The Role of a Department Chair at UCR

A Guide to Making an Impact

** *Offered with Appropriate Humility* **

Daniel R. Jeske
Professor of Statistics
Vice Provost of Academic Personnel

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Department Chair Leadership Series – Session 2

A. Developing and advancing the department vision
B. Communicating and sharing resources
C. Fostering a safe, inclusive, and collaborative environment
D. Nurturing careers
E. Fulfilling the teaching mission
F. Attending to your own professional development

A. Developing and advancing the department vision

1. Organizing and running periodic department meetings and an annual planning retreat.

   ➢ Shared governance at the department level
   ➢ Important perspectives
   ➢ Consensus versus unanimity
   ➢ Retreats
      • Strategic vision
      • Bylaw 55
      • Department research statements
      • Overview of changes to the CALL
      • Curriculum reform
      • Celebrations
      • Team building

A. Developing and advancing the department vision

2. Organize and lead the efforts for academic plans, strategic plans, and program reviews.

> ➢ Ultimately responsible for delivering
> ➢ Division of responsibility

A. Developing and advancing the department vision

3. Develop connections to department alumni

> ➢ Start early by maintaining connections with graduating students
> ➢ Long term dividends
> ➢ Connection to recruitment of new students
> ➢ Electronic newsletters
> ➢ Alumni mixers

A. Developing and advancing the department vision

4. Work on fund-raising opportunities for the department

  ➢ Relationship with University Advancement
  ➢ Connections with local industry
  ➢ Opportunities with summer session teaching
  ➢ Professional MS programs
  ➢ Grant opportunities

A. Developing and advancing the department vision

5. Enhancing department visibility

- ➢ Campus, Community, Nation, Globe
- ➢ Editorial & Review roles
- ➢ Roles in professional societies
- ➢ Nominations for awards
- ➢ Outside leadership roles

A. Developing and advancing the department vision

6. Communication of department accomplishments

- ➢ College and campus newsletters
- ➢ Highlander paper
- ➢ UCR Communications
- ➢ Outside press releases

B. Communicating and sharing resources

1. Inform about key campus offices

   ➢ Ombuds, DEI, Compliance, RED, APO, VPAR, Campus Counsel, Student Conduct, SRDC
   ➢ Awareness of these offices and their roles can head-off problems

B. Communicating and sharing resources

2. Inform about key campus committees

> ➢ Senate committees such as College Executive, Executive Council, Charges, Privilege and Tenure, CODEI, Faculty Welfare, IRB, IACUC
> ➢ Whether faculty use these committees directly or not, they will be able to explain their roles and services to others who may need them

B. Communicating and sharing resources

3. Inform about key policy and processes for Senate faculty

➢ Principles of community
➢ Faculty Code of Conduct (APM-015)
➢ Conflict of Commitment (APM-025)
➢ Conflict of Interest Reviews
➢ Senate grievance process (Bylaw 335)
➢ Senate disciplinary process (Appendix 5 of UCR Bylaws)
➢ Abusive Conduct Policy
➢ SVSH Policy
➢ Consensual relationships policy
➢ Research misconduct policy (FFP)

For non-Senate appointments substitute Bylaw 335 and Appendix 5 with:

➢ Performance Management, Corrective Action, and Dismissal Procedures (APO document)
➢ Non-Senate grievance process (APM-140)

B. Communicating and sharing resources

4. Campus communications

➢ Be aware that faculty often do not read campus communications, so proactively explain/interpret the impact of the communications on the department as appropriate
➢ Be in the loop and share with the department campus issues that impact hiring strategies, budget issues, and other administrative issues
➢ Sometimes 'No' just has to be the answer – it will be necessary sometimes to go along with and implement decisions that were made that you do not agree with
➢ Two-way messenger

B. Communicating and sharing resources

5. Responsiveness to students, faculty, and staff

> ➢ Promptness, completeness, and follow-thru matter
> ➢ Check back on handoffs made
> ➢ Think carefully about email tone and who is copied
> ➢ 1-1 and face-to-face conversations might be a better option

C. Fostering a safe, inclusive, and collaborative environment

1. Safety

- Set the tone for a safety-conscious department
- Review roles and authorities
- Oversight of delegated authority and compliance with safety training
- Work with the campus to help explain to skeptical faculty that "mandatory" trainings and/or compliance to policy is not usually at the discretion of our local campus

2. Climate

- Be conscience of the paths of junior faculty, women faculty, and faculty of color
- When you see and/or hear something, do something
- Encourage senior faculty to be "stewards of climate"
- Call out bad behavior – sometimes in side conversations but sometimes on the spot
- Know the escalation strategies to deal with problems
- Champion equity in all respects including teaching assignments, service roles, TA assignments

D. Nurturing Careers

1. Opportunities with the Academic Senate

> ➤ Senate service can be rewarding and carry weight to a faculty member's trajectory
> ➤ Leadership roles in other parts of the campus can be launched by participating in the Senate committees

D. Nurturing Careers

2. Outside interests

> ➢ Refer faculty to the Office of Research as early as possible if they are interested in becoming involved with companies or starting their own
> ➢ Conflict of interest and conflict of commitment can sneak up on well-intentioned faculty members
> ➢ Faculty with 9-month appointments are not complete free agents in the summer

D. Nurturing Careers

3. Mentoring

➢ Connect faculty to college/campus mentoring programs
➢ Can be an important element of faculty retention
➢ Mentoring efforts can apply to colleagues, student populations and members of outside communities
➢ Recognize mentoring efforts within the m/p process

D. Nurturing Careers

4. M/P Files

> ➢ 1-1 meetings with faculty putting files up for review – what are their options as they prepare their files (e.g., accelerations, decelerations, additional off-scale, career review)
> ➢ Discuss potential merits for new off-scale and/or accelerations during department meetings
> ➢ More in-depth review of APM-210 and relevant parts of the CALL with new faculty
> ➢ Encourage early preparation of efiles – perhaps even starting in the summer
> ➢ Coordinate schedules and check-in with AP staff in the colleges to identify and remove file flow snags
> ➢ Encourage complete participation by voting faculty in m/p department meetings
> ➢ Schedule dedicated m/p department meetings rather than waiting for the periodic all-purpose department meetings – and try to figure out a way to allow remote attendance and easy-to-use proxy attendance to help with participation

D. Nurturing Careers

5. Feedback on student evaluations of teaching

- ➢ Discuss with each faculty what you see in both the numerical scores and the written comments- even when everything is great!
- ➢ Help faculty with action plans when things are not great
- ➢ Encourage an open, honest and reflective self-statement from faculty in regards to their teaching
- ➢ Utilize highly successful instructors in the department as a source for ideas to help those who might be struggling (e.g., lightweight mentoring)

D. Nurturing Careers

6. Underperforming faculty

  - ➢ Try to identify areas of teaching and service they might be sparked by and that you can help organize for them
  - ➢ Help them with definitely doable first steps toward rejuvenating their scholarly activity
  - ➢ Consider use of a mentoring relationship
  - ➢ An unproductive faculty member can have a negative impact on the entire department – understand the options afforded by APM-075

D. Nurturing Careers

7. Onboarding new faculty

- ➢ NetID and IT systems access
- ➢ Procurement issues
- ➢ Space renovations
- ➢ Teaching assignments – reuse of materials?
- ➢ Overview of the campus structure – the lay of the land
- ➢ Social interactions – help with work-life balance
- ➢ Unofficial "first mentor" (not necessarily a long-term role)

D. Nurturing Careers

8. Awards

- ➤ Campus and external awards
- ➤ Modest awards are stepping stones
- ➤ Awards for senior faculty can boost morale and engagement
- ➤ Major awards bring visibility to our campus and can carry significant weight in the m/p process
- ➤ Maintain an active department awards committee: being an earnest mover and a shaker on an awards committee is mostly a selfless endeavor but it does count as department service and it is work that might be good for the soul

E. Fulfilling the Teaching Mission

1. The Final Decider

- ➢ Getting input and preferences on teaching assignments from the faculty is highly recommended – thought the Chair is the final decider
- ➢ Special care with new faculty regarding the number of new courses assigned, the areas of the course assigned, the size of the courses, and the times of the courses is recommended
- ➢ Equity is major factor to balance with regard to "choice" courses
- ➢ Balance with regard to undergraduate and graduate teaching can be important with respect to the m/p process

E. Fulfilling the Teaching Mission

2. Curriculum Reform

- ➢ Modernizing existing classes
- ➢ New classes
- ➢ New degrees/programs – including coordination with other departments
- ➢ Converting classes to online
- ➢ Collecting and making use of learning outcome assessments

E. Fulfilling the Teaching Mission

3. Celebrating Success

- ➢ Department level student achievement and service awards (undergraduate and graduate)
- ➢ Student fellowship awards
- ➢ Student internship placements
- ➢ Department level commencement activities
- ➢ Tracking first-job placement

F. Attending to Your Own Professional Development

1. Be familiar with APM-245

   ➤ Gives a broad overview of the role and responsibilities of a department chair

   ➤ "……. a chair who discharges duties as a chair effectively may have reduced time for teaching and research. Reduced activity in these areas that results from active service as a department chair should be recognized as a shift in the type of academic activity pursued by the department chair rather than a shift away from academic pursuits altogether.

      Therefore, it is entirely appropriate to award a merit increase, or, if performance warrants it, an accelerated increase, primarily for demonstrated excellence in service in the chair appointment when accompanied by evidence of continued productive involvement in scholarly activities. Promotions in rank and advancement up to Step V of the Professor rank should be considered with these criteria in mind.

      However, advancement beyond Step V of the Professor rank or to an above-scale salary are advancements of greater significance than promotion and merit increases up to Professor Step V and should require substantial justification beyond excellence of administrative service."

F. Attending to Your Own Professional Development

2. Balancing Administration and Academic Roles

  ➢ While successful academic trajectories can be maintained, it does require a lot of "extra effort."
  ➢ If it is difficult to get comfortable with the time commitment that the responsibilities of being a chair holds, a vice-chair can help improve the balancing act
  ➢ On the positive side, a successful chair has its own rewards in terms of impacting both individuals and the department overall
  ➢ Chair terms in the UC system are relatively short. The role differs from a Department Head that is often a longer term role that can have a much bigger impact on academic trajectory.
  ➢ Good performance as a chair can open up opportunities, taken or not, for other leadership roles on the campus
  ➢ Consider participating, or even initiating, a Chair support group within your discipline. Wisdom from colleagues can help identify ways to leverage your experience as chair and manage your time efficiently.