

CHALLENGING TO LEADERSHIP

Jonathan, a campus minister, had a simple idea. He asked a student from Russia to emcee a weekly gathering for internationals. This small request from Jonathan proved to be a huge development opportunity for a student; an easy task with huge growth dividends.

In retrospect, Jonathan's request might seem small. But, no doubt, we often overlook such opportunities. How do we encourage international students to lead?

Here are the top 10 dos/don'ts of challenging students to meaningful leadership:

1. **Don't consider any task too small to offer to a student.** Leadership development usually starts with simple acts of faithfulness. As your students grow, increase the size and scope of their responsibilities.
2. **Don't assign a task and then take it back.** Once something has been delegated, it should stay delegated. When we take back a responsibility we may be inadvertently communicating something like, "I don't trust you" or "I don't think you are competent." If a student needs help with a task, then adopt a coaching stance and walk through the process with him or her. But don't take it back.
3. **Don't expect the student's initial performance to match yours.** Can you remember the first time you tried a new task? You probably are more accomplished now than at first. Remember how much time it took to learn many of the skills that you now do naturally.
4. **Don't dismiss anyone as a potential leader.** Not all leaders look or act the same. And even those who don't seem naturally gifted as leaders can make tremendous strides through determination and hard work. Look for "FAT" Christians for leadership development—Faithful, Available and Teachable.
5. **Don't trust a student who has not earned your trust.** Love can be unconditional, but trust must be earned—through a proven track record. If a student has been inconsistent or unfaithful, then give the person time to show consistency before you entrust him or her with a major leadership role.
6. **Do be patient.** Whatever philosophy of leadership development is being embraced, most experts would agree on one thing. It takes time.
7. **Do communicate expectations clearly.** "All miscommunication is a result of differing assumptions," says leadership expert Bob Biehl. We take a great risk in our relationships

when we make too many assumptions. And that's what happens when we fail to communicate properly. Spend time and focused energy talking over the specifics of delegated responsibility.

8. **Do coach carefully-laying out each step in the process.** Even challenging assignments can be broken down into simple steps. Good delegation includes walking through these steps.
9. **Do offer increasing leadership opportunities** as someone demonstrates trustworthiness. Often, growing disciples get bored or listless due to a lack of healthy challenge. As a coach and discipler it's your unique role to make sure this doesn't happen. Keep looking for new challenges and opportunities for your emerging leaders. "Move with the movers."
10. **Do encourage them to pass on what they've learned to others.** The proof that your students have really learned something is when they can teach it to others. Growing disciples of Christ will be "multipliers." Note these words from 2 Timothy 2:2 — "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." (NIV)