

Succession Planning Requires Preparation and Training

What does succession planning really mean within the Society of St. Vincent de Paul? Essentially it refers to Conferences and Councils being prepared, at the time that a President's term of office nears its end, to present to membership Vincentians who are qualified and willing to take on the role of Conference or Council President. Realistically, succession planning relates to all officer positions, as well as committee chairs, etc. Achieving this goal requires preparation and training. To be more specific, it requires three parts preparation and three parts training.

1. **Preparation Part 1:** Throughout the life of the Conference member, he/she should be exposed to regular re-enforcement of the idea of growing into some role in Conference and/or Council leadership. This is something each member should be encouraged to consider from the day he/she joins to Society.
2. **Training Part 1:** The Ozanam Orientation is the basic formation/training that all Vincentians need to experience. The National Council recommends that all members not only attend an Ozanam Orientation at least once but suggests attending again every few years as a refresher. It is also recommended that all members read the document "Who Me? Why in the World Should I Become a Vincentian Leader?"
3. **Preparation Part 2:** Promotion for the election of President should begin when the newly elected President takes office. He/she should identify a few members of the Conference or Council with leadership potential and begin encouraging/coaching them so they will be ready and willing to put their names in as candidates for the election. One year before the next election, the election process and the need for a new President and officers should be promoted.
4. **Training Part 2:** Throughout the term of the President, he/she should be coaching those selected for leadership roles. The greatest encouragement (or discouragement) comes from the personal example shown by the current President and officers. How they view and execute their roles will make those roles look enticing or frightening.
5. **Preparation Part 3:** The election process for President should be moved back by at least six months. This gives time for the newly elected President and his/her appointed officers to shadow the current officers and become prepared to take on their new roles on October 1.
6. **Training Part 3:** Before the new officers take office and soon afterwards, the President and other officers should take advantage of all training programs and resources available to help them understand their roles. There are many resources to help in this area that can be found on the National Council website (such as Conference President Training, Servant Leadership Workshop, and many others).

Succession planning is not difficult but it does require effort. It is easy to put off doing anything in this respect, but it is not wise. You don't want to come to the time of election and only have

one candidate – the one who steps in because no one else will. This may not be the right person for the job.