

Recommendations Worksheet for

Starting and Operating a Learning Center Advisory Board

Craig, A., Richardson, E., & Harris, J. (2018). Learning center advisory boards: Results of an online exploratory survey. *The Learning Assistance Review*, 23(2), 85-112.

Having an established advisory board in a learning center is considered a best practice by multiple professional organizations. NCLCA includes the use of an advisory board as one of the criteria for certification as a Learning Center of Excellence. This worksheet is based on established practices and results of a research survey on advisory boards in learning centers.

Benefits of having a learning center advisory board include:

- Increased collaboration on campus
- Strengthened campus partnerships
- Improved relationships with academic departments and faculty
- Enriched perspectives on marketing, programs and services
- Enhanced voice for students in the direction of the center
- Enhanced professional feedback on center mission, goals and objectives
- Increased advocacy for the learning center
- Increased faculty involvement

Determine Purpose/Mission

A key recommendation in developing an advisory board is to create a purpose or mission statement based on the mission, goals and objectives of your learning center.

Consider: provide advice/counsel/guidance, gain ideas for marketing the center and programs, provide a sounding board for center director and staff, assist with developing collaborative relationships or strengthening current relationships with key stakeholders, prioritize programs and budgets.

Example: Advise the Learning Center Director on ways to increase the impact of the Learning Center.

Your purpose? _____

Determine Specific Activities for Your Advisory Board

An effective advisory board will have clearly established activities or goals. These activities will set the stage for establishing a successful advisory board.

Consider: providing input for prioritizing learning center initiatives, services, and budget requests; acting as a sounding board regarding learning center tactical and strategic plans; ensuring collaboration opportunities are maximized; reviewing the status of the learning center operation, budget, services, and initiatives.

Your goals for key activities: _____

Identifying Board Size and Members

The average board size is 9-12 members and it is not related to size of the institution. The actual size may be less important than selecting the right members who will help you accomplish your purpose/ mission; consider the key stakeholders. Some learning center directors request appointments from key areas, and others invite specific individuals from those areas. Membership will depend on multiple factors, including the mission, goals, and function of the learning center. The center director may serve as the chair, or members of the advisory board may elect a chair. Usually the learning center director schedules and leads the meetings; however, it may be more beneficial to have someone from the advisory board to serve as chair.

Consider: Faculty from key areas supported, key administrators, housing/student life representatives, academic advisors, disability services, veterans’ affairs, athletics, student body representatives, or others who have a vested interest in the learning center services, mission, and goals.

Your Proposed Advisory Board Membership: _____

Your proposed Board Chair: _____

Term Limits and Meeting Frequency

Decide how long you would like members of the board to serve and how often you would like the board to meet.

Consider: Some boards have 1-year term limits for members, especially for student representatives; other boards have term limits of up to three years. Some review membership annually, often inviting current members to continue. Others have no term limits.

Advisory board meetings may be held monthly, twice a semester, each semester, or annually. The learning center director needs feedback on budget opportunities in time to include them in budget requests. A meeting prior to the start of the academic year helps ensure the program is focused and visible.

Your proposed member terms: _____

Your proposed meeting frequency and schedule: _____

Final Thoughts

Many learning centers formalize these choices to create a set of bylaws for the advisory board so that all understand the purpose and operational rules of the board. In addition, someone from the board or the learning center should be responsible for taking minutes to provide a record for each board meeting. Lastly it is important that the meetings be planned and conducted well—if needed, review methods for running effective meetings.

