

# Research on Problems in the Selection of University Student Societies Faculty Advisors

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**Abstract**—This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the current selection and recruitment of faculty advisors of university student societies and puts forward suggestions for its improvement. The suggestions are as follows: restating the important role of faculty advisors of university student societies, extending the means of recruitment, promoting institutionalization, establishing an evaluation system and strengthening advisory training. All these measures aim to provide advice and guidance for selecting and recruiting faculty advisors of university student societies.

**Keywords**—higher education institutions; student societies; faculty advisors; selection and recruitment

## I. INTRODUCTION

University student societies are an effective and important way to realize quality education. They play a crucial role in building campus culture, improving the students' comprehensive ability, preparing them for the society and career and so on. Under the new circumstance, it is a fruitful means to unite and mobilize students for political education, which complements the political and ideological education carried out by the university.

"National mid- and long-term education reform and development plan (2010-2020)" pointed out that adhering to the people-oriented and wholly enforce quality education are the strategic theme of the reform and development of education. However, with the increase in the number of student societies and organizations, the absence of professional and timely guidance from specialized advisory team has become a major restrictive factor in the further development of student societies

"The views of CPC Central Committee and State Council on further strengthening and improving the ideological and political education of students" pointed out that it is necessary to closely lead and manage student societies by appointing advisors who support and guide students to carry out activities. Therefore, it has become a matter of paramount importance to clarify the responsibilities and role of the advisors and their employment criteria and recruitment.

## II. A SUMMARY OF FACULTY ADVISORS' RECRUITMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENT SOCIETIES

### A. Defining the Concept and the Role of A University Student Society Advisor

University student society advisor are recruited to guide the running of student societies, especially the activities related to their majors, and participate in ideological education and management of societies. The advisors are usually teaching faculty and administrative staff (Tang 2006).

At present, there are two kinds of advisors. The first one is teachers working in the Communist Youth League who are responsible for the daily management of student associations, and the other is teachers who guide the construction of specific student associations. In this paper, faculty advisors of university student societies refers to teachers who guide the construction of specific student associations.

In the process of the cultivation and development of college student associations, the role of faculty advisors covers two aspects. Between them, one is the role of supervision, which covers the management of community affairs and activities to ensure that norms and scientific principles are followed; the other is the role of guidance, which means to provide comprehensive guidance and full support and to build broader platforms and creating favorable conditions for the development of student associations.

### B. Research on the Recruitment of the Faculty Advisor

Main research on student societies focuses on its management mechanism, function and effects, and ideological and political education while little attention was paid to the selection and recruitment of the faculty advisors. Above all, Ren and Zhao (2011) have researched on the management of college student associations, which saw recruiting faculty advisors as an important means to elevate students societies.

The existing research on faculty advisors mainly touches on the management model of the faculty advisors and the guidance model for the student associations. For example, Wang et al. (2010) pointed out that the faculty advisors can better perform their duties by establishing leadership, accountability and strengthening management.

Yu (2007) proposed the 'Tutor + Schoolmates' model to improve the instruction of college-students associations, which expand the range of recruitment groups and management measures.

The above research on faculty advisors of university student societies has put forward the management and recruitment measures of faculty advisors from the macro-perspective, and has laid a solid foundation for the future research on the selection and employment of faculty advisors. However, none of them provided specific and detailed analysis and measures.

This paper will start from the perspective of the recruitment of faculty advisors of university student societies, to further clarify the important role and present status of the recruitment, and to make effective recommendation.

### III. THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ADVISORS TEAM

Faculty advisors are the instructor of the university student societies who are recruited in the development process to supplement students' lack of knowledge, organizational ability and experience, and have a certain guiding role in the development and construction of the student associations. The characteristics of the university student societies are extensive, fluid and loose, which cannot be overcome by the development of the societies itself.

Hence, an external force is urgently called for to help them develop healthily. The role of the college faculty advisors is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

#### A. To Grasp the Direction of Student Association

There is no doubt that student associations contribute to the quality education in universities. It can be regarded as the cradle of leadership and capacities. But the prerequisite of the student association is that it can develop in the right direction, otherwise it may cause serious harm to the students both physically and mentally, and mislead the students' values and world view.

Undergraduates are the precious wealth of the country, and are the backbone of building a well-off society in an all-round way and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is not hard to see that the growth of college students receives so much attention.

Students' association is an open platform to help college students grow. However, it may be affected by many factors. Therefore, faculty advisor of student associations should ensure a right development direction and a healthy development. Faculty advisors of students' associations can guide students' interests, foster positivity, establish a harmonious campus culture, and help students to develop characters and abilities.

#### B. To Guide the Student Activities

The independence of the activities of students' associations provides a platform for students to exercise and display their talents. However, in the course of implementation, they are faced with some problems due to the lack of knowledge

structure, experience and experiences. Solving these problems can not only ensure the smoothly running of community activities, but also teach students how to face and solve problem. Faculty advisors of students' associations should guide students how to carry out activities to better improve the student's ability and achieve the goal of associations. They should organize the activities themselves but teach students how to carry out the activities. They can promote the student associations with good and fast development, a "catalyst" in the process.

#### C. To Inherit the Culture of Student Association

College student associations' culture is the sum of material wealth and spiritual wealth of students associations, including its activities, image, value, spirit, brand and cultural products (He 2002). Student associations' culture is an important component of campus culture and the soul of the development and construction of the student associations. The formation of student association culture requires time and transition. Fluid membership is a very significant feature of student associations. The cultural heritage will only be partially preserved during each transition as the new members come from very different backgrounds, different programmers and different years. The relatively stable characteristics of the faculty advisor can make up for this in the inheritance of the student association culture, and ensure the continuity and validity of the cultural transmission.

#### D. To Coordinate Developmental Resources of Student Associations

The development of student clubs requires a certain amount of resources, including funding, venues, policies, etc., and it is the responsibility of faculty advisors to ensure them. In recent years, the condition of funding and venues for clubs activities has been improved. Although compared to the rapid development of student clubs, the resources are still very limited. Under current conditions, the resources provided by the universities can't satisfy student club development in one step. Therefore, on one hand, the students' club should make the best of current resources provided by the universities; on the other hand, student clubs should tap potential resources as many as possible. The faculty advisors themselves are one of the resources who guide the direction, activities and inheritance of student association culture. Meanwhile, the faculty advisors can help coordinate funding, activity venues, even policies and so on. From this perspective, faculty advisors play an important role in the current development of student clubs.

### IV. THE STATUS QUO OF THE RECRUITING AND SELECTING FACULTY ADVISORS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENT SOCIETIES— TAKING STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS IN DALIAN AS AN EXAMPLE

With the development of university student societies in scale and level, the role of faculty advisors is increasingly prominent. Recent decades see the number of college students surge dramatically, which leads to the shortage of educational resources and employment pressure. Therefore, college students are asked to further exert themselves, which has stimulated the development of university student societies. However, the recruitment and selection of the faculty advisors

have seriously lagged behind in face of the rapid development of student societies. The background knowledge of the thesis is mainly based on data about the faculty advisors collected from university student societies in representative universities in Dalian. The analysis of the existing problems on recruitment and selection of faculty advisors of university student societies is as follows.

**A. The Lack of Faculty Advisor Resources**

The current source of faculty advisors is quite unitary, which is mainly within the campus. When the number of university student societies is relatively small, the faculty advisors in the campus can meet the requirement. However, with the increasing of university student societies, the faculty advisors who are capable and willing are far from enough. Taking Dalian University of Technology as example, there have been 113 undergraduate university student societies in the university level up to September of 2016, which can be divided into sports competition, culture and art, public benefit, economic management, academic science and technology and mental health. However, only 57.3% of them have faculty advisors, and the professional associations' faculty advisors are extremely few, as shown in "Table I". Meanwhile, the current university student societies almost cover all disciplines, including liberal arts, science, engineering, medicine, and agriculture. The professionalization of clubs is becoming more and more prominent and the demands of matching faculty advisors are getting higher and higher. With the development of university student societies still on the way, some faculty members may dismiss them as insignificant but they have not fully realized the educational function of university student societies. Besides their attitude, faculties are preoccupied with teaching and research tasks and have little spare time, which has exacerbated the shortage of faculty advisors.

TABLE I. THE PERCENTAGE OF FACULTY ADVISORS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENT SOCIETIES AT DUT

	Culture and sports	Public benefit	Innovation and entrepreneurship	Academic science and technology	Theoretical study	Total faculty advisors
PC	44	4	7	14	3	72
%	76.7%	28.6%	50.0%	82.4%	100.0%	63.7%

<sup>a</sup> PC: number of faculty advisors %: percentage

**B. Remuneration Is not Guaranteed**

In recent years, the university student societies do have developed to some extent, but the role and function of university student societies have not yet attracted enough attention from the school board, and the workload recognition and allowance of faculty advisors have not been specified. Many faculty advisors are enthusiastic about the growth of young students, coupled with the students' repeated requests, and then they agree to be their faculty advisors. But their jobs are voluntary and unreimbursed, as they neither have certain allowance, nor workload recognition. Those universities with better conditions would give some symbolic reward to the

faculty advisors at the end of the semester, as shown in "Table II". University student societies call for responsibility and enthusiasm, but they also need a guaranteed mechanism maintain and reward their sense of responsibility and enthusiasm. Guiding the construction of student clubs not only has a high demand for the quality of teachers, but also takes up lots of personal time as most of the student clubs' activities are conducted in the evening or on weekends. Therefore, it is very necessary to give certain allowance guarantee to the faculty advisors from the universities level.

TABLE II. THE ALLOWANCE FOR FACULTY ADVISORS AMONG UNIVERSITIES IN DALIAN

Dalian University of Technology	Dalian Maritime University	Dalian Nationalities University	Dongbei University of Finance and Economics	Dalian University of Foreign Languages
A small amount of allowance	A small amount of allowance	None	A small amount of allowance	None

**C. An Inadequate Evaluation System**

Effective evaluation system plays a significant part in promoting faculty advisors to enhance work research and improving the ability of faculty advisors in association construction. Through the assessment and evaluation, teachers and students can have a better understanding of the faculty advisors' work. Assessment is not only the process of recognizing faculty advisors' hard work, but also a major method of quantifying faculty advisors' performance. Assisting and guidance student societies are no easy task, which requires a certain understanding of college students' features, student associations' nature, student associations' guiding methods and ideological and political education methods and so on. Due to short history of college student associations in China, though the development has been relatively fast in recent years, there are still many imperfections when compared with student associations abroad since an effective evaluation system has not been established. Although some universities have established a preliminary evaluation system, the specific terms and rules are difficult to put into effect in face of the current lack of faculty advisors resources and specific safeguard measures, as shown in "Table III".

TABLE III. THE EVALUATION SYSTEM AMONG UNIVERSITIES IN DALIAN

University	Dalian University of Technology	Dalian Maritime University	Dongbei University of Finance and Economics	Dalian University of Foreign Languages
Establishment Condition	Preliminarily established	None	None	Preliminarily established
Implementation Condition	Preliminarily implemented	None	None	Preliminarily implemented

**D. An Inadequate Selection and Recruitment System**

The standardized selection and recruitment system is crucial to the introduction of student associations' faculty advisors. The majority of colleges and universities lack

guidelines on the appointment of student association faculty advisors and have not formed a sound system of selection and recruitment. Many important aspects are not specified, including the appointment procedures, faculty advisors' academic background, guidance rights, salary system and other provisions, resulting in ambiguity in faculty advisors' appointment and the procedures. Most faculty advisors are invited by students or selected through simple procedure, which is not conducive to scientific operation and management. In addition, some colleges and universities have not taken the selection and recruitment of faculty advisors into consideration, rendering the shortage and gap universal. Furthermore, the colleges and universities lack awareness of the importance and necessity of student associations' faculty advisors' selection and recruitment, which is also a subjective obstacle for the promotion of faculty advisors' selection and recruitment system as well as the establishment of the system.

#### V. COUNTERMEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS TO THE SELECTION OF FACULTY ADVISORS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENT SOCIETIES

Facing the robust development of college student associations and the lack of standard advisor selecting procedure, it has become the key to further develop China's college student association to actively seek solutions for selecting the teachers. We must attach enough importance to the role of advisors in the development of student societies and actively seeking more channels to find more qualified and enthusiastic advisors, as advisory will safeguard the development of student organizations. Meanwhile, through promoting the student association guidance teachers selection work with scientific and systematic methods, not only will more advisors be found but kept as well.

##### A. *The Important Role of Advisors in the Development of Student Societies*

The scope of college student association activities are no longer limited to campus. The socialization of student associations can enlist more funding resources and enrich activity types, which contributes to the growth of student organizations and students themselves and is in the spirit of quality education (Wang 2008). However, the socialization of student associations has brought difficulties to the management. The socialization is an irreversible and imperative trend. As higher education institutions, we should be ready to face these potential issues and see their relevance in student activities. It is very important to pay attention to the role of the advisor in the development of student associations as it is also the key to other questions.

Various aspects require our attention. One of the most significance is the right incentive, which shows the hard working advisors the recognition from school level. A clearly laid out incentive system will make a statement that the school attaches great importance to the development of student associations and further foster a sense of responsibility and mission among advisors, ultimately conducive to the quality of their work. The treatment can be reflected in all aspects. For example, the tutoring hours can be counted towards the working load and salary remuneration. Faculty members as

part-time advisors can be given priority in the professional title evaluation and job promotion, while the external advisors should receive acknowledgement from the Youth League Committee. As for advisors who have outstanding performance, appropriate incentives can be offered, such as training opportunities, honorary titles and so on.

##### B. *Expanding the Channel for Selecting and Recruiting Advisors*

Faculty members have been a main source for advisors and they should continue to be so.

First, I want to talk about the faculty. Many students associations activities are closely related to their programmers in college, and the assignments of the courses are the main content of the association activities (Wang & Ma 2010). Inviting professional teacher to serve as the guidance teacher can not only greatly enhance the quality of the association activities, but also organically combine "the first classroom" and "the second classroom".

Second, I want to talk about administrative staff. Many teachers working in college offices have a wealth of student management experience and have a wide range of contacts with the students, and some of their work is closed to the activities of students. If these teachers are invited to serve as the advisors, it can not only provide help in management, but also strengthen the approval sense of the student association activities from the teachers.

The third possible source of advisory can be retired faculty. Many retired faculty are still very keen to participate in guiding students' activities if their health allows. They often have rich experience in teaching and helping students, so they are almost the natural candidates for the job.

External advisory can complement internal resources as well.

##### C. *Promoting the Institutionalization of the Recruitment of Faculty Advisors of University Student Societies*

We must regulate the employment and management of faculty advisors of university student societies through a sound and scientific system.

First, we should promote the "Tiao" culture, where prior successful cases and experience will be learned and summarized as regulations and terms.

Second, the stakeholders and parties of the advisory should be specified, led by the School Youth League Committee and student service office, personnel office and deans' office.

Third, the scope of advisor recruitment should be laid out and roughly put into two categories. The first is internal and external teaching staff, experts and scholars who are well-versed in the subjects of the student organization and relevant specialization. The second is school faculty who are experienced in political education.

The fourth is to stipulate the remuneration of student society advisors. Criteria may include factors such as frequency,

length so it can be calculated as their workload and fit into the current payment system set by the personnel office.

This financial incentive will greatly encourage the advisors to put more efforts into their work.

#### *D. Perfecting the Evaluation System of Faculty Advisors of University Student Societies*

Evaluation system can promote the working ability of faculty advisors of university student societies, and the feedback of the evaluation can better perfect the teachers training content, to provide important reference for employing faculty advisors of university student societies.

In the process of operating, the School needs to establish specific evaluating system for teachers, signing letter of commitment and specifying their duty when employing guiding teachers. The evaluation task should be launched by School Youth League Committee, Community association and students' community, which includes the evaluation of quantity, quality and achievements, to be more specific, the time length of participating students' community activities, the quality of community activities and the achievements acquired.

#### *E. Enhancing Ongoing Training on the Faculty Advisors of University Student Societies*

The training of faculty advisors of university student societies is the guarantee of fulfilling the work and reducing the attrition of adequate advisors. Guiding student associations is not an easy task. Faculty advisors of university student societies not only have to offer guidance on the running of the student community activities, but also are responsible for helping students involved to elevate their capacities. Therefore, the training on the faculty advisors of university student societies has great significance. The training on the faculty advisors of college student associations should be focused on promoting college students all-round development. Advisors should be fully aware of the important meaning of students' community on promoting the students' ability.

Meanwhile, the training on the faculty advisors of college student associations should be targeted and current. By consulting with students, the training should cover what is required of the advisor and the target of student organizations and campus culture construction. Meanwhile, by continuous and regular training, the quantity and quality of capable advisors will be maintained and sustained.

## VI. CONCLUSION

With the society's increasing demand of high quality of college graduates, student organizations' role in fostering talents has been widely recognized. Through the establishment of a standardized, systematic and scientific instructor recruitment mechanism, by which student organizations can cherry-pick the most suitable advisors, promote the healthy and smooth growth of student societies and contribute more to cultivating college students.

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