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# Empowering Advisors to Facilitate Change

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## STUDENT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY

*Empowering Advisors to Facilitate Change  
in Student-Led Organizations*

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**Advancing group dynamics is difficult. In order for students to learn, develop, and grow within an organization, they need to be empowered by their advisor to feel that their ideas and contributions are both important and valuable. This concept of empowerment means providing freedom for people to do successfully what they want to do, rather than getting them to do what you want them to do (Whetten & Cameron, 2011). As an advisor to a student-led organization, it is important to empower students to identify specific actions and strategies that facilitate change and achieve the outcomes of the organization.**

In order for advisors to successfully empower their students, they need to exhibit five core components of empowerment. These core components include self-efficacy, self-determination, personal consequence, meaning, and trust

(Whetten & Cameron, 2011). By exhibiting these core components of empowerment, an advisor is able to facilitate change by allowing students to perform confidently, feel autonomous, and move toward a positive result. In addition, these core components will allow the student to value the purpose of the organization as well as trust that the advisor is there to support and advocate for them. This philosophical foundation and these core components of empowerment can be incorporated into the advising style to facilitate change in a student-led organization.

### Theory and Application

According to Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) five-stage model of group development, organizations mature through key points. As an advisor, one must be cognizant of these transition points in order to guide students in promoting meaningful change. Furthermore, when working through change, it is essential to know who your change champions or supporters are and to understand adopter categories that coincide with each stage of group development (Rogers, 2003). For example, one must seek out early adopters in order to get the buy-in of other members of the organization. These student leaders have the greatest degree of transformational leadership ability and can often trigger a critical mass of students to subscribe to the organizational change (Northouse, 2007; Rogers, 2003). This notion is further supported by Rowley and Sherman (2001), who list developing change champions as a key component of their 11 steps to implementing successful change.

Upon identifying change champions, an advisor must be aware that a successful positional leader's power and



ability to be effective comes from the members within the organization. Thus, applying *The Leadership Challenge* model in promoting change within the organization can reap many benefits (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). Ultimately, by encouraging organizational leadership to set the example, inspire a shared vision, and foster collaboration within the group, advisors can inspire leaders who influence organizational change (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). After all, "leadership is the key to effective change management" (Rowley & Sherman, 2001, p. 161), but systemic change is best achieved through the understanding of culture and gradual measures.

### Conclusion

It is important for advisors to serve as educators and empower advisees. This includes delegation of tasks, which is mutually beneficial: Delegation establishes trust, fosters respect, cultivates skill acquisition, and promotes leadership for all organizational members. Although not all advisors of student-led organizations view themselves as cocurricular educators, it takes a dynamic educational approach and invested energy as an advisor for empowerment and delegation to occur. Successful advisors employ a balanced theoretical and practical approach. Through understanding the theory and application of empowerment, advisors will successfully facilitate learning, development, growth, and change in student-led organizations. ■

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