

Guidelines for Campus and Alumni Advisory Committees/Groups

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by the Provost's Office and the Advancement Department

Introduction

Advisory committees represent a bridge to the external public and in certain circumstances, can be an effective way to help SUNY Potsdam connect with alumni, friends, and the North Country community. When properly designed, implemented and managed, these committees can provide fresh insights, powerful connections, access to valuable resources, and excellent public relations.

Types of Advisory Committees:

Regardless of the name chosen for the group, these/committees can function as one or both of the following types:

- **Advisory Groups:** These groups are truly advisory in nature, as the committee provides external input into the college's internal processes. Examples of goals or functions might include strengthening programs; improving management; reviewing and evaluating mission, programs, and services; and helping to recruit personnel. In general, these groups provide advice to the college on how to go about addressing a particular issue or process.
- **Support Groups:** These groups serve primarily as boosters, with committee members serving the organization by helping in the outside world. Examples of goals or functions might include raising funds, providing connections to outside resources, promoting public relations, and improving relationships with other organizations. In general, these groups provide important support while offering little or no advice.

Existing Advisory Committees:

- SUNY Potsdam Alumni Association (*Director of Alumni Relations provides oversight*)
- School of Education Alumni Board (*authorized by the College's Alumni Assoc.*)
- Crane School of Music Alumni Board (*authorized by the College's Alumni Assoc.*)
- Literacy Center Advisory Board (*Director of Literacy Center provides oversight*)
- Computer and Information Sciences Board of Advisors (*Chair of CIS Dept. provides oversight*)
- Business Administration Advisory Council (*Chair of Business Admin. Dept. provides oversight*)
- Bear Pride Council (*Assist. Athletic Dir. provides oversight*)
- CPS Advisory Board (*Executive Director of CPS provides oversight*)
- Mary E. English Commons Governing Board (*Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies provides oversight*)

Guidelines for Establishing New Advisory Groups

Overview of Approval Process

1. Appropriate Dean, Director or Department Head must be involved in the process and:
 - give preliminary approval to research and/or work toward the establishment of a new group
 - provide input on the structure of the group to ensure its usefulness to the department or cause

- ensure that the Advancement Dept. has been consulted when the proposed group seeks to have fundraising functions
 - give final approval on the proposal to establish a new group
2. The appropriate Division Head (Vice President or Provost) must give final approval on the proposed group.

Guiding Thoughts as You Prepare to Define the Group

An advisory group is more likely to be effective at providing advice and/or support when:

1. Institutional representatives (deans, directors, staff, faculty) genuinely desire the committee's input or assistance.
2. The committee is comprised of knowledgeable, committed individuals whose interest in volunteering their own time is sustained by appropriate recognition and rewards.
3. The committee's group processes and procedures for governance allow for regular meetings, a sense of engagement and ownership, and sufficient access to information about the program or institution so that the committee can offer useful advice and/or support.
4. The expectations about the roles of the committee in providing advice and/or support are clear, consistent, and well communicated. (Institutional representatives need to decide what kinds of support or how much advice they want and then clearly communicate it to potential committee members. The greatest source of dissatisfaction with advisory committees comes from poor communication and a mismatch of expectations.)
5. One particularly important issue that affects advisory groups to academic programs is that definitions of roles must be explicit that curricular responsibility belongs to the faculty of the program. Both faculty and administrators welcome input from advisory groups, who often have helpful knowledge of the current demands of professionals in fields related to the program, but their advice is always advisory. Definitions should be explicit about the relative roles of decision makers in the program and advisory boards so as to avoid the expectation that the faculty and administration will choose to, or be able to, implement everything suggested by the advisory board.

Questions to Answer as You Create Your Proposal

A written proposal to establish a group must address each of the following questions. The bullets provide some additional issues to address, and/or provide guidance as you consider answering the questions.

- 1. What is the purpose and goals of the new group?**
 - Define if this is an advisory group, a support group, or will include elements of both
 - List all activities (or types of activities) that will be utilized to achieve the goals of the group
 - Is this group required in order to achieve a particular accreditation?
- 2. How will the group's activities be funded?**
 - Meetings generally require catering for meals and/or coffee breaks, limited number of mailings, printing of materials as needed, etc.
- 3. Who will be the primary "staff" person for the group?**
 - Most often, this will be the chair of the department or director of the program
- 4. What are the responsibilities of the chair or director?**
 - Establish purpose and goals
 - Work with Alumni and Advancement on potential invitees
 - Set meeting agendas
 - Arrange for clerical support for the group, including maintenance of membership list, distribution of secretary's minutes, agendas and other materials (recommend the use of Blackboard for all meeting correspondence)

- Scheduling meetings, meeting invitations to other administrators, correspondence with members between meetings
 - Maintain budget
- 5. Who will be invited to join the group and how?**
- Recommend collaborating with College Advancement to assist in determine the invitation list to ensure the inclusion of key alumni and friends
 - Who will extend the invitations (peers, dean, staff, etc.)
 - How will the invitations be extended?
 - How will members be oriented to the group, its role, and its activities?
- 6. What will the on-going operations of the group look like?**
- Specific role and expectation of group members
 - How and how often the group members will receive communications or be gathered for meetings
 - Oversight and support of on-going activities between meetings
 - Any expectations of reporting out of results or activities
- 7. If the proposed group will have a fundraising role, how will it ensure that it coordinates efforts with the Advancement Department?**
- What type of fundraising activities are desired, and to support what causes?
 - How does the group envision interacting with the Advancement Department?
 - What types of communication will the group maintain with the Advancement Department (requesting assistance and guidance as needed; coordinating fundraising efforts; requesting providing fundraising reports for the group)