

# Network Leadership Succession Planning

Succession planning is essential to the continued success of Alumni Networks; not only to ensure continuity, but also to allow other members an opportunity to take on a leadership role, get involved in planning and share their ideas.

The process of selecting the leadership team and filling vacant positions will vary according to the needs of the Network and its membership; it can be informal, such as appointing leaders based on show of interest, while others may choose to hold formal elections. The Office of Alumni Engagement (OAE) is available to help by sending out calls for membership and by identifying potential leadership volunteers for those Networks who require assistance. Regardless of the chosen method, the YUAA must officially approve all leadership volunteers once a Network submits a leadership roster.

Suggestions for succession planning:

- Start thinking about successors early in your leadership role. Finding the right replacement can take time. Identify Network members and get them involved in activities and sub-committees.
- Have clear role descriptions, volunteers want to know what they are signing up for; by setting clear expectations, volunteers will feel more confident in their roles and are more likely to stay. The Office of Alumni Engagement has created descriptions for suggested positions which can be found on the Volunteer Resources page.
- Identify multiple candidates for succession. People might be interested today, but unexpected demands such as relocation or family responsibilities can change a person's ability to volunteer tomorrow.
- Document your plans and achievements. Keep copies of the submitted Annual Reports and Annual Plans that can be reviewed; a record of what the Network has accomplished, and its goals for the future, conveys a sense of structure. This makes new leaders more confident in their role and sets them up for success.
- Consider staying on as an advisor after you are succeeded to pass on your knowledge and information about the network.
- Thank and recognize volunteers. Reinforcing the value and importance of volunteers' efforts is key to making them feel appreciated and like they are valuable contributors.

## **Suggestions for Succession Process:**

### **Elections**

Networks that opt for an elections based process should submit a call for new leadership and host an election on a minimum bi-annual basis; some Networks may opt to conduct this process on an annual basis. Alumni Network elections should be held in spring with leadership terms beginning July 1 and concluding June 30 one or two years following.

There are three acceptable options for elections and the Network should choose the option that works best for its membership. After voting is complete, the Network is required to submit the new roster to the Office of Alumni Engagement for approval by the YUAA.

### **In-Person Election**

With this option, nominations are accepted in person at a meeting open to all alumni in the area/interest.

Leadership position descriptions are emailed out in advance of the nominations meeting, along with an outline of the general procedure for nominations/voting. Alumni who would like to be considered for a leadership position are instructed to carefully read the position requirements. Alumni may nominate themselves by attending the nominations meeting, at which time they will be invited to share brief remarks about their qualifications and experience, interest in the position, etc.

Voting can then take place at the same meeting once all nominees have had the opportunity to speak, or elections can take place at a meeting held at a later time.

### **Electronic Election**

Networks may find that they are able to garner greater participation if the elections process is conducted online. Leadership position descriptions are emailed out to the membership, along with an outline of the general procedure for nominations/voting. Nominations can then be collected via email. The requirements for the nomination are at the Network's discretion. For instance, alumni may be required to fill out a form answering various questions, or to just email a simple statement explaining their qualifications.

The nominations are then compiled by the Network and can be emailed out to the membership to review, along with a link to vote. Free online survey websites like Survey Monkey make it easy to set up and collect votes electronically.

### **Combination**

A final option is to accept nominations electronically, but require all alumni seeking a position to attend an in-person elections meeting. Some Networks like this option because it allows for the efficiency of a virtual nominations process, but still requires interested alumni to show they are willing to take the

extra step of attending an event in-person in order to be elected.

### **Informal Succession**

Volunteers can be identified from alumni who attend network events and activities, express interest or by direct person to person approach. Appointing volunteers to specific tasks or committees, helps to expose members to leadership roles and establish a channel for future leadership volunteers. When a position becomes vacant, the Network has a group of committed volunteers to pull new leadership from.

In the case where the Network does not have the capacity to hold elections, in order to maintain transparency and inclusiveness within the Network, the YUAA will assist with succession and transition. After issuing a call for nominations to the Network's membership, individuals interested in assuming a leadership role will be required to submit a nomination to the YUAA through the OAE including a resume and brief statement about their qualifications and experience, interest in the position, etc. The YUAA will review nominations and appoint new Network leadership.

Alumni Network nominations should take place in spring with leadership terms beginning July 1 and concluding June 30 one or two years following.