Challenges and Rewards of Advising

STUDENTS BENEFIT SUBSTANTIALLY from being involved in campus organizations. Astin (1985) states that "students learn by becoming involved" (133). He defined a highly involved student as "one who . . . devotes considerable energy to studying, spends a lot of time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students" (134). The Student Learning Imperative adds that "serving as an officer of a campus organization or working offer opportunities to apply knowledge obtained in the classroom and to develop practical competencies" (American College Personnel Association 1994, 2).

Involvement in student organizations also provides challenges and rewards for you as the adviser. On the one hand, some advisers are actively involved with their students and enjoy their interaction immensely. Some advisers work with debate teams and travel every weekend to various contests; others enjoy white-water rafting with their organization or having lunch at the dining center with the executive officers. On the other hand, some advisers have such a negative experience that after one term they refuse to advise another student organization.

Regardless of why you have become an adviser—be it a role freely chosen or one thrust upon you—an understanding of the benefits gained by student involvement and the challenges and rewards of advising will help you fulfill your responsibilities more effectively.

This chapter summarizes Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) and how various institutions have utilized the research to promote student involvement in organizations. The chapter then identifies the challenges and rewards—for the community, the institution, the organization, the adviser, and the student—of being involved in and working with student

organizations, and at several points directs your attention to other chapters for in-depth discussion of specific issues.

Astin's Theory of Involvement

The core of any student group or organization is the student. The student's time, commitment, and energy to be involved in the organization helps drive the organization's membership, excitement, and interest by other students. Students gain a number of benefits from being involved in a student organization. Astin's Theory of Involvement provides evidence of these benefits. Hutley (2003) has provided an excellent summary of Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement:

> The most basic tenet of Astin's Theory of Involvement is that students learn more the more they are involved in both the academic and social aspects of the collegiate experience. An involved student is one who devotes considerable energy to academics, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations and activities, and interacts often with faculty (Astin, 1984, p. 292). . . .
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> Astin states that the quality and quantity of the student's involvement will influence the amount of student learning and development (Astin, 1984, p. 297). True involvement requires the investment of energy in academic relationships and activities related to the campus and the amount of energy invested will vary greatly depending on the student's interests and goals, as well as the student's other commitments. The most important institutional resource, therefore, is student time: the extent to which students can be involved in the educational development is tempered by how involved they are with family, friends, jobs, and other outside activities (p. 301).

> Montelongo (2002) summarized in his review of literature as follows:

> Participation in college student organizations promotes affective and cognitive changes within college students. Involvement in extracurricular activities, especially in college student organizations, has benefits extending beyond classroom learning. Participation in extracurricular activities contributes to the intellectual, social, and emotional changes in a person over time. Outcomes associated with participation in college student organizations includes cognitive development or higher intellectual

processes such as critical thinking, knowledge acquisition, synthesis, and decision-making, as well as personal or affective development of attitudes, values, aspirations, and personality disposition. . . . Participation in college student organizations has been shown to have an influence on affective outcomes of the college experience, such as cultivating a student's sense of satisfaction with the college experience and in increasing participation and involvement within campus and community. College student organization participation also was an influential component in a student's total co-curricular experience as shown by enhancing intellectual development and by allowing students to become aware of and involved with the educational environment. Students were able to assess campus resources to achieve their educational goals. (61–62)

Institutions have drawn from the considerable research to promote the benefits of student organization involvement. At the University of Nebraska at Omaha (2013), the student activities and leadership programs office website includes a list of benefits: "academic enhancement, communication skills, scholarship incentives, personal/professional growth, career development, community service, leadership skills, self-confidence, and life-long friends."

At California State University San Marcos (2013), the student life and leadership website states that as a result of getting involved leaders "develop a campus support network, grow their leadership skills and plan fun activities for their group. . . . Current student leaders report their communication, interpersonal and social skills have improved as a result of being involved on campus and in the San Marcos community."

The website of Bethany College (2013) in West Virginia lists benefits of joining a student organization that include "making new friends, career exploration, career information, getting involved, gaining a sense of being, a chance to share common interests, learning to work in a group, learning to manage your time, an opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills, learning to organize meetings, events, and programs, and recognition for achievement."

At Rutgers New Brunswick (2013), the website's list of benefits to students includes "providing students with an opportunity to explore interests, sharpen skills, and learn about themselves and others while enhancing the academic mission of the college. Organizational involvement allows students to develop those skills that will prepare them for their career and civic responsibilities beyond the University."

The RedbusUS site (2013) identifies eight reasons why students should join a student organization. These include networking, social skills, professional experience, personality development, leadership skills, alumni networking, organization and management skills, and friendships and fun.

Whether an institution selects to identify student benefits gained based directly on a theory or model, by using institutional values or mission, or by using anecdotal or testimonials from students, student activities and involvement offices will commonly couch these benefits and publicize them through their student organization registration processes, student and adviser training, and leadership development programs. We believe it is important to select and promote a list of benefits that students will gain through their student organization involvement.

Challenges

The community, institutions, organizations, advisers, and students face a variety of challenges related to student groups. We look at each of these challenges in detail.

Community

There are few challenges to the local community from student organizations. Most of the challenging situations in the community are from the result of individual student behavioral issues. The community may also be challenged by student celebrations following final examinations or winning a championship sports game. These issues are typically remedied by local city codes and standards, law enforcement, or the institution's off-campus housing or dean of students offices.

Student organizations whose activities run counter to the local community environment can be seen as challenging. Some examples of such activities include a student organization creating a farmer's market to occur at the same time as a local farmer's market, a student organization protesting local restaurants whose practice or purchasing of materials may be viewed as against their wishes, or a student organization speaking to the city or county commission about their political position or decisions made.

Institutions

Faculty and practitioners in student affairs units know the benefits students experience by being involved in campus organizations, but it is nevertheless an institutional challenge to educate the greater campus community about the benefits of student involvement in organizations. We

strongly recommend that you read *Achieving Educational Excellence* (Astin 1985), *How College Affects Students, Volume 2: A Third Decade of Research* (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005), and *What Matters in College? Four Critical Years Revisited* (Astin 1993). These three books are central to understanding the rewards and benefits that an institution can gain from having involved students. Consequently, the first challenge faced at an institutional level is to ensure that the knowledge of the benefits and rewards described in these books is distributed widely among faculty and staff.

A second institutional challenge is to develop and maintain a legal safety net for organizational activities, programs, and travel. Student organizations work with contracts and agreements, travel extensively throughout the country and world, and participate in such higher-risk activities as skiing, skydiving, caving, white-water rafting, and mountain climbing. The institution must have staff assigned to assist organizations with complex contractual agreements, to assist in providing safe transportation, to discuss the issues of risk management, and so on. Colleges are facing increasingly complex liability and risk management questions; the campus legal counsel can assist in many aspects of this institutional challenge. Texas A&M University provides a risk management team as part of their division of student affairs and student activities unit. This risk management team "strives to help student leaders and advisors facilitate experiences that are developmental, educational, safe, and successful. Risk Management is the process of advising organizations of the potential and perceived risks involved in their activities, providing education about the guiding boundaries established for organizations, and taking corrective actions and proactive steps to minimize accidental injury and/or loss" (Texas A&M 2013b). Chapter 9 provides detailed information on selected legal issues of advising.

A third institutional challenge is the increased need to find the supplies and the meeting and office space to enable student organizations to function. Student activity fees enable many institutions to construct and maintain a central suite of offices for students. Typically this suite is located in a student union, student center, or leadership and service building. Student committees typically allocate the student office space. Student organizations, in turn, will usually provide their own office equipment and supplies. Some campuses have identified a requirement that these student offices must be staffed by members of the student organization and open for minimum periods during the week, such as 15–20 hours.

Meeting space for student organizations is increasingly difficult to find. Institutions are struggling during difficult funding periods to

balance assignment of meeting rooms, conference rooms, and ballrooms for conferences and other revenue-generating activities against the needs of student organizations. Institutions have reviewed other campus space to use for student organization meetings and are increasingly using vacant classrooms, residence hall common spaces, or covered outdoor space. In other circumstances, student organizations are finding it necessary to move their meetings to off-campus facilities such as students' houses, conference or convention centers, churches, restaurants, or parks.

Many chapter houses for sorority and fraternity members are well-maintained with significant reserve funds available. The conditions of the aging facilities of some Greek chapter houses, however, have increasingly become an institutional challenge. As some of the houses have fallen into disrepair due to the lack of funds or ability to coordinate the repairs, the institution has stepped in on several campuses to offer assistance. In some cases the institution has provided low-interest loans for chapters to install fire sprinklers; provided consultation to house corporations on what is necessary to upgrade their facilities; or provided project coordination to ensure work is completed on time and within budget. Other campuses have worked to assume full control of the chapter houses by financing the construction or renovation of the houses and then provided oversight for all financial, facility, and staffing issues.

Another institutional challenge has been to clarify for the public the distinction between registering versus recognizing student organizations. Members of the general public often complain with letters to the editor, phone calls to the president, letters to the local governing board, or social media remarks about student organizations that appear to run contrary to the mission of the institution. Whereas private institutions can take a more restrictive position regarding which student organizations may be allowed to be "recognized" by the institution, public institutions tend to follow a procedure of "registering" student organizations. At times some members of the public consider the mere existence of a particular organization an affront to the use of tax dollars (e.g., a white student union organization or atheist student organization, and so on). The general public may not possess a clear understanding that the institution only registers the organization and does not recognize (or approve) the organization. We explain the registration process in detail in chapter 2. The challenge for institutions is to communicate with the public regarding the educational mission of the institution. For example, this mission may include providing a means of dialogue, debate, and free speech, thus allowing students an opportunity to explore the value of an organization that appears to offend others.

The fifth institutional challenge is to bring campus leaders together for discussions of events, problems, and the life of the institution. Institutional leadership should understand that the students are some of the best sources of feedback and insight for the institution. Students can provide valuable information on academic advising, campus safety and security, career planning, and parking.

Many institutions have invited students from select student organizations to provide this information. The presidents, vice presidents, and directors at these institutions have discovered the value of establishing relationships with a student constituency that can later be helpful when a campus crisis occurs and students are needed to assist in distributing information, making public statements, or sharing a podium during a press conference. They have found value in gaining student support for needed fee or tuition increases, securing funding for building construction, or voicing support for a policy, statute, or law change. Chapter 7 discusses the relationships that student organizations have with the institution. Thus, another institutional challenge is to understand the ongoing value and resources that student organizations, their leadership, and their membership can provide to the institution.

A final institutional challenge is to educate the members and officers of student organizations about the requirements for holding an elected position and the priority the institution places on students' academic success. Institutions, primarily through the student activities office, maintain the information necessary for determining officer eligibility. As the number of student organizations has swelled to over one thousand on some campuses, institutions face increasing difficulty in reviewing records for eligibility. Some campuses have specific eligibility requirements for students to be members or to serve as officers (or both). These requirements may include students maintaining a minimum grade point average, students enrolling in and maintaining a minimum number of course credits to hold a position, or that students show academic progress to graduation. In these cases, it is the institution's responsibility to review the officers' or members' grade point averages and class loads, because student records cannot be revealed to student organizations under current privacy laws.

Organizations

One of the greatest challenges facing a student organization is to recruit and retain an adequate membership base. Recruiting is less of a concern for some organizations because of the nature of their activities. For example, military or recognition organizations may have a direct academic linkage

that serves as an organization's entry point. Others, such as intramural sports groups or sports clubs, experience substantial student interest and may have to limit the number of participants. Still other organizations, such as fraternities and sororities, have an extensive process of recruitment and a comprehensive orientation into the organization. The recruitment process may involve many hundreds of interested students.

For many special-interest student organizations, recruitment and retention are vital, ongoing concerns. The organization may spend time at student organization program fairs, spend money on ads, identify student members to utilize social media sites to promote their organization, or they may produce video pieces to publicize their organization. Because so few students may be interested in a particular special interest, the organization must publicize to the broader student body to attract members. These organizations work with media outlets to share information about their successes, projects, and the benefits membership provides.

Securing funding to meet the organization's needs is another challenge. Some organizations receive direct funding from student activity fees, student government allocations, fundraising efforts, membership dues, private donations, or foundational accounts and trusts. Most student organizations, however, spend time raising funds and soliciting for money to operate on even the most frugal budgets. Successful student organizations will identify multiple reoccurring funding sources to support their efforts versus relying on one funding source. Chapter 8 provides a number of suggestions about fundraising to support student organizations.

Auditing financial records and maintaining fiscal responsibility also are organizational challenges. Providing oversight for the budget is crucial. Many institutions require audits of accounts through a student government or student activities general accounting office. More often, this responsibility is assigned to the organization's treasurer, with additional oversight provided by the adviser. Some large student government operations may be audited by the institution's office of audit and compliance on an annual basis due to budgets well over $1 million. Again, chapter 8 provides guidance for this challenge.

Another organizational challenge is to identify and train individuals to advise student organizations. To be recognized, registered, or sponsored on most campuses, an organization must have an adviser. Granted, most organizations select their adviser on the basis of the interest or previous involvement the person has with the organization. Other organizations inherit advisers who serve in that capacity due to the responsibilities of their positions. These organizations may have little or no input into the

selection of their adviser. Still other organizations have great difficulty finding a faculty or staff adviser due to the perceived amount of work the adviser must contribute to the student organization, the nature of the organization or its values, the travel required, or the embarrassment an adviser might experience by being associated with a controversial student organization. Due to the continually changing landscape of liability and regulations—which includes Clery Act reporting, Title IX, and protocols related to minors—fewer faculty and staff are eager to serve in an advising role.

Another challenge for the organization is to make an active effort to involve the adviser in its meetings and activities. For many organizations this is never an issue as advisers are fully engaged and attend all meetings and activities. Other organizations appear to work in a vacuum, failing to communicate with their adviser on any matter including the dates and times of meetings. In order for advisers to be effective, they must be able to attend and, to a certain level, participate in organizational meetings and activities.

A difficult challenge for some organizations is understanding that the act of registering their organization comes with the responsibility of complying with policies and procedures of the institution. Often these policies and procedures require organizations to submit timely and proper paperwork to maintain organizational eligibility, budget oversight, or officer rosters. Student organizations travel internationally, work with food purveyors, manage complex contracts, and purchase materials and equipment. Many of these processes may require the adviser's signature for approval. These organizations work closely with the institutional staff to manage the processes necessary for any oversight. This challenge is especially difficult for disorganized or unorganized student groups. Organizations not receiving funding from the institution may have the perception that they do not owe the institution anything and consequently do not need to submit anything to the bureaucracy of the institution. An adviser can always assist in these matters by providing direction for the organization and clarity of purpose.

A final challenge facing organizations relates to one mentioned in our discussion of institutions. The organization must monitor activities and events for liability and risk management implications. In many cases, as an institutional representative, the adviser serves an important function by reviewing planned organizational activities and events. An adviser's knowledge of the details of the activities and events is of even more importance when contracts, travel, large purchases, or other potential risks to students are involved. The institution and organization must provide

adequate training to the adviser. Much of this training will be the responsibility of the campus student activities office.

Advisers

In your work as an adviser, one of your greatest challenges is managing your time and not becoming overcommitted to the organization. The students and the organization can be very demanding of your time. Attending weekly meetings with the student organization president, the executive board, and the organization itself; attending a couple of activities or events each week; traveling to conferences, meetings, and events; making phone calls; attending individual meetings with students in the organization; and writing letters of reference and recommendation—these activities collectively can take a considerable amount of time. You need to set expectations early as to your ability to attend meetings, events, and activities. Meeting with the organization's executive board soon after their election or selection is important to discuss your level of availability and attendance. Your personal and professional situation (e.g., work requirements, family obligations, and so forth) may require you to openly discuss your availability. Discussing and setting expectations early will help prevent a later misunderstanding. Chapter 5 provides additional information on the demands placed on advisers.

The typical training of the adviser can be minimal to elaborate. Some advisers refine their skills by taking advantage of professional organizations and associations to attend programs and listen to speakers. Others will use the organization's manuals or notebooks to provide advising information. Still other advisers have developed a proven advising technique over many years of experience or have applied their knowledge of supervision to the role of advising. Some student activities and involvement offices provide intentional adviser training on behalf of the institution. This training might include legal and financial topics, processes and procedures to purchase materials and equipment, processes to reserve space, and the like. Chapter 5 provides detail on the skills common to both supervising and advising.

Graduate courses continue to emerge that focus on advising student groups and organizations. Colorado State University's graduate degree in student affairs in higher education lists advising student groups and organizations within their portfolio of professional practices competencies. Arkansas Tech University offers an elective course in advising student groups as part of their Master of Science degree in college student personnel. The campus student activities office and the central office of an organization's national association are excellent places to start in identifying

adviser training opportunities to overcome the challenge of lack of training. Colgate University utilizes a guide to advising student organizations through their center for leadership and student involvement. Baylor University uses a student organization adviser summit held every semester to train their advisers. The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) includes adviser training within their annual national convention.

Another challenge for you is to clarify for members what your role is in the organization. Students will have their own ideas; your role should be discussed as soon as possible following the election or selection of officers. Following a discussion of everyone's expectations, it is also important to discuss what you and your office staff can provide, how to communicate effectively among the members, the executive board, and yourself, and the time and stress management of the member, executive board, and adviser positions. Chapter 5 provides some activities to assist in the discussion of these issues.

Another challenge for you is to avoid becoming overly controlling in the organization's matters. The organization is for the students, and decisions should be made by students. An adviser who begins to take control by making decisions or running meetings takes the risk of having the students vote with their feet by leaving the organization or ostracizing the adviser. Most faculty and staff advisers play supervisory roles, and their practice and experience as supervisors is helpful for providing direction, assisting in the decisions, and facilitating meetings. Advisers must step back and allow the students the opportunity to run their organization. Some circumstances can arise in which you should take more directive action. Chapter 9, on legal issues, provides detailed information on the matters in which the institution might be liable and it would be necessary for you to intervene. Chapter 8 discusses circumstances in which the financial integrity of the institution would be at risk, necessitating your taking action. In most situations, these matters can be worked out with the organization's president or executive board in advance of the program, activity, or meeting.

Another challenge for you is to be aware of decisions and action taken by the organization. Some advisers are not able, for a variety of reasons, to attend the organization or executive board meeting and therefore will miss some of the decisions being made by the organization. It is nonetheless the responsibility of the adviser to be aware of the decisions that are made in order to respond to questions, to ensure that financial and legal issues are properly addressed, and to better understand the climate and attitude of the organization and its members. You can stay informed about decisions by meeting on a weekly basis with the organization's president, by reading

minutes, or by communicating via e-mail or social media with the president or secretary.

Finally, you can be challenged to be patient in the growth and developmental processes of students. It may seem easier simply to make decisions for the organization and quickly provide solutions and results. You need to ask yourself, however, in what ways membership in the organization will augment the students' education. If you allow students the opportunity to discover answers themselves and to attempt different approaches or techniques to group development, the students will benefit. Doing so entails patience and the ability to sit back and allow the process to take its course. Trial and error can be a valuable approach to student and organizational development without harm to the students, organization, or institution.

Students

Astin's research (1993) found several challenges for students related to their involvement in campus organizations. He determined that involvement in a social fraternity or sorority has a negative effect on liberalism; participating in intercollegiate sports has a negative effect on students' performance on three standardized tests (GRE Verbal, LSAT, and NTE General Knowledge), and requires a substantial amount of time for competition at the intercollegiate level; and working on class group projects has a negative effect on students' performance on the GRE Verbal test. Kuh and Lund (1994) found that "participation in student government was negatively correlated with the development of altruism" (11).

Another challenge to students, whether they are members of the executive board or members of the organization, is for them to make an active attempt to establish a relationship with you. You may be new to the organization, or you may have been involved as an adviser for many years. In any case, the student's challenge is to work with you to identify expectations and roles. This relationship building is a process that continues throughout the year. Chapter 4 provides detailed information on the relationship- and team-building processes.

Students are challenged to establish a system of communication that benefits and provides information to the organization. Student organizations thrive on continuous communication among the executive officers and members, the adviser and executive officers, the organization and institution, and perhaps the members and their constituency. Communication can be facilitated through technology (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, text messaging, voice mail, and the like), the distribution of agendas and minutes of the meetings, and discussions during meetings. Students are challenged

to develop an effective means of communication in order that all members and other interested parties receive proper and timely information.

A difficult challenge for students is to balance the time needed for their academic responsibilities and for the extracurricular activity of a student organization. You should be in a position to provide the information, resources, and referrals necessary to assist students in achieving this balance. Some advisers work individually with students to complete a time management analysis. Chapter 6 provides information and activities for you to use with your students.

A final student challenge is to be patient with the institution's decision-making processes. Colleges and universities, whether public or private, all have complicated systems of accounting for funds, submitting paperwork for travel, and making room reservations. You can help students work their way through these institutional procedures. In addition, you are in a position to provide information and clarification on these lengthy procedures. You can identify the faculty or staff on campus who will visit with students to hear about their needs or who might help to accelerate the administrative processes. However, students should not rely on you for all the answers or shortcuts in solving their problems. Nor should student leaders look for shortcuts for fast-tracking institutional procedures.

Rewards

Let us turn now to the wide variety of rewards that the community, institutions, organizations, advisers, and students can enjoy as part of their experience with student groups.

Community Rewards

The local community realizes a reward from the leadership and service provided to the greater community. Many student organizations have within their mission to provide community service. These student organizations focus on providing service for after-school students; mentoring for at-risk elementary, middle, and high school students; holding volunteer fairs to provide information on social issues and service opportunities; painting, repairing, or building homes and apartments; providing healthy lifestyle information to community members; judging local science fairs; or cleaning up local creeks and parks.

The Independent Sector (2013) provides an estimated value of volunteer time. In 2012 this time was valued at $22.14 per hour. Many colleges and

universities use this calculation to quantify their student organization and members' service hours. The Center for Leadership and Service at the University of Florida (2013) in their most recent report calculated 115,963 student and student organization service hours valued at $2,163,870 for the State of Florida and $2,526,833 nationally. The University of Tennessee (2013) allows students to self-log their service hours. In 2012–13 over 12,000 service hours were performed by students and student organizations.

College students make a significant contribution to their communities through volunteering and service, according to the most recent Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2012. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (2013), in 2012, 3.1 million college students dedicated more than 118 million hours of service across the United States—a contribution valued at $2.5 billion.

Institutional Rewards

An institution's ability to attract and recruit new students may be greatly increased by the visibility and involvement of students in organizations. Some of the more visible student organizations lead summer orientation programs for new and prospective students and their parents and families. Other organizations work throughout the academic year as student diplomats and ambassadors to host tours and speak to prospective students and their parents. These student organizations have as their primary purposes advancing the institution and providing information to campus visitors for the recruitment of students. Many other student organizations (such as military, collegiate sports, and special interests) use their visibility or connection to academic programs to recruit students to the institution. Involvement in recruitment programs can be found in many other student organizations' purpose statements. The array of cultural organizations on your campus allows institutions to demonstrate the diversity of their student body.

Improved retention is another institutional benefit of students' involvement in organizations. We know that "learning, academic performance, and retention are positively associated with academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peer groups" (Astin 1993, 394). Academic involvement includes time allocated to studying and doing homework, courses taken, and specific learning experiences. Involvement with faculty includes talking with faculty outside of class (for example, as part of involvement in student organizations), being among a group invited to a professor's home, or working on a research project. Involvement with student peer groups includes "participating in intramural sports, being a member of a social fraternity or sorority, . . . being elected

to a student office, and hours spent in socializing or in student clubs or organizations" (385).

Improved retention has also been demonstrated through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Hughes and Pace 2003). Students who participated in a community-based project, participated in cocurricular activities, and students who planned to have an internship or field experience were less likely to withdraw from the institution. Another NSSE study (2001) indicated that two-thirds of all minority senior students were "involved in community service and volunteer work" (3). In addition, a 2008 study (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea) concluded that "student engagement in educationally purposeful activities is positively related to academic outcomes as represented by first-year student grades and by persistence between first and second year of college" (555). Educationally purposeful activities were from a scale of 19 NSSE items including participating in a community-based project as a part of a regular course and working with faculty members on activities other than coursework (i.e., committees, orientation, student life activities, and so on).

Another benefit to the institution is to have students serve on various advisory boards and committees to provide feedback for institutional events and projects. Many institutions request that students from various organizations serve as representatives on search committees, athletic advisory committees, student union boards, concert committees, recreational sports advisory boards, budget advisory committees, or even as voting members of institutional and state governing boards. The feedback and insight that students provide the institution come directly from the consumer through a student organization.

A similar reward is to have key student organization leaders meet with campus administrators, faculty, and staff during times of crisis to provide feedback and assistance to the institution. In the past few years, serial killings, major fires, natural disasters, and terrorist activities have occurred on college campuses. The individuals who have lost their lives included students, faculty, and staff. These events and their aftermaths are difficult periods for the campus. The director of the counseling center on a campus that experienced multiple homicides observes, "The absolutely outstanding cooperation of our student leaders, particularly the student body president, enabled us to get valuable student feedback and perspectives, and provided strong leadership for students" (Archer 1992, 97). Involving key student leaders from such organizations as the residence hall association, fraternities and sororities, student government, the Hispanic-Latino student association, or the black student union can help the institution plan memorial

ceremonies, improve educational approaches to safety and security, or publicize enhanced services. In addition, student organizations can be involved in press conferences to help reassure students and answer questions.

Organizational Rewards

Naturally, the primary organizational reward is in providing students with an opportunity to participate in an enjoyable activity or to achieve a valuable purpose. Students participate in organizations, in part, to gain a sense of acceptance by their peers. Astin (1993) asserts that the peer group is the most potent source of influence on students' growth and development during their college careers. If students discover an organization that provides a common interest or academic theme to their liking, they may feel a greater sense of acceptance. The organization's reward is a group of students with common interests, enjoyment, or goals.

Another organizational reward is the opportunity to contribute to the tradition and history of the institution and organization. Many student military, sports, Greek letter, and honorary organizations have a rich history within an institution. The organizations may sponsor homecoming events, such as the student-produced Gator Growl at the University of Florida, a comedy, concert, and fireworks show pep rally in the football stadium, which attracts over thirty thousand students and alumni; career expositions; or major institutional events, such as VEISHEA at Iowa State University. "VEISHEA is an acronym for each of the colleges in existence at the time the festival was founded [in 1922]" (Schuh 1991, 40). Another example of a campus event is the Great Cardboard Boat Regatta at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, originally developed by Richard Archer, a professor of art and design, as a final examination for his freshman design class. These types of events provide some student organizations with the opportunity to contribute to the tradition and history of the college.

Another organizational reward is in the fulfillment of the organization's purpose. Some organizations advance an area of study or research, provide feedback to the institution, prepare students for military service, provide recreation, or represent students of a particular constituency. A student organization that fulfills its purpose provides one of the greatest rewards possible. When student leaders can keep their organization involved in matters within its stated purpose, the organization maintains strong leadership and meets its goals. This improves the legitimacy of the organization on campus as being recognized for good work and increases its sphere of influence. When a student organization finds it necessary to pursue other meaningful purposes, the students must know and understand how to revise their constitution, adjust purpose statements, or redirect the resources available to them.

Adviser Rewards

One of the several rewards for you as an adviser is being able to observe the development of students during their college matriculation. You have the opportunity to work with incoming students and, in many cases, observe them in and out of classroom environments over the course of several years. You can feel the students' excitement as they too discover an organization. It is rewarding to observe the students as they move from membership to leadership roles, or from being reserved to participating fully. When seasoned advisers are asked why they continue to serve, the majority of answers include the idea of being in a position to make an impact on the growth and development of students.

Another reward for you, one that is seldom sought, is to be recognized by the institution, organization, and students for a job well done. Letters from students ten years after they graduate, a plaque from the executive board at the conclusion of the year, a distinguished service award from the institution, an advising award from the organization's national association, or a thank-you from a student—all these are possible (usually unexpected) rewards for your involvement in a student organization.

You should feel flattered in serving as a reference for students. When a student approaches you for a reference, it means that in the student's eyes, a relationship exists between you and the student. At certain times of the year the request for references can be inordinately heavy; however, the reward in being asked to complete a reference far outweighs the work involved in providing it.

A very fulfilling aspect of being an adviser is in serving as a mentor for students. Either you or the student can initiate the mentor relationship. Maintaining contact with certain students during their academic career or providing them assistance following their graduation can be very rewarding to a mentor in an advisory capacity. Chapter 5 provides detail about the mentoring role and also identifies activities that you and students can undertake.

Another reward for you is the opportunity to be able to observe the fads, cultures, and subtle changes that occur in student life. You sometimes are among the few individuals on campus who possess a sense of campus activities and attitudes. In the course of attending meetings, going on trips with the organization, or attending evening activities, you will find it easy to observe and note the language, dress, and nonverbal communication of the students along with the various messages and nuances of their interaction. Your being able to relate enables better understanding of students, which in turn helps you as you work with the organization, academic department, or institution on student problems and concerns.

Advising also provides an opportunity to teach, lead, and coach students involved in student organizations. You may present programs to

the organization's membership or executive boards, facilitate leadership development programs for members, take members and executive boards on retreats and workshops, or involve the members in community service or volunteer service. These types of activities allow you to practice your teaching, leading, and coaching skills. Chapter 5 provides detailed information and activities for each of these advising roles.

Another reward is an opportunity to form networks with colleagues involved as advisers of similar organizations. Traveling to professional or student-oriented conferences allows you the opportunity to visit with colleagues with similar interests. These trips and collegial relationships not only rejuvenate you but also help create a network to rely on for resources and information. Some organizations have highly developed regional, national, or international associations for advisers, separate from the students. These organizations provide you a forum in which to openly discuss problems and present views. Similarly, an increasing number of online discussion groups are available for advisers of different organizations. These groups provide a more global opportunity to discuss topics and access resources without even leaving the office. Chapter 2 provides summary information on different types of student organizations as well as on the professional organizations available to you.

The opportunity advising provides to serve the institution is yet another reward. Many faculty in large, research-oriented institutions are evaluated on the basis of their teaching, research, and service. Serving as a faculty adviser to an organization enriches the service component of a faculty member's annual dossier. This reward is peripheral to the many others you will realize as an adviser, but is nonetheless important for those faculty who have tenure or other related compensation considerations tied, at least in part, to institutional service. In community colleges the faculty evaluation process will emphasize teaching and service. Advising a student organization as a faculty member at a community college is an excellent way to provide services and is rewarded accordingly.

A final reward for you is the opportunity to participate in an organization whose purpose you enjoy. For many faculty and staff, the work of their profession leaves little time for additional special interests. However, among the wide variety of student organizations that exist, you can often find one whose activities or purpose complements your interests.

Student Rewards

As we have already discussed, the rewards or benefits students gain through involvement in extracurricular activities have been studied extensively.

Astin (1993) reports that membership in a social fraternity or sorority has positive effects on leadership abilities; participating in intramural sports has a positive effect on physical health, alcohol consumption, and attainment of the bachelor's degree; and participating in collegiate sports has positive effects on physical health, leadership, and satisfaction with student life. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) conclude that learning and personal development are enhanced when students are involved in educationally purposeful extracurricular activities. Kuh and Lund (1994) observe that involvement in student government "was the single most potent experience associated with the development of practical competence" (10). Practical competence in this case is defined as skills that employers are seeking, in such areas as decision making, leadership, cooperation, and communications. Kuh and Lund also report that participation in student government contributes to the development of self-confidence and self-esteem. Student skill development can be greatly increased through their building self-confidence and self-awareness. "Students with an awareness of their weaknesses were better equipped to challenge themselves to apply new skills and improve themselves through practice" (Fincher 2009, 303). Involvement in student organizations provides students an opportunity to become better listeners, manage problems, and expand their motivation.

Student rewards include being recognized by the institution, organization, or adviser; meeting new people and discovering new friends; gaining new skills that can be transferred to their careers; networking with faculty, staff, and employers through contacts gained in the student organization; enjoying the personal satisfaction of completing tasks and projects that have received a positive evaluation; and the sense of giving back to their institution by serving as a campus resource to parents, faculty, staff, and other students.

Students also benefit when they learn skills while working with the organization that can be transferred to their career. Chapter 6 provides an exercise in identifying these transferable skills.

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You will find tremendous gratification in advising a student organization. The few challenges are always manageable. The following chapters will provide you numerous resources to prepare you to realize the many benefits.