



STUDENTS FOR LIBERTY

Leadership Transition Guide

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Every year, dozens of groups go out of existence because they fail to pay attention to one of the most important points in student group organizing: **transitioning leadership**. As you approach graduation, it is easy to start looking toward the life and career ahead of you. It is important to realize that after the years spent building a dynamic student group for liberty, successful leadership transition may be one of the biggest challenges facing your group. Whether your campus organization weakens or thrives after you depart is in part a reflection of your leadership.

As an officer, it is not enough to build and run a good organization; one of your missions should be to leave your organization in the hands of students that will continue to build on your accomplishments. Therefore, you should always be in the process of seeking, identifying, recruiting, training, and putting into place the next team of leaders.

While turnover is an inherent part of the leadership of a student organization, a great student group will put in place a smooth and effective leadership transition process.

Why is this issue important?

- Without a leadership transition process in place, new club leadership will waste time trying to learn the administrative ropes. Successful transition tactics can minimize or eliminate the “lame duck” period when group effectiveness can be limited.
- By effectively undertaking this process, new leaders can build upon the knowledge of their predecessors allowing them to become even more successful at organizing events, running meetings and building an overall presence on campus.
- Transitioning leadership will add continuity to your organization and help give your members a sense of history and identity.
- By effectively transitioning leadership, you can ensure that the hard-won lessons that you have learned in the course of running a student group are transmitted to the next class of leaders.
- An effective leadership transition process will help outgoing leaders who have invested much time and energy in the club bring closure to their experience.

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I. Choosing Leaders

The first step in transitioning leadership is to have a plan for selecting and training new leadership. Here are two questions that you should review **early on** before turning the reigns over:

1) WHO are the leadership candidates?

The task of leadership transition is a process that you will want to be engaged in from the start, as you look for those with the highest leadership potential. Look for students with the following qualities:

- *Passion.* New leaders must be wholeheartedly committed to the values and mission of your organization. Students who take a public stand for liberty and defend the ideas of liberty in the classroom and on campus demonstrate their commitment to the ideals of your group.
- *Dedication.* Running a student organization for liberty is tough work. Leaders must be reliable and responsible enough to meet with and spend time working closely with administrators to put together events ranging from conferences to tabling events.
- *Charisma.* Leaders should be able to motivate members to work towards the goals of the organization, as well as be a public face for the organization. They should be able to encourage new members to take up greater responsibilities within the campus organization.

Do not hesitate to approach students who are regular attendees at meetings and invite them to join or apply for leadership positions. Oftentimes, students (especially underclassmen) are hesitant to assertively demand greater roles, yet once they are approached and encouraged, can take on and fulfill leadership responsibilities. Make sure they know that your request for them to apply is not a guarantee that they will get the position, but an indication that they have potential and the application process will help determine whether they are a good fit or not.

2) WHEN should we select new officers?

Typically, student groups select new officers at the end of the fall semester or towards the middle of the spring semester. We strongly suggest that the process for selecting new officers begin during the fall. At the very least, outgoing leadership should be actively recruiting and encouraging their top members to join the incoming club leadership. Ideally, the selection of the new leadership will take place in the fall, giving them the spring to interact with outgoing leadership in running different aspects of the organization. For **newer groups**, it is possible that the fall semester is still a time for seeking new members and potential leaders. These groups might decide to hold off on the selection of new officers until the spring in order to increase their pool of leadership candidates. While this is a strategy for some successful groups, this track will require more dedication from both incoming and outgoing officers to make sure they have time to go over all the details.

***DO NOT** wait until the last few weeks of the spring semester to determine new officers. By waiting this long, you are not only depriving new officers of time to interact with and learn from the experiences of outgoing officers, but you are also making it more likely that not all of the relevant information will get into the hands of the new leadership. The most important thing to do is **START EARLY**.



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II. The Executive Board Handbook

Once the new club leadership has been selected, it is time to get to work turning the organization over to the new leaders. The Executive Board Handbook is a standardized document of all the collective notes, tips and information needed to run a student group specifically on your campus. The process of enhancing that document begins the day you take over, so record everything.

Refer to our sample [Executive Board Handbook](#) as a guide for creating your own. While this example covers many of the basics necessary for organizing in most places, do not be afraid to get creative and add other sections if you deem them important. Your own experience is the most important thing to incorporate into this handbook for future leadership. You can choose to use a binder or create your handbook online; for example using shared Google docs. Creating a Wiki for your group may also be a particularly effective way of organizing this information. **DO NOT** share this information in loose papers or stray emails.

Your handbook should contain:

- A list of the most important administrators, and their responsibilities, office locations, phone numbers, and email addresses
- A list of vendors used by the club and their phone numbers
- Blog, website, and computer usernames/passwords
- Student group account information
- Club Advisor contact information
- Instructions for managing and adding students to the list-serve
- Procedure for submitting a budget; a copy of previous year's budget
- Photos, copies of flyers, and evidence of your organization's successful activities
- Minutes and records of your official meetings
- A list of deadlines and upcoming dates that the new leadership needs to be aware of. These might include dates for applying for the Student Organization Fair, budget submission, mandatory fall training sessions, re-registering your student organization, sending new leadership info to your group advisor, and selecting new leadership.
- A document listing the projects you are in the middle of, specifying their status and what needs to be done next.

III. Training New Leadership

Creating the executive board handbook is just the beginning of the transition process. In order to ensure new leadership is familiarized with running a student organization, you will need to train them.

Here are some tips for training new officers:

- **Copy officers on all emails sent concerning the official business of your organization.**
This is not only so that officers see who the relevant administrators are, but also to teach them how to address and deal with administrators.



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- **Create a protégé system.**

Have new officers accompany outgoing officers to reserve rooms, get flyers approved, use catering services, get vouchers signed, and other logistical matters. This is one of the MOST effective things you can do to make sure the new leadership is ready to go from the first day of their term.

- **Take a tour of campus resources.**

Identify the people in each department that you've been working with and make sure that the new leadership gets a chance to see where their offices are located. If your school offers free copying, poster making supplies, or any other organizational resources, physically take new leadership there and show them how to use what is available. This can also include visiting the IT department at your school.

- **Hold a Leadership Retreat.**

Invite all outgoing and incoming officers and general members to spend one day covering the state of your student organization. Provide refreshments and lunch or dinner, and invite a speaker from a local organization to speak during the meeting. Include the following elements in your retreat:

- Review your group's history. Give a big-picture look at the strides your organization has made promoting liberty on campus.
- Go over the group's constitution and mission, and describe the roles and responsibilities of officers.
- Discuss the relationship between your organization and other campus organizations.
- Speak about the successful tactics and events that your group has used to promote liberty on campus. Also discuss what types of approaches and events have not done well.
- Address how your club has raised funds in the past. Present the current budget to give new officers a sense of how club funds are spent.
- Communicate the lessons in logistics you have learned while organizing speaker events, tabling, and undergoing leadership transition. Use Students For Liberty's handbooks as a supplementary resource.
- Review details from your organization's Executive Board Handbook.
- Talk about the leadership qualities that will be needed to keep the organization vibrant.
- Brainstorm ideas for future events.
- Discuss all upcoming deadlines and training sessions offered by your school.

- **Tie up loose ends with the administration.**

Give your leaders a head start on the coming year by together scheduling future meeting spaces, re-registering the group, and doing anything else necessary to remain in the good graces of your school's administrators.



IV. Passing the Torch

Once new officers have been selected, do not abandon the new leadership. Help make the transition process even smoother by doing the following:

- Hold a social event with your club to kick off the term for the new officers.
- Update the public face of the group. List the new officers on your website. On Facebook, add the new officers as group admins and remove the old leadership. Post all remaining photos of your events.
- Update names on any accounts the club has, such as the club bank account, PO Box, etc.
- Add the email address of the new leadership to the list permitted to manage the group list-serv.
- Send a message to your members introducing the new officers.
- Introduce the new leadership to your student group advisor.
- Encourage new officers to keep in contact over the winter or summer break. A meeting—in person, online, or over the phone—will be beneficial for getting the group organized to start off the next semester.
- Refer the new officers to Students For Liberty. Remind them of the resources SFL has to offer and put them in touch with the appropriate Regional Director.
- Make sure to include yourself as a resource for the new leadership. There are bound to be minor details you left out during the transition process that you could easily inform officers about if need be.