

Leadership Development and Sustainability

Acting on AIDS was not started by individuals, but as a collaborative effort by students who were united behind the issue, where each participant was personally invested in the program. The program continues because each student is aware of his or her voice and opportunity to raise awareness about AIDS. That is the key behind sustainability.

The crucial issue. One of the biggest issues your Acting on AIDS chapter, or any organization, can face is sustainability. Sustainability speaks directly to the life of your chapter. The word often refers to *nourishment, support and continuance*—all factors that define the sustainability of an Acting on AIDS chapter. A sustainable chapter has *foundation, force, and function*. Here are some examples:

Foundation: Make sure you have a sponsoring faculty member who is educated on the issues and who desires to see your Acting on AIDS chapter grow over time. Also make sure you have at least five core chapter leaders with specific responsibilities. Make certain that not all of your leaders graduate in the same year.

Force: Educate the members of your chapter on the issues of and around HIV and AIDS. Continue to build not just on education but on awareness, using a variety of tools such as testimonials, books and documentaries. Keep a strong discipleship component as well, reminding students of the real reason that drives them.

Function: As a team, develop a specific action plan for the academic year, as well a longer-term 5-year plan. Cultivate an understanding of who you are and where you are going.

Why be sustainable? The goal of Acting on AIDS is not meant to be another club on campus but a movement that unifies Christian students under the banner of awareness, advocacy, and hope in fight against HIV and AIDS and other social justice issues. Students with various talents and academic interests are encouraged to participate and translate the message of AoA into their language—using the fields they know best to advocate for this issue. For that, each chapter needs direction and sustainability. The sustainability of your chapter is directly linked to leadership development.

What is leadership development? Leadership development is *apprenticeship* to prepare someone to take over the Acting on AIDS chapter when you leave. This is to enhance the learner's capacity to lead people. Consider leadership development from a biblical perspective, focusing on Christ's approach to developing leaders and growing the church. Building on the practicality of Scripture, we will discover ways you can apply these concepts and ideas on your campus.

Jesus' Approach:

I. Calling People Out. *"As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he got up and followed Him."* Matthew 9:9

If a well-known person that you hardly knew sent out a general invitation for everyone on campus to attend a party, would you go? Maybe, maybe not. On the other hand, if this person came up to you and personally invited you, wouldn't you be more likely to go? As a general rule, people are more inclined to respond to personal invitations than general ones. It affirms our value as individuals and makes us feel unique, a wanted part of something.



Application: Getting people to get involved, and more than that, to be *invested*, in Acting on AIDS will require a more personal touch, in addition to flyers and announcements in chapel. Speak to peers one-on-one to encourage their involvement.

2. Witness in Action. *“You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”* John 13:13-15 (NASB)

If we are to walk as Christ walked, we must know what He did. He let His disciples watch Him in action—healing, ministering, teaching—before He ever asked them to do it themselves. Jesus, Himself, said that He could “do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing.” (John 5:19b)

Application: If a group, organization or movement is to endure, the leader must let himself/herself be watched and followed by others, so those who follow after can carry on the torch. Identify the strengths of your chapter members, call them forth to be trained as a future leader, and pair them up with the appropriate people to watch them in action.

3. Specific Training. *“And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples.’ And He said to them, ‘When you pray, say . . .’”* Luke 11:1-2 (NASB)

Imagine the most beautiful car you’ve ever seen. It’s shiny, sleek, has automatic everything, and looks like it could go from 0 to 60 in 2 seconds. You open the hood and, to your surprise, there is no engine in the car. It’s all bells and whistles with no real substance. Training is the engine in the car—the power to sustain and accelerate. Without training, as soon as any real action is required, everything collapses. The Gospels are full of Jesus’ teaching about specific issues. Simply following and watching Jesus is not enough. We must receive His teaching. He responded to specific questions and used everyday situations to teach life lessons. If the disciples had not been trained, then once Jesus ascended into heaven, they would have been like a car without an engine, unable to lead the church or guide new followers of Christ. Training provides the depth necessary for a movement to continue.

Application: Take the time to teach those you are grooming to lead the chapter after you. Make sure they are well-versed on the issues, biblical responses, and how to locate resources for expansion. Investigate the resources in this toolkit and others such as *A Guide to Acting on AIDS: Understanding the Global AIDS Pandemic and Responding through Faith in Action*. As you become more knowledgeable on the issues, pass these resources on to others.

4. Participation. *“No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”* John 15:14 (NASB)

Several years ago, an international non-profit organization went to an African country and built water systems all over the country. If you visit the country today, you will see all but one of the water towers broken down in disrepair. When questioned about the problem, community members said that these water systems were built for them, without consulting them for their needs,

without utilizing existing human resources for building these water systems, and without training them to maintain the system. Where did the project breakdown? It collapsed at the very beginning. If any project or movement is to succeed, it must use the support, participation, and resources of the entire community. No one likes to be told what to do or how to live. We all bring our varied perspectives and contributions. We must enter into a relationship with each other to discover our varying viewpoints and how we can fit these pieces together to form a whole.

Application: Make sure everything your chapter endeavors to do is participatory. Any issues you address or activities you undertake need to be determined as a team. Simple team-building activities, group brainstorming, or open-door policies promote this ideal.

5. Momentum. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”* John 14:12 (NASB)

Discipleship is training others up to have an even greater impact in the world than you have. It requires leaders to have faith in those they train and the humility to desire that those individuals will surpass them in knowledge and action. Step-by-step training that builds in momentum creates this capacity. When a child is first learning to read, his teacher does not begin with Shakespeare. A teacher begins with the basics—alphabet, sounds, simple words—and builds momentum as the child learns. To continue effectively, an organization or a movement must build on momentum, getting more involved, more knowledgeable, and more invested. A leader’s role is to build this momentum with those he or she is preparing to lead in the future.

Application: Take your chapter on a step-by-step journey. Make sure all new members are trained in the basics and expand on the current knowledge of more experienced members. Use existing knowledge within the group to train, building on the wisdom and various experiences of your chapter members.

6. Calling to Action. *“And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.”* Luke 9:1-2 (NASB)

If training is the engine in the car, the call to action is the fuel. Sending someone out to take action is an affirmation of their ability to perform and an opportunity for them to apply what they have learned. Watching and listening are not enough. The Bible is full of exhortations not merely to listen to the Word but to do it. In sending the disciples out, Jesus expanded His kingdom in a multiplication style. He trained a few people who then went and trained a few more, spreading out like branches on a fruit-bearing tree.

Application: An organization cannot continue if there is no one willing to carry on the ministry. Trained, prepared students must be at the ready and called out to go and train more people. They must be empowered to carry on the task, recognizing that they are ready to make a difference.

7. Trust. *“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age.’”* Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB)

In these verses, Jesus is expressing His trust in the disciples to continue on with His work. Jesus' work on earth as a human is complete. He left behind His Spirit to empower His followers to expand His kingdom. A leader who does not trust his group members can become entrenched and stuck in his ways, because he has never trusted those alongside him to pick up any tasks. Trusting those who are to succeed is key in the survival of any movement. Not only does it liberate the leader to go on to other things, but it also empowers the new leader to continue and thrive.

Application: When you know someone has placed their trust in you, don't you feel a greater honor and responsibility to that task? The same is true in the context of sustainability. Those in whom the leader invested must be empowered to continue. Something as simple as a verbal acknowledgement of trust can be enough to affirm and endorse the new leader.

Run with it. There is great freedom in how you apply the principles of godly leadership development to make Acting on AIDS sustainable on your campus. Know your members and the culture of your community and your campus. Seek to follow the Lord's example and He will be faithful to direct your chapter the way it needs to go in His timing. Always remember that He has placed ample resources at your disposal. Use them and trust the Lord and your fellow Acting on AIDS members. Soon enough, everyone wearing the orange t-shirt will be a leader.