

# ***MichiganTech***

## Student Organizations Advisor Manual

Student Activities Office, 112 Memorial Union Building  
1400 Townsend Drive  
Houghton, Michigan 49931-1295  
906-487-1963

## **Contents**

Welcome.....	3
Student Activities Office Information.....	4
Areas of Student Activities.....	6
Student Activities/Advisor Relationship.....	8
Important Student Organization Events.....	9
Student Organization Registration.....	12
Goal Setting.....	16
Transitions.....	17
Funding.....	19
Advisors and Liability.....	22
Understanding “Millennial” Students.....	24
College Student Development.....	26
Communicating With Student Organizations.....	28
Tips From Advisors.....	30

## **Welcome**

This manual was created to assist you in advising your Student Organization(s). After receiving many questions about the role that an advisor plays with a student organization and what the expectations are of advisors on campus we decided to put together some information to address the needs of advisors.

Our office recognizes that you are taking time to serve as an advisor and we appreciate your dedication. We hope that this manual answers any question that you have now and questions that may come up throughout your time as an advisor at Michigan Tech. By providing you with this manual our hope is that you are a more informed and involved advisor with your student organization(s).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,  
The Student Activities Staff

## **Student Activities Office**

The Student Activities Office, located in room 112 of the Memorial Union Building, MUB, offers many programs and resources to Michigan Tech students. Student Activities is a part of Student Life which is housed in the division of Student Affairs.

## **Student Life Mission Statement**

We strive to enrich the lives of students by engaging them in diverse learning experiences through innovative programs, quality services, and meaningful activities that prepare them to create the future.

## **Student Affairs Mission Statement**

To prepare students to create the future, we make their success our number one priority.

## **Student Activities Staff Members**

Director of Student Activities

Jen O'Connell

[jaoconne@mtu.edu](mailto:jaoconne@mtu.edu)

Assistant Director for Greek Life and Leadership

Jason Bergeron

[jtberger@mtu.edu](mailto:jtberger@mtu.edu)

Assistant Director of Student Activities and Adventure Programming

Jared Johnson

[jaredmj@mtu.edu](mailto:jaredmj@mtu.edu)

Administrative Assistant

Mary Ann Struthers

[mastruth@mtu.edu](mailto:mastruth@mtu.edu)

Carol Janisse

Student Organization Secretary

[cjaniss@mtu.edu](mailto:cjaniss@mtu.edu)

906-487-2402

### **Student Activities Office Contact Information**

Memorial Union Building

Room 112

[activities@mtu.edu](mailto:activities@mtu.edu)

906-487-1963- phone

906-487-0332- fax

Office hours:

Academic year: 8:00am-5:00pm

Summer: 8:00am-4:00pm

### **Student Organization Office Contact Information**

Memorial Union Building

Room 106

906-487-2402

Office hours:

Academic year: 8:00am-5:00pm

Summer: 8:00am-4:00pm

## **Areas of Student Activities**

### **Greek Life**

Our office currently supports and advises our local and North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) fraternities and our local and National Panhellenic Council (NPC) sororities. Greek Life also houses our Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council. Provides values-based advisement, support, and programming to undergraduate fraternity/sorority members through working with chapter presidents, chapter advisors, inter/national staff and officers, and undergraduate students.

### **Leadership**

Student Activities presents the Leadership Symposium and the LeaderShape® Institute, guides the Leadership Acceleration Team and assists with leadership activities across campus such as Leadership Week and Leading Scholars.

### **Tech Challenge Course**

This is located by the Waxing Shed in the Tech Trails and is a great way for groups to learn more about teamwork and communication. Courses can be specifically programmed to an organization's needs to address the most important topics they are facing. The course includes high and low elements for on and off campus groups.

### **Outdoor Adventure Program, OAP, and Tech Adventures Rental Center**

Tech Adventures Rental Center provides outdoor equipment at low costs for students, faculty, staff and community members. The OAP also offers many resources such as maps of the local terrain, outdoor books and magazines, seminars and guided trips.

### **Student Organizations**

Student Activities and the Student Organization Office provide support and direction for all student organizations on campus. We meet with students who want to create new student organizations, those who want to disband current groups on campus and those organizations that need help with planning events and those who are looking for additional assistance. The Student Organizations Office also assists students in understanding policies and procedures regarding the governance and operations of student organizations.

### Campus Programs and Traditions

Campus Programs and Traditions provide University professional staff support to major campus programs such as Keweenaw Day (K-Day), Homecoming, Winter Carnival and Spring Fling. We work to enhance current programming and create new opportunities with students.

### Community Service

Student Activities coordinates Make A Difference Day, a national day of community service, and the Standathon, a twelve hour standing marathon. We also keep the online community service database up to date and accurate and are working to find ways to integrate the alternative spring break trips that are occurring on campus.

### The GLBT Safe Place Program

The Safe Place Program is a campus wide program that sends a visual message of inclusion, acceptance and support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) individuals in the University Community. Manuals, letters, buttons and stickers are currently distributed to members. Members also can attend “Meet and Greets” to get to know other students, faculty and staff along with training sessions offered throughout the year.

## **Relationship between Advisors and the Student Activities Office**

While there is no direct relationship between the Office of Student Activities and the student organization advisor, the Office of Student Activities keeps in consistent contact with advisors to share new initiatives within Student Activities and the University, helps advisors to understand the responsibilities of advising student organizations, and provides resources to both new and seasoned advisors on how to be the most successful within their role. Advisors, along with student organization leaders, are often the first means of contact between the Student Activities Office and the student organization, so the Office of Student Activities ensures that communication remains strong and provides advisors with the information necessary to excel in their position.

## **Services Provided By the Student Activities Office**

The Student Activities Office works to provide meaningful resources to student organization advisors including:

- Online resources,
- The Student Organization Advisor Manual, coupled with Student Organization Advisor Training,
- An advisor listserv used to communicate important information regarding student organizations,
- An office established in the Memorial Union Building where advisors can go for questions/assistance.

## **Important Information for Student Organizations**

There are many events that Student Organizations may choose to take part in throughout the year. Many of these events serve as recruitment tools and are a way for students to see what organizations there are on campus.

### **Campus Events**

#### **K-Day**

Keweenaw Day (K-Day) is an important part of Michigan Tech history. This university tradition is celebrated on the first Friday of the fall semester. A noon recess from classes gives students, faculty, and staff alike the opportunity to head out to McLain State Park and enjoy Lake Superior and the generally agreeable weather. K-Day is coordinated by the Interfraternity Council and features live music, a student organizations fair, free food, and lots of great opportunities to get involved on campus and enjoy the Keweenaw Peninsula. For student organizations, it is a prime opportunity to promote their group and have fun doing it. With a broad variety of organizations present each year, it also offers great opportunities to learn about other organizations and create collaborative relationships. Registration for K-Day opens near the end of the spring semester.

#### **DOTS, an Event Planning Workshop**

DOTS is a fairly new program that offers students the chance to learn more about event planning on and off campus. This session covers the basics of planning an event, creating a budget and publicizing the event along with providing a variety of resources so that the event is successful. This program is offered once a year during the first month of classes, traditionally the third or fourth week.

#### **Homecoming**

Like most other campuses, the week's activities include the crowning of this year's Homecoming King and Queen, a pre-game tailgate party, and of course the football game itself. Challenges like card board boat races, human pyramid, Powder Puff and Take-On-A-Husky-Night, also take place. However, Tech also has a unique tradition, the Hobo Parade that dates back to 1959 when students at Tech chose that year's Homecoming theme to be "hobo." It was a huge hit, and students voted to keep the theme in following years. Today, students raid local thrift stores, searching for flannel shirts, trousers, and jackets that they wear for several days in a row, in preparation for the Parade. Student organizations spend the week prepping their vehicles for the parade. Groups also acquire old beat-up vehicles (many of which don't even run) that serve as their floats for the parade.

### Leadership Symposium

The Student Leadership Symposium is a day long conference open to all students featuring break-out sessions, a keynote address, and an interactive closing. The symposium offers an on-campus opportunity for both emerging and current student leaders to further develop their knowledge and skills in the area of leadership.

### LeaderShape®

Michigan Tech has participated in LeaderShape® since 1997. Coordinated by the Student Activities Office, this program gives approximately sixty Michigan Tech students the opportunity to grow in their leadership abilities at a weeklong institute held during winter break at the Ford Center. This weeklong intensive program focuses largely on the ability to create a vision and to learn how to bring that vision to reality. LeaderShape® further promotes the value of “leading with integrity” and the impact that can have on the community. After the week of intense training, these leaders take their new found abilities and knowledge back to their organizations and pursue the realization of those visions.

### Student Involvement Fair

The Student Involvement Fair is an annual event, held the first or second week of the Spring semester. It is chance for Student Organizations to promote themselves, to share information with new students, gain more members and advertise upcoming events. Tables range from very interactive, such as swing dance lessons to passive, with nice displays with pictures and memorabilia from organizations.

### Winter Carnival

Winter Carnival, arguably Tech’s most established and successful tradition, is generally agreed upon to have started in 1922. Organized and produced each year by Blue Key National Honor Fraternity, Carnival nets Michigan Tech national publicity, especially for its spectacular snow statue competition. It also creates quite the influx of alumni, many of which take leave from their jobs to return to Houghton and enjoy the celebration of winter. During all-nighter, which is the Wednesday night of Winter Carnival week, many organizations take the opportunity to fundraise by selling food to all those that come out to partake in the festivities. There are also many competitions during the week that student organizations can partake in and contribute to the hype which has become Winter Carnival.

### Spring Fling

Spring Fling was actually first conceptualized by a student, whose reasoning for the new tradition was that K-Day covered the fall tradition, and Winter Carnival the winter, students needed something to embrace in the spring. Spring Fling includes an organization fair, live bands, and an assortment of activities. You can find anything from a pie-throwing fundraiser to a motorcycle stunt show.

## **Specific Events and Information for Student Organizations**

### **Student Organization Officer Meeting**

This is an annual meeting held the first week of classes and lasts approximately one hour. To be a registered Student Organization an organization must send at least one representative to this meeting. The representative can be anyone in the organization but executive officers, such as the president, are preferred to be in attendance. This meeting allows the Student Activities Office to update the organizations about changes that may have occurred since last year and share any information that is relevant for the year.

### **Registering or Reregistering a Student Organization**

Student Organizations must reregister every year by the fourth Friday of the fall semester. Any student within the organization may be given editing rights but typically these rights are given to the president, secretary and advisor. Registration can be found online at <http://www.sa.mtu.edu/stulife/stuorg/registration/> and students use their ISO log-in to make edits and updates to organization information. If previous leadership did not provide editing rights to the new leadership please contact Carol Janisse in the Student Organization Office, 487-2402 or via email at [cjjaniss@mtu.edu](mailto:cjjaniss@mtu.edu).

This provides the Student Activities Office with updated information, such as advisor and president contact so information is clearly communicated. Occasionally the leadership within an organization turns over throughout the year due to numerous reasons. The Student Activities Office asks for each organization to make sure the information in the database is up to date and accurate. For example, if your organization elects new officers in December please make sure the database reflects your new leadership. Another situation that occurs is that an officer will need to be replaced. The old officer would need to be removed and the new officer would then need to be added to the database.

### **Additional Requirements for New Student Organizations**

New student organizations must provide the following information and follow the process below to become recognized by the Student Activities Office.

## **Paperwork for Becoming a Registered Student Organization**

### **Constitution**

Each organization is required to have a constitution on file with the Student Activities Office. This document states the goals and mission of the organization. More information on creating a constitution can be found in the Starting a Student Organization document (located in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106). It should be reviewed and updated annually. The Student Activities Office requires this document to be updated every four years, as a minimum requirement.

### **Organization Registration Form**

This form includes information about the type of organization, the officers, the current advisor (including a signature from the advisor) and the dates and times of meetings and upcoming events. It can be found in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106.

### **Membership List Form**

This form is a way to show the names and email addresses of all the intended members of a new organization. It should list all members, including the officers (who are also listed in the organization registration form). It can be found in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106.

## **Required Information**

To be registered, a student organization must provide the following information:

- Name of the organization
- Names and titles of the officers
- Names of all members
- An updated constitution (unless already on file) which
  - must be updated every four years.
  - provides a description of the purpose(s) of the organization.
  - provides that officers have a 2.0 cumulative GPA at the time of their election or appointment.
  - provides that only students registered with Michigan Technological University are officers or voting members.
  - provides that no discrimination on the basis of ethnic group creed, gender, religion, weight, height, age, disability, marital status, or national origin shall exist within the organization.

- The Student Activities Office requests all members to be listed to help keep an accurate record of student organizations. A minimum of ten current, enrolled students is required.
- The Student Activities Office must be notified in writing of any changes made in the original required information presented to the Student Activities Office within four weeks after an organization has instituted a change. These changes must also be reflected in the online database.
- A student organization may become suspended by the Student Activities Office if:
  - The organization is found guilty of submitting falsified required information.
  - The organization if found guilty of violating an ordinance or written policy of Michigan Technological University.
  - The organization if found guilty of failing to discharge its financial obligations to the University.

### **Procedure for Registering a Student Organization**

1. Pick-up a packet at the Student Activities Office, MUB 112, or the Student Organization Office, MUB 106.
2. Find ten interested people to be members of your organization.
3. Find a full-time employee of the university willing to be the organization's advisor (This can be a staff or faculty member).
4. Draft a constitution (use the Starting a Student Organization document which can be found in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106)
5. Drop off a draft of your organization's constitution and schedule an appointment at the Student Activities Office (MUB 112).
6. Meet with the Director of Student Activities.
7. Revise constitution based on feedback.
8. Complete organization registration form (use the Starting a Student Organization document which can be found in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106).
9. Complete membership list form (use the Starting a Student Organization document which can be found in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106).
10. Drop off forms and revised constitution, and if necessary, meet with the director again.
11. Receive notification of official registration.

## **Student Organization Status**

The Student Activities Office uses the following terminology to describe the status of student organizations on campus.

- Recognized
- Unrecognized
- Inactive

### **Recognized**

The student organization has completed all of the steps necessary to be a recognized organization by the Student Activities Office. All of these steps are listed under Specific Events and Information for Student Organizations within this manual. All of these organizations are listed on the Student Organization Online Database and organizational records and are kept on file in the Student Activities Office.

### **Unrecognized**

This term is used for organizations that are not recognized by the Student Activities Office. This means they have chosen not to be recognized and/or have not completed the necessary steps. There are organizations on campus that chose not to associate with our office. We encourage all organizations to connect with our office- there are no disadvantages to registering and being recognized by the Student Activities Office.

### **Inactive**

The organization is no longer active on campus. Organizations tend to shift and change over time, therefore the Student Activities Office keeps all inactive organizations on file in case an organization reestablishes itself with the office in the future. Inactive organizations can reactive at any time if there is enough interest.

## Goal Setting

Goal setting can be a critical piece to student organizations. It gives direction and meaning behind the organization's activities. Goal setting can occur on an individual basis as well as on an organizational level. Executive boards may want to establish goals for their position, along with assisting general members with the goals of the organization.

When setting goals it is important to remember that goals should be meaningful, tangible and measureable. A good way to set goals is to follow the SMART goals.

- Specific  
Answers the six "W" questions, who, what, why, when, where, which
- Measureable  
How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?
- Attainable  
Is there a way you can make this goal a reality? Is it something you can accomplish?
- Realistic  
The goal must be something you are willing and able to do.
- Timely  
If there is not a deadline set, how will you know when you accomplish your goal?

Encourage your members to place their goals somewhere visual so they will see their goals every day. This can be their residence hall room, in their bathroom, in their car or even in their planner. If goals are written but never looked at they quickly become irrelevant.

## **Transitions**

In a college organization change is inevitable. Each year, or even semester, brings new members while older members graduate, leaving open leadership positions. With all of these changes, a smooth transition is vital to keep the organization's mission and goals in tact for the following years. Advisors play a key role as they may be the only consistency in a group from year to year. Here are a few tips to assist with organization transition.

### **Binders/Transition Files**

Each officer should keep a binder with important files. This should be passed down from officer to officer and can be added to each year. Basic information that might be useful to include is constitutions, by-laws, history of the organization, timelines for events, past publicity, actual posters or even brainstormed ideas, financial statements and any other helpful information for the position.

### **Predecessor Reports**

Students that have been in leadership positions know more about their position than anyone else. Encourage students to write up a concise overview of their year including what went well, what didn't, what they might change, where important files may be located (in the office or on the computer) and contact information of people that they worked with on events. Advisors may want to review these at the end of the year to make sure the reports are clear and that they answer any question the advisor might have before the student leaves the position.

### **Transition Meetings/Retreats**

Although binders and reports are nice they do not allow new leadership to ask questions. A transition meeting with old and new leadership allows a time to talk about the transition, information that the group needs to know and answer any questions from incoming officers. It might also be beneficial for each position to meet with their successor, for example, the out going president should meet with the incoming president and so on.

### **Other helpful suggestions**

Make sure you, or your incoming leadership has access to past and current electronic files, including the constitution and bylaws. The Student Activities Office has hard copies of these files and hopes to eventually have electronic copies from all organizations. As new groups are formed the office is making an effort to collect the electronic files. There have been numerous groups in the past that have had to retype their entire constitution to update it because no one knew where the electronic files

were located. It will save an organization a lot of time if they communicate this information to the new leadership.

If an organization transitions in conjunction with the academic year it might be wise to collect summer contact information so communication can occur over the summer. The first meeting of the semester should be established before students leave for the summer, along with any events that may happen in early fall.

## **Funding**

All Michigan Tech students pay a student activity fee. The Undergraduate Student Government administers its use. Recognized student organizations may ask for a budget from the Undergraduate Student Government, or USG. Budget hearings for the academic year are held the spring prior to that year. For example, funding for 2007-2008 was decided upon in mid spring of 2007. USG will provide information regarding budget hearings in early spring.

### **Opportunities Fund**

USG sets some money aside each year to invest in new opportunities. Established organizations are eligible to request funds from the Opportunities Fund for new initiatives that present themselves after the budget hearings process. Organizations may apply for startup funding by filling out an Opportunities Fund Request Form which can be found in the Student Organization Office, MUB 106. USG meets every Wednesday during the academic year to hear requests from student organizations and conduct business. Each week, submitted requests are accepted until Tuesday at 12 noon.

New organizations or organizations who missed budget hearings can apply for opportunities funding for start up costs.

To make a start-up funding request, organizations should follow these steps:

- Make a copy of the Opportunities Fund Request Form and fill it out completely
- Stop into the Student Organizations Office (MUB 106) and sign up for a ten minute time slot with the Ways and Means Committee (the financial committee of the Undergraduate Student Government)
- Give the request form to the Student Organizations Secretary, along with any accompanying documentation
- Show up at the assigned time slot (Wednesday) and present on the request

After the request presentation, the Ways and Means committee will vote to make a recommendation to the general body of the Undergraduate Student Government. Should the Ways and Means committee choose to recommend a start-up funding allocation to the organization, the organization will be asked to come and present before the general body when the recommendation is moved upon. This is generally the week following the organization's Ways and Means request, but the committee will notify the organization of the time and date.

### Reserve Fund

In addition to the yearly allocations from the Student Activity Fee and the Opportunities Fund there is also the Reserve Fund. The Reserve Fund is a fluctuating amount of funds that has been established to insure against catastrophic loss to a student organization. This has been used primarily to replace broken equipment. More information is available to student organizations in the Student Organization Office or through USG.

### Tech Parents Annual Fund

The Tech Parents Annual Fund (Parents Fund) is a financial resource that is based upon donations from enrolled students' parents and friends for opportunities in the area of student life. It has funded travel, campus events, equipment, and miscellaneous items that aid in the unexpected expense of the operations and activities of student organizations. The process for applying for money from the Parents Fund is similar to the Opportunities Fund.

- Obtain a copy of the Parents Fund request form from either the Student Organizations Office, Student Activities Office or COMPASS (formerly First-Year Programs) or online at [www.sa.mtu.edu/fyp/parent\\_policy.html](http://www.sa.mtu.edu/fyp/parent_policy.html)
- Fill the request form out completely and attach a working budget and program rationale
- Turn in the request form, budget, and rationale to COMPASS (formerly First-Year Programs)
- Requests will be reviewed by a committee and organizations receive notification from the fund administrator

The Parents Fund review committee is comprised of two Student Life professional staff, two students, and a professional staff member from the university at-large. They review and decide whether or not to fund requests, and if so, at what level. Organizations will receive notification of the committee's decision via email. At that point, to receive the organization's allocation, a member will need to complete and sign a support contract that ensures that the organization is aware of the guidelines the supported expenditures must meet. The Parent Fund Administrator will also follow up with the organization within a week of the event or expenditure to evaluate it.

## Fundraising and Sponsorship

There are numerous activities that can be done on or off campus to raise funds. Often times local businesses are willing to donate money and/or incentives for an event or activity. A few things to think about as your group plans a fundraiser:

- Plan well in advance if your organization wants to approach local businesses, many are asked by multiple organizations, yet may only have a small amount of funds to give out annually.
- Students should be prepared when they approach businesses or departments for donations. People tend to contribute when there is a clear purpose.
- Collaborating with other groups may increase the productivity of the fundraiser and possibly the event.
- Fundraisers should be approached as any other organization event, planning is essential for a successful fundraiser.

Below are a few ideas that might inspire creative fundraising efforts within your organization:

- Contests such as chalk drawing or logo creations
- Food sales, ranging from bake sales to hosting ethnic dinners
- Selling items, anything from buttons to flowers to shirts or magazines
- Services that could include car washes, clean-up, laundry services or even finals week wake up calls

More resources on fundraising can be found at:

- [http://www.campus-adr.org/CR\\_Services\\_Cntr/Design\\_Tools/fundraising.html](http://www.campus-adr.org/CR_Services_Cntr/Design_Tools/fundraising.html)
- [http://www.cornellcollege.edu/student\\_activities/fundraising.php](http://www.cornellcollege.edu/student_activities/fundraising.php)
- [http://www.sac.edu/students/support\\_services/samannual/sarsrcs/sarddf.html](http://www.sac.edu/students/support_services/samannual/sarsrcs/sarddf.html)
- <http://www.iso.umich.edu/sOrgs/funding.html>

## **Advisors and Liability**

(parts taken from the University of Southern California Student Organization Advisor Resources)

While institutions recognize students as adults and appreciate the institution's decreased liability for student actions through the demise of the in loco parentis philosophy (i.e., the institution acts in the place of students' parents), they also acknowledge the need to guide behavior which may expose the institution to complex liability issues through the advisor of student organizations. Within the court system, it is clear that the advisor is treated as an agent for the university, thereby indicating university liability when an incident occurs.

It seems that the type and level of interaction with students in an advisory capacity may have an impact on determining negligent liability for the institution. Yet, in many instances, this has not been the case within the court system. The courts have been reluctant to evaluate the level of guidance and control exercised by the institution involved in a negligent liability case. Overall, case law indicates limited liability for the university for the acts of student organizations regardless of the level of advisor interaction, because of the demise of in loco parentis philosophy.

The courts have examined many issues when determining negligent liability including university policies, foreseeability, and amount of previous intervention or control of student activities. In negligent liability cases, the plaintiff must first establish a duty of care. This duty is usually a duty to protect or a duty to supervise.

Various degrees of institutional liability can develop with the level of advisor interaction. This has been shown in the lower courts if the in loco parentis philosophy has been reinstated by the decision.

The first level of advising where the advisor exists only on paper would appear to be the lowest level of liability because interaction is minimal and the students are not being controlled in any way other than by university policy. Previous court cases have deemed the institution liable in situations where appropriate guidance and intervention on part of the advisor was not exercised. Liability for campus incidents also occurs at the other end of the continuum, namely when the advisor mandates activities and has a high level of interaction.

Student organization advisors walk a tight rope in avoiding institutional liability. If an advisor elects to regulate and control activity, then he/she must be willing to accept the duties that accompany that control. If an advisor chooses to be laissez-faire, then he/she must accept the potential liability of the failure to supervise. An

advisor, who strictly provides information, must balance an information-giving and an intervention approach with the student organization. Policies established by the university of a punitive or controlling nature may establish the advisor as the enforcer of such policies. Advisors are warned to avoid any impression of university sponsorship of events either through their supervisory attendance at an event or through the registration of off-campus events.

## **Understanding Today's College Students (Millennials)**

Born in or after 1982, the Millennial Student brings a new perspective to college life. As the sons and daughters of the “baby boomer” generation, millennial students have shaped the way administrators have provided programs and services to students, the ways in which course curriculums are structured, and the way in which developmental experiences are defined. Understanding the “Millennial” generation can assist student organization advisors in understanding the culture and experiences of the students arriving on today's college campuses.

Who are “millennials”?

- No definitive agreement on birth years; experts say somewhere between 1978 and 1995; most say 1981 to 1993
- Children of Baby Boomers
- Younger siblings of Gen Xers
- Largest generation (75 million) after the Boomers (80 million), compared to the Gen Xers (40 million)
- 38% of millennials identify themselves as “non-white”
- Positioned in history to be the next “Hero generation”

What are the successes in working with Millennial students?

- Value teamwork – Millennial students recognize the value of working in teams and are more inclined to find success while working cooperatively with others, both on coursework and student organization activities.
- They are progressive and forward-thinking – Millennial students have a keen understanding of the harsh realities that surround them, and consider themselves the generation that can change their environment and improve the quality of life for others.
- They are smarter – Millennial students are more intelligent than previous generations of college students. They have a heightened awareness of social issues facing their communities, and they have cultivated a culture where intelligence is en vogue.

What are the challenges in working with Millennial students?

- Parental involvement – Parents of millennial students have been a strong force in the lives of their sons and daughters, up through their college search and their enrollment at Michigan Tech. The challenge for universities lies in allowing students to create their own thoughts and identities independent

from their parents while still valuing the role parents play in their student's lives.

- College as a means to an end – Millennial students increasingly look at the college experience as a means to “get a high-paying career”, and are less concerned with experiences not directly related to the classroom. College personnel must continually be helping students make connections between their involvement experiences and the expected benefit to their lives as career men and women.

## College Student Development

The student organization setting provides a meaningful venue for students to develop qualities and skills which they will carry with them post-graduation. As a student organization advisor, your role in helping to create developmental experiences for students is important in facilitating their growth as young adults. When discussing and applying student development theory in a practical setting, it is always important to remember that each student has a variety of life experiences which shape the way in which they respond to specific situations. Also tantamount to their life experiences is the understanding of the environments in which they live, work, study, and interact, and how those environments can influence a student's behavior. More succinctly, behaviors are a function of the person and their interaction with their environments (Lewin, 1936).

Readiness, Challenge and Support – Perhaps one of the most simple, yet most applicable theories in college student development is the provided balance of “readiness, challenge and support” made famous by developmental theorist R. Nevitt Sanford (1966). Sanford theorized that the successful development of the college student is found by finding the correct balance between providing situations that may stretch students out of their comfort zones, and ways in which they are supported in those challenges, all while students must be ready to accept those challenges. Finding the optimal balance is important in facilitating meaningful developmental experiences for students. For example, experiences in which there is too much challenge without adequate support may cause students to engage in escaping or avoiding behaviors, or may revert to less adaptive models of behavior (1966). Vice versa, situations in which too little challenge may be present allows students to feel too safe and comfortable in their experiences, which can impede development.

Students develop through a meaningful balance of “challenge and support”. Challenge places students in intentional situations that will stretch them out of their traditional comfort zones, and support will give them the confidence to face those challenges.

### Cognitive Development

A significant part of the college experience is the development of ways in which students form thoughts and make intellectual and ethical decisions. This helps students to further develop their sense of right and wrong, and how to develop their cognitive processes to make sound decisions. Dr. William Perry (1999) helps us to understand how students begin their cognitive development with a dualistic nature

and, through intentional experiences designed to challenge them, progress towards a more relativistic or pluralistic form of thought development.

### Dualism

Dualism refers to early stages of cognitive development in which students view situations and experiences in which right and wrong, or “black and white”, are clearly defined. Those in roles of authority are seen to have the “right answers”. Diversity in opinion and thought is viewed as wrong if it conflicts with what is thought to be absolute.

### Complex Dualism

In Complex Dualism, students may begin to recognize some diversity in thought, but still struggle with recognizing the place that diversity holds. Students may view other opinions as uncertain, poorly qualified, or attempts by another who “hasn’t found the answer yet.” Students may begin to recognize the value of multiplicity and the value of others’ ownership of their thoughts and opinions.

### Relativism

In developing a relativistic outlook, students begin to realize that both knowledge and values are based in different situations and different contexts, and that both “right” and “wrong” are found to be in context. Students are apprehensive to commit to any specific ideals or values for the fear that they contradict the very idea of relativism.

### Commitment to Relativism

Students come to the realization that commitment is a function of their identity, and feel comfortable forming thoughts and beliefs around their personal knowledge and values set, while still basing things in the context of the situation.

## Communicating with Student Organizations

As increasing technological advances have presented both new opportunities and challenges in communicating with students, it is important that advisors have an understanding of how students are communicating with others, and determine which methods to use to keep lines of communication open while remaining professional.

- Face-to-face communication – This continues to be the most effective method of communication and true understanding of what students may be thinking and feeling. Unfortunately, it is the least convenient method of communication. Establishing a face-to-face meeting schedule is important, but as students' schedules are being filled with other commitments, it is important to not overwhelm students with too frequent meetings. Having a conversation with your students about their preference for face-to-face meetings and what information they feel warrants a face-to-face meeting can serve as great tool in establishing your student/advisor relationship.
- Email – Email can serve as one of the most convenient ways to communicate with student organization leaders and members about day-to-day operations of the student organization. However, due to the sensitive nature of email, confidential information can be leaked, and emotions may be misconstrued over email. Email can be used most successfully to communicate general thoughts or to get quick answers to questions. However, a face-to-face meeting might assist in situations that might require a more developmental conversation.
- Office Phone/Cell Phone – Using the phone to communicate allows both convenience and a sense of personal connection. Phone calls allow students to have a better understanding of decisions and allow them to ask repeated questions to better understand a situation. Setting expectations for students can be beneficial when referring to phone calls. For example, calling an office phone at 2:00 pm is typically more acceptable than calling a cell phone at 11:00 pm. Helping students to understand how and when to use phone conversations can help to maximize communication when email is not appropriate but a face-to-face meeting is not possible.
- Facebook, MySpace, Other online networks – Comfort in using these methods for communication lies with the advisor. These can be convenient means of communication with students, but may open the door for advisors to become aware of inappropriate behaviors, and may make students feel uncomfortable. Having a conversation with your student may help in

understanding if both you and they feel comfortable with this type of communication.

## Tips From Advisors

What, have you found, are the most effective ways to challenge the thoughts and beliefs of Michigan Tech students?

- *You have to know your organization's members before you can challenge them. If you don't know their name or what is going on in the organization, good luck trying to change their thoughts and beliefs*
- *Really, it's just important to meet regularly with the students.....that means going to as many regular meetings as possible and meeting with the e-board or smaller work groups when you can. That way you can be an active part of their discussions and share different points of view as part of the regular dialogue without it sounding like a lecture.*
- *Make sure they remember that each is responsible for their own behavior. As a member of an organization, each member is a representative of the organization on campus, in the community, etc. Always pose the question "what is "best" for you & the organization?"*

What, have you found, are some of the ways you have provided support for your students to which they have really responded?

- *Show them you're invested in their success. Successful advisors are those who attend meetings and activities. Students want to see the advisor and notice when you are present at meetings and activities. However, your involvement will differ depending on the situation. You should be a more active participant with the executive board at their meetings and be more passive during regular member meetings.*
- *When they seem to be struggling with getting a project going, I have volunteered to be part of the planning group and have taken the lead to set up planning meetings. This doesn't mean I'm doing their job, just helping to get them going. I have also offered to make phone calls or contact people on their behalf.*
- *Utilize your E-Board or "seasoned" members for support / responses. In working with an executive board I use them as a "sounding board" for my "take" on a scenario/situation. As an advisor, I think it is good to have a "mentor" & also work with other advisors.*

- *I have found that one on one time has been the best way to connect and support members. A few one on one meetings can go a long way on knowing your students and understanding their thought process.*

What resources on campus have you found to be useful in helping you to advise your student organization?

- *The most beneficial campus resource for your students or yourself is the Student Activities office. They put on great events like the Leadership Symposium and Connect the DOTS (Event Planning Workshop). They're always there to offer assistance. An amazing opportunity for any Michigan Tech student is LeaderShape. a week long leadership institute held annually at the Michigan Tech Ford Center. Encourage your students to apply.*
- *As an advisor, you have the opportunity to let your students know of up coming events on campus and in the community. Use the online campus, athletic, Rozsa or other event calendars. This will help your organization have more successful events and not compete with other major activities.*
- *A good understanding of the org structure and accounting structure on campus helps. Students need to know how to get things done , so knowing that you call the SDC to order tables and call facilities to set them up for you really means a lot. Also, knowing how to purchase things and how to get contracts and P.O. 's processed is of real value to the students.*

How do you manage your student organization advising responsibilities with your professional responsibilities?

- *As an advisor you really have to plan your involvement. Too often advisors are nothing more than a name on a piece of paper. When that happens the organization is being robbed an experience of interacting with a faculty/staff member or other positive influencing adult. Limit yourself to the number of organizations you advise. If you've never advised a student organization before, then stick to advising one. The more organizations you advise, the less time you can spend with each one which makes you less effective.*

What are your top "tips" for advising student organizations here at Michigan Tech?

- *Be Present!*
  - *Meet with the executive board members of your organization regularly.*

- *Attend general meetings and activities of your organization.*
- *Motivate, encourage, and recognize members.*
- *Act as a resource!*
  - *You've most likely been around longer than the students in the organization, so share that knowledge.*
  - *Risk Management. Know University policies. Know your personal liability.*
- *Encourage them to promote their events in advance and get their posters and flyers up. Help them with this. This is really where they fall down a lot.*
- *Encourage them to act professionally when interfacing with other student orgs and to collaborate whenever possible to stretch resources and develop new bonds.*
- *Encourage them to be realistic in their planning. Great ideas are great, but if there is not the time and resources to execute them, it feels like failure all the time.*
- *You are an advisor, not a member of the organization. Challenge and support your students and build meaningful relationships with them, but do not make decisions or act as if you are part of their membership. Know when to intervene and when to step back.*
- *Let them know that you are a real person. The students that have gotten glimpses into who I really am tend to open up to me more and share more with me than those who I don't connect with on a personal basis.*

**Notes**

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