

BEST PRACTICES FOR CHAIRS

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Learning Outcomes

2

- *Identify strategies to improve advocacy skills with university administrators.*
- *Identify strategies to improve effective skills within the department.*

3

I. Some Background on Department Chairs

Who Wants to be a Department Chair?

4

- 30% of faculty state that they would like to be a chair (Gmelch, 2006).
- 60% of department chairs have no prior administrative experience (Hecht, et al., 1999).

Self-Perceptions of Department Chairs

5

- 44% of department chairs primarily identify with faculty roles.
- 52% see themselves as both faculty members and administrators.
- only 4% see themselves primarily as administrators.

Leadership Styles and Perceived Effectiveness of Department Chairs (Peterson, 2004)

6

- **Directive** ~ gives instructions about tasks, expectations, and deadlines
- **Supportive** ~ attends to the well-being and needs of faculty

Leadership Styles and Perceived Effectiveness of Department Chairs (Peterson, 2004)

7

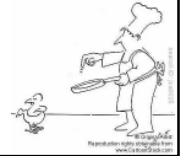
- **Participative** ~ invites colleagues to share in decision-making; integrates their suggestions into decisions
- **Achievement-oriented** ~ challenges faculty to perform at the highest levels possible



What Leadership Style Do Most Department Chairs Indicate That They Employ?

8

- **Selling** ~ this style is appropriate if followers are confident and willing to take responsibility but are unable to do so because of lack of expertise (Al-Omari, 2005)



Personality Characteristics of Effective Leaders (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994)

9

- **Surgency** ~ desire for advancement; readiness to make decisions
- **Emotional stability** ~ resistance to stress and tolerance for uncertainty
- **Conscientiousness** ~ hardworking, persevering, organized

Personality Characteristics of Effective Leaders (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994)

10

- **Agreeableness** ~ sympathetic, cooperative, good-natured, warm
- **Intellectance** ~ imaginative, cultured, broad minded, curious

Some Background on Department Chairs

11

- Also, read 'Seven Habits of Successful Chairpersons' in Deryl L. Leaming's *Academic Leadership: A Practical Guide to Chairing the Academic Department, 2nd Ed.* (2006).

Some Background on Department Chairs

12

- **Part I. Summary of Best Practices:**
 - Understanding your reasons for becoming a department chair
 - Gauge your preparation for the chair role
 - seek training to shore up weak areas
 - Identify your leadership style or what style works best for you and your department colleagues

13

II. Strategies to Improve Advocacy Skills with University Administrators

14

Improving Advocacy Skills

- *Advocating for your unit is vital!*
 - To leverage influence so that constituents begin to share the department's goals, missions, vision and values (Leaming, 2007)
 - To widen your "circles of influence" (Covey, 1989)
 - from Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
 - **To acquire resources for your program**

15

Improving Advocacy Skills

- Hecht, et al. (1999)
 - The chair's role is complicated by external pressures from:
 - central administration
 - accrediting agencies
 - state boards of education
 - granting agencies
 - state legislators
 - Chairs must be familiar with these entities in order to address each of their particular challenges

16

Improving Advocacy Skills

- A chair is not only the chief advocate and spokesperson for the department
 - chairs are a primary agent of the central administration
- faculty sometimes have a hard time accepting this fact

17

Improving Advocacy Skills

- **Many new chairs have little/no experience advocating for anyone other than themselves**
- *How does one learn these skills?*
- Some individuals have prior experiences with other administrative positions
 - graduate, undergraduate coordinator
 - directors of special programs (student affairs, honors, CTLT, etc.)

18

Improving Advocacy Skills

- Transferable (attainable) advocacy skills and experiences
 - fiscal management
 - general management experiences
 - development and cultivation of institutional networks
 - Provost, VPs, Deans, Registrar, Bursar, Treasurer
 - being a member of university committees:
 - Provost's or Dean's advisory committees
 - Faculty Senate
 - Graduate/Undergraduate Council
 - Human Subjects/Animal Review Boards

Improving Advocacy Skills

19

- Leveraging Influence and widening your circle of influence:
 - With alumni
 - With "publics", i.e., professionals outside of the university
 - On-campus networking
 - With your Dean and other administrators
 - working with your Dean is not enough!

Working with Alumni

20

- Make contact with alumni
 - many alumni feel unwanted if not called upon
- Create an alumni association and association board
 - help to contact other alumni
 - assist in fundraising
- Honor your alumni
 - create a "wall of fame" of distinguished alums

Working with "Publics"

21

- To create, improve and maintain a positive image
- The chair is usually the liaison with external constituencies
- Chairs need to be adept at recognizing perspectives held by external publics and be able to structure department communication with them to enhance a shared relationship (Hecht, et al., 1999)

Working with "Publics"

22

- Hecht, et al., (1999):
 - Effective chairs not only answer all surveys and reports demanded by external constituents, but also
 - institute communication with them
 - Send department newsletters to external publics
 - Solicit press coverage for important events

On-Campus Networking

23

- Importance of networking with other professionals across campus
 - joint programming with other departments
 - special/regular education
 - handicapped services
 - student affairs
 - work collaboratively with the registrar, bursar, financial aid, student affairs and other offices that impact student success

Working With the Dean

24

- You must have a solid working relationship with your Dean (Lees, 2006; Leaming, 2007)
 - you must be willing to work with (or cultivate a relationship with) your Dean
 - relationship built on trust and mutual respect
 - don't talk behind his back
 - it is helpful if you like each other

Working With the Dean

25

- Set up regular meetings
 - ▣ informal or formal, depending on the Dean's preferences
 - ▣ talk candidly
 - ▣ air differences
- Think beyond your own agenda and department!

What Deans Do Not Want or Like (Lees, 2006)

26

- **Late or inaccurate paperwork**
 - ▣ may have legal ramifications
- **Overspent budget accounts**
 - ▣ you may not get bailed out
- **Hearing department-level complaints**
 - ▣ deal with problems yourself and promptly to avoid escalation
- **Surprises**
 - ▣ try to warn the Dean ahead of time

What Deans Do Not Want or Like (Lees, 2006)

27

- **Being left out of the information loop**
 - ▣ don't let the Dean hear about department business from "higher-ups"
- **Continued requests for resources from chairs**
 - ▣ there is a line between "justified advocacy" and requests "just because she got it"
 - ▣ make sure requests have solid planning and predicted, measured outcomes associated with them

What Deans Want (Lees, 2006; Leaming, 2007)

28

- Keep the Dean informed
- Keep lines of communication open
- Take responsibility for your decisions
- Meet deadlines
- Know university policy and follow it
- Be open, and share information, with faculty
- Be a strong advocate for your faculty and department

What Deans Want (Lees, 2006; Leaming, 2007)

29

- Solid strategic planning from the chair and the department
- Projects that coincide with initiatives of the Dean and the College
- External funding and gifts
 - ▣ overheads
- Recognition for their work and decisions
- Things they can brag about

III Strategies to Improve Effective Leadership Skills within the Department

30

- ▣ Understanding Faculty Priorities
- ▣ Enhancing Effectiveness of the Chair
- ▣ Being/Becoming a Future-Oriented Chair
- ▣ Evaluation of your Performance

Understanding of Faculty Priorities

31

□ 10 Principles of Good Practice for Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarship (O'Meara, 2005):

1. *Prepare faculty in graduate school for the variety of roles and types of scholarship in which they will engage.*
2. *Socialize new faculty to the broader institutional definition of scholarship.*

Understanding of Faculty Priorities

32

□ 10 Principles of Good Practice for Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarship (O'Meara, 2005):

3. *Present clear expectations for scholarship in promotion and tenure.*
4. *Do not expect or reward the "overloaded plate."*

Understanding of Faculty Priorities

33

□ 10 Principles of Good Practice for Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarship (O'Meara, 2005):

5. *Assess the impact of scholarship on multiple beneficiaries and partners.*
6. *Provide useful feedback to faculty during evaluation.*

Understanding of Faculty Priorities

34

□ 10 Principles of Good Practice for Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarship (O'Meara, 2005):

7. *Support pioneers with resources---structural and financial, training and development, political and symbolic.*
8. *Encourage scholarly contributions that build on strengths.*

Understanding of Faculty Priorities

35

□ 10 Principles of Good Practice for Encouraging Multiple Forms of Scholarship (O'Meara, 2005):

9. *Define and emphasize scholarship in the context of institutional mission.*
10. *Resist increasing research expectations to enhance institutional prestige.*

Enhancing Effectiveness of the Department Chair

36

- The most important characteristics of an effective leader are (Lees, 2006)
 - ▣ *Credibility*
 - ▣ *Equity*
 - ▣ *Honesty*
- These contribute to your "personal power" as chair!

Leadership Qualities (Leaming, 2007)

37

- Have a sense of humor!
- Have vision
- Delegate responsibility
- Know your own strengths and limitations
- Be self-confident
 - don't be afraid to make mistakes
 - accept blame for failures and share credit for success

Leadership Qualities (Leaming, 2007)

38

- Be sensitive and caring
 - don't be afraid to apologize
- Be self-confident and decisive
- Embrace change
 - provide ideas and be flexible

Securing Resources

39

- How do I become more effective at acquiring external resources?
 - The following suggestions apply to acquiring resources, but also to all things you do.
 - These tie in with ideas discussed earlier, related to advocating for the department

Specific Strategies (from Sutherland, 2007)

40

- Target multiple actors
 - working with the Dean is simply not enough
 - the more access you have to other constituents, the better
 - get involved in important university committees
 - understand the players across campus who can help you be successful!
 - develop credible connections with key players

Specific Strategies

41

- Garner faculty support for funding initiatives
 - senior level administrators look for unit support
- Be knowledgeable of institutional priorities, faculty preferences, department programs and different revenue streams on campus

Specific Strategies

42

- Promote your Department
 - increase visibility across campus
 - it is helpful if administrators are knowledgeable about your programs
 - Align proposals with available revenues, institutional priorities and departmental strengths

Being/Becoming a Future-Oriented Department Chair

43 Characteristics of Traditional versus Future-Oriented Department Chairs*

Traditional Department Chair

Characteristics	Example
National stature and visibility	Prominence and distinction among peers nationally
Recruitment from a prestigious institution	Comes from an academic program that has a solid reputation
Track record in research	Recognized as a legitimate scholar with expertise in a particular field
Appreciation for teaching	Understands the educational and training needs of students at all levels
"Gets along well with others."	Reasonable social skills

* Source: Grigsby et al. (2004)

Being/Becoming a Future-Oriented Department Chair

44 Future-Oriented Department Chair

Future-Oriented Department Chair

Characteristics	Example
Institutional orientation	Able to balance departmental affairs with institutional priorities
Emotional competence	Self-aware and adaptive
Resilience	Does not panic under pressure, but takes decisive action
Fits with the institution's values and guiding principles	Is a team player cognizant that her/his success is tied to the success of others
Strong communication skills	Is a good listener

* Source: Grigsby et al. (2004)

Being/Becoming a Future-Oriented Department Chair

45 Future-Oriented Department Chair (contd.)

Characteristics	Example
Able to build and lead a team	Articulates a shared vision; removes obstacles to success, creates commitment, provides resources
Results oriented	Focuses on execution, sets clear expectations, and holds people accountable
Develops others	Is able to shine in reflected light

* Source: Grigsby et al. (2004)

Evaluation of Your Performance

- 46
- What is expected of me?
 - Department Chairs have many duties too numerous to mention (Lucas, 1994)
 - prepare teaching schedules
 - ensure teaching effectiveness
 - manage administrative assistants and graduate assistants
 - personnel decision making
 - curricular revision
 - budget management
 - some of the tasks can be delegated

Evaluation of Your Performance

- 47
- As a leader, which functions are most important?
 - How can you be viewed as a strong, proactive leader?
 - Lucas (1994) lists nine areas that help define strong leadership
 - she uses an evaluation matrix to help determine in which areas
 - chairs are functioning adequately
 - chairs need to improve

Leadership Responsibilities (Lucas, 1994)

- 48
1. Leading the Department
 - team-leader
 - creates shared vision
 - empowers others
 - achieves goals together as a group
 2. Motivating Faculty to Enhance Performance
 - create a climate that enhances ongoing faculty learning and accomplishments
 - create goals and provide feedback

Leadership Responsibilities

49

3. Motivating Faculty to Teach Effectively
 - ▣ create a culture to motivate effectiveness
 - ▣ make teaching excellence a high-priority goal
4. Handling Faculty Evaluation and Feedback
 - ▣ create an environment that encourages colleague mentoring and that values feedback
 - opportunity for sharing accomplishments
 - sharing effective teaching strategies
 - stimulating ideas for professional development

Leadership Responsibilities

50

5. Motivating Faculty to Increase Scholarship
 - ▣ create an environment commensurate with your institutional missions
 - ▣ work with junior faculty and find ways to stimulate mid-career faculty
6. Motivating Faculty to Increase Service
 - ▣ depending on the role of the individual faculty member

Leadership Responsibilities

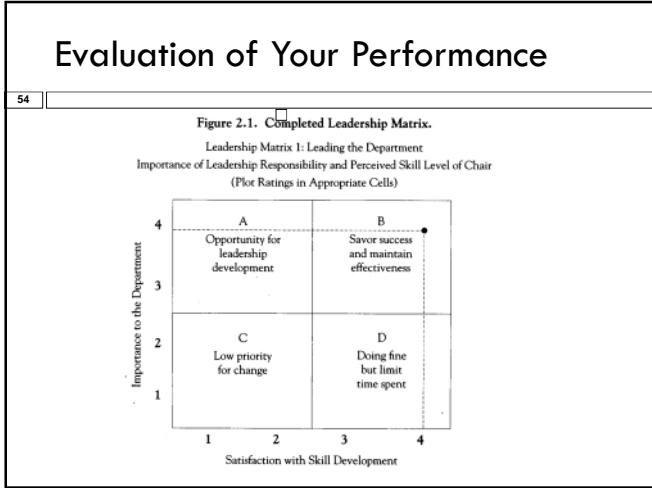
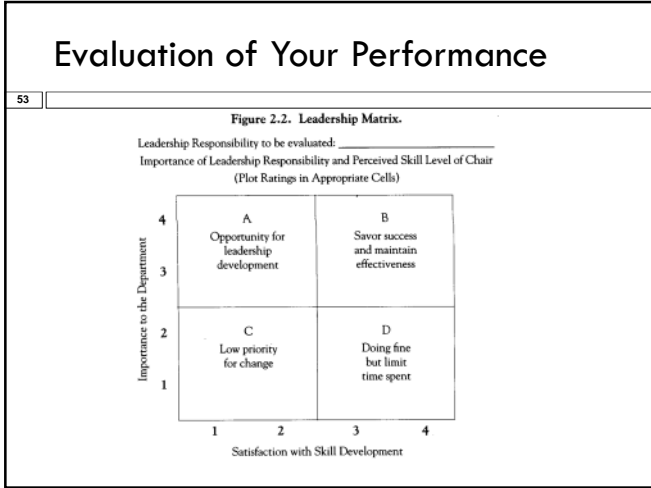
51

7. Create a Supportive Communication Climate
 - ▣ good listening skills
 - ▣ demonstrate respect for faculty and students
 - ▣ well-planned faculty meetings
8. Managing Conflict
9. Developing Chair Survival Skills
 - ▣ time management
 - ▣ stress management

Rating Responsibilities

52

- ▣ Raters may include
 - ▣ dean
 - ▣ faculty member
 - ▣ self
- ▣ The rater evaluates the nine leadership responsibilities in terms of:
 1. importance to the dept.
 2. degree of satisfaction with the chair's current level of skill development
 - scale of 1 – 4 (1 is low; 4 is high)



Evaluation of Your Performance

55

- Important to examine intersecting rankings in Cell A
- Intersecting rankings in Cell B are useful for identifying opportunities for development

Foundational Texts

56

- Gmelch, W.H. and Miskin, V.D. (2004). *Chairing an Academic Department*. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.
- Lees, N.D. (2006). *Chairing Academic Departments: Traditional and Emerging Expectations*. Boston: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- Leaming, D.R. (2007). *Academic Leadership A Practical Guide to Chairing the Academic Department (2nd Ed)*. Boston: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.

Foundational Texts

57

- Lucas, A.F. (1994). *Strengthening Departmental Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- O'Meara, K. and Rice, R.E. (2006). *Faculty Priorities Reconsidered: Rewarding Multiple Forms of Scholarship*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Online Resources

58

- ACE Department Leadership Programs
<http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/Events/chairsworkshop/DLPOverview111.htm>
- The Academic Chairpersons Conference
<http://www.dce.k-state.edu/conf/academicchairpersons/>
- Department Chair Online Resources
<http://www.acenet.edu/resources/chairs/>
- Academic Leadership: The Online Journal
<http://www.academicleadership.org/>
- K-State Department Head Resources
<http://www.k-state.edu/academicpersonnel/depthead/>