

### **Roles and Expectations of Chairs and Program Directors**

Discussion with Kevin Corcoran and Nivedita Mukherji



#### **What roles do chairs/program directors have?**

- Facilitator
- Manager
- Advocate
- Mediator
- Fundraiser
- Leader
- Visionary
- Budget Manager
- Participant in shared governance
- Recruiter
- Representative of department to external contacts
- Developer of curriculum
- Scholarship supporter

#### **What are expectations for chairs/program directors?**

- Everyone expects you to be a mind-reader, a magician, and a miracle worker.
- Faculty expect you to:
  - Accommodate them.
  - Keep up morale.
  - Say YES!
  - Be their advocate.
  - Mentor them.
  - Support them.
  - Find consensus in the department.
  - Promote the needs of faculty and the department.
  - Be fair in decision-making.
  - Be present.
- Administrators expect you to:
  - Cultivate relationships.
  - Make decisions.
  - Be a representative of the department.
  - Adhere to the requirements for accreditation.
  - Be transparent.
- Students expect you to:
  - Advise them.
  - Create and schedule courses that fit their needs, interests, and schedules.
  - Value them as a part of the department.

### What skills should chairs/program directors have?

- Be organized
- Be responsive
- Be ego-less
- Be serene
- Be compassionate
- Be patient
- Be objective
- Be impartial
- Be mature
- Be persuasive
- Be consistent and fair
- Be able to negotiate
- Have integrity
- Have good people skills, communicate
- Forecast the future of the department
- Plan out schedules and programs
- Provide reasoning when you say no
- Manage crises
- Resolve conflict
- Manage budget
- Adhere to accreditation standards
- Assess program
- Develop the big picture
- Find external financial support
- Listen to faculty and students
- Solve problems

### Leadership Skills for Department Chairs and Program Directors

Discussion with Kathleen Moore



### What is academic leadership?

#### Definition from presentation:

*“The act of building a community of scholars to set direction and achieve common purposes through the empowerment of faculty and staff.”*  
(Wolverton and Gmelch, 2002)

#### Another definition (created during discussion):

- Fostering a community of scholars who share a common direction and collaboratively work toward department and student success.

### What does an academic leader do?

- Involve others. Encourage all faculty members to contribute to department development.
- Embrace new ideas.
- Build community.
- Consider students and their role in the department.
- Focus on a common purpose. Know the ideas and direction of the department.
- Utilize and improve soft skills, especially communication.
- Coordinate and make decisions.
- Be accountable for actions and decisions.
- You may be considered the “fall-person” of the department and often get the blame for things.

- Be an active leader. Respect and engage your followers, aka the department faculty and staff.
- Encourage faculty members to become leaders within your unit. Partner with and support other leaders.
- You don't have to do everything alone! Delegate tasks, responsibilities, etc. to other faculty members and staff.

#### Who are the constituents of an academic leader?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students – present and future</li><li>• Alumni</li><li>• Employers – present and future</li><li>• Colleagues</li><li>• Staff</li><li>• Support services on campus</li><li>• Upper administration and leaders distributed across campus</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The complex university system (all positions, departments, organizations, and offices)</li><li>• Professional organizations/accreditors</li><li>• State and/or federal agencies</li><li>• Community organizations</li><li>• The public (community members that you see in town, at events, etc.)</li></ul> |
|--|--|

#### Dealing with Difficult Challenges and Making Difficult Decisions

Panel Discussion with Mark Rigstad (Philosophy), Brian Sangeorzan (Mechanical Engineering), Kristine Thompson (Physical Therapy), Lisa Hawley (Counseling), Dave Dulio (Political Science)



#### How do you deal with challenges (and hopefully turn them into opportunities)?

**How do you handle a professor who gets tenure but “checks out”...ie shows up to teach but is not productive with research, service, or engagement with students?**

- Set aside your personal feelings. Ask “what?” and “how?” questions instead of “why?”
  - Where are they in their career? How can you re-engage them? What are their interests?
- Try to motivate unproductive faculty by framing their activities in a positive way.
  - What beneficial things can the faculty member bring to your department?
- Consider differential teaching loads. This method works best when decisions are diplomatic.
- Consider applying soft power first – talk out the issue with the faculty member. If further steps are necessary, disciplinary tactics (aka hard power) may be implemented. Consult with OU AHR (Article 9).

- Ask or remind the faculty member of their responsibilities and tasks at a department meeting. The public acknowledgement may encourage the faculty member to be more accountable for their actions.
- Document any discussions and actions for future reference.
- Encourage your faculty member to participate in mid-career activities on campus.

**How do you handle a difficult tenure/promotion decision?**

- Your department has a process – abide by it.

**How do you handle complaints from students and/or colleagues?**

- Listen! Let the person vent. They will most likely feel better after talking and appreciate that you gave them your time and attention.

**How do you handle a faculty member who does not reply to emails, especially to those from students?**

- Suggest that they faculty member uses Moodle for communication and/or offers office hours.
- Consult with AHR.

**How do I avoid forgetting meetings, tasks, etc?**

- Consider using online tools for scheduling and reminders.
  - Use the Google Calendar to mark appointments and meetings on your own calendar. You can share calendars with colleagues and schedule meetings with other people.
    - Google also has a Tasks function. Tasks can be marked as completed and sorted by date.
  - Use Doodle (doodle.com) to create a poll to help decide a time and date for a meeting.
  - If you prefer physical reminders, consider using a whiteboard in your office or notepad to keep track of your schedule and tasks.