Dancing With a New Partner

How to Efficiently and Effectively Support a Leadership Transition

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Rhythm:
A strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound.

The Rhythm is off in Higher Education

- In 2017 more than 50% of University Presidents reported they plan to leave in 5 years.  
  (Inside Higher Ed September 2020, Retirement Wave Hits Presidents Amid Pandemic)
- “… a difficult environment is likely driving presidents away.”
  (Inside Higher Ed August 2023, Abrupt Presidential Exits Underscore Jobs)

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Agenda

- Tempo of Transition
- Preparing for the Change
- Learning New Styles
- Leading the Leader
- Practice, Practice, Practice!
- Taking Lessons
Tempo:
The speed at which a passage of music is or should be played.

Retirement Celebration or Farewell
- Come in many shapes and sizes
- Usually have time to plan
- Generally positive

Termination or Resignation
- Come in many shapes and sizes
- Usually abrupt or unexpected
- Potentially scandalous

Onboarding has its own tempo to consider.
Preparing for Change

Things to consider before your new partner arrives.

**Offboarding**
- Stay engaged
- Consider workload
- Prepare outgoing needs and communication
  - Internal
  - External

**Onboarding Prep**
- Reach out early
- Prepare for Day 1
  - Internal meetings
  - External introductions
- Connect with former assistants if applicable
  - Learn about your future boss
Learning New Dance Styles

Revert Back to Assistant Fundamentals

- Communication is key
  - Preferences
  - Ask questions
- Follow instructions
  - Compartmentalize
- Offer information and support

You will take for granted the things that became unspoken routine.
Leading the Leader

Mutual Learning Period
- Institutional Knowledge is a resource
  - Policies and Practices
  - Personalities
- Insight can be Invaluable
- Embrace New Perspectives and Ideas

Recommendations
- Know when to suggest an alternative
  - Flag concerns

Look out for the unspoken needs
- Lunches, office time, “villain” support
Practice, Practice, Practice!

The Learning Phase Can Feel Like Extra Work

Key Skills to Keep Practicing:

- Communication
- Flexibility
- Optimism

“It is the best day ever. So was yesterday, and so is tomorrow, and every day from now until forever.” - Barbie
Taking Lessons - Continue to Grow and Learn

Resources:
- NAPAHE e-Round Table
  - Forum of information sourced from all NAPAHE members!
- Book Recommendations
  - “Succession Planning for the Higher Education Presidency” By Rita Bornstein, AGB Press
  - “From Presidential Transition to Integration: Strategies to Avoid Early Derailment”, by Patrick Sanaghan, Academic Impressions
- Professional Development
  - Make yourself the best partner!
Thank you!

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