

CETL Chairs' Corner

Message from the Chair Fellow

Introduction and Plans for 2016-2017

Jay Meehan | July 6, 2016

My goals for the 2016-17 CETL Chair Fellowship are modest but hopefully will serve those who perform the important role of a department chair or program director. I served as CAS chair for 9½ years during which time my department added two new majors (Social Work & Criminal Justice) and doubled its full-time faculty. During this tenure, I faced a number of challenges and had my fair share of successes and failures that will inform my work as the CETL Chair Fellow. Toward that end, let me highlight my major goals for the year.

Getting to Know You! Funny as that may sound, there are chairs and directors, particularly outside the CAS, who I do not know or know only in passing. I am aware that while every department/program shares similar challenges, each one also has their unique set of issues. My goal is to connect with each of you so I can better understand the issues you face and to ascertain how the CETL can lend best support to your leadership efforts.

Mentoring. I often described being a chair as a “lonely” job. Satisfying competing demands, whether from students, faculty or administration often involves a tightrope balancing act. It was at these times that I sought the counsel and support of other chairs. I am hoping to earn your trust so I can serve as a mentor to you. To me, mentoring can range from being a sympathetic ear or sounding board over a cup of coffee or a brainstorming strategy about a specific problem. I will be reaching out to each of you—chairs and program directors—with the goal of scheduling a one-on-one meeting in addition to the Chair Forum opportunities hosted each semester. I teach Tuesday/Thursday afternoons in Mt. Clemens, but can be available those mornings and most other days for a mentoring session. Please feel free to email me (meehan@oakland.edu) or call my office x2428 to schedule an appointment or just chat.

Mobilizing Supportive Resources. An important role for the Chair Fellow will be institutionalizing supportive resources for chairs and program directors. I have inherited two efforts begun last year that will continue in 2016-2017: Chair Lunchtime Forums and the Chair's Handbook.

- Four forums are already planned for the Fall. On Monday, September 19, I will host a [New Chairs/Program Directors Forum](#) for incoming chairs and program directors. On Wednesday, October 5, [Chairs' Perspective on Provost's Evidence of Teaching Initiative: Course Evaluations Revisited](#) will be lead by CETL Director Judy Ableser. On Monday, November 7, Jen Heisler, Chair of the Department of Communication and Journalism will lead a discussion about [Academic Work-Life Balance](#). On Monday, December 5, Kathy Moore and I will lead a discussion on [Mentoring Faculty](#). Each forum will be from noon to 1:30, and lunch will be served.
- The [Chair Handbook](#), which is posted on the CETL website, is an amazing resource! It has tons of information and names of “go-to” people and places. But we have been made aware of gaps, such as some practical guidance about conducting searches and how offers should and should not be negotiated. And I am sure there are more. So this year I will be reviewing that document and soliciting your input about its contents. I also plan to systematically solicit from the Deans their expectations for chairs and program directors as “leaders” in their units.

I am in uncharted territory—this is year one of a new fellowship. I am open to any ideas you have about how CETL can help you be successful in one of the most challenging roles in this university. I am open to your ideas—and more importantly to translating those ideas into resources for you.