Developing Leadership Skills among Department Chairs

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Presiding:
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Critical Role of Department Chairs

• Front line of leadership / administration
  – Communicate and implement policy
  – Collectively, make most institutional decisions
  – Convey faculty concerns, interests to Dean
  – Manage budget, staff
  – Evaluate faculty
  – Represent University in conflict situations
    • Faculty, staff, students, parents
  – Lead innovation, change processes
Special Leadership Challenges of Department Chairs

• Selection is only partly based on leadership skills
  – Nominated or selected by peers
  – Few volunteers, few alternatives
  – We don’t know how to identify important qualities
• Time-limited role, then (often) return to faculty
• Lead and evaluate their peers
• No prior experience in similar role
• Lead through interpersonal skills, not hierarchy
• Few opportunities for intentional development of leadership skills
Why Don’t We Do More to Develop Leadership Skills in Chairs?

• Private sector
  – Expects to invest a lot in developing leaders
  – Expects their leaders to actively seek to develop skills
  – Effort division: 35% process, 65% task

• Universities
  – We expect to learn what we need to know without support
  – We don’t place a high value on soft skills
  – We don’t recognize that these are teachable skills
  – Chairs don’t want to invest time
  – Institutions question the cost
Developing Leadership Skills among Department Chairs

Michael Stoloff
James Madison University
James Madison University (JMU)

- Comprehensive State University
- Total Enrollment: 20,181 (92% Undergraduate)
- 7 Colleges plus Graduate School
- 42 departments offer ~110 programs
- New Chairs
  - 10 during 2013–14
  - 8 during 2014–15
Domains of Professional Development for Department Chairs
Domains of Professional Development

- Position responsibilities
- College and University procedures
- Leadership skills
- Interpersonal & professional skills
- Priority projects
Position Responsibilities (General)

- Disciplinary and departmental representation
- Serving as primary point of contact for the department
- Communicating and coordinating among faculty, staff and students
- Maintaining an environment conducive to scholarship and academic accomplishment
- Maintaining and improving the quality of the department’s academic programs
- Advancing the financial condition of the department
- Promoting conflict resolution among individuals including faculty
Position Responsibilities (Specific)

- Recruiting, mentoring, supporting and evaluating faculty
- Selection and supervision of part-time faculty and staff
- Recruitment, orientation, tracking progress, and supervision of students
- Management of finances, contracts, space, equipment and other resources
- Creating the schedule of classes and managing the registration process
- Supervising plans for program assessment; periodic review and accreditation
- Producing the department’s annual report
Position Responsibilities (Faculty roles)

- Continuation of faculty roles: teaching, scholarship, professional service
- Serving in special roles reserved for faculty leaders
College and University Procedures

- The faculty handbook or contract
- Policies and procedures (for all domains of activity)
- Knowing which office is responsible
- The legal landscape
Leadership Skills

- Adopting a broader and longer-term perspective
- Establishing priorities
- Developing and communicating a vision and strategic plan
- Using data to make effective arguments
- Influencing departmental and campus-wide directions
- Communicating effectively
- Facilitating change
Interpersonal & Professional Skills

- Developing effective interpersonal relationships
- Developing a comfortable and productive departmental culture
- Dealing with difficult people
- Managing conflict
- Managing change
- Time management
- Maintaining work–life balance
Priority Projects

- Understanding university and college strategic plans
- Enhancing diversity
- Encouraging student engagement
- Diversifying funding sources
- Promoting the university QEP
Domains of Professional Development

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Opportunities for Professional Development at JMU

- Self-study of publications (facilitated by faculty development center collection)
- Orientation
- Monthly lunch meetings with a Vice Provost & selected experienced Chairs
- Regularly scheduled meetings with Deans
- Monthly meetings of all chairs, facilitated by a Vice Provost
- For some:
  - Year-long leadership training program (Impact-3)
  - Participation in development activities through national and regional disciplinary organizations
  - American Council on Education (ACE) Leadership Academy
Resources

- Stoloff, Coté, & Heesacker (2014). Chairing the Academic Department. In *The Oxford Handbook of Undergraduate Psychology Education* (Dana Dunn, Editor).

- See handout for additional resources.
Thank you!
Leadership Programs for Department Chairs

Doug Doren
University of Delaware
Range of Program Options

• Sink / Swim (autodidactic)

• Intentional development
  – On-site / Off-Site / On-line
  – With colleagues / With strangers
  – Short (1-2 days) / Extended
  – One-time / Ongoing
Example 1: CCAS Seminar for Department Chairs

- Off site, with strangers, 2 days, one time
- Presentations plus small group discussions, case studies, several facilitators
  - Basics/Problem Solving
  - Managing People & Conflict
  - Recruiting/Retaining/Developing Faculty
  - Working with the Dean
  - Work-life Balance
- $550/chair plus travel, including some meals
- www.ccas.net
Example 2: CCAS On-Campus Leadership Development for Chairs

- On site, with colleagues, 1 day, one time
- Presentations plus small group discussions, case studies
- Same material as off-site seminars, with options for tailoring to specific needs
- One facilitator
- $2250/workshop, plus facilitator travel and local expenses
Example 3: ACE Leadership Academy for Department Chairs

• Off site, with strangers, 2 days plus follow-up and group interactions

• Focus areas
  – Chair as unit leader
  – Chair as academic leader in service to the institution and its mission

• $1000/chair plus travel

• www.acenet.edu
Example 4 - Jossey-Bass Department Chair Leadership Institute

- Online program, extended duration (1 year)
- Self-assessment plus survey of faculty perceptions of chair
- Focus development on gaps, areas for improvement
- Recommendations of online resources
- $399/chair
- www.departmentchairso.org
The Chair Feedback & Development Program focuses on four major areas of responsibility:

- Promoting positive culture
- Administrative leadership
- Faculty management and development
- Department advocacy

And answers these questions:

- How effective am I perceived to be?
- What might I do to improve
Example 5: University of Delaware

- Combined Approach
  - On site, with colleagues
  - Large group meetings
    - 1 morning on operations, University-wide, annual
    - 1 morning on annual appraisals, College-wide
    - Ongoing modules on issues as they arise
  - 7 small group sessions led by external consultant
    - Semester long, experiential learning
    - Group and individual work, case studies and discussion
    - Individual assignments
    - Peer interactions between sessions
    - One-on-one coaching sessions with consultant
Example 5: University of Delaware Small Group Workshops

• Modules developed by consultant, in collaboration with Dean’s office
  – Frameworks/strategies for
    • Leading change
    • Difficult conversations
    • Problem solving
  – Focus on self-awareness
  – Principles of group process
    • Lead with principles
    • Collaboration
Example 5: University of Delaware
The External Consultant

• Experienced in leadership development
  – Established frameworks for leading change, etc

• Confidential conversations with chairs

• “Thinking partner” for current challenges

• Small group modules (6-9 participants)
  – $2000/day for consultant X 7 days
  – Consultant travel
  – Program development (one-time costs)

• Dennis Morris, www.lsrrpm.com
Future Opportunities

• Identifying characteristics of successful chairs
• Developing future chairs
• Leadership style assessments
• Stress management
  – Work-Life Balance
• Online approach for small group workshops
  – Combined with face-to-face sessions and phone consulting
  – On-site workshops at lower cost
Questions for Further Exploration

• What qualities should we look for in chairs?

• Can we identify specific development needs for individual chairs?

• What development approaches are effective?

• What are the costs of not actively developing leadership capacity?
American Council on Education: Leadership Academy for Department Chairs
“The New Normal: Instability”

• Will the role of the Department Chair ever be the same again?

• Is reinvention feasible? Possible?
When you Observe a Fabulous Chair – What Do you See?

- Passionate Commitment to the institution’s mission
- Informed about the campus, the state, and the national scene in higher education.
- Well-informed about policies, practices, regulations
- Mindful of ‘precedents’
- Enjoy saying ‘yes’; willing to say ‘no’
- Able to keep faculty focused on a positive vision of the future, and build the plan to get there.