

MOBILIZING STUDENT LEADERS

Samuel leads a ministry for internationals at a large university. He does a great job. But if you observe him closely, you will see one odd, little inconsistency. When he's involved in raising funds or recruiting co-laborers, Samuel always underlines the importance of Christian ministry to "future world leaders." Yet when he needs additional leadership help, he's hesitant to ask an international. Hey, Samuel, what happened to those future world leaders on your campus? If they're really future world leaders, why can't they help lead your local ministry?

Many of us need to think about that kind of question. We can't afford to overlook the most strategic type of leaders for international student ministry—international students!

Here are some tips to help all of us mobilize internationals as leaders:

- At first, new arrivals from overseas may appear to lack confidence. But don't misinterpret a temporary homesickness or insecurity as a lack of leadership potential. Watch your students in various situations, including interactions with their countrymen.
- There is a big difference between saying we want a student-led ministry and making the changes to create one. In some cases, we may need to step back slightly so that others can step forward.
- Internationals rarely promote themselves for positions of leadership in a local ministry—especially if Americans are involved. Most international students come from cultures that value humility, so they will wait to be invited into leadership roles instead of taking the initiative to volunteer.
- To mobilize leaders means much more than simply giving over a responsibility. We must maintain a coaching relationship with developing leaders over time—offering encouragement and training as long as it is needed and wanted.
- International students, like others, will occasionally fail in particular roles. Remember that the failures of young leaders create opportunities for their spiritual growth—if older leaders communicate grace, unconditional love, encouragement and correction to them.
- Realize that the first few years of a person's Christian life tend to form the pattern for the future. If we want our international friends to become spiritual leaders in their homelands, we need to let them begin to lead while they are still with us.

