



## Vice President

Many view this job as insignificant—nothing more than a popular figurehead position.

It doesn't have to be that way. The vice president, more than any other officer, has the opportunity to be creative in the position beyond the primary job description. The vice president is the president's closest student adviser and assistant. The vice president and president must work very closely together to create a productive student council. The president can't be everywhere and do everything required of the council's leader. There must also be another—a vice president—to assist and lead.

In many councils, the president serves as the point-person, the person out in front of everyone. The vice president can then serve as the behind-the-scenes person who plans, organizes, schedules, and oversees to make sure the council work is done.

### The Vice President's Challenge

To be successful, the student council vice president needs to know how to handle many types of situations. The individual must be mature, organized, have sound judgment, and have the ability to work with many different kinds of people and personalities. Keeping the delicate balance between leading and encouraging other officers, members, and interested students to take on leadership responsibilities is the vice president's challenge. There is also the practical side of being vice president that requires energy, careful management of time, and a good relationship with the president, council members, committees, and student body.

#### *Typical Duties*

- Able to assume the president's duties whenever necessary.
- Work closely with the president and have frequent, scheduled meetings.
- The ability to work with and supervise committees. In many councils, the vice president's main responsibility is to coordinate the work of the committees and often to chair an important committee. The VP needs to learn how to enlist the help of others by delegating responsibility.
- Serve as an ex officio member of each committee and attend meetings as much as possible.
- Assist in planning council meetings and agendas.
- Maintain a schedule of projects delegated to committees and a timeline of each committee's work.
- Work behind the scenes to help iron out differences between people.
- Give assistance, guidance, and praise when appropriate.
- Act as a facilitator of group discussion by summarizing, clarifying, etc.
- Maintain frequent contact with faculty and administrators.
- Work closely with the student council adviser.
- Represent student council at school, community, and civic organization meetings.
- Participate in student council-sponsored activities.
- Meet deadlines and achieve goals.
- Assume other duties as assigned by the president, such as serving as parliamentarian or meeting manager to keep meetings operating smoothly.

### Promoting Democratic Meetings

An important task of the vice president, like the president, is to preside over meetings with a democratic group atmosphere. Council meetings should be a place where:

- Ideas are reviewed by their merit rather than on the status of the person who proposed the idea.
- Decisions are made by the whole group with each member participating.
- Both quantity and quality of work are expected.
- Spontaneous ideas are exchanged.
- The leader is objective rather than subjective in praise and criticism.
- The leader functions as a regular group member, sharing work with the group.
- Genuine interest in work produces high motivation.
- Creative thinking continues with or without the leader present.
- Effective leadership stimulates awareness of those outside the group and the needs of the student body at large.

### Effective Committees

An important aspect of the vice president's job is overseeing the work of committees. Good committees, no matter what their specific purposes, have some common characteristics:

- A clearly defined purpose and specific goals.
- Enthusiastic and committed chairperson and members.
- Good attendance at meetings.
- Comfortable atmosphere where everyone's ideas are valued.
- Appropriate size—5 to 7 members is ideal, but sizes vary depending on purpose. The vice president must work with the committee chairs to ensure that committees are functioning effectively. The VP can help committees succeed by:
  - Coordinating the work effort between committees to avoid duplication of effort.
  - Encouraging general efficiency.
  - Serving as a consultant to committee chairs and members.
  - Supporting committees in the performance of their responsibilities.
  - Helping committees understand and define their problems.
  - Encouraging regular committee reports and feedback to the council. To avoid problems, it's helpful to understand what makes committees unsuccessful. When committees fail, it is usually because the committee or chairperson:
    - Does not understand their purpose and authority.
    - Does not know how to conduct a meeting.
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Is not interested in the project or assignment.

Does not have enough time to carry out the project or assignment.

Is too large or small to handle its work.

Lacks adequate resources or guidance.

Is not held accountable to the larger group.