

# Advocacy Council

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HANDBOOK



# A Word from Our President...

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Fellow Traveler. Champion. Encourager. Proponent. Supporter. Friend.

These are synonyms for advocate. And they describe you—an advocate for the good news of Jesus Christ, for students and faculty, for InterVarsity's ministry, and for InterVarsity staff.

Since 1941, people like you have traveled alongside InterVarsity. You're needed now more than ever. Welcome to being part of an InterVarsity Advocacy Council.

Within this partnership, your experience and expertise can produce fertile ground for sustaining InterVarsity's ministry. Advocacy Councils help us grow and allow students and faculty opportunities to deepen their lives as disciples and followers of Jesus by the grace of God.

God, in His wisdom, knows how desperately His followers need help. *Advocate* and *advocacy* are found throughout Scripture, particularly as a descriptor of the Holy Spirit—an Advocate and Helper.

**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. —John 14:26**

**But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. —John 15:26 (ESV)**

Your willingness to be part of an Advocacy Council and help our staff on the journey of ministry that can sometimes be challenging is a great example of living and serving under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whether it's offering opinions on strategic planning, sharing what can be a heavy load of responsibility in ministry, giving time and resources, volunteering on campus, or leading in prayer, I thank you.

I look forward to seeing all that the Lord Jesus will do through Advocacy Councils and you—as an encourager, champion, friend, and more.

For God's glory,



Tom Lin  
President

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## THANK YOU

We thank and gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Young Life in their willingness to let us use their Advocacy Manual as a template and guide for our own. InterVarsity deeply appreciates our friendship with Young Life and our mutual calling to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to young people across the country.

# Biblical Basis for Effective Advocacy Councils

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The central and essential context for the Advocacy Council is found in the Bible. The Scriptures themselves are the rationale for the council structure and function.

## WE ARE CHOSEN TO SERVE

Our appointment to any mission, including an Advocacy Council, is Christ's initiative. Those who serve are called to this mission at Christ's invitation. InterVarsity has a God-given calling to reach the university for Jesus Christ. We who are called are also empowered so that we will bear fruit in Jesus' name.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. —*John 15:16*

## WE ALL DO THE WORK

We are chosen to do God's work in the world. Graciously, God chooses us, and then equips us with "...everything good for doing his will..." (Hebrews 13:21). We offer our own unique gifts so that the entire Advocacy Council will grow as individuals and the ministry of InterVarsity will flourish.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. —*Ephesians 4:11-12*

## WE ALL HAVE GIFTS

We possess different, yet complementary, gifts. The root of the word *complementary* is “complete,” and that is exactly what the effective Advocacy Council does—it helps bring a complete set of gifts to the ministry it is supporting. Every member of Christ’s body and every member of an Advocacy Council have gifts given through God’s grace. No one has every gift, and no one’s gifts are superfluous.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. —*Romans 12:4–5*

## WE SHARE IN MISSION

Paul uses the body as the model of Christ’s church more than 30 times in his letters. It is his most often used analogy for the church. Interesting how the parts of the body, as beautiful or essential as they individually may be, lose all relevance absent from the other parts. What good is a foot without a leg to make it useful or an eye to direct its path?

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.  
—*1 Corinthians 12:12, 25*

## WE DO IT TOGETHER

Paul sees the nature of the relationship as partnership, a team commitment to the mission to spread the Gospel with each person doing their part to contribute. This relationship is marked by a deep mutual affection and spiritual friendship that is built on a common commitment to the Kingdom.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.  
—*Philippians 1:3–6*

In the same way, the Advocacy Council works together as one body striving toward the same eternal purpose of transformation of the students and faculty through Jesus Christ while also seeing the transformation of our ministry partners.

# Who Should Be an Advocacy Council Member?

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The “who” on your council is more important than the number of members. Council members should be:

- Followers of Jesus
- Those interested in and/or passionate about InterVarsity, college students, and/or InterVarsity staff, as well as the next generation of church, local, business, and world leaders
- Believers who are called to partner with InterVarsity as a council member
- People who are involved and respected in the community
- Those who are willing to use their time, talent, and treasure, including their networks, to help the ministry grow

## THE ADVOCACY COUNCIL WILL SHARE OWNERSHIP IN THE MINISTRY BY:

- Praying for the ministry
- Providing practical wisdom and counsel for the integrity, longevity, and continuity of the ministry
- Being personally involved through using their gifts to serve in ministry
- Advocating within their networks to develop more ministry partners and financial resources needed to meet the Advocacy Council’s goals

## ADVOCACY COUNCIL MEMBERS WILL BE GENERALLY EXPECTED TO:

- Share in the 4 Ws
  - *Wealth*: Give financially to support the ministry
  - *Works*: Attend council meetings, attend InterVarsity activities with students each year as able and appropriate, and take an active role in council activities that support the ministry
  - *Wisdom*: Use their knowledge and expertise to influence the ministry
  - *Witness*: Be a positive witness and advocate for InterVarsity within their networks and connections
- Pray for the ministry
- *Note: Some members may not want to or be ready to ask others for money. Here are a few ways they can still help with Ministry Partnership Development:*
  - **Give** to InterVarsity themselves
  - **Advocate** by telling the InterVarsity story and educating people about what InterVarsity does and how great it is (“I’m serving on a council for the local InterVarsity ministry at \_\_\_\_ and I’ve got to tell you—it’s an impressive ministry...”)
  - **Make a list** of people who should hear about the ministry—people whom the staff could meet with and get to know and eventually invite into partnership
  - **Thank** other partners by phoning donors who are giving to the ministry or staff in the area, just to thank them for their gift
  - **Host** a porch party/dessert and coffee night to introduce their friends to InterVarsity (this is a no-ask event, but it’s an opportunity for staff to meet people and follow up later).



## ADVOCACY COUNCIL MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- Experience the joy of giving and serving
- Enjoy a new network of people to meet and befriend
- Exercise gifts and skills for the Kingdom of God
- Invest in something they love, value, enjoy, and are passionate about
- Hear about and be involved in transformed lives
- Influence the development of tomorrow's leaders today
- Pray in community for specific needs of the ministry

# Effective Advocacy Councils...

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## Have Goals and Action Plans for Success

Set aside time each year to establish Advocacy Council goals in collaboration with staff. If possible plan a day-long or overnight retreat dedicated to prayer, discernment, and planning. The time will be an investment not just in strategy, but also in the relationships that will sustain the council's momentum.

### Advocacy Council goals are:

- **Jointly determined.** Everyone participates because the body benefits from the discernment of its individual parts.
- **Long range.** Planning in faith means making sure you are reaching for something bigger than the immediate future.
- **Few in number.** Focus on what really matters to the ministry and what will be critical to the long-term viability (three might be a good number).
- **Specific in nature.** You can't measure progress against undefined outcomes and must be able to describe what success looks like.
- **Assigned to individuals.** Every Advocacy Council member contributes to stated goals. Individuals act as the group's steward of a particular aim.
- **Reviewed regularly.** Check progress, identify obstacles, and recalibrate as needed.

## ENSURE ADEQUATE TRIFOLD PARTNERSHIP

**Prayer Partnership** – Advocacy Councils will be a primary place for prayer support and intercession for the staff and the ministry. Members of the council will also bring prayer needs when appropriate.

**Hands-on Partnership** – Advocacy Council members will be involved in the life of the ministry beyond just council meetings. They will also reach out to their networks to recruit and advocate for hands-on activities when needed.

## Financial Partnership – Advocacy Councils will:

- Help to develop a vision for the ministry and then advise in establishing an annual operating budget.
- Develop a strategy for generating the needed financial resources outlined in the budget. This involves tasks like developing new ministry partners, creating an effective communications strategy, and facilitating great events.
- Make a regular personal financial commitment to support the ministry.

## PLAN AND HOLD REGULAR MEETINGS

While special meetings may be necessary from time to time, plan and hold meetings on a regular basis. Monthly is ideal, especially early on, but it may depend on the members and goals of the council. Consider the following tips for holding effective meetings:

- Set a schedule of days, dates, and meeting times with firm start and end times.
- Plan for a 90-minute meeting. Exceed that time limit rarely.
- Council chair plans the meeting with the InterVarsity staff member.
- Think about the ideal flow of the meeting. Incorporate the following meeting components:
  - Spiritual or devotional time
  - Ministry update
  - Review completed projects
  - Consider having a “Moment for Mission,” a time when staff, volunteers, or student guests share where and how God is at work in their midst. Be reminded of the larger and eternal purpose of serving on the council. Be encouraged by the reward of everyone’s investment. (Try to have a student testimony, story, or report in each meeting.)
  - Time to work on current issues/projects/events
  - Time to discuss upcoming issues/projects/events
- Once the agenda is established, send it to council members before meeting.
- Take minutes at the meeting and distribute them afterward. Highlight action steps agreed upon during the meeting.

## CELEBRATE AND EXPRESS GRATITUDE OFTEN

Appreciate your volunteers and council members. Cultivate an atmosphere of generosity and celebration. Their service, and yours, will be far more rewarding in an atmosphere of appreciation and gratitude.

Celebrate every accomplishment! Applaud, bake a cake, launch a balloon or two, present awards. Nothing is too insignificant to celebrate.

Say thank you to your partners, staff, volunteers, and council members often and sincerely. Make sure that at times this is done in person as well as handwritten form.

## EVALUATE THEMSELVES

The council goal-setting process, even if exemplary, is incomplete without dedicating time and energy to evaluating the progress toward area goals each year. The measurement of progress should occur at two levels, at the individual project or tactical level as well as at a broader or strategic level.

### **Project Review**

After every event, whether campus, conference, community, etc., debrief as a group. Review what worked well and, more importantly, what improvements your council would suggest for the next event. Document all comments, include them in your minutes, and refer the compilation to the responsible individual or sub-group for planning purposes.

### **Broader/Comprehensive Review**

At a more strategic level, annually ask the council to evaluate itself on progress toward stated goals and the mechanics of council functioning.

Example:

- Are we accomplishing our goals?
- Are financial resources more plentiful?
- Are meetings run effectively?
- Are meetings well attended?
- Are agendas comprehensive and useful?
- Are staff, volunteers, and student leaders contacted for prayer requests monthly?
- Are council members generally proud of InterVarsity in their community? If not, why not?

# Advocacy Council Structure

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Advocacy Council structures vary from campus to campus and ministry to ministry. They may even be fluid over time—responding to the changing needs of the local ministry.

*NOTE: When forming a new council, as staff you need to have some clearly defined expectations and goals to share with your potential council members. This will help them clearly understand Advocacy Council commitments. Once the council is formed, the members may be able to help shape future goals and expectations, but keep in mind that they want to serve you and the ministry first and foremost.*

Consider using these incentives as you invite people to join the council. Advocacy Council members:

- Help InterVarsity's ministry and staff carry out specific goals for ministering to students and faculty on campus.
- Network and advocate in the community for InterVarsity.
- Develop prayer and financial resources for the ministry.

## SIZE AND COMPOSITION

- Generally, Advocacy Councils should range from 8 to 12 members, plus the staff. However, do not wait to start until you have this number. Begin meeting with whomever has expressed interest and commitment to the council. Even if it is only one person, getting started right away will keep enthusiasm at a high level.
- All or most segments of the community should be represented on the council.
- A variety of professions and local churches should be represented on the council.
- Make sure you do not choose people just like you. A council full of ministry leaders, pastors, and youth pastors will not lead to the results we are looking for.
- Your Advocacy Council may benefit by appointing one-third of the members annually, thereby keeping a balance of new and veteran members. However, length of terms and renewability of terms will vary depending on the council.

## POSSIBLE STRUCTURES INCLUDE:

- **Traditional structure.** The most common structure is with a chair, treasurer, and other various roles based on need. Roles could be the same or similar to the sub-groups listed below, but function on the primary council.
- **Two-committee structure (used for a campus-focused Advocacy Council).** You could have one committee to focus on funding, strategy, networking, and accountability for the staff and a second committee to focus on serving the ministry practically (baking, providing food, volunteering, hosting events, grilling, etc.).
- **Sub-groups structure.** Sub-groups are established to do specific tasks. Interested participants may serve on sub-groups without serving on the Advocacy Council.
  - Examples of sub-groups might include:
    - Prayer
    - Finance
    - Community Relations
    - Recruitment
    - Alumni
    - Events (e.g., banquet, small dinners)
    - Student Leader & Volunteer Care
    - Hospitality

## START WITH A TASK FORCE?

- One option is to start with a Task Force instead of starting a council right away. This may be because you don't have enough of the right people or because the right people can't make a long-term commitment.
- Gather a group of people who would be willing to work with you on a one- or two-time basis or for three-to-six months on forming the best structure for your campus or area.
- You could also ask them to solve a problem for you—maybe an issue you have been stuck on or even how to form an Advocacy Council.
- Sometimes the best people to cast vision for this are not the best people to serve for a longer length of time. Personalities are essential to how this works.
- Some people on your Task Force may even be the solution to forming the Advocacy Council or know the people who will be.

## ADVOCACY COUNCIL ROLES AND POSITIONS

While your council may name several individuals to positions with distinct functions, all councils should name a council chair and treasurer with the responsibilities described below.

### **Council Chair**

The chair greatly influences the character and effectiveness of your council. Understanding the qualifications and functions of the chair will help identify the right person for the role. Having the right person in this role will make all the difference in your Advocacy Council being a success or not. Waiting for the right person is worth delaying the start of your council.

*Qualifications in addition to those mentioned earlier:*

- A leader and a motivator
- 100 percent sold on InterVarsity—totally convinced of what we do and how we do it
- Enough InterVarsity experience to appreciate our strengths and understand our weaknesses
- Able to lead and facilitate meetings effectively

*Functions in addition to those mentioned earlier:*

- Provide spiritual leadership, along with the InterVarsity staff person, for the council
- Lead in developing a vision for InterVarsity's potential in the community
- Maintain close relationships with the staff, helping staff communicate needs and problems as well as successes
- Act as a liaison and advocate between staff and council members
- Communicate issues of accountability from the council's perspective
- Build trust in the ministry
- Provide leadership in the recruitment, selection, retention, and retirement of council members
- Place council members in positions to utilize their talents
- Be in communication with the relevant staff and the staff's supervisor

## **Treasurer**

The council treasurer dispenses certain specific responsibilities that require a unique set of qualifications, experiences, and gifts.

*Qualifications in addition to those mentioned earlier:*

- Honest and trustworthy
- Talented with finances, budgeting, and/or accounting

*Functions in addition to those mentioned earlier:*

- Together with the InterVarsity staff person, assume administrative responsibility for funds involved in council projects (See Appendix B for InterVarsity guidelines regarding the different types of InterVarsity financial accounts)
- Review income and be accountable to the council for expenditures
- Communicate a monthly financial report to the council
- Submit an annual financial report on the campus or area and initiate preparation of the budget for the next year



## Other Council Members

- Council members should understand responsibilities they need to carry out.
- Over time Advocacy Councils should have an intentional process in place to recruit, select, and train new members.

*Qualifications in addition to those mentioned earlier:*

- Depends on the role or position that they serve in

*Functions in addition to those mentioned earlier:*

- Depends on the role or position that they serve in

*Potential Roles:*

- Alumni Coordinator
- Community Liaison
- Hospitality Coordinator
- Ministry Liaison
- Prayer Coordinator

## NETWORKS FOR BUILDING YOUR COUNCIL

- Alumni
- Church or Bible study groups
- Special Guest Tracks at conferences and events
- Council development weekends
- Current ministry partners
- Christian administrators or professors on campuses
- Members of sub-groups
- Those indicating an interest on banquet or event cards

# Appendix A

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## VISION STATEMENT

*Our vision is to see:*

Students and Faculty Transformed

Campuses Renewed

World Changers Developed

## PURPOSE STATEMENT

*In response to God's love, grace, and truth:*

The Purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA is to establish and advance at colleges and universities witnessing communities of students and faculty who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord: growing in love for God, God's Word, God's people of every ethnicity and culture and God's purposes in the world.

## DOCTRINAL BASIS

### *We believe in:*

The only true God, the almighty Creator of all things, existing eternally in three persons—

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—full of love and glory.

The unique divine inspiration, entire trustworthiness and authority of the Bible.

The value and dignity of all people:

created in God's image to live in love and holiness, but alienated from God and each other because of our sin and guilt, and justly subject to God's wrath.

Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, who lived as a perfect example, who assumed the judgment due sinners by dying in our place, and who was bodily raised from the dead and ascended as Savior and Lord.

Justification by God's grace to all who repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

The indwelling presence and transforming power of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all believers a new life and a new calling to obedient service.

The unity of all believers in Jesus Christ, manifest in worshipping and witnessing churches making disciples throughout the world.

The victorious reign and future personal return of Jesus Christ, who will judge all people with justice and mercy, giving over the unrepentant to eternal condemnation but receiving the redeemed into eternal life.

To God be glory forever.

## STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT

InterVarsity's Statement of Agreement involves agreeing to the above statements.

# Appendix B

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## SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS AND EXPENSE POLICY

1. **Staff account:** This is an operating expense account used to reimburse staff for all approved InterVarsity/USA expenses, salary, and benefits.
2. **School/chapter account:** This is an account that receives income. This is the account that we desire Advocacy Councils, local churches, and community people to give to. Expenses cannot be submitted to this account. Local supervisors can transfer funds from this account to cover expenses, provide salary and benefits for staff, etc.
3. **Scholarship accounts:** Ministry partners (including alumni and current students) can give money to this account for tax-exempt purposes. Money given to these accounts will not have any overhead taken out. Scholarships cannot be given to chapter-only events, but can be given to area retreats and other similar types of conferences. Students cannot ask friends and family to give to a scholarship account to cover their personal costs. They can invite friends and family to give to a scholarship account, but the amount of scholarship will be determined by the staff and staff supervisor.

## CHAPTER-RELATED EXPENSE POLICY

Local chapters are legally autonomous; therefore, some local chapter expenses cannot be expensed to InterVarsity/USA. To understand more, go to the following links. (InterVarsity staff must be logged in to view these resources.)

- [staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/campus-ministry/chapter-expenses-policy](http://staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/campus-ministry/chapter-expenses-policy)
- [staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/campus-ministry/local-chapters](http://staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/campus-ministry/local-chapters)
- [staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/expenses-and-reimbursement/chapter-related-expenses-policy](http://staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/expenses-and-reimbursement/chapter-related-expenses-policy)

## SCHOOL GIFT ACCOUNTS AND ALLOCATIONS

- [staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/donations-and-gifts/school-gift-allocations](http://staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/donations-and-gifts/school-gift-allocations)

## SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

- [staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/processing/scholarship-accounts](http://staffhandbook.intervarsity.org/processing/scholarship-accounts)

# Appendix C

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## TIPS FOR HOLDING AN EFFECTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

Leading an effective meeting that strikes a balance between spiritual, social, and task-oriented elements is more art than science. The leader of an effective council meeting will:

- Plan the meeting in advance. Make sure all meetings have a purpose. Identify the goals and action steps you are looking for—do not meet for the sake of meeting.
- Have and follow an agenda. Note: It is helpful to send out the agenda at least a week before the meeting, highlighting any work that might need to be done in advance.
- Start and end on time. Do not delay waiting for stragglers to arrive, and be sure to end at the appointed time. Council members will appreciate and adapt accordingly to a tightly run session. Note: It is helpful to plan some social time into the meeting for relationship building.
- Let members talk and share ideas.
- Utilize process strategies.
- Take breaks as needed.
- Have clear action steps identified and accepted.
- Send out a summary of the meeting with action steps within 24–48 hours of the meeting.

# Appendix D

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## INTERVARSITY'S AUTHORITY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

InterVarsity is overseen by a Board of Trustees. This Board supervises a president who is responsible for all InterVarsity activity. The InterVarsity Board of Trustees and the staff have legal authority.

The relationship between a campus staff and Advocacy Council should be characterized by trust, partnership, and collaboration, as the task to be accomplished requires the full engagement of the body of Christ. InterVarsity Advocacy Councils are advisory in nature and have no formal authority; they do, however, have significant influence in an area or a campus and are critical to a strong and sustainable ministry.







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