

**Tuckman's Stages of Group Development:
Applied to Student Organization Advising**

Stage 1: Forming

During this stage the group is just getting started. An example of this time would be when the new executive board has been elected and they are just starting to make plans for the upcoming academic year. In this stage the group is usually excited and motivated but are unsure of their role and the overall group dynamic. The group will probably rely heavily on you or a returning member's guidance and direction.

As an advisor it is important to help form an effective team in this stage. This means helping board members set clear guidelines and expectations for themselves while defining individual roles within the group. It also means making sure that an environment of trust and inclusivity is created. Because the importance of this stage relies so heavily on creating the group dynamic, productivity may be relatively low. It is important to find a balance between creating the team and getting the work done.

Stage 2: Storming

During this second stage the group starts to focus on the goals that were set in the previous stage, and inevitably disagreements and conflict arises. Members also tend to have issues reconciling their original expectations and the reality of the group. Now that they feel more comfortable within the group, they may also feel more comfortable voicing frustrations and criticisms. You may also start to notice cliques start to form within the group that cause power struggles. Some members of the group may see this stage as an opportunity to "get at the real issues" while others may retreat and avoid the conflict.

In this stage an advisor is critical to serve as a mediator. You can help keep members focused on the goals of the organization and try to understand where the conflict is really coming from. It could be that the goals or roles need to be re-evaluated or that biases/norms within the group are blocking progress. It is also important to make sure that the conversations around conflict are handled civilly and absent of personal attacks.

Stage 3: Norming

Groups move into the third stage when they start to come to a general consensus. The previous stage revealed the problems with their originally created goals, structures, and norms. With this revelation the group is able to redefine all three to be more realistic and sustainable. In this stage the group members have a better understanding and appreciation for other members' skills, experiences, and perspectives. When problems do start to arise groups in this stage are better at having meaningful conversations and accepting constructive criticisms.

As an advisor you can help in this stage by promoting the teamwork and collaboration that is already happening. It is also important to remind the group to revisit expectations and goals so it can guide their work. Advisors can also be there for tougher conversations to ensure that the dialogue stays meaningful and constructive.

Stage 4: Performing

In this stage the group understands its goals and the roles that they play in achieving them. They become more strategic and task-oriented, and therefore are able to produce results. Members feel both confident in their individual skills and the accomplishments of the group as a whole.

Groups in this stage tend to be very autonomous, and therefore may reach out less to their advisor for help. However, this does not mean that there aren't actions you can take to best support groups in this stage. Advisors can encourage group members to learn new skills and take on new roles to further their development. Advisors can also be a great structure to ensure that the group does not fall back to the storming stage. You can do this by helping to celebrate the accomplishments of the group and help ease transition from both external and internal changes.