

## Three Dysfunctions of a Campus Fellowship Leadership Transition

**(1) VISION WHIPLASH.** Out with the old, in with the new, year after year until one's neck is sore. Each new leadership team energetically starts with a blank piece of paper: revisiting foundational questions and crafting a new vision. A "start-up" or "restructuring" mentality often motivated by high level of ownership, which is a good thing. However, far too often the thoughts that seep in are, "those bums really screwed this up". The sense is that *we* would have done better given the same opportunities. The result? The Fellowship doesn't build from year to year but rather, continually "resets". The group fails to benefit from good work invested by faithful former leaders. Furthermore, it limits campus impact to what can be built in one year.

**Consider:** Standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before you. There is no need to reinvent the wheel every year (even if you like inventing wheels)! Take time to understand the ministry from the old leaders' perspective and then, carry on the vision with greater clarity, power, and effectiveness employing the gifts and passions of the new leadership team. It takes humility to learn – the task is more complex than you think and the old leaders had reasons for doing what they did!

*\*Note: Continuity of vision/mission is what's important in contrast with continuity of strategy or programming, which should be thoughtfully evaluated each year to see if it's advancing the vision and mission.*

**(2) HOT POTATO HAND OFF.** Little to no overlap between old and new leaders doesn't allow time to cohere together around the vision, to understand the rationale behind ministry choices made, and to understand the challenges and opportunities faced. Feeds vision whiplash and hinders fellowship building from year to year. Old leaders need to stick around. New leaders need to watch old leaders with eye to doing it themselves and then lead with the old leaders at hand to encourage and advise.

**Consider:** Moving up your leadership selection and transition process. Let new leaders take on increasing responsibility and run with the fellowship as soon as feasible spring semester. Imagine runners in a relay race. In an optimal baton handoff, the pace never wanes. This requires both sprinters to run together for a period of time.

**(3) PUT-IT-OFF PLANNING.** This last dysfunction is a credit to the former leadership team. They made it look deceptively easy but, it assuredly is not. Trust us. Transforming lives and renewing a campus will require far more ingenuity, imagination, perseverance, and plain old hard work than you think. A few afternoons spent planning in September is not only insufficient time, but will likely turn into an allocation of tasks to maintain programs (Who's contacting speakers? Who's reserving the rooms? Who's leading the Bible studies? Who's planning the social events? – you get the idea!). The

evaluation, strategy, and planning questions that *should be discussed and prayerfully considered each year* (\*) will be lost amidst the tyranny of the urgent.

**Consider:** Committing to a leadership retreat in April, May, or August. Yes, we know that time is costly and that there are very real scheduling complications, not to mention the ever problematic hesitancy to commit to anything until all other options are known and weighed. However, we believe this time away will gain you far more than it costs!

## **For Group Discussion**

1. Where are you in your leadership transition process now?
2. What's been challenging for you?
3. What questions would you like to bring to the group?
4. What's worked for you?
5. What lessons learned or other encouragement would you like to share with the group?