Serving as an Advisor in the Student Conduct Process at Kalamazoo College

The Student Conduct Process at Kalamazoo College is an educational one. It is premised on using the best available information (accurate, truthful) to lead to the best possible decisions. It is not a version or variation of the legal system. Good advisors can provide a great deal of help to students involved in the conduct process.

Except in the case of alleged sexual misconduct, advisors are defined as members of the Kalamazoo College community - students, staff, and faculty. Students involved in cases of alleged sexual misconduct may be assisted by an advisor of their choice. The role of the advisor described below pertains regardless of the allegation or person serving in that role.

What is an advisor? Short answer: a “knowledgeable friend who can provide helpful advice and counsel.”

Good advisors:

- Provide personal support to students,
- help students understand the conduct process (https://reason.kzoo.edu/studev/stuconduct/ has comprehensive information about the student conduct process),
- help students prepare for their hearings,
- help students anticipate issues that may arise as part of the process,
- understand their advising role, and
- help students focus on the essential matter – providing accurate and truthful information, as clearly as possible, to the hearing officer or panel, and
- understand and respect the confidential nature of the student conduct process.

Good advisors also feel free to contact the Office of the Dean of Students with questions about their role and/or the conduct process.

The Advisor’s Role

Advisors are not responsible for determining if a student has violated the Code of Conduct, for representing or speaking for the student, for advocating or “making a case,” for questioning anyone, for investigating, or for talking to decision makers or others involved in a case prior to, during, or after the hearing (witnesses, authors of documentation, and the like). In fact, these activities are prohibited. Advisors are permitted to raise with the hearing officer or the hearing panel chair procedural questions that arise (“When does Buzz get to provide his account of the incident?”), but are not permitted to
speak as part of the hearing in any other way. Advisors who engage in prohibited behaviors or who are disruptive will be removed from the hearing and are not eligible to return to it.

Advisors best support students going through the process in the following ways:

Prior to the hearing. A “hearing” is the meeting to determine whether violations of the Student Code of Conduct have occurred. Prior to a hearing, students will receive a letter notifying them of the charge(s) and of a date to meet with a hearing officer. In high-level cases (typically, allegations that could reasonably result in suspension or expulsion), students will meet first with a hearing officer, and then with the Student Conduct Panel at a later date. Prior to a hearing, the advisor should:

- Learn about the charge(s) and what they mean, and be sure the student does the same.
- Encourage the student to review all relevant documentation, available in the Dean of Students’ Office during office hours. Accused students must give written permission for advisors to review relevant documentation.
- Understand the student’s account of the incident, and help the student identify inaccuracies in available documentation.
- Help the student organize their account and anticipate questions that may arise (who, what, when, where, and why are good guideposts).
- Encourage the student to be truthful.
- Remind the student that the focus is on discovering and using the best available information.

During the hearing. The student in a hearing will speak on their own behalf. Questions will be directed by the hearing officer or the panel to the student alone, and answers must come directly from the student. Advisors are permitted to raise procedural questions that arise (“When does Buzz get to provide his account of the incident?”), but are not permitted to speak as part of the hearing in any other way. Among other things, this means that advisors do not answer for a student, do not question anyone, and do not speak except to raise procedural questions.

During the hearing, the advisor should:

- Remind the student of important details they may have missed in their account of the incident, provide advice about questions that are asked of the student.
- Encourage the student to be truthful.
- Help students frame questions they may have for the hearing officer or panel.
- Be supportive and help the student focus on the matter at hand.
- Ask procedural questions if there are any.

After the hearing. Good advisors help students debrief about the conduct process, and, if necessary, understand the appeal process.

- Be supportive. Some decisions may not be made immediately and waiting can be difficult for students
- Understand and consider using the appeal process.
- Review written appeal and remind student of deadline.