



## How to Develop and Operationalize a Succession Plan for Your Institution

- **First, build a case for succession planning.** Obtaining support from the regents/trustees, CEO and top leaders is critical to a project of this magnitude and importance. If the process and attendant programs are not supported philosophically and financially at the top, the effort will raise employee expectations for naught—a recipe for poor morale, higher turnover and a negative climate. Use the literature, formulate a list of potential positive outcomes, contact CUPA-HR colleagues who are involved in succession planning for advice and to serve as references and develop metrics to support your proposal.
- Determine if your HR software offers succession planning tools and whether you want to use them.
- **Develop the plan.**
  - Decide how deep you want to go: CEO? Executive Leadership? Management? Professional Staff? Everyone? [HR can formulate a proposal, but the decision should be made at the top.]
  - Formulate the list of position to be addressed by the plan.
  - Review the institution's mission and goals to identify what skills, knowledge and experience will be needed to achieve them.
  - Develop a succession plan that links talent development with the strategic plans of the regents, the executive leadership and the various departments.
- **Add the Details.** A set of tasks for HR and/or relevant managers:
  - For each position, define the skills, abilities, knowledge and experience (SAKE's) needed for the future. [HR can initially formulate this information, but relevant stakeholders/managers should be consulted.]
  - Inventory the SAKE's of each employee to be included in the succession plan and compare them to the SAKE's identified in the above activity.
  - Assess employees' current performance and identify any skill or experience gaps for their future roles.
  - Ask employees about their career goals so you are certain they want the role for which you are grooming them.
- **Train managers** to conduct a gap analysis with employees to help them see what they need to do to be ready for the next level and how long that should take.
- **Develop a recruitment plan** to address gaps in the workforce needed for the future.



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- **Factor diversity into decision-making.** Train managers on how to encourage diversity on their teams.
- **Avoid the misstep of assessing talent within the context of a specific department or division.** Cross training and developing talent should take an institution-wide view.
- **Develop training programs** or identify external sources for training for professional development.
- **Establish mentorships** to facilitate the professional growth of individuals.
- **Develop a tracking plan** to record employee progress toward being ready to fill those roles. [This can be incorporated into the performance management system.]
- **Identify stumbling blocks**-such as lack of training budgets, mentors, poor job performance or limited on-the-job leadership opportunities—and formulate solutions.
- **Review succession plans** during annual strategic planning.
- **Revise the succession plan** as circumstances warrant.