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# Executive Summary

# The Academic Chair Handbook

Daniel W. Wheeler



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**The Academic  
Chair**  
Handbook

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# Executive Summary

## The Academic Chair Handbook

### Overview

The Academic Chair's Handbook, first written in 1990 and revised in 2008, is based upon interviews with 238 excellent chairs on 94 campuses in the US and Canada. The colleges and universities represented the full range of institutional types including research, doctoral, comprehensive, liberal arts and community colleges. The book could be sub-titled In the Voices of Chairs as they are continually quoted regarding important issues and strategies to address these issues.

In the interviews, the day to day challenges were not so much different as just intensified. Personnel, changing demographics of both students and faculty, student consumerism and different learning habits, scarce resources and the challenge of finding new sources, shifts in public policy with greater external demands and expectations, and accountability are in the forefront of the chair's work context.

The book has a strong strategic as well as interpersonal focus. Chairs described a range of strategies which have been divided into two sections: (1) challenges in the department building process (2) application of the strategies. Each chapter has an annotated list of resources and there is an extensive list of references.

## Chapter 1 - Difficulties in Building Process

Departments historically are often collections of individuals who pursue their individual goals and professional development sometimes with only limited congruence with the department and institutional goals. The challenge for chairs is to more closely align the individual with the department capturing the synergy and still honoring the individual initiative and professional expertise.

*Context for Leadership.* At the heart of the academic endeavor is learning and performance. The chair lives in a context that is a dynamic interplay of internal and external factors. Learning and performance, at the center of the enterprise, takes place in an environment consisting of: (1) Processes (2) Department Culture (3) Governance ,and (4) External Environment. These are further broken down as follows: Processes- visioning, planning, assessment, improvement, organizational learning, teamwork, collaborating, and trust. Department Culture- leadership, advice, accountability, quality and change. Governance- students, chair, faculty, upper administration, and Board. External Environment- technological, legal, social, economic and political. These factors were identified by the chairs in the interviews and translated into a model to help the chair better understand what the factors are and have some understanding of their relationships.

*Chairing the Department.* Chairs are in a role with dual loyalties to higher administration and to the faculty of the department. In the language of chair scholars, this has been described as being neither fish nor fowl, being on a swivel chair and being a Janus (a reference to the two-headed Greek god). The point is that the administration expects the chair to communicate their expectations and the faculty expects the chair to be an advocate for them. Over identifying in either direction results in lack of credibility for the chair. Most chairs begin their chairing with little or no training with an expectation that this is a temporary position, often 4-5 years that someone else will occupy. Chairs expressed a concern that being in the position will truncate their careers as they will have less time and energy for research and teaching. They are aware that administrative tasks will take precedence over their faculty responsibilities.

*Nature of the Department.* Departments are highly varied with a wide range of responsibilities. The chair's challenge is to capitalize on the strengths of the



faculty and address important needs of the institution and society. Because departments are “where the rubber hits the road,” they address clientele needs through research, programs, courses and services.

*Nature of Faculty Work.* Chairs describe faculty as both their source of greatest satisfaction and also their greatest source of dissatisfaction. Since departments accomplish goals through people, this is understandable. When people are aligned and focused, great things happen. When they aren’t, it can be a constant source of frustration. Faculty express concerns about more tasks, many only tangentially associated with major responsibilities, have been assigned to them. They suggest that they have less discretionary time to address their primary functions – teaching, research and service. The chapter ends with a thirty-four question self-assessment for chairs that parallels the chapters in the book. The sections of the self-assessment are: (1) About the Self-Development of Chairs (sample



question: Have you built networks with other chairs and administrators on campus?) (2) About Leading an Academic Department (sample question- Has your department developed a clear vision for the future?)(3) About Interacting Positively with Faculty (sample question- Do you regularly assist faculty in setting realistic goals and priorities?) (4) About Applying the Strategies to Specific Faculty Issues (sample question- Do you have new faculty in the department who need to be oriented and acclimated to the unit?).

## Chapter 2 - Consider Your Own Development

The premise is that your own growth is connected to the growth of others. The old saying “know thyself” is foundational and the chair serves as a role model for continual professional development. The chairs suggest that there are numerous instruments and processes available for chairs to better understand themselves and their role. Examples include: MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire),

DiSC (Personal Profile System), MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), SLQ (Servant Leadership Questionnaire) and Strengths Quest. The instruments are not ends in themselves but a means for self-reflection and to address questions such as:

- 1) How do I see myself, how do my subordinates see me, and how do my superiors see me?
- 2) Am I perceived in the way I want to be?
- 3) What sorts of changes in behavior should I consider?
- 4) Does a positive work environment exist?
- 5) Does my development plan reflect the changes I want to make?

The position of chair is quite different from a faculty position. The skill sets involved are different and the expectations for outcomes are broader. The chair should take a careful assessment of why they were chosen for the position. What was the previous chair like? What do I bring to the position that is valued by the administration and the faculty? What is the department's stage of development?

The chair should reflect on three dimensions in considering their development.

*Learn About Your Role and Responsibilities in the Department and the Institution.* The ideal situation is to have been groomed for the position with a mentor and a focus on taking on progressive responsibilities in the department. Chairs can also talk with past chairs, examine job descriptions (however often they are not very detailed), study various planning and evaluation documents to assess the direction and strengths and weaknesses of the department, have discussions with deans and other higher administrators about their reading of the reputation, strengths and weaknesses of the department, and identify other strong chairs on campus who can provide insight into the department. Regardless of the strategies used, recognize this is a complex job in a specific context that has to be understood to be successful.

*Create a Balance Between Your Professional and Personal Lives.* Chairs emphasized that it takes systematic management to create balance. The professional work is never done – one can always be doing more so the chair has to be the boundary setter. The mundane tasks sometimes referred to as

“administrivia” can be overwhelming and the chair must have a system in place to make sure tasks are completed in a timely and efficient manner. At the same time, the chair must keep an eye on and allocate time to planning for the future. Chairs emphasized that time and space has to be allotted to personal issues so that family and friendship networks aren’t shortchanged. A number mentioned the importance of taking time for exercise and attention to wellness. Chairs highlighted in this 24/7 technological environment people expect instant communication so that communication has to be managed. They expressed that e-mail and other technological methods have helped them get their work done but that it also complicates their lives. For example with e-mail, a common technique is only to check it twice a day, to have important (coming from higher-ups) e-mails flagged and respond to most e-mails in a down time (e.g. late afternoon or early in the morning). Chairs suggested that they should model good balance for others in the department.

*Prepare for Your Professional Future.* Years ago Gregory Kimble suggested in his Handbook for Psychology Chairs (Lesson 14) that chairs prepare for their own demise as a chair. The basic message is to exert some control over your career path and not be controlled by the convenience of others. Most chairs serve 3 or 5 year terms, sometimes with a renewal for a second term, so they are often sacrificing disciplinary time for chairing responsibilities. This is one of the reasons institutions want chairs to be fully promoted before taking the position. One way to think about the time to leave the position is to ask the

question have you achieved the outcomes identified and no longer have others to motivate you. In short, has the challenge gone?

*Here are some questions to consider:* (1) What will be your legacy in the department? (2) How will you balance your life? What will balance mean? (3) When will you be finished with your chairing? (4) What will happen to the leadership in five years? What will you do to prepare the department for that time? (5) How will you prepare the next department chair?

### Chapter 3 - Reflect on Your Role as an Academic Leader

The chair's responsibilities go beyond administrative tasks with expectations for leadership in moving the department forward and creating the environment for facilitating work outputs. A major task is to find that balance of individual faculty interests and the needs of the department.

*Establish a Collective Vision or Focus.* Chairs coming into the position with their individual vision will meet resistance as there will be a lack of faculty commitment. Yet even though the process may be somewhat messy, faculty should have the opportunity to discuss where the department needs to be in the future (5-10 years) and how they can be a part of that picture. Kouzes & Posner (2003), two leadership authorities, suggest "One of the most important practices of leadership is giving life and work a sense of meaning and purpose by offering an exciting vision." (p.34) To ensure success, chairs indicated the vision should be tied to the institution's mission and vision. Questions to consider include: (1) What is the current focus of the college or university? (2) Historically what have been the major thrusts? (3) What has the college or university identified for future directions? (4) What types of programs will be supported internally and externally?

*Develop Faculty Ownership of the Vision.* Since visioning is a process that takes repeated conversations and insights, chairs suggested visiting faculty offices and having informal sessions. They also identified using techniques such as brainstorming, nominal group technique and consensus building to move the process forward. It was also suggested that even though all members of the department should be involved at various stages there will need to be a few faculty who are willing to write and refine the vision statement.

*Initiate Changes Carefully.* Chairs indicated there are no "quick fixes."



They emphasized that one should observe and analyze what needs to be done to move toward the vision. Yet they also indicated that there are changes that are initiated from above that must be addressed and sometime the only question is how they will be addressed. Advice included: (1) Let ideas and initiatives evolve progressively, but do not force or impose change. (2) Spend time the first year observing and getting acquainted (3) Visit with other chairs to see how they handle situations (4) Look at any new “vision” as a long-term commitment.

*Allocate Resources of Time, Information and Assignments to Implement the Vision and Department Goals*

The true test of the priority of a vision is that it receives resources to make it happen. One chair indicated his major responsibility was to see that faculty receive resources to get the work done. Strategies suggested include: (1) When you have a feeling for what faculty prefer to do, guide materials toward them. (2) Keep abreast of the periodicals and what is new. Pass this information along to faculty. (3) Try to put something in every faculty member’s mailbox every day (4) Try to get as many sources of information as possible to your faculty (5) Help new faculty become aware of sources of support such as institutional resources and faculty aid programs.

*Monitor Progress toward Achieving the Vision and Goals.* Chairs suggested the importance in monitoring individual and departmental progress toward the long-term goals and the vision. They indicated the importance of having databases that contain important indicators of productivity and progress.

*Questions to consider:* (1) Is the timing appropriate to engage the department in a serious goal-setting exercise? (2) Do you have a process in mind and have you a clear sense of what you would like to see as the outcomes of the process? (3) Do you have sufficient resources to undertake the process? (4) Are there some short-term actions that could result in progress toward goals that have been established?

## Chapter 4 – Create a Positive Interpersonal Work Environment

The faster pace in departments has intensified the tension between developing a sense of community and meeting the individual needs of faculty. The chair plays a crucial role in facilitating this balance.

*Establish an Open Atmosphere to Build Trust.* Chairs should establish a transparency in their work and that of the department. It is important to have a set of guiding principles that provide the framework for development of a trusting environment.

*Listen to Faculty Needs and Interests.* Chairs identified listening skills as critical to success. They suggested meeting with faculty and asking the questions (1) What are you trying to do? (2) How can I help you do it? As one chair said “listen, listen, listen.”

*Motivate Faculty and Collaboratively Set Goals.* Motivating faculty is described as facilitating an environment in which people can be successful. Suggestions included: (1) There is no magic formula. (2) Success lies in the details. (3) Provide consistency and continuity. (4) Performance follows motivation. (5) Always keep others in mind (or as a chair said it is not about you the chair). Chairs suggested setting realistic goals – achievable and of priority to the department.

*Develop Leadership Skills that Empower Faculty and Provide Effective Feedback.* Chairs suggested that their leadership should focus, communicate the focus, empower others, demonstrate respect for others and be consistent over time. One chair indicated her job was to inspire and excite people with an everyday vision.

*Culture Building.* Culture represents the collective values and patterns of behavior in the department. Chairs suggested that they concentrate on four organizational aspects: managing change, achieving goals, coordinating teamwork and maintaining a vibrant department culture.

*Feedback Techniques.* Chairs suggested that one of their important functions is providing clear and constructive feedback to followers. They suggested providing

feedback to everyone as sometimes high performers and those who have been written off are ignored. Feedback guidelines include: Provide feedback when recipients are ready; focus on behaviors; provide feedback regarding behavior the person can change; provide in small amounts; provide prompt feedback and check later on how it was received and the results.

*Represent Faculty to Colleagues and Senior Administrators.* Chairs indicated that they are departmental advocates to higher administrator and a buffer for the faculty. By buffer it is suggested that chairs take the heat from above and keep the trivia off the faculty. They also suggested it is a tightrope to walk between advocating for faculty and serving higher administration.

*Serve as a Role Model and Mentor.* Chairs are expected to perform at high levels of performance and to mentor others to achieve those high standards. They play an important role in helping junior faculty be successful.

*Encourage and Support Faculty.* Chairs suggested focusing on faculty strengths and ways they can contribute to the department. Their message was work with all faculty – producers and non-producers alike. When change is needed, be ready to provide encouragement and support.

*Some guiding questions to consider:* (1) What factors in your department are conducive to a positive work environment? (2) What could be improved in the work environment and collegiality of the department? (3) What steps can you take to facilitate these improvements?

## Chapter 5 - Help New Faculty Become Oriented

Departmental futures depend upon the success of new faculty. Chairs play a crucial leadership role in encouraging them and providing support. Ten principles were identified to guide this work.

*Communicate Expectations for Performance.* Chairs suggested that setting of expectations begins with campus interviews for the position. They also suggested orientations, both campus-wide and within the department, are necessary. Sample items included in a departmental orientation include: responsibilities of the chair; responsibilities of the faculty; the Faculty Handbook; tenure and promotion criteria; academic standards; program and graduation



requirements; grading procedures; services available for advising students; drop-ad process; use of teaching and research assistants; and appeal and grievance procedures.

*Provide Feedback on Progress.* Chairs identified that feedback occurs at formal evaluation times and they also indicated they make other times to discuss new faculty progress. They emphasized the importance of honest and straightforward feedback as sometimes difficult feedback is required.

*Enhance the Collegial Review Processes.* Emphasis was on clear, timely processes that focus on what needs to be done to be successful. Often feedback is required annually from the Promotion and Tenure Committee.

*Create Flexible Time Lines for Tenure.* Institutions increasingly are providing faculty time flexibility in tenure decisions due to personal circumstances including family and personal situations. Particularly women and minorities may require alternatives to be successful.

*Encourage Mentoring and Integration by Senior Faculty.* Chairs suggested senior faculty play an important role in junior faculty success. With new faculty desiring collegiality and connectedness, senior faculty have networks and a history of accomplishments to help new faculty meet their needs. Senior faculty can also gain from this association of new energy and ideas.

*Extend Mentoring and Feedback to Graduate Students Who Aspire to Be Faculty.* Chairs suggested that in graduate institutions there is the opportunity to develop the teaching skills and attitudes of graduate students who will be the future faculty. Too often it has been assumed that if one knows the subject, they can teach it.

*Recognize the Department Chair as Career Sponsor.* Chairs indicated a special responsibility to be a career sponsor for new faculty. They can allocate resources and help to create the sense of collegiality. With the effort that is exerted to hire, strategies are necessary to have retention.

*Support Teaching, Particularly at the Undergraduate Level.* Chairs indicated they encourage new faculty to take advantages of opportunities to develop their teaching skills. They also, when possible, assign courses based on new faculty



interests and background and provide the teaching resources necessary.

*Support Scholarly Development.* Chairs recognize that faculty scholarship takes time and often is a crucial factor in gaining tenure. They facilitate finding research support and connecting with other scholars with similar interests. Some institutions have set aside funds for pre-tenured faculty to support their scholarship particularly until they can establish themselves.



*Foster a Balance Between Professional and Personal Life.* Chairs recognize that new faculty is on a definite timeline that creates added pressure to produce. They help them find and use resources to build healthy life styles and manage their time. They also encourage use of campus resources that can provide support.

*Questions to consider:* (1) Is my department clear in communicating our expectations to new faculty? (2) Do we have an effective orientation program that is fully supported by faculty? (3) What flexibility do I have to allocate time and funds to new faculty in support of their scholarship? (4) Does our promotion and tenure process provide sufficient opportunities for timely feedback to pre-tenured faculty?

## Chapter 6 - Improve Faculty Teaching

Chairs suggested that highlighting and encouraging effective teaching is central in departments. They suggest a range of strategies to meet the needs of all faculty but they recognize that new faculty require different approaches from established faculty.

*Promote Excellence in Teaching.* Chairs suggested that since excellent teaching is often in the eye of the beholder, it is important to encourage a discussion that might include: (1) What is excellence in teaching? (2) How do you know when

a teacher is doing an excellent job of facilitating student learning? (3) What outcomes are important in the discipline? (4) What examples of excellence exist on campus or in your discipline?

To aid in the discussion of these questions, consider Feldman's list of good teaching characteristics: knowledge of subject/discipline; course preparation and organization; clarity and understandability; enthusiasm for subject/teaching; sensitivity to and concern for student's level and learning progress; availability and helpfulness; quality of examinations; impartiality of evaluation in student's work; and overall fairness to students.

*Support Teaching Improvement.* Four ways of enlarging faculty's understanding of teaching and learning are: (1) Enlarge faculty members' understanding of learning theory and pedagogical practices (2) Increasing faculty members' interest in and commitment to teaching (3) Reinforcing and rewarding excellent teaching (4) Providing opportunities to bring about this kind of growth.

*Address Teaching Problems.* Chairs indicated that teaching issues should be addressed promptly, systematically and carefully. From the chairs' comments, a five step process was identified: (1) gather background information (2) clarify goals and objectives (3) observe the performance yourself (4) facilitate improvement and the practice of new skills, and (5) monitor progress and advocate for the individual.

*Teaching questions to consider for the future:* (1) What can we do in the department to encourage a high priority on teaching? (2) What can we do to develop a culture of improvement? (3) How are we preparing for innovations in teaching and technology? (4) What are we doing to become familiar with students of the future- their interests and learning styles? (5) How is our department employing the teaching resources on campus? (6) Who can provide instructional leadership in the department?

## Chapter 7 - Improve the Scholarship of Faculty

In the comments from chairs it is evident that faculty at all kinds of institutions are expected to produce knowledge as well as use it. So chairs must be aware of conditions and strategies that foster faculty scholarship. Boyer's model (1990) with four types of scholarship (discovery, integration, application and teaching) was identified as particularly helpful in providing a framework for development and evaluation.

*Foster a Strong Research Climate.* Particularly for those institutions that have a strong focus on traditional scholarship, keys to productivity have been identified as: (1) individual researcher socialization (both in the doctoral program and at the institution) (2) a clear institutional focus (3) leadership/peer reinforcement. (Bland et al. 2005) At the departmental level, the following are suggested: clear goals that coordinate work and emphasize research; shared culture and positive climate; mentoring; communication with colleagues- professional networks, interdisciplinary collaboration; sufficient time for research; rewards; a brokered opportunity structure; sufficient faculty size and diversity; and leadership and governance – from both the chair and faculty.

For faculty problems involving scholarship, a four step process was defined.

*Detect a Problem Situation as Early as Possible.* Chairs indicated that problems were often identified in the annual review process. Questions for an annual review could include: (1) What impact has their scholarly work had on others? (2) What thread of continuity exists among the works? (3) What resources are needed to conduct scholarly work? (4) How is the work original or unique? (5) What is the individual's plan for continued growth as a researcher? Chairs also mentioned that they detect "problems" through informal reviews by asking what you are working on. How is it going?

*Clarify the Reasons for Lack of Performance.* Chairs indicated one should explore the nature of the problem which can often be categorized as: (1) lack of skills (2) lack of motivation and interest (3) personal reasons, or (4) obstacles in the work setting. Chairs suggested some of the reasons are more difficult to address than others (e.g. skills can often be developed in association with good

researchers or going to an in-service while motivational issues may require more in-depth work). This clarification can lead to an in-depth development plan.

*Identify a Plan for Improvement.* Chairs suggested the plan should address the career stage of and be individualized for the faculty member. The plan should indicate goals, activities, resources and evaluation. Chairs can mentor, network with others and represent the individual in discussions with others about providing resources from outside the department.

*Follow Up on the Plan.* An important step is checking to see if there was improvement. If so, the chair can advocate for the individual in their career development. If there are no improvements, then either the plan can be revised or a different assignment made utilizing the individual's talents.

*Questions to consider in the department's scholarly development include:* (1) What is your vision of scholarly activity for your department? (2) What steps need to be taken to accomplish this vision? (3) Who are the people in the department who can model the desired scholarly behavior? (4) What support is there to move this effort forward?

## Chapter 8 - Refocus Faculty Efforts

Many faculty continue to find new challenges in their work and enthusiastically make changes that position them to be on the cutting edge or to address institutional challenges. Others need help in making career shifts avoiding what has sometimes been described as “academic cul-de-sacs” in which they seem to get stuck in a place that leads them in circles. Chairs play an important role in preventing and or remedying these situations.

*Detect the Signs of Lack of Focus.* Chairs can often detect signs of concern in annual performance conversations, observing a faculty member or hearing comments from faculty, staff and students. These comments are warning signs that intervention may be necessary and include: (1) dissatisfaction with work roles or assignments (2) lack or loss of enthusiasm, getting stale or suffering burnout (3) performing minimal duties (4) negative attitude, or (5) post-tenure review. One can see that the best scenario is addressing these signs early before they lead to the extremes of burnout and negativity.

*Explore Options with the Individual.* Chairs described exploration as an important step in a process which needs time and reflection. Sometimes it requires visiting new possibilities, discussing with new colleagues and reconceptualizing one's role. Chairs suggested it should include reality testing to be sure this is an appropriate path. False starts are often a part of the process.



*Mutually Design a Plan for Intervention.*

A successful plan should be mutually developed so that the faculty member has the commitment to carry the plan forward. A concept that is useful in this discussion is the psychological contract which is an understanding of what the employee provides and what the organization will provide in return. In a new career direction, this contract needs to be re-negotiated. The plan should have specified goals, activities, a timeline, resources and an evaluation plan.

*Arrange for Activities, Resources and Feedback.* Chairs can help to sharpen the activities that will help the faculty member meet the goals. They can also be a facilitator in finding the resources, both within and outside the department, to meet the plan's goals. Chairs did point out that the amount of resources available can vary greatly but they do have some network connections that may be advantageous.

*Questions to consider include:* (1) What are the priorities of the department? (2) How can established faculty be redirected to meet these needs? (3) What new psychological contracts need to be renegotiated? (4) What resources are available or can be found to help this redirection? (5) What structures are needed for individuals to be successful?

## Chapter 9 - Address Personal Issues of Faculty

Personal problems of faculty can be a threat to the productivity of the department and create morale problems as others may end up taking on the faculty member's responsibilities. Chairs suggested this was an area that they often felt uncomfortable addressing. As one said, "I am not a psychologist." Personal issues were categorized as: relationship problems with students, staff and faculty; difficulties associated with dual careers; exclusion and alienation in the department; health issues; personal disorganization; relationship between family and employment; and institutional affiliation and commitment.

*Differentiate Between Short and Long-Term Issues.* Short-term issues are often triggered by common life events such as deaths, minor health issues and changes in finances. Long-term problems are chronic in nature and take more intensive, systematic interventions.

*Adopt Strategies for Temporary Problems.* Typically short-term issues can be addressed with emotional support and direct help (providing time and connecting to expert resources). Other strategies mentioned included: heart-to-heart talks, listening and protecting the individual thorough the troubled time.

*Adopt Strategies for Intervening in Chronic Cases.* Sometimes short-term problems can develop into longer-term problems. Chairs also inherit situations that they did not create but have to find ways to move forward. Although institutions have different procedures, a four step process was identified to address problems: (1) Develop an awareness of the issue (2) Hold a colleague-to-colleague discussion (3) Use the authority of the chair position (4) Initiate formal procedures to modify faculty behavior.

Chairs realize these are not easy conversations but if not addressed, the situation will probably get worse. The colleague stage is an attempt to use one's personal and professional influence. If that is unsuccessful, then the chair may need to use their formal authority. For example, if a faculty member is not meeting class obligations (not showing up or under the influence) and the chair has made suggestions as a colleague, he or she may have to step in and even pull the faculty member out of the class. As a last resort, the suggestion is to use the procedures and legal institutional authority to address the situation.

Quite often when chairs step in and use their authority it leads to using outside resources to address the issue. Many institutions have Employee-Assistance Programs (EAPs) which can provide initial counseling and referral for personal issues such as marital and family problems, drug and alcohol abuse, financial issues, and emotional stress. Chairs can also use private counselors if EAPs are not available.

*Questions to consider include:* (1) Does the department and the institution have procedures, both formal and informal, in place to address personal issues? (2) What options are available if these should become long-term issues? (3) What institutional resources are available to help with personal issues?

## Chapter 10 - Employ Technology Wisely

Technology has been identified as one of the major conditions of change in higher education. Students and new faculty coming into institutions have high expectations for technology use. Chairs identified many situations where technology has helped their departments in teaching and streamlined management processes.

*Be Aware of Technological Developments.* Everywhere chairs are bombarded with claims of how technology will improve their departmental functions and processes. They suggest staying aware of the possibilities but also identifying resource people who can cut through the hype and claims to help the chairs make sure they are using technology in effective and efficient ways.

*Encourage Faculty and Staff Technology Literacy.* Chairs face situations with people with a wide range of technological literacy. Some faculty expects and uses the latest technology while others are just learning it or may resist its use. The chair has to find ways to keep literacy an ongoing agenda and facilitate an ongoing discussion and implementation plan.

*Support Technology Training.* Chairs suggested that they support technology training through formal training sessions, use of resource people and networking within the department so that people can learn from each other. Some institutions assign technical advisors to departments.



*Use Technology Efficiently.* Chairs indicated that technology has had an effect on the speed and form of communication both in classes and in the department. They indicated that technology also has aided in making many office functions faster and more efficient. Some described this as streamlining things. Chairs also suggested they were aware of the down side of technology such as e-mail in which people avoid face-to-face communication and miss the subtleties in the process.

*Use Technology to Facilitate Outcomes, Assessment, and Accountability.* Technology makes it easier to compile and share data on the various department functions and programs. With the emphasis on accountability, chairs will have

to balance the ease of production with ensuring that safe guards are in place. Particularly with the emphasis on student outcomes, technology has great promise when a carefully constructed system is in place. Chairs mentioned student electronic portfolios as a means to document outcomes.

*Develop a Plan for Resource Allocation.* Chairs suggested it was important to have a department plan that is well coordinated with the institutional plan. Technology is expensive to maintain and then there is the question of which new technology to adopt. Chairs suggested that technology has a greater impact in some disciplines. They all indicated that technology can take discretionary resources so plans and networking with others is important.

*Adopt Emerging Technologies Prudently.* Faculty continually identify new technology that will help them in their work. This requires encouraging use and evaluation of what the technology is adding to the service or in many cases teaching. Every faculty member doesn't need the newest technology just because it is available. Chairs can encourage faculty to learn from each other and to share the resources until it is clear of the advantage. They can also advocate across the campus for resources to put technological platforms and innovations in place.

*Consider the Impact on Student Services.* Students now have access to many aspects of their student life. Access to classes, grades, financial aid, and billing are all readily available. Chairs are aware that there will be a continual expectation of more information and service that will be instantly available.



*Questions to consider:* (1) Are we clear about our intended outcomes and how technology can assist in achieving these ends? (2) What investments must we make to increase our efficiency and effectiveness in teaching, research and service? (3) What training needs to be available to faculty and staff to meet continuing technological improvements? (4) How does a chair develop the knowledge needed to make good decisions about the use of technology? What other resources are available to help make



those decisions and do we have criteria that we can use to help us decide what technologies to use? (5) Do we have a plan for implementing and sustaining technology in the department? (6) Do we have success measures that we can use to demonstrate the effectiveness of our use of specific technologies?

## Chapter 11 - Adapt to Funding and Resource Challenges

Demands on higher education institutions have increased and intensified resulting in chairs and other administrators looking for resources to address these challenges. Chairs suggested that they were looking for greater efficiencies as well as making efforts to enhance revenue streams.

*Clarify Responsibility for Budget Development and Allocation.* Chairs identified that they have various levels of responsibility for budget development and allocation. Whether they have complete responsibility or not, they all agreed that resources were key to the ability to deliver their functions and programs. Chairs identified a number of strategies for containing costs including: a balance of the use of tenure-track and adjunct faculty; management of delivery factors (differentiated workload, credit hour production, class reassignment, and class release); deferral of maintenance (e.g. technology, labs, teaching environments); strategic use of early retirements; restriction on discretionary travel; salary freezes; and expanded use of graduate students or peer-level activities (e.g. peer advising).

Department chairs also described other strategies that used resources and arrangements often beyond the department including: strategic use of one-time funds available at the college or institutional level; direct requests to the dean for

special projects; reallocation of funds between personnel and other categories; fostering a positive tone within the department; reliance on programmatic strategies that focus on growth; cultivation of local and regional collaborations and targeted use of supplemental pay (stipends, merit pay etc.).

*Recognize the Implications of Budget Pressures.* Chairs in many instances indicated that their budgets have been diminished and they are realistic there will not be a great influx of resources. One chair suggested that you need to decide what you do best and then stay with it. Others suggested budget cuts have stretched programs and personnel sometimes too far.

*Diversify Funding Through Revenue Generation Strategies.* Chairs indicated as resources have become tighter they are challenged to find new means of support. The most frequently mentioned sources were grants, gifts, entrepreneurial efforts and expanded enrollment. They also suggested use of institutional resources to address important organizational issues. Lastly, they observed that some disciplines had a decided advantage in leveraging grant resources.

*Capitalize on Changes in Staffing.* In 1999 it was noted that over one third of the faculty in the US were 55 and older which suggests some personnel transitions will have to be addressed. Since personnel costs represent the largest part of the budget, transition decisions can be a factor in controlling costs.

*Maintain High Morale during Trying Times.* Chairs noted that during reductions it can be a challenge to maintain faculty and staff morale. Halford (1994) suggested that the following are important factors in morale: physical environment; consultative management; open communication; honesty and even handedness; open budgetary process; classroom control; adequate support services; opportunity for professional growth and renewal; and involvement in establishing institutional mission and goals. Chairs suggested that the more control one has over resources the more the chair can be assertive in establishing and promoting a supportive tone in the process.

*Questions to consider include:* (1) Do you have a sufficient understanding of the financial and budgetary processes of your institution to identify and take advantage of funding opportunities? (2) How do you encourage faculty participation in the generation of new revenue streams through activities such as fund raising, entrepreneurship and grantsmanship? (3) Does your departmental direction support the strategic direction of the institution and how can you leverage that synergy to garner the needed resources? (4) Have you developed a departmental culture that allows you to effectively engage in interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, and interinstitutional collaborations and consortia?

## Chapter 12 - Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement

“Our job as leaders is to inspire and excite people with the vision of where we could be and what we could be together. And that takes energy every day to be there.” This quote from a business chair captures the idea of continuous improvement.

*Make Continuous Improvement a Priority.* The chapter suggests the focal point should be learning and performance. Chairs play an important role in devising ways to improve student learning and keeping departments accountable for producing results. Five questions are suggested: (1) What will enhance learning and increase performance on the part of students? (2) What will improve the level of performance of faculty in teaching, research and service? (3) How can we increase the overall performance of the department? (4) How will we develop a reputation for programs that are recognized for excellence locally, nationally and internationally? (5) What programs will attract outside resources?

*Devise Strategies and Resources to Support Quality Improvement Efforts.* Chairs suggested the focus should be on preparing students for the future and learning how to learn. A number of national resources are identified to aid in this improvement journey.

*Student Learning Assessment.* Chairs described a commitment to continuous monitoring of student learning and making improvements based on that information. They indicate that this involves more than tests and grades. Assessment methods suggested include: portfolios of student work; simulations; case studies; scenarios for computer courses; keeping performance ratings or

references; role playing job interviews; holding mock trials; and giving students the opportunity to practice skills in real world situations.

**Teaching Effectiveness Assessment.** Chairs indicated best teachers treat their teaching like their scholarship. They encourage faculty to build these inquiry habits into their everyday teaching activities.

***Program Effectiveness Assessment.*** It's suggested that departments develop rubrics that will assess the degree to which programs meet expected goals. The rubric should include mission, vision and goals. Key components in program assessment include: (1) What services were delivered? (2) Who were the services delivered to? (3) What difference did it make with regard to desired educational outcomes?

***Encourage Support of Continuous Improvement Efforts.*** Chairs should take stock of the level of support for Continuous Improvement efforts. To heighten it may require discussion of why a department is on this journey and tying it to faculty motivation. A key criterion of success is when the department accepts responsibility for the effort.

***Adopt Reliable Assessment Measures to Track Progress Over Time, Make Comparisons, and Demonstrate Results.*** Chairs suggested excellence and quality can be measured in a number of ways. A crucial question is what to measure. Examples include: knowledge, skills, problem solving abilities, attitudes, values and spiritual commitment. Chairs also indicated the importance of identifying key indicators of learning including: number of students in the major, student-teacher ratio for the major, success of students on nationally normed exams, placement rates of graduates, satisfaction of future employers/ placement in graduate programs, student satisfaction data and research/ publication data for faculty.

***Questions to consider include:*** (1) How does your department define quality? (2) How is it measured (3) What are the highest priority improvements that will position the department for the future? (4) What methods will you use to accomplish your goals?

## Chapter 13 - Build an Agenda

An important role of the chair is to synthesize all of these strategies into an overall framework which incorporates the four dimensions of the building process.

1) *Be Sensitive to the Developmental Growth of People and the Organization.*

Chairs suggested that individuals grow and develop in response to changes in personal lives and the work environment. Their comments indicate chairs should take into account career phases, their own growth and development and changes in the department. Three questions to consider include: (1) Do I adjust my strategies to the needs of faculty at different career stages? (2) How am I growing and developing professionally? (3) How is our department changing and developing?

2) *Understand the Departmental, Institutional and Disciplinary Context in Which Growth Occurs.*

Chairs indicated that one needs to consider how the setting affects growth. They suggest the importance of matching individual needs to department priorities, institutional vision and disciplinary needs. A number of strategies were identified that can be used with individuals and groups. Individual strategies include: (1) informal day to day interactions (2) annual performance reviews (3) helping faculty establish goals for the year (4) social gatherings. Group strategies involve: (1) sharing their vision at department meetings (2) creating times where the vision is explored (3) using outside facilitators to address crucial issues (3) discussing what constitutes good teaching, service or research.

Questions to consider: (1) In what ways do I assess the individual needs of faculty? (2) To which important departmental, institutional or disciplinary priorities must I link these needs? (3) When do I interact with faculty individuals? How can these opportunities make a positive impact? (4) When do I interact with the entire faculty? How can these opportunities make a positive impact?

3) *Acknowledge that Building Is a Process.* Four steps were identified in the people building process: (1) Detect the signs of faculty needs (2)

Explore the options individually with the person? (3) Collaboratively develop a plan for action (4) Enact the plan and monitor the results. Chairs should understand that they can't motivate others but they can help set the conditions for others to be motivated. They suggested that when one is thinking about an intervention with someone who is experiencing difficulty, consider the following questions: (1) What options are available to me in this situation? (2) What are the potential outcomes of an intervention? (3) What are the consequences of not proceeding? (4) What steps should I follow? (5) What assistance or support will I require?

- 4) *Recognize that Chairs Can Make a Difference.* By using the suggested strategies, chairs will grow in self-confidence, provide faculty guidance as they progress through career stages and departments will become more cohesive and focused as they pursue their educational mission. *Questions chairs should consider include:* (1) How does my growth and development affect faculty? (2) How am I serving as a leader in the department? (3) How do I relate to faculty interpersonally? (4) How do my growth, leadership, and interpersonal skills affect the process I am using to bring about change in individual faculty and the department?

*Implementing the Agenda.* The following ten strategies were identified: (1) Consider starting an orientation program for chairs on your campus. (2) Read books about human development needs. (3) Read books on serving others and other-centered leadership. (4) Write into your job description the responsibility to assist faculty in their professional growth. (5) Develop your own set of faculty-oriented goals. (6) Attend workshops on interpersonal skills. (7) Create a career plan for your own professional future. (8) Renegotiate your contract for effort and rewards with faculty. (9) Recognize that some strategies take less time to carry out others. (10) Celebrate the job of establishing a positive department for faculty, staff and students.

Since chairs are at the nexus of programs and functions in their institution, consider the following suggestions about your role: (1) Always act with integrity. (2) Build trust. (3) Avoid acting impulsively. (4) Act in a consistent manner. (5) Avoid bias in dealing with people. (6) Maintain confidences.

(7) Accept criticism and admit mistakes. (8) Adopt a positive, purposeful outlook. (9) Communicate, communicate, communicate. (10) Know when it is time to leave.

To those in the chair positions we express our gratitude. For those just beginning, we wish you the best in this important responsibility.





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King Saud University - Deanship of Skills Development  
P. O. Box: 85500 Riyadh 11691 - Tel.: 4673380 / 4675109 - Fax.: 4673381  
[www.dsd.ksu.edu.sa](http://www.dsd.ksu.edu.sa) [dsd@ksu.edu.sa](mailto:dsd@ksu.edu.sa)