

All Alone on the Job

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Editor's Note: This article is written so you can share with the volunteer advisors on your campus or those working with your organization.

Many would agree serving as a volunteer advisor is an abundantly rewarding experience. Many would probably also agree that serving as a volunteer advisor can be stressful. There can be a feeling that you are “all alone on the job.” I know there have been times I have felt this way in my volunteer role. One of the best improvements to my volunteer advising role I have enacted is engaging and utilizing campus-based resources and professionals. Consider the following tips and suggestions for engaging and utilizing campus-based resources and professionals:

Go surfing. You will be amazed at how much information you can typically find on a university's website. Start surfing on the institution's website to learn more about what services are provided to students to help them succeed. Typically you can find names, contact information, and a brief description of services on the institution's orientation, admissions, first year experience, and student life webpages. By using a Google Drive spreadsheet, you can create a great quick reference guide for yourself and even share access to it with the membership. This should be a living document and should be updated regularly.

Determine your needs. Once you have established what resources are available, you can start matching the resources to the needs of the chapter. If the chapter is trying to increase their overall academics but cannot seem to move passed the idea of study tables, you can encourage members to utilize services like tutoring or academic coaching by their campus' learning assistance center. Chapter retreat is approaching, and there is a need for a speaker to discuss personal wellness. Contact the institution's wellness center for suggestions. Many campus-based units offer presentations, workshops, and other resources to student organizations for a low cost, if there is a cost at all. This is great programming for the chapter; it allows the members to interact with campus professionals; and, it is cost effective.

Ask for help. Once you have an idea of what you want and who you need, it is time to make the initial connection. Just as we teach our membership the importance of being able to articulate their organization's values during recruitment, advisors need to be ready to do the same. Explain what kind of resources you are looking for and also ask for suggestions and referrals. Your campus-based fraternity/sorority life professional is a great place to start when asking for referrals to other campus resources. If you have not established a positive relationship with your campus fraternity/sorority life professional yet, this should be priority number one.

Share the wealth. Establishing partnerships with campus-based professionals is great. As an advisor, it is natural to want your chapter to have the best and quickest access to resources that will make them successful. Equally important to your chapter's success is the success of all chapters within the community. It is important for the chapter and advisor to understand that not one organization or advisor necessarily owns the access to certain campus resources or professionals. Be respectful in terms of commitments you ask of campus-based professionals and units. Be understanding that these services are for all students and not just your chapter. Sharing resources is one of the quickest ways to form great partnerships with other chapter advisors.

Say thank you...a lot. A sincere and authentic “Thank You” goes a long way. It is as simple as that.

In my experience, engaging and utilizing campus-based resources and professionals has enhanced the undergraduate’s experience. Advisors have powerful opportunities for their members to see firsthand the benefits of using campus resources. A member may make the connection that not only was the counseling center a great speaker at the chapter meeting, but it is also a place where they can go for services. Members will be able to develop a sense of knowing that these resources can assist in aiding them in reaching their fraternal, personal, and academic goals at the same time. In the end, an advisor is never “all alone on the job.” There are several professionals on each campus that are eager and willing to help our members; all we need to do as advisors is to engage and utilize them.