

Increasing Engagement through e-Learning: Impactful Fraternity/Sorority Chapter Advisor Training

Wes McCormack, OrgSync, Inc.
Lindsay Ritenbaugh, DePaul University

Students benefit substantially from being involved with student organizations. Beyond the benefits of higher retention, co-curricular learning, and a sense of community on a college campus, the student organization advisor also benefits. Advisors will have unique experiences depending on the organization type, personal connection, and dedication to their role. Regardless of why someone is an advisor, gaining a better understanding of the challenges and rewards of this role will help the organization, advisor, and institution (Dunkel & Schuh, 1997). Advisor roles can also vary in style, level of involvement, and required duties. Virtual communities and training can allow institutions and organizations to provide necessary skills training to target audiences and advisor cohorts to deepen both their peer and institutional connections and increase effectiveness and efficiency of organization advisors.

Virtual communities and e-Learning have been shown to lead to successful engagement in learning because they relate to the current interests in technology as well as provide a different style of teaching for individuals with different learning preferences (Warburton, 2009). The use of virtual spaces where people gather to collaborate on projects and tasks has shown to help students and their respective advisors excel despite introversion learning difficulties (Weigel, 2002). These virtual classrooms offer a new style of learning without defining necessities around physical proximity or setting times which allows individuals to learn where and when they learn best. With the constant evolution and advancement of technology on college campuses, it is necessary for advisors to adapt to welcome new modalities for learning (Vest, 2002).

Likewise, virtual communities can assist in the training and support of fraternity/sorority chapter advisors. Accessible, convenient, online cohorts allow for learning, collaboration, and sharing of best practices in real time. e-Learning initiatives increase personal growth while providing greater opportunity to customize training based on needs of the organization and/or chapter advisors. These virtual workspaces are economical, measurable, and easily adaptable for commuting advisors who have limited time and access to on-campus meetings and activities.

How have you incorporated e-Learning in your advisor training experience as a fraternity/sorority professional? If you have not yet done so, it is important to start with why you need advisor training before determining how best to accomplish the task (Sinek, 2009).


Why is e-Learning necessary for advisor training?

- It allows users and administrators to define engagement in an online context.
- Administrators are able to understand the influence of technology and e-Learning on advisor/volunteer engagement.
- Administrators are able to build upon the advisor/volunteer's interest in technology.

How can this be accomplished?

- Administrators should be able to articulate how to provide beneficial advisor/volunteer training through an e-Learning platform.
- Administrators should recognize the feasibility of creating these virtual learning communities for your campus or inter/national organization.

With the recent hiring of a new professional to oversee student organization development and advisor training, the Office of Student Involvement at DePaul University delivered online training modules/webinars and in-person workshops to faculty/staff advisors. This allowed faculty/staff and chapter/alumni advisors alike to get an in-depth training experience from the luxury of their home or office computer. These monthly workshops were made available for faculty and staff through the Advisor Network at DePaul within their university's OrgSync community. Recorded sessions and downloadable files of presentations were also available to those whose schedules did not allow them to attend in-person or via the online webinar.



AND

- People
- Communication ▶
- Calendar
- Events ▶
- Files
- Forms
- Photos
- To-do Lists
- Treasury ▶
- Videos
- Website


Settings

Advisor Network at DePaul

Welcome
Feed
Profile

Add

Lindsay Ritenbaugh



Good afternoon advisors,


Below you will see the link to the Officer Transition presentation from today's scheduled workshop. Due to weather, I understand many of you were unable to make it to the Loop. Please review this presentation at your leisure. The student involvement interns will also be making this presentation available to students and we will be incorporating some of this information into training at OrgConnect on April 25.

All the best,

Lindsay

7 days ago · [Delete](#) · [Comment](#)

New Files in Presentations

	Officer Transition	2.0 MB	2/17/14 4:05 pm
---	--------------------	--------	-----------------

Similarly, inter/national headquarters across the country are recognizing the benefits of delivering identical training to hundreds of alumni advisors in a format that can be completed wherever and whenever is most convenient for each volunteer. Ensuring training is consistent no matter when and where it is completed is crucial to not only educating volunteers but also holding them accountable for the knowledge required to lead fraternities or sororities. Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women recently launched the Pi Beta Phi Online Learning Center, an online learning management system which houses sequential training courses for both collegians and alumnae. Not only do these e-Learning courses provide training on general fraternity officer knowledge but also position-specific training courses geared towards each individual advisor role. Many other fraternity/sorority life offices and inter/national headquarters across the country have also recognized the need to implement e-Learning training into their regular curriculum.

Ensuring that chapter/alumni and faculty/staff advisors are properly trained is essential to the success of each fraternity or sorority. As more and more advisors are becoming technologically savvy, providing this education at the location, time and speed most desirable for each learner is key. Whether this training is being led by the institution or inter/national headquarters, it is important to understand and provide learning using the newest methods.

References

- Dunkel, N. W. & Schuh, J. H. (1997). *Advising student groups and organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ritenbaugh, L. J. & Shukas, J. C. (2013). Book review [Review of the book *Cases on formal and informal e-Learning environments: Opportunities and practices* by H. Yang & S. Wang (Eds.)]. *Learning and Performance Quarterly*, 1(4), 38-39.
- Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Vest, M.V. (2002). Years of experience are not enough: Seasoned advisors must continually adapt. *Campus Activities Programming*, 35(2), 62-66.
- Warburton, S. (2009). Second Life in higher education: Assessing the potential for and the barriers to deploying virtual worlds in learning and teaching. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 40(3), 414-426.
- Weigel, V. B. (2002). *Deep learning for a digital age: Technology's untapped potential to enrich higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Yang, H. & Wang, S. (Eds.). 2013. *Cases on formal and informal e-Learning environments: Opportunities and practices*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.