

S.H.E.L.L.S.

AT THE BEACH

**Successful Higher Education Leadership Learning
Skills**



OFFICER TRAINING AND TRANSITION MANUAL

A guide to assist the training and transition process of outgoing and incoming officers. Included are resources on recruiting officers, implementing officer transition retreats, a sample leadership agreement form, and a sample meeting checklist.

Office of Student Life and Development USU-215
California State University, Long Beach
(562) 985-4181
<http://www.csulb.edu/sld>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

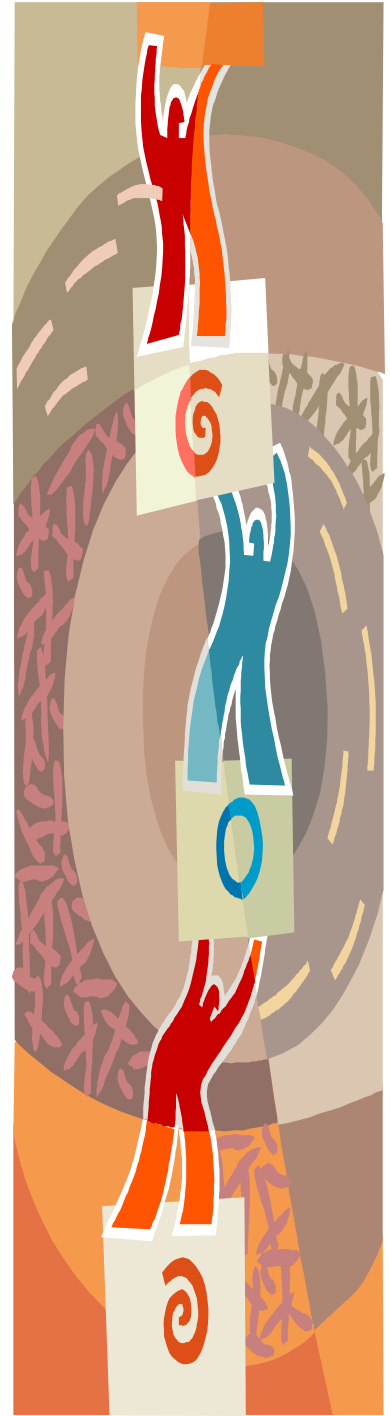
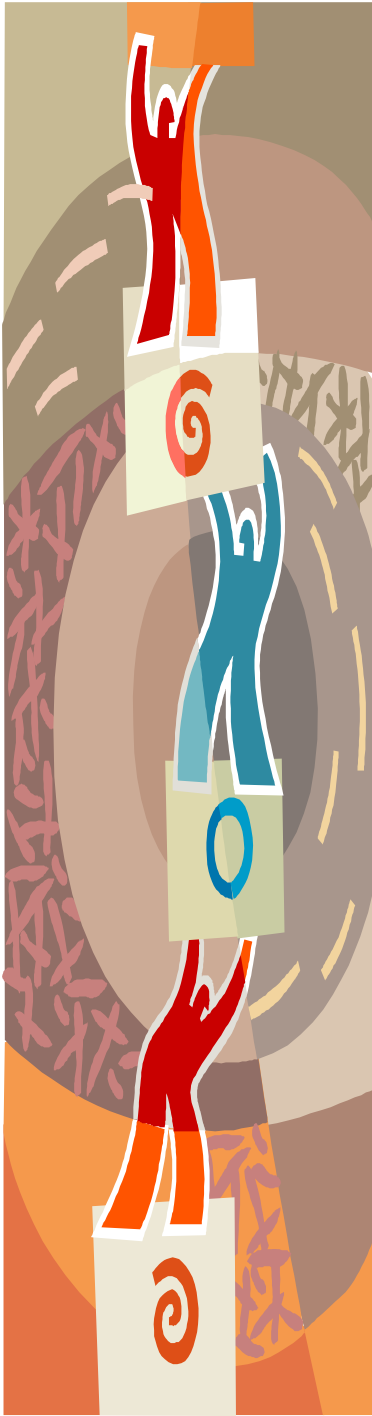
Introduction	1
Eight Things to do Before Leaving Office	2
Pre-Election Period	3
Recruiting Officers	3
Interviewing Officers	4
Possible Questions to Ask Officers	5
Nominating Officers	6
Sample Officer Application	8
Officer Notebook Contents	9
To the Outgoing Officer	9
Post-Election Period	10
Meeting with New Officers One-on-One	10
One-on-One Meeting Handout	13
Sample Vice President Leadership Agreement	14
Outgoing/Incoming Officer Retreat	15
Where We've Been: A Review by the Outgoing Officers	16
Outgoing Officer Evaluation	18
Meeting Checklist	19

INTRODUCTION

Officer training and transition is one of the most important responsibilities outgoing officer team members have to their successors and to their organization. While outgoing officers may be tired at the end of their term or even looking forward to "passing the gavel" to their counterparts, they must remember how they were treated when they took office...

- Did your predecessor have a notebook compiled?
- Did they take the time to clean out their officer notebook before they gave it to you?
- During your transition period, did they introduce you to individuals who were important resources to them?
- Did your predecessor spend one-on-one time with you?
- After your transition did you feel confident carrying out the responsibilities of the position and taking the organization to a new level?

A successful transition provides a strong platform for the continuation of all the activities and plans initiated by the outgoing officer team. This guide will provide the process and the resources to help outgoing officers plan and implement a strong officer training and transition program.



EIGHT THINGS TO DO BEFORE LEAVING OFFICE...

1. Recruit Officers: Think about the members and their leadership talents and skills. Begin encouraging specific individuals to consider running for a leadership position.



2. Interview Officers: The interview process benefits both the candidates as well as the organization. Officer candidates develop life-long professional interviewing/communication skills. The nominees have the opportunity to communicate their goals, personal priorities and leadership skills.

3. Nominate Officers: Many organizations effectively use a nominating committee to first interview and then recommend officers to run for elections based on their skills and leadership qualities. After interviewing all candidates, the nominating committee slates officers for each position. Through this process, officers are recommended to the membership for their vote.

4. Gather Officer Notebook Contents: Each officer should have a thorough notebook containing important materials and documents for their leadership position. Outgoing officers should clean out and/or replace other important resources for the officer notebook.



5. Meet with New Officers One-on-One: The one-on-one meeting is one of the most important steps in officer transition. The new officer can walk through all of the responsibilities related to their new position along with their predecessor. This period also provides structured time for the new officer to ask questions and to understand the flow of work during their term of leadership.



6. Develop an Outgoing/Incoming Officer Retreat: An outgoing/incoming officer retreat will provide the council-elect a strong foundation of information, resources, and leadership expectations. Communicate the purpose of the retreat with all attendees. Decide on the retreat activities and priorities. Determine the length, time and location for the retreat. Gather the appropriate materials and start the retreat!

7. Develop an Officer-Elect Retreat: Getting away from the campus and its incessant demands can be a refreshing opportunity to give the new leadership of the organization the opportunity to reflect on past successes and programs, and to look ahead to the future success of the group. This second retreat offers a concentrated period of time for a group to step back and take an objective look at itself.



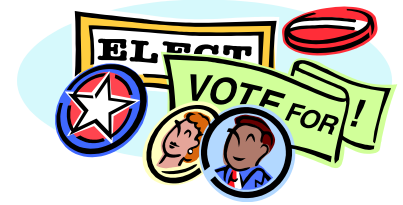
8. Meet with Campus Administrators and Community Leaders: Developing relationships with key campus and community personnel is one of the many benefits and responsibilities of leadership. The new officers should take time to set face-to-face meetings with the people who will be able to assist with program development and issue resolution.

PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Recruiting Officers



Never forget that the best organizational leaders are constantly planting seeds in potential officers' heads to run for office. Recruiting great officers is the key to success for any organization. Seek and find individuals who are willing to contribute even more than the existing officers. Most leaders got involved because someone took the time to tell them,



"You have great organizational skills, you already have strong support from the membership and you have a vision for the future for this group. I think the organization would really benefit from your leadership."

"Have you ever thought of running for office? I think you would be great as treasurer."

Think about the leadership characteristics that will make the candidate stand out above the rest. What characteristics are important for this leadership position?



Honesty - is the candidate consistently truthful and does s/he expect the same of others?

Visionary - does candidate have the ability to subordinate individual or organizational interests for the good of the group as a whole; does s/he have the ability to understand the long term effect of decisions made to put things in perspective?

Open mindedness - is the person unbiased or heavily influenced by strong or vocal factions in the membership? An open mind toward problems and solutions is very important.

Sound judgment - can the potential officer weigh the pros and cons of an argument carefully before reaching a decision? Does s/he avoid jumping to conclusions or quick decisions without sufficient information?

Knowledgeable - does s/he have a thorough understanding of the organization and resources available for them?

Enthusiasm - is there a genuine interest in, and enthusiasm for, the goals of the organization? Can the potential officer communicate that interest and enthusiasm to others?

Creative thinking - is s/he open to new ideas and ways of doing things or is s/he going to do things the way things have always been done?

Tough mindedness (leadership can be lonely at the top) - can s/he deal with the pressures of leadership and take the heat of unpopular but necessary decisions?



Strong interpersonal relations - does the prospective officer have the ability to get along with others, to be part of a team effort, to give credit where credit is due, and to use strong leadership and diplomacy as needed?

Empathy - can s/he lend an understanding ear to members' concerns? Will s/he be available for consultation, advice and support?



Responsibility - can s/he follow through with commitments? Is s/he prompt?

Willingness to learn - most officers will not come in knowing everything, is s/he willing to learn more?

Initiative - will s/he be comfortable taking the lead with projects and concerns without waiting for prompting?

Self-confidence - is s/he self assured and does s/he have the ability to inspire confidence in others?



Interviewing Officers

(This is an optional process)

Some organizations greatly benefit from structured pre-election interviews. To ensure smooth and appropriate transitions, officer interviews are recommended. Interviews allow the opportunity to gain an understanding of the capabilities of a potential leader. Anyone can give a good five minute speech. What those leaders will accomplish over the course of their term could be an entirely different story.



Important tasks include:

- Create a simple application and have interested individuals fill out the form and sign up for an interview time.
- On the application form, ask for relevant information including their name, position they are applying for, grade point average, previous offices held in organizations, involvement on campus and reasons for running for office.
- List times on a sign-up sheet for candidates to choose from for the interview.
- Post the sign-up sheet in an accessible location.
- Contact each potential officer to let them know what to expect during the interview process.

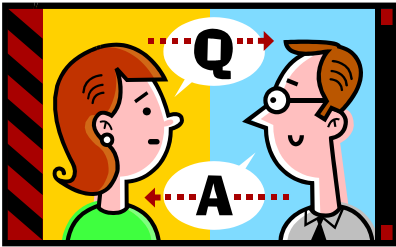
- Create a professional setting for the interview.
- Common courtesy and basic interview etiquette should be followed.



- Make the applying officer comfortable.
- Ask only job related questions.
- Keep the interview concise and to the point.
- The interview should not last more than 20-30 minutes.

Possible Questions to Ask

Use thought provoking questions to determine an applicant's knowledge base. If the organization does not have interviews before elections, consider asking some of the following questions after an officers' speech:



1. Why did you decide to run for this position?
2. What qualities do you possess that qualify you for this position?
3. What do you hope to gain personally through this experience?
4. Give us an example of a situation in which your leadership skills were tested.
5. What do you think will be the most difficult aspect of being an officer?
6. Describe your most significant college experience.
7. What do you feel are the two biggest issues facing this organization?
8. What changes would you like to make for this organization?
9. What are your time demands/other obligations next year/semester?
10. Tell us what you know about the purpose of leadership transition.
11. How would your friends describe you?
12. Describe how you have worked with other people to accomplish a common goal.
13. What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction? Why?
14. How much time do you have to devote to this position?
15. Tell us something about you we would not know from your application.
16. Describe your most rewarding organizational experience.
17. Describe a situation in which you failed; how did you cope with that challenge?



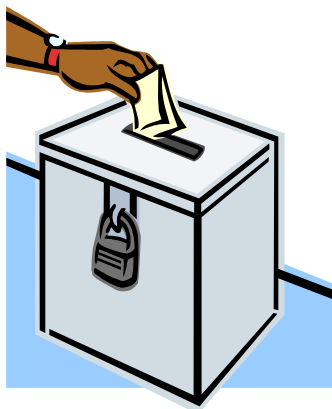
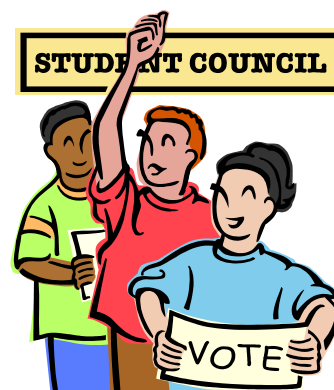
18. What is the purpose of this organization?
19. What one person has made a difference in your life?
20. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
21. How would you describe yourself?
22. Would you be willing to run for another office?
23. _____?

Nominating Officers



As every organization conducts their nominating process specific to their needs, this guide can offer an alternate way of nominating officers. Whatever your organization decides to do in terms of nominating officers, it is crucial that a process is determined and agreed upon prior to the nominations. In fact, this process should be explained in your organization's Constitution and Bylaws. For assistance, be sure to contact your SLD advisor. Below are suggestions on how to conduct interviews for nominees running for office.

- Some organizations interview nominees and choose officers to run for elections based on their skills and leadership qualities. In this context, nominees are slated to be voted on by the membership. This process can eliminate individuals who are simply running for election to serve their own needs. Weeding these individuals out of the process will strengthen the organization.
- If too many individuals are competing for the same position, question #22 may be important. Asking this question allows the opportunity to shift the leadership talent so that the team members will complement each other.
- When compiling an interviewing committee include knowledgeable members that are well respected. Include your advisor as a participant and allow him/her an opportunity to ask questions as well.



- It is appropriate to see what time commitments an individual already has for the coming term (i.e. if they are taking 20 credit hours and working 30 hours a week, they may not have time available for a major leadership position). Asking good questions now will save difficulties in the months ahead. These interviews will allow the members to further probe into the depth of an individual's leadership skills and abilities. Individual and membership integrity is critical during this process. The nominating/interviewing process should be a mechanism to create an open environment, not an opportunity to emphasize personal issues or agendas. After interviews have been completed, come to consensus on the best person for the slate. Provide the voting members a choice for elections.

- Summarized biographies for the potential officers should be offered so members can cast knowledgeable votes on the election of officers. Short bios should be compiled and provided to all members before the date of elections. This process helps members fully examine their potential leaders' credentials. Use the information gathered in the initial officer application form to streamline the nominating/voting efforts.



SAMPLE OFFICER APPLICATION

Name:

Mailing Address:

Phone:

Email:

Year in School:

Major:

Cumulative GPA:

Position running for: (President, Vice President, Treasurer, etc.)

Previous offices held:

Campus activities (denote leadership positions):

Personal reasons for running for office:

Specific goals for the organization:

Please return the completed form to _____ by: (specified time and date)

OFFICER NOTEBOOK CONTENTS

Each officer should have (or develop) a notebook containing important materials and documents for his/her leadership position. Documents and resource materials used often should be kept handy in the notebook. Outgoing officers should take the time to file important historical documents. They should also clean out and/or replace other recourses for the officer notebook. This is a quick checklist of notebook contents and can be copied for each officer's notebook.



To the Outgoing Officer

This may be the most difficult work in your transition process. If your notebook is cleaned out and organized, it will make everything else run smoother. This checklist must be completed by _____ (date) and the notebook is due to your successor by _____ (date). Please get this information in order now.

Tab 1: Governance

- _____ Constitution
- _____ Bylaws
- _____ Officer job description
- _____ Other: (Please list)



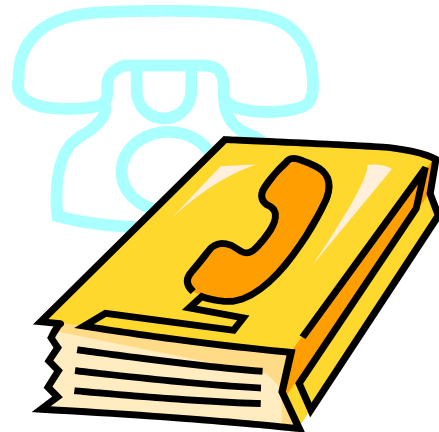
Tab 2: Agendas/Minutes

- _____ Committee reports
- _____ Other: (Please list)



Tab 3: Directories

- _____ Officer Team addresses/phone numbers
- _____ Member's addresses/phone numbers
- _____ Advisor's addresses/phone numbers
- _____ Outgoing officer's directory
- _____ Emergency phone numbers
- _____ University directory
- _____ Other: (Please list)



Tab 4: Resources

- _____ Campus Regulations booklet
- _____ All current forms pertinent to the office
- _____ Event Planning handouts
- _____ Scheduling and Publicity Policies brochure
- _____ Other: (Please list)



Tab 5: Calendar

- _____ Accurate records of activities over the past year (i.e. contracts, dates of events, successes, challenges, PRCs, RPPs, etc.)
- _____ Activity calendar of the past year
- _____ Current calendar of major University events
- _____ Blank calendar for future planning
- _____ Other: (Please list)



POST-ELECTION PERIOD

Meeting with New Officers One-on-One



A shadowing, or mentoring, period between the time new officers are elected and when they are sworn into office is vital. People learn from others' behavior. The outgoing officers may take certain leadership habits and tasks for granted while the incoming officers may not have their complete knowledge base. Observing the outgoing officers and receiving ongoing instruction and advice through this shadowing period will provide the incoming officers good exposure to a typical day in the life of an officer. (See the *One-on-One* Meeting Handout on page 12).

During the one-on-one period, it is important to establish expectations of the officer and his/her duties while representing the organization. Expectations lay the groundwork for a successful year. These expectations should be high, yet attainable, and goal oriented. People strive to meet existing expectations. If leadership expectations are set low, the leaders

and group will find it difficult to compete for organizational excellence. Outgoing officers are vital in creating and upholding these expectations to ensure future success for the organization.

A written officer expectations agreement may be useful. Formulate a list of specific duties from the constitution. Include another section that describes other duties that are not in the formal job description. These may include responsibilities such as office hours, particular projects, attending meetings relevant to the welfare of the organization, public speaking opportunities and representing the organization through attendance at all group sponsored and campus events. The leadership agreement allows the incoming officers to realistically see their goals, objectives, commitments, and responsibilities. (See Sample Vice President Leadership Agreement on page 13).



Some issues to discuss and consider:

- How can the organization use this document to help officers become more accountable?
- Can any member of the group confront each other on their responsibilities as a group member?
- What are the current motivations of the officer?
- If a leader is having difficulty following through, how can the leadership agreement be a tool for conversation?

In many one-on-one interactions, the most helpful time spent is discussing the "Things I wish I would have" To best use everyone's time, the outgoing officer should spend some time thinking about this conversation before it takes place.

The outgoing officers should take time to look at the calendar of events during the course of their term. Reflecting back on what they were thinking and feeling during specific events will allow them to more accurately remember key pieces of information that will be needed in the upcoming months. Reviewing the calendar month by month and event by event will facilitate a good discussion on their job responsibilities and the timing of upcoming events.

During the calendar review think through and discuss the following key phrases:

- Things get busiest when...
- A helpful time-saver hint is...
- I wish I would have...
- I would recommend contacting...
- Don't forget to...
- Watch out for...
- In January make sure you...
- By the end of the semester/quarter you should have...





Another benefit of one-on-one meetings is to understand how their role as officer complements the team approach of the organization. Learning to listen to different viewpoints helps the group come to a better decision. Leaders should take the initiative to offer assistance to the group if their own job is running smoothly. Asking for help is a sign of strength not weakness. If the leaders know their own limits and communicate those to the group, the organization will be ultimately more effective in the long run.

It may also be appropriate to have future contact information of the outgoing officer(s). Discussing current organization initiatives, goals and objectives with someone who has been in the organization in the recent past will provide outlook and perspective. Tap their expertise and use their knowledge and experience as a strength of the group. Keeping these past officers in the communication loop may also promote their future involvement with the university and/or an Alumni Association.

ONE-ON-ONE MEETING HANDOUT

This handout will assist in officer transition by focusing upon past accomplishments and providing a critique of the year in office. This report should serve as a supplementary resource in planning for the new officer's term.

Office:

Name:

Date:

1. List other officers/chairmen with whom you worked and the projects involved.
2. List specific accomplishments realized during your term in office and the reasons for their success.
3. List any problems or disappointments you encountered as a part of your office and suggest ways of avoiding or correcting them.
4. List supplemental materials and sources of information you found most helpful. Include specific alumni or faculty contacts, university/college officers, community resources, etc.
5. Comment on the timetable applicable to your office. Give suggestions for increasing efficiency and effectiveness.
6. List any other suggestions you feel would be helpful to your successor in carrying out the responsibilities of this office.

SAMPLE VICE PRESIDENT LEADERSHIP AGREEMENT

Specific Duties Assigned (the formal definition found in the constitution)

1. Administration of committees
2. Preside over meetings when the president is absent
3. Understand and use parliamentary procedure
- 4.

Expanded Guidelines (not written but expected behavior)

1. Attend every executive council and regular meeting
2. Attend all organization sponsored events
3. Complete two office hours per week
4. Be present at university sponsored orientation and open house weekends
5. Complete an end of the year report
- 6.

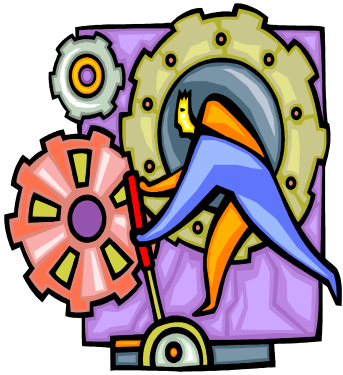
S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-specific) Personal Goals

1. I want to start a community service week to be completed by the end of the fall semester
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I understand the above mentioned duties and responsibilities. I also understand that my leadership duties take precedence over all other campus leadership commitments and/ or obligations. I commit to fulfilling these obligations over the course of my term in office.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

OUTGOING/INCOMING OFFICER RETREAT



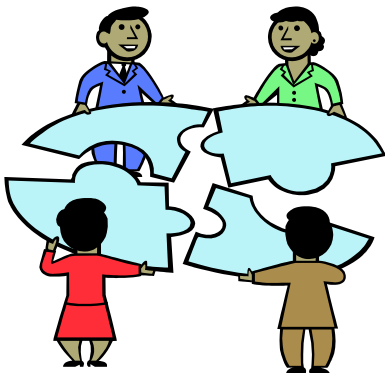
Do the officers lose the achievements/advances of previous officers? Do officers keep "re-inventing the wheel?" An officer training and transition retreat is essential to organizational effectiveness because it helps the outgoing officers provide a smoother transition for all new officers. A retreat gives incoming leaders the opportunity to develop their skills before their terms begin. With an outgoing/incoming officer retreat, new leaders will gain a better understanding of the value of group decision making, review the past goals and programs of each officer, and set goals as a new leadership team.



Retreat Overview (10 minutes)

Share what will happen during the outgoing/incoming officer's time together. Distribute agendas if necessary.

Discuss Individual and Team Responsibilities (30 minutes)



Newly elected leaders will want to know exactly what is expected of them for their particular office. While this information is important, they should be reminded to discuss those details during the one-on-one meetings. Those meetings should take place before the retreat. If time does not allow for the one-on-one meetings to be held prior to the retreat, consider using this time for that purpose.

It is just as important for the new officers to understand their responsibilities as members of the leadership team. Use the following partial list of responsibilities and privileges of an executive council member to start the discussion (write on flip chart paper or write on chalkboard/dry erase board to engage all participants). Add responsibilities as suggested by the retreat participants.

- Serve as a positive and ethical role model; (give examples)
- Attend meetings
- Be prepared for meetings and provide reports
- Understand organization policies and procedures
- Understand college/university policies and procedures
- Understand the services/purpose of the Associated Students, Inc.
- Utilize the resources of your SLD Advisor
- Abide by financial procedures
- Understand budget allocations: review revenue sources, financial forms, deadlines, policies and expenditure authority
- Understand and use parliamentary procedure
- Other:



Communication Procedures (10 minutes)



Discuss any formal and informal communication procedures. A review of the committee and reporting structure is beneficial. Any organizational or reporting charts should be distributed at this time. This is also an appropriate time to discuss written procedures for consistent and professional formatting. Discuss the value of proof-reading all outgoing correspondence.



Policy Review (20 minutes)

Outgoing officers should quickly review all organizational policies with the new officers as a team.

New officers should feel comfortable with all official documents after this review.

Where We've Been: A Review by the Outgoing Officers

Part 1: Review the Calendar from the Past Year (15-20 minutes)

Outgoing officers share dates for important deadlines and important campus events and suggestions for avoiding coinciding events. Take time to discuss the following topics:



- What are annual commitments and events for this organization?
- When was our busiest time?
- When was our high stress period?
- When were our members at their highest motivation level? Lowest?
- How much last minute troubleshooting did you have to do?
- When are current mid-terms, finals and other scholastic priority times?



Part 2: Review the Outgoing Officer Evaluations (30 minutes)

Before the outgoing officers lead this discussion, they should have completed the Outgoing Officer Evaluation. This handout should be summarized and shared with the new leaders during this time. Outgoing officers have a responsibility to review their past goals and give an update on the status of any incomplete goals. (See Outgoing Officer Evaluation on page 17).



Part 3: Review Goals, Projects, and Activities (20-30 minutes)

Once the Outgoing Officer Evaluations have been discussed, take time to review the outgoing council's goals, projects, and activities.

The outgoing officers should verbally share their current projects and activities. They should also cover the goals that they set for themselves when they first took over their office and how they progressed with their goals.

The outgoing officers should review their past activities as a team:

- What needs follow-up work?
- What activities or projects are near completion?
- When was the activity started? Should it be continued?
- What commitment do the outgoing members have to the completion of the project?
- What needs to be evaluated?



Managing Meetings (30 minutes)



In order for meetings to run effectively and efficiently, meetings should be conducted on a regular basis with the time and place being consistent. Don't call a meeting unless it is necessary. A Meeting Checklist is provided to assist the chairperson in this process. (See page 18 for the Meeting Checklist or refer to the *Organizational Meeting Guide*). Members should know the purpose of the meeting:

- Exchange information
- Solve problems
- Make decisions
- Share concerns
- Explain issues

Parliamentary Procedure (30 minutes)

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules for conducting a meeting. It allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions . . . without confusion! It demonstrates democratic rule, flexibility, protection of rights, and a fair hearing for everyone . . . which means it can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Parliamentary procedure is important because it is a time-tested method of conducting business at meeting and public gatherings. Is parliamentary procedure reflected in the constitution and by-laws?

Originated in the early English Parliaments (discussions of public affairs), parliamentary procedure came to America with the first settlers. In 1876, it became uniform when Henry M. Robert published his manual, *Parliamentary Law*. Today, *Robert's Rules of Order* is the most widely used, common-sense approach, to rules for group meetings. (See *Parliamentary Procedure* in the *Organizational Meeting Guide*).



Closing Activity: "Things I wish I knew before I became an officer..." (20 minutes)

In the one-on-one meetings, each officer should have discussed "Things I wish I knew before I became an officer..." Each outgoing officer should now verbally share some thoughts and ideas of how s/he would have

done things differently. New officers share the one topic/issue s/he wants to understand better. Gather the group in a circle. The president begins the activity by sharing what s/he wishes they'd known before becoming president. When the president is finished, the next officer begins to speak. No one should interrupt them while they're speaking. Repeat this process until everyone has had the chance to talk.

Outgoing Officer Evaluation



- Have we developed younger members who will prove to be exceptional and involved?
- Will the membership be innovative and creative after we have left?
- What programs or governing practices proved to be successful for us?
- What was our greatest achievement as officers?
- What was our greatest challenge as officers?
- Three goals we would have liked to accomplish:
- Three goals we would like our successors to achieve/build on:

MEETING CHECKLIST

1. Before the Meeting:

- Set a starting and finishing time for the meeting.
- Reserve the meeting room. Notify the members in advance of the time and location.
- Decide on physical set-up/arrangement.
- Prepare agenda. Send the agenda in advance so committee chairs and members can prepare.
- Make copies of agenda and include the next meeting time and place. Have an agenda file to help you build the agenda and remember items to discuss at the meeting. Remember, the agenda plots a course, but it is the leader's responsibility to stay on it.
- Copy previous minutes.
- Prepare and reserve visual and audio aids and equipment (if needed).
- Invite guests.
- Prepare evaluation of meeting.

2. At the Meeting:

- Greet members and special guests. Members and guests want to feel like they are welcome and their time spent at the meeting means something. Welcome returning members and provide time for self introductions among members. Welcome attendees and thank them throughout the year for their contributions.
- Start meeting on time. The chairperson does not have to wait for latecomers to begin. Be aware of setting a pattern for starting late.
- Introduce guests.
- Call everyone by name.
- If the organization is large or this is one of the first meetings, use nametags or name plaques until people are well acquainted.
- Conduct the meeting. Summarize important points.
- Take minutes.

- Keep order. Call on quiet members and ask them to participate and contribute to the group. Try to limit the individuals who act as discussion dominators.
- Direct remarks to the group as a whole and ask questions so everyone participates.
- Distribute materials. This may include lists, schedules or other details to help members digest and understand the information.
- Explain important decisions the group needs to act upon and decisions they may face during the year.
- Describe important upcoming events and activities and emphasize how members and newcomers can get involved. Include dates in the agenda and minutes.
- Announce committee appointments or name the appointments that will be made. Tell members how they can serve on a committee.
- Announce time/place of next meeting.
- Evaluate the meeting/past programs.
- Add variety to the meeting; guest speakers, meet in a different location, refreshments, etc.

3. End of Meeting and After:

- Clean up.
- Collect any unused materials.
- Return equipment.
- Read/analyze the evaluation.
- Distribute/post minutes.
- Follow-up on committee assignments.
- Call those who did not attend the meeting to tell them their input was missed.