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Organization Restructuring and Leadership Development

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Introduction

The University of Rhode Island American Marketing Association (AMA) has been struggling with membership retention and leadership transition over the past few years. These two problems were linked to the chapter's organizational structure as well as the leadership transition process.

If the chapter continues to struggle in these areas, it will have a difficult time growing and improving each year. By improving in these areas, our chapter will be more competitive nationally among other collegiate chapters and marketing programs.

Our goal was to find best practices for the leadership hierarchy as well as for the transition of power from year to year. To move towards this goal, we conducted research by drawing on the AMA network of collegiate chapter presidents. We also planned and executed a retreat to educate our new executive board on their positions in order to make the transition smoother.

Methods

Phase 1: Organization Restructuring

Our two main methods of research during the initial phase of the project were informational interviews and a survey.

Survey:

- Objective - to gather quantitative and qualitative data that allows for the comparison of leadership and organizational structure with variables such as chapter size.
- Distributed to a network of collegiate AMA chapter presidents nationwide

Informational interview:

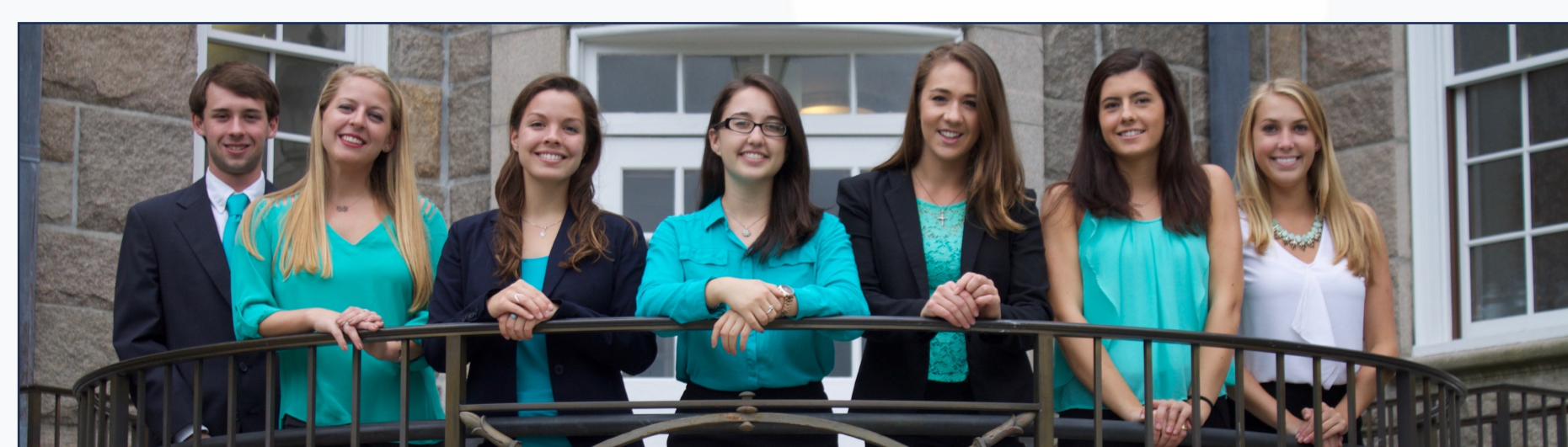
- Objective - to gather in depth feedback from past AMA members to understand progress and shortcomings over the past three years
- Conducted with two previous URI AMA chapter presidents

Phase 2: Leadership Transition Retreat

The second phase of the project involved planning a leadership transition retreat for AMA's current and incoming board members.

Transition Retreat:

- Objective - To create a smooth transition between school years so that the new board will be in the best position possible to succeed in the upcoming year
- Retreat program executed during two sessions where members participated in team building exercises in addition to learning the tasks and requirements of their upcoming positions



Results

Phase 1: Organization Restructuring Survey Results

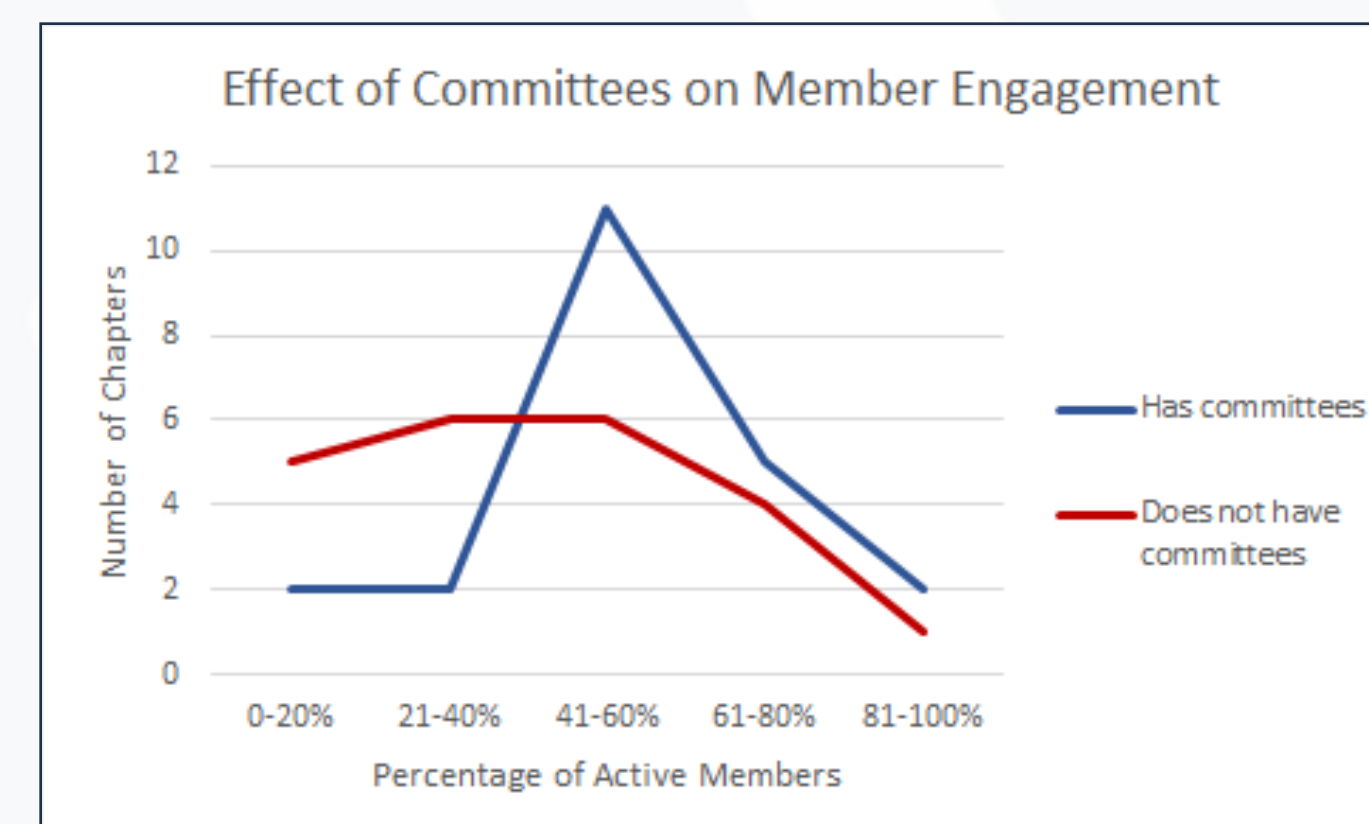


Figure 1 Chapters who have committees tend to have higher percentages of active members than those chapters who do not have committees.

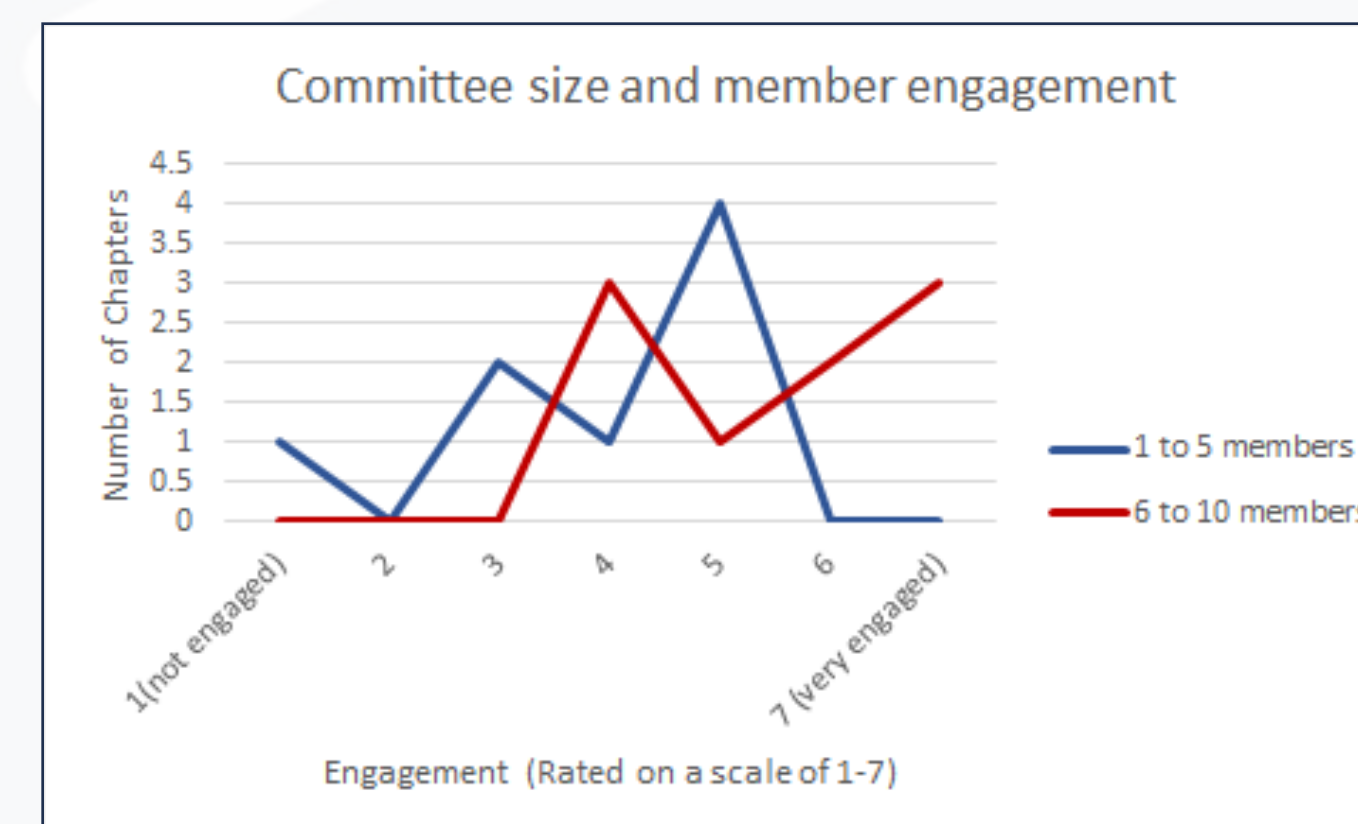


Figure 2 compares membership engagement created through committees, cross-tabulated with the size of the committees. This graph shows that both size committees improve membership engagement fairly equally.

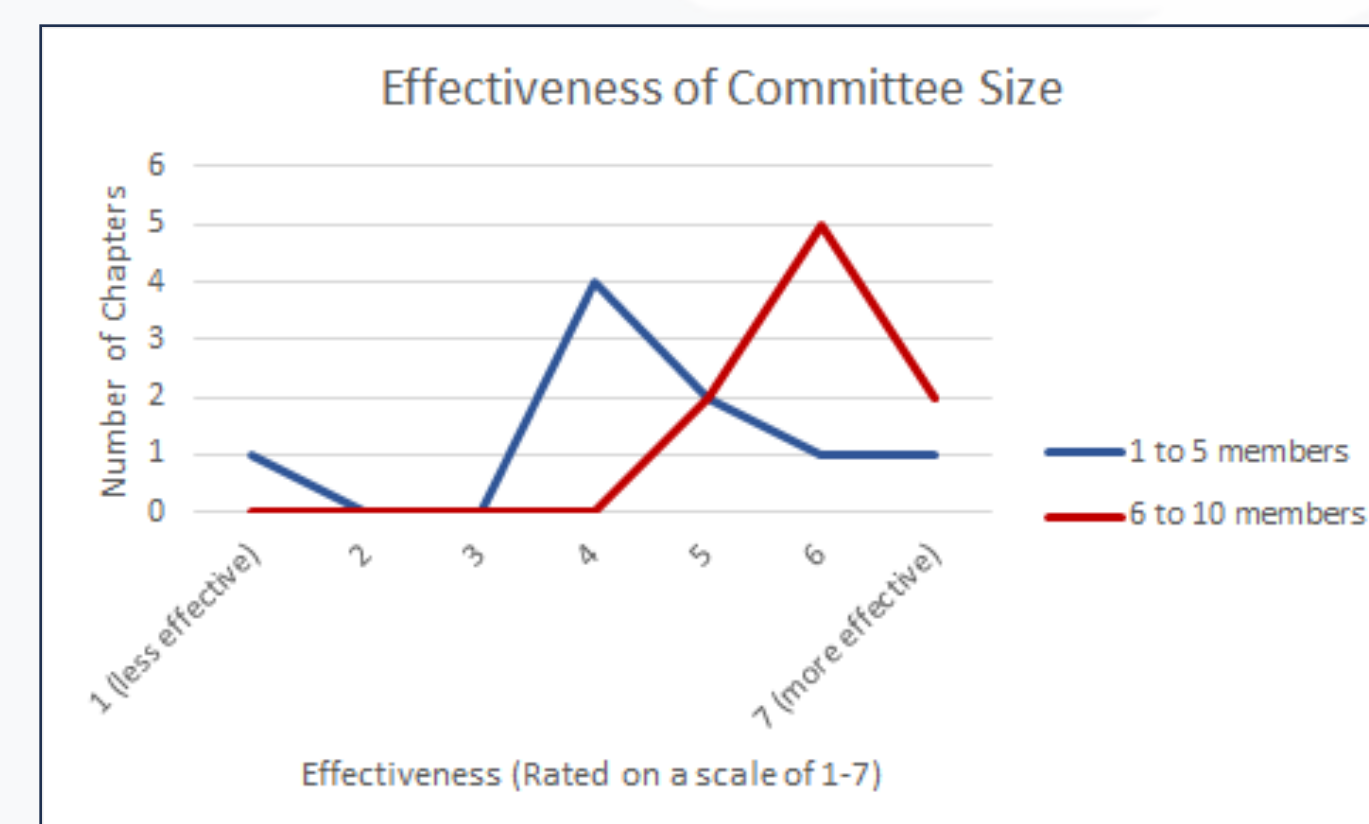


Figure 3 shows the effectiveness rated by other AMA chapters of their committees, cross-tabulated with the size of their committees. The graph shows that committees with 6 to 10 members are slightly more effective than the small committees.

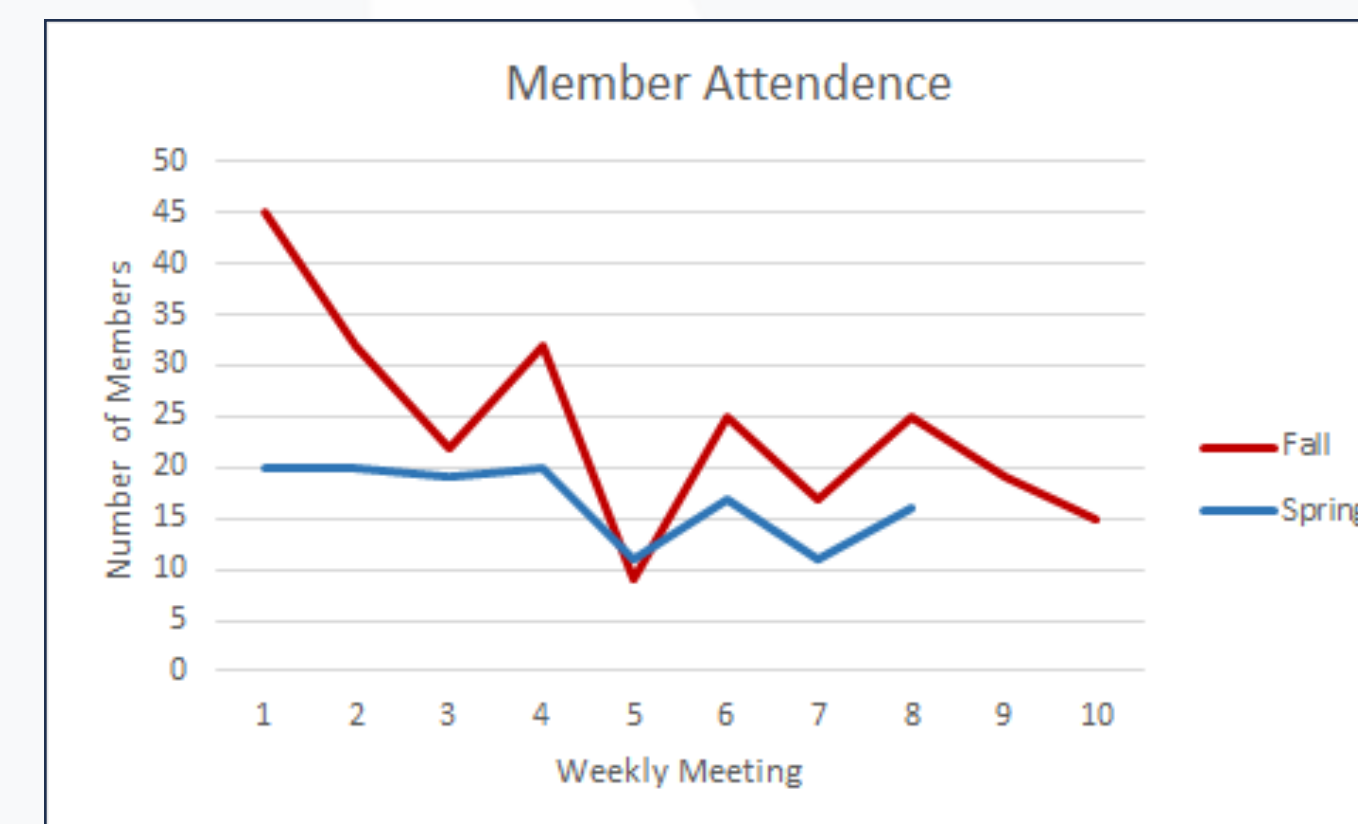


Figure 4 Although the AMA chapter started off with greater member attendance during meetings in the fall semester, after introducing committees in the spring, weekly membership was more consistent.

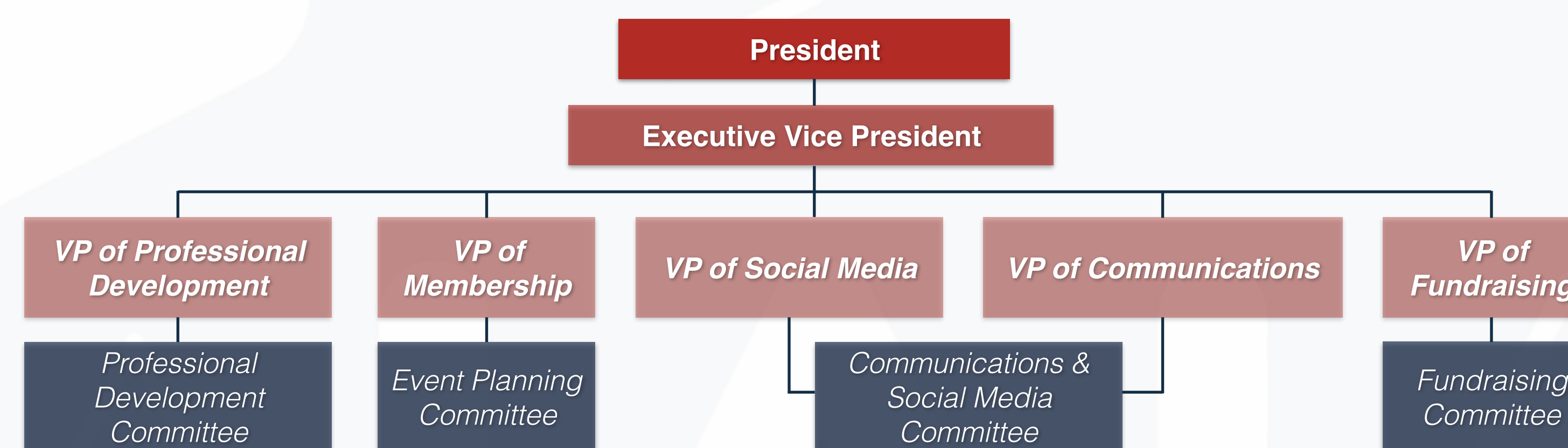


Figure 5 Leadership and committee hierarchy that was implemented during the Spring 2017 semester.

Phase 2: Leadership Transition Retreat

Day 1:

- Built trust and communication within team through ice breaker activities
- Reflected on their personal brand as well as goal setting for upcoming year
- Learned about responsibilities of positions
- Set up all technology & communication platforms for new board members
- Read and discussed the National AMA Collegiate Chapters operations manual

Day 2:

- Reviewed day 1 materials
- Brainstormed & planned for next academic year
- Completed more than 50% of Chapter Plan
- Established schedule for summer plans

Feedback was positive and the 2017-2018 board members were left feeling excited, empowered, and well-informed.

Discussion

Phase 1: Organization Restructuring

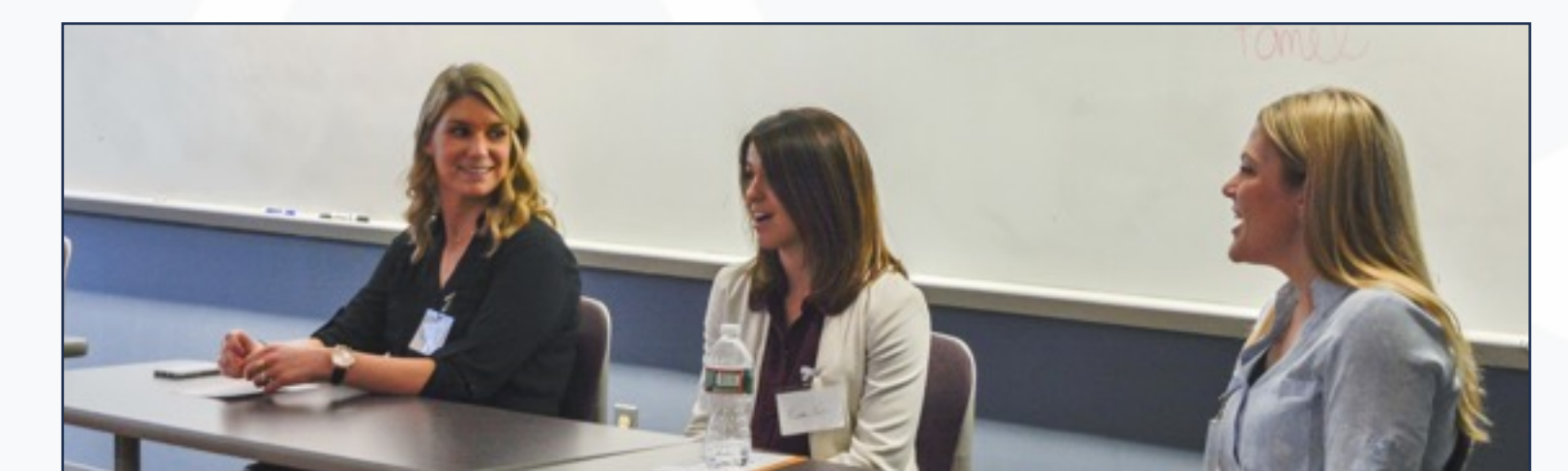
As a result of the survey and informational interviews, we were able to gain a better sense of URI AMA's progress over the past few years, its level of achievement in comparison to other chapters, and opportunities moving forward.

Based on the survey, we discovered that more AMA chapters that have committees also reported higher levels of active members than those that do not have committees (Figure 1). Therefore, we concluded that it would be beneficial to organize the URI chapter into committees with the goal of increasing membership engagement as well as retention.

When deciding on how many committees we should create, we compared the effectiveness of committees of varying sizes. As shown in Figure 3, the effectiveness rating is skewed towards 6 (more effective) for committees with 6 to 10 members. Committees with 1 to 5 members were still effective, yet are centered around 4, meaning that they are less effective at completing tasks.

We decided to implement 4 committees led by the five VPs (Figure 5). This structure achieved the goal of membership retention and also aided in providing all members with more opportunities to take ownership of projects.

In Figure 4, the spring semester member attendance for our chapter was much more consistent. Although it can not be concluded that the committee structure that was implemented in the spring semester was the sole contributor to improved retention, we did receive positive feedback from members who felt more involved due to the new structure.



Phase 2: Leadership Transition Retreat

The retreat went well and members actively engaged in the activities. Never before had the Chapter Plan been created so far in advance. This will give the incoming board members a strong foundation for planning and communication as the summer begins.

The full results of this transitional program will not be evident immediately, but will be apparent especially during the first semester next year. We anticipate there to be less stress for board members and a better experience and opportunities for members. It is the objective of this program to give the board members all the resources they need in order to succeed and help progress the chapter to a new competitive level.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our faculty sponsor Dr. David Mitchell for his support during this project and over the past few years as the faculty advisor of URI's AMA. We also would like to thank Professor Amanda Moss-Cowan for her insight on leadership structure that helped us organize our chapter for the coming years. Finally, a special thanks to the Honors Program that has given us this opportunity to grow deeper in our understanding of this interest.