



National Association of College and University Residence Halls

RHA Advisor Handbook

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1. WHAT ADVISORS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE NCC

The National Communication Coordinator (NCC) is the main link between the member school and the "NACURH network" of residence hall organizations across the country. It is only through the effectiveness of the NCC that the school's residence hall organization may enjoy the benefits of NACURH and your school's regional affiliate.

There are many vital responsibilities that come with the job. NACURH is only as strong as each NCC. The whole idea behind the organization is the improvement of the college or university residential living environment, and only through the sharing of schools' programs and ideas can we accomplish this goal. The NCC is needed to share your school's uniqueness with the rest of the region and nation.

As an advisor, a strong understanding of the responsibilities of being an NCC can help you to advise them regarding the workings of the organization. Students are highly transitional-much more than advisors at times. You can help to maintain the continuity of your school within the realm of NACURH and your regional affiliate.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVISORS

Literature on faculty/staff advising suggests three major areas of responsibility for advisors. An advisor will perform certain functions within any of these three categories described below. Each provides a classification, a rationale and a validity to group advising.



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Maintenance/custodial functions include activities that help to maintain the group and minimize the difficulties it encounters.

The advisor serves as a link with the past, interprets university policies, helps the group avoid bad public relations, arbitrates inter-group difficulties and provides a validation signature when necessary. Any of these activities may call for careful consideration and a great deal of working with officers or members of the organization.

Group growth functions are those that are designed to aid the group in improving its effectiveness in operating and to help it progress toward its goals.

Activities that may fall within this category are teaching techniques of leadership, helping the officers understand the principles of organization and administration, helping the group develop self-discipline and a sense of responsibility, stimulating activities and helping the group concentrate on its goals. The advisor may introduce new objectives and help the group attain its own established goals.

Program content functions may be seen as an expansion of the group growth functions.

The advisor should assume an active role by introducing new program ideas and insisting the group do more than just maintain itself. The advisor may urge the group to develop programs with an intellectual flavor and help members exercise classroom-learned skills. A key role of the advisor is to enlarge the thinking of the group by pointing out new perspectives, providing ideas for new projects and supplying expert knowledge.

The advisor's activities may fall within any of these categories as the situation requires. There are various types of groups and the objectives differ, so consequently the functions differ. Also, because group members and officers vary from year to year, and because new circumstances and environmental factors may arise, the advisor may find that his or her approach and activities will change. Advisors should not allow their group(s) to become dependent on them and their decisions, but they should work toward becoming accepted as participants and as a significant part of the decision making process of the organization(s).

It is obvious there is a need for communication and mutual understanding. Advisors have obligations to their organizations and organizations have obligations to their sponsors. Ideally, the relationship between the advisor and the organization



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involves trust and respect. The advisor must feel he or she can depend on the organization to act in a manner that will not cause embarrassment. When issues arise, the opinions of the advisor should be sought and given proper consideration. Although the advisor is not responsible for policy making, he or she may make recommendations and should expect that these will be followed.

The advisor must recognize the organization is responsible for making decisions and is responsible for the consequences. Advisors can be held responsible and liable for the actions of student organizations during officially sponsored events and activities of the student organization. Since the value of student organizations is centered on the learning experience, an advisor must serve an educator's role. Consequently, all of the suggestions are made to remind as well as to instruct. It is important the relationship between the organization and advisor be mutually satisfactory. Each can learn from the other and there are many rewards.

3. A CHECKLIST OF OBLIGATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVISORS

When a faculty member of housing official is asked to serve as an advisor, he or she should be informed about the organization and what the organization will require.

1. The new advisor should be given an orientation relating all the activities of the organization.
2. Notices of meetings should be given to the advisor. When a designated meeting time is set for the semester or the year, every attempt should be made to set a time that is convenient for the advisor.
3. If executive meetings are established to determine agendas for upcoming meetings, the advisor should be invited to these meetings. If the advisor is unable to attend, he or she should be informed about what is to be discussed and requested to submit additional items.
4. The organization should confirm the appointment of the advisor, when applicable, and should be certain the advisor will serve before submitting his or her name as advisor. Please note that some advisors are assigned to the position by the nature of their job responsibility.
5. The officers of the organization should maintain a close relationship with the advisor and should provide opportunities for the advisor to meet as many members as possible.
6. Organizations should always invite the advisor to all events as a way of keeping the advisor informed of activities sponsored by the organization.



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- This should be done to allow the advisor to be aware of what is happening and also allow him or her to react to the proposed event or activity.
7. If situations arise that may cause problems for the organization or any member of the organization, the advisor should be informed immediately.
 8. Organizations should update the advisor with the financial condition of the organization. This is important for all organizations, but is especially important for organizations receiving funds from student service fees. The advisor should not be expected to co-sign a voucher unless he or she has evidence of the validity of the documents.
 9. Organizations should recognize that an advisor should not be committed to any type of obligation unless he or she agrees to the commitment.
 10. Minutes of the meeting, as well as other materials of the organization, should be submitted to the advisor as these materials are made available to the members.
 11. An organization should be aware that the advisor is providing services in some cases without compensation. Although advisors do not expect special recognition, they like to know their services are appreciated.
 12. An advisor candidate should agree to serve only if he or she is willing to actively participate in the work of the organization.
 13. Understanding the organization, its purpose and its goals is a primary obligation of any advisor. He or she should help the organization evaluate its purpose and goals and the program it is providing.
 14. Interest in the organization should be demonstrated by an advisor through his or her attendance at meetings and other functions.
 15. Advisors should try to develop a close working relationship with the officers and as many of the members as possible. Meeting members in social settings can help to establish better relationships.
 16. Advisors should give attention to the interactions within the group, be available for complaints from members about the group and serve as arbitrator if necessary.
 17. Advisors should inform the group if he or she is not receiving notices of meetings, minutes, etc.
 18. An advisor should be comfortable expressing his or her dissatisfaction with anything the group is doing or proposing to do. How this is done is important. In some cases, it is better to discuss concerns with officers. In other, it may be necessary to react during a meeting at the time the proposal is made. How the advisor may handle this depends on the situation and on the personality of the advisor. It is generally undesirable for the advisor to nominate and inhibit the participation of members at meetings.



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19. Of importance for advisors is accepting the opportunity to learn from the organization. He or she must recognize the individuals, resources and potential of a group are important. Helping members voice opinions and make decisions is one of the most important services he or she can render.
20. Advisors should identify the resources outside the group. He or she should be sensitive to opportunities that may help the organization become more productive and effective.
21. Advisors who have had long associations with organizations can provide continuity. In some situations advisors have been associated with groups longer than any of the members. They can help their organizations understand the history of the organization and provide a perspective that is lacking.
22. Advisors are generally older and have had more experiences that will allow them to make recommendations. Whatever skills they may possess they should make available to the group.
23. Making oneself available to counsel with officers or members of the group to help them with personal situations, as well as problems that may arise during activities of the organization is a key advisor role.
24. An advisor must provide assistance to the group but not allow the organization to become dependent on him or her.
25. Advisors should be aware of university policies, attitudes of the faculty and administration and help the organization to understand limits, restriction and avenues for achieving its objectives.
26. Advisors should accompany groups when attending meetings, conferences, conventions or any other activity where the organization is representing the university.

The preceding gives some indication of the range and amount of responsibility that is placed on the faculty/staff advisor. It is recognized that not all that is listed is required all the time. The requirements in terms of time and involvement vary for each of the items and from one organization to another. One of the larger and/or more complex organizations may require the advisor to commit much time and effort in relation to understanding the organization and helping with programs, records, procedures or involvement. Other organizations that have capable leaders, are well established and have member support may require less time.

The advisor cannot be expected to give unlimited time to advising the organization. He or she must establish priorities. Judgment is also involved in terms of whether the advisor believes that he or she is competent to advise in various situations.



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Obviously, it is better to give no advice than to give advice that may create difficulties for the organization.

4. ADVISOR QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How do you gain support for programs from administrators who don't have an understanding of what Student Development in the Residence Halls is about?

Since you are in an educational environment, it might be helpful to develop awareness programs in "student development." Usually, administrators are receptive to staff who prepare detailed proposals for a project, explaining its purpose and plan of implementation. Another technique would be to set up a meeting with the administrator to discuss his or her expectations of the department, staff and students. Find out the organizational goals. Have a round table discussion with the housing professionals at your school to discuss the importance of developmental programs and the strategy for implementation.

In the preparation of outlining the purpose of student development programs, the book *Student Services* by Delworth and Hanson may be helpful. There is a chapter on the book devoted to defining the role and meaning of student development.

2. How do you get more students involved in Residence Hall Student Government? What does Residence Hall Student Government offer then?

There are several ways to get people involved in residence hall student government. It is helpful to recruit students during the beginning of the semester. Having an activity mart during the opening of the halls is a good recruitment tool. Most of the student leaders for the fall semester or quarter are chosen during the preceding spring semester or quarter. Therefore, leaders are available to set up booths or tables recruiting students to participate in the diverse residence hall student government committees. When Resident Assistants have their first floor meeting, have residence hall student government brochures and recruitment slips available for the students to sign up for a committee. At each of the halls' orientations have an enthusiastic leader speak about "How to Get Involved." As the organization grows, more students will become involved. The best strategy is for residence hall student government members to



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voice their appreciation for the organization to other students. As a result, more will join the organization. Residence hall student government thrives on active participation of the members and the dedication of its leaders.

By participating in residence hall student government, you are able to gain in many personal benefits. Some will have the opportunity to develop leadership and people skills while others will enjoy the friendship that is cultivated through the involvement. Residence hall student government offers students the opportunity to have a voice in the residence halls.

The organization/association is a chance for residents to have fun while growing personally and improving their residence halls. Your residence hall student government can expand and grow by participating in the state, regional and national student associations.

3. We have trouble with student retention? Are there any other schools who might have written guidelines?

Several schools in [NACURH](#) have implemented programs to improve the retention of student in the halls. You may want to review the [Resource Files Index](#) for resources.

4. How do you deal with personal friends on staff who try to take advantage of you, even if they don't do it on purpose?

As a staff person, utilize several skills: administrative, interpersonal, communication, confrontation, counseling, etc. It is important for us to keep in mind our role and responsibility as an administrator. Therefore, it should be communicated to all staff the expectations and goals for the department. Share with your staff your expectations, and also find out their expectations of you. If the above doesn't help in a group setting, confront your friend and explain what he or she is doing and determine strategies to improve the employer/employee/friend relationship.

5. How do you get RAs and Residence Hall Student Government to work together?

We need to point out the importance of staff and students working together to improve residential life. Usually RAs are chosen as a result of their involvement with residence hall student government or related experiences. We try to continue the marriage of the groups by allowing RAs to get in-service credit for participating on residence hall student government committees. Also, we encourage co-sponsorship of large



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events with the hall governments and RAs. Another aspect is to have an administration that is concerned about the two groups coming together for a common cause of improving the quality of life in the halls.

6. How do you help the student realize their potential as an organization?

Just as we use role models for RAs, leadership models can be used to demonstrate an organization's potential. Showing a group how much potential they possess is not an easy task. However, encouraging participation in conferences can get a group really excited. Accomplishing small projects successfully builds confidence for the group so that larger tasks are not as overwhelming. Sometimes encouraging individual potential in your officers to be used in the organization will help the group.

7. How do you keep encouraging our student attendance at regional conference and NACURH when our delegation is never more than 10? Relating to the big schools' cheering is not easy.

When motivating students to participate in your region and at NACURH, it is important to stress to the delegation that it is the spirit of the delegation, not the size of the group. As advisors, we need to encourage our students who think the emphasis on spirit is actually on size to discuss possible changes in the award system at the conference with their NCC. One possible solution is to have two awards with the size of the delegation used to determine who competes with whom.

8. Starting out completely from scratch! 1) New Director; 2) No Hall Council because it folded last year and 3) Electing a whole new government but 90% are Freshmen. I need to a) Get them going; b) Keep them motivated and c) Keep them interested but don't overwhelm them or take up all my time in the process. HELP?

What a wonderful challenge! However, the challenge needs to be organization wide and not just a few officers and the advisor. Motivating a group is difficult but not impossible. One key to keeping everyone interested in the organization is to take time in the beginning to explain the constitution and the expectations from this document for each officer and council member. Individuals are more likely to stay involved with a group if they understand what is expected from everyone. Many times an organization makes the mistake of not to set goals and objectives for the group and officers, both short and long term. Remember to give positive and constructive feedback. Ask for input regarding your role as the advisor



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for the organization. Encourage those overwhelming projects but be realistic. For a newly organized group, setting and accomplishing small goals and then tackling the larger tasks is usually the best route to go. Plan leadership workshops for the officers. Invest time in the organization early as the advisor, and then turn some of the responsibility over to the officers.

9. How successful is hall government and/or Resident Hall Student Government Officer training at other schools, and how can I implement this kind of a program at my school?

Officer training can come in various forms. You may want a summer retreat where all Executive Board Officers come to campus for a weekend to plan the next school year. The could agenda include: goal setting, expectations of each position, parliamentary procedure, advertising techniques, team builders and finally planning specific major events for the upcoming year. It really continues the team concept for the Executive Board.

Hall Council probably is not elected by the end of the spring semester or quarter, so fall training is vital. The National Residence Hall Honorary can assist in a "Floor Rep Workshop" dealing with running meetings, responsibilities, campus resources, parliamentary procedure, etc. Take advantage of campus leadership workshops. If all else fails, you, as advisor, need to spend an evening with them -- ask RAs to serve as speakers or ask other advisors to come in.

10. If an RA and Residence Hall Student Government are planning similar fundraisers, who should have priority? Should both be allowed to the fundraiser?

Too often RAs and residence hall student government are seen as adversaries; sometimes advisors even promote this attitude. Both serve different functions but share a common goal of serving residents. Encourage the two to work together and split the profits. Combining the two groups means less work for everyone, improved understanding of RAs and residence hall student government's function and hopefully better attendance since those who support residence hall student government may not come to RA functions and vice versa, so a large audience is targeted.



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The benefits can far outweigh any disadvantages cited early on. The work can be split so each group acts independently, or a committee of both groups can work.

Each group gets equal credit, and perhaps you will spark interest in future support of activities, etc.

11. How do you acquire more support for Residence Hall Student Government and its activities from coordinators who are more concerned with day-to-day administration policies and procedures?

Each fall during training; share with Hall Directors and RAs your goal. If residence hall student government is an area of concern, then voice that general goal and, if possible, make it an expectation of yours to the staff. Educate the coordinators as to the benefits of getting involved: get to know residents outside of typical roles (coordinator deals with only "problem" residents); view it as a recruitment tool for hall council representatives, RAs, desk workers, etc.; get a feel for their building -- concerns perhaps unvoiced by their RAs -- and that their residents are really "neat" people; and finding that they (the coordinators) lose out by not taking advantage of those friendships/contacts. Also, use such techniques as personal pressure, "quilt" them into attending a function, send invitations to them via the mail or in person, or make them a "special guest" for the evening. If all else fails, require them to attend, but use this sparingly.

12. How do you deal with the egos of the student leaders when the egos need to be deflated a little?

Inflated egos are one of the toughest things with which advisors deal. You want to build them up, not destroy them, but the pros think you need to confront the "ego" problem. Our advice is that you need to convince yourself that the problem must be addressed. I've had tough, honest talks with student leaders and they've been very successful in the preparation stage. We as advisors have an obligation to give feedback to the students. Once you've decided to confront, be open and frank. Discuss the importance of the membership, talk about different approaches, that the organization does not exist for the President but vice versa, etc. The advisor obligation also has to do with preparing our leaders for "real jobs" and being a success, so those "tough" conversations are necessary. Remember to follow-up those confrontations so it is a "learning experience."



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An advisor's tip to proactively guard against the "inflated ego": set aside an hour each week with the residence hall student government President, a standing appointment. At that time recap last week's meeting -- the pros and cons to it -- and discuss upcoming events or issues. Use this time to mentor with the student leader, point out strengths and weaknesses of his or her style/approach, help the leader with problems he or she is experiencing with the group, make sure he or she is studying with the group and also make sure the student leader is studying the managing of all those roles. I've found this cuts down on daily visits and/or interruptions, plus they get undivided attention.

13. Sometimes, even with many years of experience under my belt, it gets difficult to be the group advisor and motivator with the students when they are not naturally motivated. It becomes an "I've done and seen it all" situation. How can I continue to advise effectively?

It appears we are dealing with advisor motivation versus student motivation. Tips to you and to ourselves are:

- a. Read something motivational; Zig Ziglar's *Top Performance* and Charles Garfield's *Peak Performers*.
 - b. If possible, take a mini-vacation from your advisor responsibilities -- get a co-worker to go to the student conference -- the absence could refresh you.
 - c. Perhaps ask a RA or Hall Director to co-advise the group or the special project/event so that all responsibility is not just yours.
 - d. Do something different/challenging in your other job responsibilities that will excite you, or something different with a program or event related to residence hall student government.
 - e. Remember that each year a different group of students are in the same residence hall government positions -- listen to their ideas and goals and you will notice a change; visit other campuses or talk with other advisors on your campus.
 - f. Lastly, try to regain your perspective on why we advise students -- what is our role/goal? Developing students is a worthy, important purpose, but we sometimes get caught up in low attendance, poor planning and group conflict rather than this is a learning process. If we are extremely lucky we will see results, but typically some other organization/business reaps the "seeds" we planted.
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5. TIPS ON BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL NACURH ADVISOR

1. Learn about the organization

It is very important to understand the organization's complexities as well as the different resources that NACURH offers so that you can help educate your students and your NCC on how to succeed within NACURH. It is also helpful to understand the issues surrounding the organization so that you can prepare your NCC for some of the discussions that will happen during the meetings.

2. Support your NCC

Your school will be as strong as your NCC is. Support them and encourage him/her to participate in the meetings and in the business of the region. Participating in the business aspect of the regional affiliates and of NACURH can be a very educational experience for the students involved.

3. Support NACURH within your administration

Participation of your school in NACURH and the regional affiliates can help your students grow and prosper in their years within residence life. Your school's participation in NACURH is the most prosperous when you attend all of the conferences, and when the students get a chance to experience all of the benefits of NACURH. This takes a lot of administrative support and can be the difference of a successful and a not so successful NACURH membership. You can help by supporting NACURH, and your students' involvement in the organization, to your administration.

4. Attend and make the most of the conferences

Most NACURH conferences have an advisors track built into the schedule. This is a great place to learn how to advise better, as well as to learn more about NACURH and how to be a better NACURH advisor.

5. Let the Students Lead!

This is the largest student run organization in the world. The reason it is so successful is in part because of the challenges and experience that it provides to students. It is important that you empower the students to experience the world that is NACURH-however, they need to do it on their own with your support. Armed with that, this organization will benefit your students and your school tremendously!



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6. EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NCC

You, as an NCC, are the main link between your school and the **NACURH** network of residence hall organizations across the continent. It is only through your effectiveness as a NCC that your school's residence hall organization may enjoy the benefits of **NACURH** and your region. There are many vital responsibilities that come with the job. Remember, *NACURH is only as strong as you*, the NCC, make it. The whole idea behind the organization is the improvement of the college or university residential living environment, and only through the sharing of schools' programs and ideas can we accomplish this goal. You needed to share your school's uniqueness with the rest of the region and nation. As you see, the NCC does have responsibilities, but the rewards far outweigh the duties!

1. Serve as the liaison between **NACURH**, your region and your school's residence hall organization.
2. Official representative of **NACURH** at your school.
3. Official representative of your school's residence hall organizations to **NACURH**.
4. To be knowledgeable about **NACURH**, your region and your school's organization.
5. Keep abreast of all changes in **NACURH**, your region and your school's residence hall organization.
6. Organize and submit a research or resource report on some aspect of your school's residential living environment, government or programs to the **NACURH Information Center** once per year.
7. Submit **Of The Month** nominations (in conjunction with your school's NRHH Chapter if applicable).
 - a. Award categories include:
 1. Advisor Of The Month
 2. Executive Board Member Of The Month
 3. NCC Of The Month
 4. NRHH Chapter Of The Month
 5. Program Of The Month
 6. Community Service Program
 7. Educational Program
 8. Social Program
 9. Resident Assistant Of The Month
 10. Spotlight Of The Month
 11. Student Of The Month



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8. Submit nominations for other regional or national awards and honors, when applicable.
9. Keep a notebook or file of all correspondence received and sent.
10. Communicate regularly with the [Regional Board of Directors](#) and other NCCs in your region.
11. Answer all correspondence (letters, questionnaires) promptly.
12. Keep regional and national newsletters for reference, and submit articles.
13. Share the information you receive in these newsletters with the others in your residence hall organization and housing office.
14. See that your school's residence hall organization takes advantage of all benefits and services offered by [NACURH](#) and your region.
15. Establish a [National Residence Hall Honorary](#) chapter on your campus.
16. Establish a [Student Action Team](#) chapter on you campus.
17. Request files, reports and video tapes from the [NACURH Information Center](#).
18. Utilize [NACURH](#) Corporate Sponsors and Corporate contract discounts.
19. Serve as the delegation chairperson of your school's residence hall organization during regional and national conferences.
20. Serve as the delegation chairperson, recognized spokesperson for group, official representative at business meetings of your region and [NACURH](#).
21. Attend all NCC meetings at regional and national conferences.
22. Report to your delegation about the business conducted at the meetings.
23. Responsible for all pre-conference materials, arrangements and communication.
 - a. Submit conference registration materials and fees on time.
 - b. Make sure program session forms are returned, and assist in the preparation of any sessions from your school.
 - c. Responsible for the school display, banner or other region-specific activities, if desired by your organization.
24. Responsible for making sure membership dues are paid and registration forms are taken care of at the National Conference or sent in to the [NACURH Information Center](#) by June 15 of each year.
25. Responsible for assisting in the planning of all conferences by sharing ideas with the Conference Chairperson and staff.
26. Give reports on your region and [NACURH](#) at each meeting of your school's residence hall organization.
27. Train your school's new NCC (NCC-IT). Be sure to pass your NCC Handbook, RFI and Video Tape Index on to him/her, as well as your files



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of correspondence, regional and NACURH business, any conference material and any other pertinent NCC information.
- 28.** Inform the [Regional Director](#) and the [NIC](#) of any change in status, be it a new NCC or change in address or telephone information. All changes in information are due in the regional office within two (2) weeks of occurrence.

Enjoy the benefits of one of most rewarding positions -- the NCC. You will have the opportunity to meet people like yourself from campuses across the region and nation!