



Take Our Advice

Why full-time or co-advisors are essential

By Vincent Alex Brown, executive editor

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She makes all the difference at **Florida International University**. He helps Student Government stay focused at **Pace University, New York City Campus**. And having two really makes life better at the **University of Arkansas at Fort Smith**.

Who are they? Advisors—administrators and faculty who devote their time, energy, and experience into making SG, clubs, and fraternities shine. Having a full-time advisor is ideal, and having co-advisors is even better. Co-advisors can share the load, cover for each other, and maintain the momentum needed to make large groups function day after day, especially SG administrations that oversee multi-million dollar budgets.

At Full Throttle

“Having a full-time advisor helps,” says Vicky Owles, FIU Student Government Association’s first full-time advisor. “I live in the SGA office, so I live and breathe this all day long.” Victor Romano, former president of the Student Government Council that makes up half of SGA, agrees. “Our advisor is absolutely great...She’s really supportive of us.” With Owles’ help, FIU’s SGC was named best in the state last year by *Florida Leader* magazine.

At Pace University, SGA President Sara Shikhman says her advisor “helps the organization stay focused on its goals and allows for a constant exchange of information between the officers and advisor. Whenever [Professor Bill Offutt] isn’t in his office, he’s reachable at home and via e-mail, and his advice is always thoughtful and honest.

“He has an open door policy,” she says, “and best of all, he advises SGA pro bono. So even though being the SGA advisor is not Offutt’s main occupation, he still does a great job and is always available...He really pushes our members in the right

direction.”

A full-time advisor provides perspective to balance the continually changing student leadership of an organization. “The current advisor for the Business College Council (BCC) has been with the council for over 20 years and is the best source of history imaginable,” says Brandi Johnson, BCC president at **Colorado State University**. “Gladys Eddy remains active, and although she’s over 80 years old, she reminds us all that determination is what gets the job done. Her dedication to the College of Business and BCC enables us to be the strongest council on campus.”

But what if your group can’t afford a full-time advisor? “They can look to the faculty and staff of the university and can probably find someone with lots of great experience, willing to do it for free,” Shikhman says.

Twin Turbos

Now, just imagine if you had two advisors helping out and making sure your group succeeds. Often, one administrator or faculty member serves as an advisor with another staffer helping as co-advisor. The two share the demanding workload and give it combined brainpower to tackle its toughest challenges.

“I’ve found that having associate directors, or co-advisors, is a great benefit to an organization,” says Laura Creegan, alumnus of the **University of Central Florida’s LEAD Scholars Program**. “If one person is out of the office, the other one is usually in. It’s simply more efficient when planning events and brainstorming when two different people working together have a great deal of experience combined.”

The Student Advisory Council at UA Fort Smith has the benefit of co-advisors. Director of Student Activities Margie Moore works alongside Dean of Campus

Activities Stacey Jones as advisor and co-advisor to help make SAC a success.

“[Moore] is outgoing and fun-loving...yet she is always on the ball to get things done,” says Marie Higginbotham, SAC president. “She’s a wonderful coordinator while working with the SAC officers, listening to our ideas and suggestions. She truly cares for the students in their academic pursuits and in their personal lives.

“[Jones] is an exact taskmaster, expecting things to be done, done right, and on time, but you could never meet a more fun-loving man,” she says. “These two work so well together, like bread and butter!”

Two Halves

Co-advisors can offer varying perspectives. “Their different responsibilities within the university allow for a broader perspective on SG issues,” says Jeff Parks, SG president and former president of Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity at **Youngstown State University** in Ohio.

However, Parks says they aren’t full-time advisors but have additional duties.

Having two part-timers may be an option, if one full-timer can’t be found. Regardless of your advisor situation, another option is looking for outside advice from time-to-time. “I’ve found that there are subjects where it may be appropriate to consult other individuals as advisors due to their expertise or abilities,” Parks says. “It’s helpful to get many different perspectives to provide balance, but it’s important to have two people that are familiar with you and your organization.”

So, get an advisor, and while you’re at it, get two, especially if your group is a growing or large organization. It can be the decisive difference between puttering through the school year and having an award-winning team. Which do you want to be a part of? **SL**

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Advisor Advantages

Full-time advisors

- Give group undivided attention
- Are available at all hours
- Direct energy at one group
- Provide consistency

Co-advisors

- Share workload
- Double the brainpower
- Bring more ideas to group
- Provide varied perspectives

Get more advice and the full story on advisors at www.studentleader.com