



Leadership Transition

“How can I reserve a room in the Union?” “Can I send mail to other RSO’s on campus?” “How do I pay for the food we had at our last meeting?” “What do you mean University Dining Services needs a two week notice?” These are common questions from new leaders of organizations who 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 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).

MEETING ONE

- Review purpose/objectives of the position, organization, and/or committee
- Review past programs and services
- Evaluate the position and the committee or organization including its responsibilities and expectations
- Share problems, helpful ideas and recommendations
- Show new leader reading materials and appropriate files for review before the next meeting:
 - Job descriptions and responsibilities
 - Status reports on continuing projects
 - Evaluations of past projects
 - Meeting minutes/agendas
 - Member list
 - Resource and contact list
 - Financial books and records
 - Historical records (scrapbook)

MEETING TWO

- Review the organizational manual which may include:
 - Organizational Structure (Bylaws, Constitution, etc.)
 - Resources
 - Nuts & Bolts
 - Policies and Procedures (refer to RSO Book online at <http://involved.unl.edu/nubook/>)
 - Committee Development
- Review the resources most often used by that position/committee
- Be sure to keep the meeting an information-sharing session and not a “how to” meeting; 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

- Introduce the incoming leader to people important to the carrying out of the tasks of the position (i.e., Union Reservations, University Dining Services, Student Involvement and SOFS staff, etc.)
- Meet with advisor together

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Ask a professional in Student Involvement 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.
- Schedule an appointment for a brief orientation with SOAR staff to familiarize the incoming leadership with existing and new policies concerning student organizations.
- 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 Involvement for help with planning and facilitation of the retreat.

Material adapted from an article entitled, "Orientation for New Leaders," by Cynthia Woolbright and Teresa Delahunty found in *Supporting Student Leadership*, edited by Dr. Sara Boatman, 1992.

For more information on organization and personal development skills in the SOAR series, stop by or call UNL Student Involvement, 200 Nebraska Union, 472-2454; or 300 Nebraska East Union, 472-1780. Staff members will be happy to assist you and answer your questions.

student involvement
<http://involved.unl.edu>

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