PASSING THE TORCH

How to Ensure a Successful Leadership Transition For Your FRN Chapter

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INTRODUCTION

So, not only are you a rockstar student who led a successful chapter of Food Recovery Network, but you’re also about to graduate from your institution of higher learning! On behalf of everyone at Food Recovery Network, we sincerely thank you for your hard work and dedication.

You’re literally the best.

Before you graduate, however, you’ll need to ensure that you’ve got a leadership team to take your place. One of the greatest (and easiest-to-avoid) disappointments is seeing a strong chapter flounder after a disjointed transition of power.

You can never be too early to prepare for a leadership transition — it is imperative to anticipate changes in leadership by the spring semester before it’s too late. The purpose of this guide is to prepare student leaders for inevitable transitions, establish a timeline for transitions to take place, as well as ensure the long-term sustainability of the chapter.

This guide provides a suggested timeline for the preparation of a successful LT transition, advice for current leaders, and important tips to keep in mind during this process.

Good luck!
-FRN National
SUGGESTED TIMELINE

START OF FALL SEMESTER

- Prioritize getting recoveries off the ground.
- Be on the lookout for strong leaders or FRNds that are interested in specific positions.
- Acknowledge outgoing members. Make a contingency plan for illness, graduation, and other unforeseen circumstances.
- Teach incoming volunteers about FRN, LT positions, and need for consistency for members.
- Make a call for LT applications.
- Describe responsibilities and expectations for each role.

END OF FALL SEMESTER

JANUARY

- Review LT applicants.
- Hold elections / decide on new leaders.
- Confirm that selected leaders are committed to selected positions.

FEBRUARY/MARCH

- New leaders begin to shadow outgoing leaders.
- Emphasize “on the job” training.

POST-SPRING BREAK

- Shadowing ends, leadership transition complete.
- Incoming Presidents will be familiar with the role of FRN National, and will understand the importance of periodic check-ins.
FALL SEMESTER

Beginning of Fall Semester

The beginning of the semester can be a hectic time; between scholastic endeavors, FRN recruitment, and restarting recovery operations, you’ve got a full plate. Leaders will:

1. Need to submit OCA following fall semester.
2. FRN ensures website information is updated for chapters.
3. Update Partner Agency Agreement forms (if needed).
4. Provide information about current Dining Service Providers.

In the midst of all of this, you’ll want to keep in mind a few things:

1. Are any LT members graduating?
2. Do any team members want a specific role on the LT?
3. Are there any extraordinary circumstances in which a LT member has to be replaced?
4. Are there volunteers in the chapter looking for leadership experience?

Transitions will be on the backburner for the first few months of the semester, but it’s important to be mindful of these questions throughout!

Protip:

Leading a student organization is rarely perfect. Interested volunteers can drop off, recruitment efforts can fall flat, and problems outside of your control can occur. This is normal, albeit frustrating. Don’t give up!
Late Fall Semester

In a perfect world, you’ll have a mix of established student leaders that you’ve either inherited from yesteryear, and a fresh batch of students that you’ve recently recruited.

Of course, “perfect” circumstances in student leadership are sometimes few and far between. If you find that your team is lacking in membership, consistency, or motivation, you may want to consider different recruitment or team building opportunities around campus.

Different teams have different necessities for their LT. The size of the chapter, scale of recovery operations, and capacity of the members will influence the number of official LT positions. For instance, a new chapter with 10 members has different needs than an established chapter with 50 members. Delegate accordingly, and make changes to the structure of your team if necessary.

Before the holiday season, you’ll want to issue out a call for leadership team applications. FRN offers descriptions of potential LT positions, as well as an application document for interested students.
SPRING SEMESTER

January

During the break, you’ll want to review submitted applications with your executive board and staff advisor. Discuss who might be best qualified for a role, and if possible, hold an election within the team to determine leadership if numerous equally qualified candidates are offered a position.

February/March

New leaders begin shadowing current leaders. As the year progresses, previous leaders will become progressively more hands off. Shadowing still continues in order to ensure that all responsibilities are fulfilled.

End of Spring Break

Shadowing ends, and the LT Transition is complete. Well done! You’ve successfully heralded in a new LT.

For many founding members of FRN chapters, there is always an element of stress associated with a successful transition of power, even if all of the circumstances work perfectly. Trust that you’ve worked to train your successor to the best of your ability, pass your finals, and enjoy the rest of your year!
**DO’S AND DON’TS**

**DO:**

1. Prepare in advance as much as possible.
2. Communicate expectations and responsibilities for roles.
   - Are expectations listed in your chapter’s handbook?
3. Be transparent about your selection process.
   - Who will vote on the incoming leaders? Entire chapter, leadership team, staff advisor?
4. Pick people based on their merit. Qualities that you’ll want to look for include, but are not limited to:
   - Consistent service with the chapter.
   - Good time management abilities.
   - Conflict resolution skills.
   - The ability to hold and schedule a meeting.
   - An interest in FRN and how it relates to various social justice issues.
5. Conduct on-the-recovery training during the transition of leadership.
6. Connect them with the key players:
   - FRN National - during hands-on leadership training.
   - Partner Agencies.
   - Dining Halls and Restaurants.
7. Schedule a check-in call with your new point of contact.
8. Send us contact information of new leader and show [student portal](#).
DO NOT:

1. Leave the chapter without a leader.
   - Worst case scenario: the staff advisor can support the chapter temporarily if there isn’t a leader.
2. Randomly pick someone to lead without communicating expectations.
3. Do everything yourself.
4. Pick people simply because they’re your friend (though friends can be great FRNds).
5. Leave FRN National in the dark about leadership transitions.

FAQ’S

“A close friend wants to lead a chapter, but has not demonstrated leadership abilities, is flaky with scheduling, or has trouble managing school and work life. I don’t want them to be upset, but also don’t want to risk the future of the chapter. How do I navigate this?”

Favoritism is a blueprint for disaster. Ask yourself: “Am I choosing this person because they’ve demonstrated good leadership abilities, or are they being chosen simply because they’re my friend?”

Leadership transitions are never personal, until someone makes them personally. Either set up a committee that can vote for new leadership positions, or choose the new leaders yourself. You might be able to suggest that they can assist with a certain role without taking on full leadership.
What if we don’t have enough volunteers to draw from for LT?

While not a perfect fix, see if it’s possible to consolidate positions, at least temporarily. For instance, instead of two separate positions for a PA or Dining Hall liaison, have one person contact them both. When recruitment efforts start the next year, your main goal will be to expand to a degree that you won’t have to worry about having enough volunteers.

What if no one is interested in LT positions?

If no one is explicitly interested, you may be able to encourage them for a specific role. In the worst case scenario, your team will be placed “in limbo” as a staff or faculty advisor seeks out new student leaders for the chapter.

The latter is certainly not a perfect scenario. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and a lot of heartache. Recruit early and often to avoid a leadership crisis!

As stated above, we don’t recommend recruiting random individuals to LT positions who have never recovered or participated with FRN before.

Who is eligible for LT positions?

Anyone that demonstrates exceptional leadership capabilities, and has attended enough recoveries to know the general ins-and-outs of the club.

Protip:

If you’re still having trouble with any of the above steps, or have a specific question in relation to your LT, feel free to reach out to your FRN National point of contact through an email or phone check-in.