Regional Chapter Council Succession Planning

Provided by the Alumni Association Board’s Chapters Committee

Succession planning is an on-going process to recruit outstanding and engaged alumni, develop their knowledge, skills and abilities and prepare them for assuming more challenging leadership roles on your F&M Regional Chapter Council. Succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable alumni volunteers that are prepared to assume leadership roles as they become available, including the role of Chapter Chairperson. It is vital to the long term success of your F&M Regional Chapter.

The natural turnover of volunteers is a healthy process, and maintaining a pipeline of “new blood” is a good way to keep the Regional Chapter Council fresh, boost the energy level, and ensure a flow of new and creative ideas. If properly stewarded, outgoing volunteers will remain strong advocates, and having more people engaged with the Regional Chapter is a good thing.

The current Chapter Chairperson will be responsible for identifying volunteers to replace him or her when his or her service as Chairperson is complete. This is a process that should start at the beginning of the Chairperson’s term to ensure a smooth turnover and allow the Chairperson to leave the role of Chapter leader with the assurance that the Regional Chapter is in good hands.

Additionally, the Chairperson will draft a succession plan in writing at the beginning of his or her term. The written plan should be shared with the Regional Chapter Alumni Board Liaison and should include the following:

- A set of expectations for himself or herself during tenure as Chapter Chairperson.
- An estimated period of time he or she would like to serve as Chairperson. Although the Regional Chapter Program does not have set term limits for its leaders, past practice has shown that a term of two to three years ensures stability of the Regional Council and at the same time allows for fresh ideas and leadership strategy. It is important to consider what is best for the Regional Chapter, as well as personal and professional demands, when thinking about how long a Chairperson should serve.
- The names of several potential future leaders, who are either currently involved in the Regional Chapter Council or who have been identified through Chapter events or other means. These individuals will be candidates for the role of Chapter Chairperson. Identifying them early will allow them to take on additional responsibilities to assess their ability and interest in replacing. It will also give them the opportunity to receive training to ensure a smooth transition from one leader to the next.
- “Second-line” leadership roles with opportunities for growth. In connection with the bullet point above, it is important to have several leadership roles other than Chapter Chairperson to allow certain volunteers to grow into leadership roles. Potential
“second-line” leadership roles could be head of the Professional Networking Group Committee, a leader in charge of social media, a young alumni events leader, etc.

- A recruitment plan for current Regional Council members and prospective members. The recruitment plan should include ways to share information with current and potential volunteers about key positions and areas, as well as skills needed for these positions and areas. The plan should also include strategies to speak to each volunteer or prospective volunteer to discuss his or her aspirations with respect to the Regional Chapter Council in order to identify those who are interested in leadership roles or who wish to move to more senior or alternate roles.

- A contingency plan to determine in advance what will happen if the Chairperson must step down or is temporarily unavailable to serve as Chairperson. Who will step in or how will responsibilities be divided? The plan should also include a contingency to address a situation where the Chairperson does not meet his or her responsibilities. This could be similar to workplace policies (e.g., meet with the Regional Chapter’s Alumni Board Liaison to address issues, leave with a plan for change, review after agreed-upon period of time, if no improvement on probation for period of time, if no improvement after that time, Chairperson is asked to step down.)

The Regional Council Chairperson should communicate the plan to the other Regional Council members, revisit it frequently and update it as needed to ensure that all elements of the plan are being utilized.

Regional Council Members serve as an important part of succession planning as well. They are responsible for assisting the Chairperson in recruiting new members, as well as considering their own abilities and interest in leadership. Regional Council Members interested in serving in a leadership role should communicate with the Chairperson and identify ways that they may take a more active role in the Regional Council.