space is ideal for your event?
5. How much will your event cost?
6. Where can you get the funding for your event?
7. What are some other resources for the planning process?

Type of Event

The type of event you are having will help determine what else you will need to make the program a success. It is important to have a clear vision of what you would like your event to be and who will need to be involved. The most common types of events planned by student groups on campus are speakers, forums, bands, and parties. This does not mean, however, that you can't plan something unique that has never been done before. You simply need to have a good idea of what you're interested in before you meet with anyone to begin planning.

Planning Time

The amount of time you need to plan your event depends on multiple factors listed below. In any case, it is always better to plan far in advance than try to fit something in at the last minute.

- **Venue availability** - Every day on campus, there are dozens of events and meetings happening. Planning your event in advance will give you more flexibility when it comes to choosing your venue. OSI requires that spaces be reserved at least 14 business days in advance of the event. Some venues, however, including Memorial Chapel and the Center for the Arts, require a minimum of 3 weeks in advance to book the space.
- **Furniture/AV Equipment** - In order to request tables, chairs, speakers, etc. for your event, a minimum of 5 business days prior to your event is required.

- **Contracts** - Contracts must be processed 6-8 weeks prior to your event with an OSI staff member. For more information about the contract process, [visit the website](#).
- **Funding Requests** - The SBC requires that requests for funding be done at least two weeks in advance of your event. The OSI Student Program Fund has a deadline of 5 business before your event. Other funds on campus will have varying deadlines, so be sure to pay attention to each one closely.
- **Public Safety** - If you are planning an event where Public Safety will need to be present, the request must be in at least 3 weeks in advance.

Anticipated Attendance

Predicting attendance for your event can be difficult without knowing exactly what else will be happening at that time and how interested people will be in attending your program.

However, having a general sense of these numbers will help you to choose a venue that will suit your event. This information will also help you determine what time of year or time of day your event will be most successful and if your event is cost effective (if you can only anticipate 10 people coming to your event and it is costing you thousands of dollars, you may want to think of ways to make it more widely accessible).

Venue Choice

The majority of room reservations for student events and meetings are handled through the Office of Student Involvement. You can reference the [Reserving Space section of our website](#) to find out more about this process. When considering which space would be best for your event, there are multiple things to think about:

- **Room Capacity** - Each room on campus has a specific capacity. Additional furniture in any space will lower its capacity significantly so keep this in mind when thinking about appropriate venues for your program. Information about capacities for campus spaces is available in room request in your portfolio or on WesNest.
- **Furniture/A/V** - Most spaces on campus will have existing furniture and A/V set-ups that you can work with. If, however, you would like additional furniture or equipment brought in for your event, there may be additional costs. These costs are typically covered by the WSA for recognized student groups.
- **Proximity** - The type of event you are interested in hosting will certainly play a role in the location you choose for your event. Keep in mind how loud your event might be, how much set-up will be needed, where your audience will be coming from on campus, and what atmosphere you are interested in creating for your program.

Event Cost

With the exception of the Daniel Family Commons and Beckham Hall, there are no spaces on campus that have a reservation fee. Costs are incurred, however, through additional services such as custodial clean-up, furniture set-up, audio/visual set-up, staffing, and electrical assistance. Typically, the WSA will cover the costs for recognized WSA student groups.

Funding Options

The following are the available sources of funding on campus for your events. Keep these in mind as you are planning your programs. Remember that each funding source has different timelines and requirements as well as possible allocation amounts.

Student Budget Committee (SBC)

Sponsored by the Wesleyan Student Assembly

The SBC oversees the allocation of funds for all student groups officially recognized by the Community Committee (CoCo) and serves as a resource to all student organizations regarding the allocation process and other funding sources on campus.

OSI Programming Fund

Sponsored by the Office of Student Involvement

The OSI Programming Fund was created to financially support the programming efforts of student groups by supplementing budgets that might not have been fully provided by the Wesleyan Student Assembly's Student Budget Committee, such as food for events and small program enhancements.

Healthful Words Fund

Sponsored by the Office of Health Education/WesWELL

The HWF was developed to support the planning and implementation of student-initiated educational events which address health issues relevant to the Wesleyan population. The HWF provides mini-grants of up to \$150 for individuals or individual student groups or up to \$350 to multiple groups who collaborate on a project.

Student Group Officer Roles

Many, if not all, groups have a constitution or set of bylaws which guide the role and expectations of members of the group. Usually, it takes an entire group effort to maintain and run programs, however, there are some specific yet basic responsibilities of specific officers in each group. The following is an example of the role of the advisor and elected officers. Each officer should understand their role in order to ensure that all functions of the group are carried out.

Officer roles are commonly divided as indicated below, but each group should clarify the roles within their own group.

The following are positions that are required for all formally recognized student groups:

Primary Contact:

- Facilitates the registration process for the group
- Receives communication from the WSA and the university
- Responsible for ensuring the student group is aware of important deadlines and information
- Maintains and updates information on WesNest, including roster information

Financial Manager:

- Facilitates the financial process for the group
- Attends Financial Manager training
- Ensures the group understands the SBC guidelines for requesting money
- Completes SBC budget requests on behalf of the group

Event Coordinator:

- Submits events on behalf of the student group
- Ensures group is aware of the policies and procedures related to hosting events on campus

The following are positions that the organization may want to consider for their student group:

Role of the President

Some Potential Responsibilities

- Facilitates all meetings of the group
- Calls special meetings of the group
- Prepares and files any reports required
- Appoints committee chair people
- Completes annual Recognition Forms and reports changes in officers to OSI
- Represents group at official functions
- Maintains contact with organization advisor
- Maintains contact with affiliated department
- Remains fair and impartial during group decision making processes
- Votes in cases where there is a tie
- Coordinates group's elections

Role of the Vice President

Some Potential Responsibilities:

- Assume the duties of the President as needed
- Serve as an ex-officio member of standing committees
- Plans officer's orientation and organizational retreats
- Coordinates organizational recruitment efforts
- Represents group at official functions
- Remains fair and impartial during group decision making processes
- Coordinates group's elections

Role of the Secretary

Some Potential Responsibilities:

- Keeps a record of all members and activities of the group
- Keeps and distributes minutes of each meeting of the group
- Creates and distributes agendas for each meeting of the group
- Notifies all members of meetings
- Schedules all practices, classes, and other activities of the group
- Obtains appropriate facilities for group activities
- Handles all official correspondence of the group
- Represents group at official functions
- Remains fair and impartial during group decision making process
- Coordinates group's elections

Role of the Treasurer

Some Potential Responsibilities

- Keeps all financial records of the group
- Pays group's bills
- Prepares and submits financial reports to the members
- Prepares budgets for the appropriate resource
- Advises members on financial matters (i.e. vendors, ticket selling procedures)
- Coordinates fundraising efforts
- Represents group at official functions
- Remains fair and impartial during group decision making processes

Other possible positions:

- Parliamentarian
- Social Chair
- Recruitment / Retention Director
- Academic Coordinator
- Community Service Director, etc.

Please note, not all groups use these traditional roles, and some groups utilize a horizontal leadership model. As an advisor you should familiarize yourself with the group's structure to best support them and ensure they are providing a fun yet equitable experience for all members.

Membership and Recruitment

Over the course of time, membership and leadership will need to change in order to maintain the group's activity. Newcomers bring to the table new ideas, commitment, and the potential to take over leadership roles as graduating member's transition out of the group.

Each student on campus has their own reason to become a part of a student group. People join clubs or organizations for many reasons, including the desire to get involved, because they are interested in the subject matter, are looking to have fun, are trying to meet and make new friends, or are trying to develop particular skills. Group leaders must be educated about the group, know the history, and be able to provide reasons why students should join their group. Membership is an aspect of the group that continually expands no matter what time of year.

As an advisor, you should encourage the executive board to delegate tasks to new members to make them feel like they are connected and have ownership of the group. New members want to feel they have contributed to the group effort. By assigning an organizational duty, it gives them a sense of how a group works. These are the beginning steps to retaining membership and developing the future leadership of the group.

Recruitment Tips and Ideas

Below are some recruitment ideas that you can advise to the group's leadership:

- Remember that a personal contact is always better than 1000 flyers and newspapers/ advertisements. People join clubs and organizations because they like the people they find there. Nothing can replace the simple act of getting to know someone and asking them to join the group.
- Get scheduled to make a brief introduction of your group at a related residence hall meeting.
- Co-sponsor campus events so that the name gets out there more. Be sure to have information about the group at each event.
- Ask key people to give recommendations of possible members and leaders.
- Don't expect a person to come to a meeting in a room full of people they don't know. Offer to meet the student somewhere and go to the meeting together. Then, make sure you personally introduce that person to others in the group.
- Feed potential members.
- Recruit people by the issue that interests them. If there are people very interested in one issue, you can recruit them to head up a program on that issue.
- When someone has expressed an interest in getting involved to any degree in your group, immediately get them involved and give them a meaningful task to do.
- Go out of your way to make new members or potential members feel valued right away.
- Hold meetings and events in comfortable, visible, easy-to-come-to places.
- Make a list of all of the advantages of being a member. This could include public speaking opportunities, networking, or any number of other things. Use this list of advantages as your major selling points for new members.
- If appropriate, take photos at meetings and events, then upload them on WesNest for prospective members to see.
- Create a display that you can set up in a visible location.

- When working to recruit members, always try to think in terms of “what’s in it for them.”
- Have an informational meeting.
- Print up business cards for your members to carry. Be sure to have a place for members to write their own name and number, but the card should also say, “Open meetings!
- Please come!”
- Ensure your WesNest page is up to date. Make sure to include flyers, pictures, and important information for members and the public.

Adapted from *Office of Student Activities at Smith College*.

Officer Transition

At the end of each year, each group should anticipate having an officer transition period for the positions of those who will be graduating or leaving the group. An important function of an advisor is to help transition each officer’s responsibilities to the next officer. This will help maintain the continuity of the group.

In order for a successful transition, this discussion should take place early to mid-spring semester in order to establish who is leaving, run elections, and to transition the new officers. Transitioning new officers before the end of the year is extremely important to ensure that they have the resources and knowledge to successfully adapt and maintain the position held. The following are some suggestions to help ensure a successful transition.

The Team Effort

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

- Past records/"survival guide" for their records and updating those together
- Discussion topics should include:
 - Completed projects for the past year.
 - Upcoming/incomplete projects.
 - Challenges and setbacks.
 - Anything the new officers need to know to do their job effectively.
- **The advisor’s role may be to:**
 - Facilitate discussion and be a sounding board for ideas.
 - Helping to 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 does not know how something was done or does not have records to pass on to the new officer, you can help that officer by providing the information they do not have.

One-on-One Training, Advisor with Officers

It is ideal to have the outgoing officers assist in training the incoming officers; however sometimes it is left up to the advisor to educate the incoming officers. In that situation, there should be a joint meeting of the new officers followed by individual meetings held with the advisor.

- **The advisor may:**
 - Examine the records of the previous officer (or create a new one). If creating a record, include any forms the officers may need to use and copies of previous meeting agendas as well as a copy of the organization's constitution and bylaws.
 - Provide historical background.
 - Help create specific organizational goals that are attainable and measurable.
 - Provide advice on policies and procedures.
 - Help the student define their own expectations of the position and their goals.
 - Discuss the expectations of each position.

Survival Guide

Many student groups may choose to leave behind a survival guide to assist new incoming board members. This proves to be an irreplaceable resource if a group's previous board members are unavailable for a transitioning period or if a group is being resurrected. This document should be saved in WesNest so future group leaders can access it easily.

- The document may consist of:
 - A binder, folder, etc.
 - The history of the group and a guide pertaining to each particular position
 - Advisor information
 - Historical documents, and letters from former officers
 - Past and anticipated goals for the group that have and have not been completed and a timeline
- As an advisor, you too can create your own "survival guide". This guide gives you the opportunity to assist your successor in the advisory position to understand how the group has grown, while providing historical background.
 - Keep a journal of your experiences with the group
 - Include the programs that they have planned and the general responsibilities.

Liabilities and Risks

The role of the faculty/staff advisor is to assist students in navigating university processes, managing group dynamics, and assisting in maintaining group history. A faculty/staff advisor should not advise students to legal matters.

WesNest

WesNest is a web-based student group management platform. Students and student groups can use WesNest to manage their student groups, learn about upcoming events, complete financial forms, and stay connected to the University. WesNest is a great platform for advisors to learn more about what's happening on campus, as well as get resources to best support the groups they advise.

As a Wesleyan employee, you already have an account with WesNest. All you need to do to activate your account is go to: wesnest.wesleyan.edu and sign in using your Wesleyan credentials. WesNest may also be found in your WesPortal. Once your account is set up, you will be able to explore the site and learn about the 200+ student organizations on campus.

As an advisor, you will be able to view the group's management features, such as the roster, finances, events, and news. You will not be able to make changes/take action in those areas, as this is the responsibility of the students in the group. However, this will help you stay in the loop of the things that the group(s) you advise are doing. In addition, you will be able to create and maintain documents in WesNest that will help you in your role as students leave and join the group. For example, you can keep a list of annual events the group does, or information about unique group structures (i.e. shared leadership models).

Thanks!

Thank you again for taking on the role of being an advisor to our student clubs and organizations at Wesleyan! Your service in guiding our groups, helping them navigate the institution's policies and procedures, and supporting students' and groups' development is so vital for us to create inclusive communities on campus where students feel valued and belonging.

If you ever need assistance or have any questions, contact us at involvement@wesleyan.edu.