

“How can I reserve a room in the MUB?” “Which copier did we use last year?” “How do I pay for postage?”
“What do you mean University Dining Services needs a two week notice?”

These are common questions from new leaders of organizations that have had neither an effective nor sufficient leadership transition. Making the transition from the old (outgoing) to the new (incoming) leadership is the responsibility of both the outgoing and the incoming selected/elected leadership. The passage of knowledge, experience, accomplishments and goals for student organizations will help current officers gain a sense of completion and bring closure to their terms. At the same time, the transition gives the new officers valuable information, advice, and confidence for the future.

Leadership transition should be customized to fit your organization. There are some key aspects of a transition that should not be forgotten. First, it is a good idea to have the first meeting with the new leadership to be a joint meeting with the outgoing leadership. This allows the members-incoming and outgoing- to interact and share information about the organization or committee, plus gain insight into who one's predecessors are. This is also a good time to share contact information to help facilitate a smooth transition.

It is often helpful to break up the leadership transition process as to not overwhelm the incoming leadership. Refer to the included sample leadership transition (Meeting One, Meeting Two, and Meeting Three).

Other Suggestions

- A. Ask a professional in Student Life or someone else not involved with the organization or committee to help facilitate the leadership transition. An outside perspective is often helpful in catching things taken for granted by the outgoing and incoming leadership.
- B. Schedule an appointment with the Assistant Director of Student Life- Student Organizations and Leadership to familiarize the incoming leadership with existing and new policies concerning student organizations.
- C. Hold a retreat at which new and outgoing leadership can help plan for the upcoming year and better facilitate the leadership transition. Speak to Student Life for help with planning and facilitation of the retreat.

Meeting One

- A. Review purpose/objectives of the position, and/or committee.
- B. Review past programs and services.
- C. Evaluate the position and the committee or organization including its responsibilities and expectations.
- D. Share problems, helpful ideas and recommendations.
- E. Show new leader reading materials and appropriate files for review before the next meeting.
 1. Job descriptions and responsibilities
 2. Status reports on continuing projects
 3. Evaluations of past projects
 4. Meeting minutes/agendas
 5. Calendaring and plans for planning
 6. Members list
 7. Resource and contact list
 8. Financial books and records
 9. Historical records (scrapbook)

Meeting Two

- A. Review the organizational manual which should include:
 1. Organizational Structure (bylaws, constitution, etc.)
 2. Resources
 3. Nuts & Bolts
 4. Policies and Procedures
 5. Committee Development
- B. Review the resources most often used by that position/committee.
- C. Be sure to keep the meeting an information-sharing session and not a 'how to' seminar; the membership elected the incoming leader for a reason and she or he should be allowed to decide how to carry out the position in the organization or committee.



Meeting Three

- A. Introduce the incoming leader to the people important to carrying out the tasks of the position (i.e., Office of Student Life, Residential Dining Services, MUB Catering, Student Organizations Secretary and Records & Registrations staff, etc.)
- B. Meet with advisor together.

Officer Binders

To ensure a smooth transition from one executive board to another, officers should keep a binder of materials that they reference on a regular basis, and of information that they find useful in performing their office duties. When doing this, don't hesitate to exhaust the binder with detail! What seems like common knowledge now, may well be forgotten in two to three years. Your successors will thank you for not having to spend their entire term determining something that could have been explained to them in a few sentences. In addition to the concrete information that exists for each position, it is a good idea to include a list of recommendations and ideas for the new leader to think about. Much of their few weeks will be dealing with absorbing all the information, but duties and problems don't wait until you've properly learned the position. Having your input will give them somewhere to start from.

Look for Leaders

Who knows the person that will best fill your shoes? You do. Start looking for emerging leaders early. When you notice them, give them encouragement. Get them thinking about taking up a leadership role. One word of encouragement can go a long way, so don't neglect the opportunity to inspire your organization's future.

Training Sessions

Everyone gets busy at the end of the semester. Even if your officer transition isn't at that time period, it's important to schedule training sessions. It's great to hand the new leaders a binder and tell them to read it, but interacting with the person who last held the position is much more beneficial. The binder is a good reference, but what you see is what you get. Only the person who has experience can answer the questions that will undoubtedly be asked. Be proactive and schedule a couple hours with your successor before the officer transition period.

Establish Relationships

Every leadership role is not all-inclusive. You must work with other people to get your job done. Before transitioning from your office, make sure to introduce your successor to the people you worked closely with. This will save them from figuring out whom they need to know and then meeting them. It would be advantageous to establish these relationships as you train your successor of his/her duties. Make sure to include the contact information for these important people in the informational binder.

Bringing It All Together

The most important relationships you will have will be between your other executive board members and your advisor. All of the officer positions are designed to mesh and compliment each other. As an outgoing executive board, it is important that you set up a meeting between the new officers and the advisor, and explain how the positions all fit together into a concentrated effort. At this meeting, it would also be good to establish some expectations for the organization that year, and how they are to be accomplished. Now that you have given the new leadership of your organization the tools and guidance to lead your organization, you may feel confident about the future of your organization.