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The Chair as Mediator

WALTER H. GMELCH

When you think of conflict, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Most chairs develop images of controversy, disagreement, hostility, whining, bickering, and volatility. Although negative images of conflict predominate, isn't some controversy necessary and desirable? Many emotional responses to conflict are positive: excitement, enjoyment, stimulation, curiosity, and creativity. Conflict can have both positive and negative effects on departments as well as on faculty, staff, and chairs. Conflict helps define issues, resolve disagreements, clarify expectations, establish alliances, and keep faculty alert to others' interests.

The goal of this article is not to debate whether conflict is negative or positive but rather to help department chairs respond appropriately when conflict arises. If not managed properly, conflict can increase faculty antagonism, lead to department tension, disrupt normal channels of communication, divert faculty's attention from department goals and mission, and cause chair dissatisfaction and resentment.

Chair Dissatisfaction

We asked department chairs when they felt most dissatisfied with their jobs. Second only to bureaucratic red tape and paperwork, their frustrations stemmed primarily from sources of interpersonal conflict.

1. Interfaculty conflict. Most of the chairs' dissatisfaction came from faculty disagreeing with each other, which resulted in "bickering, whining, and feuding," "acting without reason," and "ideological and personal wars."

2. Faculty attitude. Chairs felt disappointed when faculty were seen as "unimaginative, apathetic, disengaged" colleagues who "are recalcitrant and no longer focused on the mission" and who "do not measure up to their potential."

3. Unsupportive faculty. Another source of conflict surfaced when faculty did not support the department's direction. For example, "chairs dealing with faculty resistance to improvements and change," "faculty acting unreasonably (and selfishly), thereby causing turmoil and compromising the achievement of department objectives," and "when interpersonal differences between faculty inhibit the mission of the department and … basically work against the good of the department."

4. Unsupportive chair. Chairs expressed remorse when they could not support their faculty and had "to make decisions which cause great disappointment to my colleagues" and "when I can't, or don't, have the resources to reward good faculty."

5. Role of mediation. The chairs' role in mediating conflict between their colleagues caused them dissatisfaction. One chair expressed concern over "severe faculty confrontations," and another expressed difficulty "when I have to referee bad interpersonal relations between faculty, and I don't know how."

Thus, at the heart of the problem, chairs suffer from the conflict inherent in the position.

The Chair's Conflict Resolution Continuum

You may believe that your primary role in conflict is to negotiate an equitable settlement, protecting the interests of others and yourself at the same time. This assumes that you, personally, are in conflict with someone else: a student, a faculty or staff member, a dean, or even

another chair. This is not necessarily so, but chairs do need to help others manage their conflict. What options do you have? Table 1 illustrates some of your potential strategies and how they vary in terms of formality of the process, type of decisions, and outcomes (Gmelch and Miskin 2011; Moore 1996).

At the left end of the continuum, level 1, the majority of disagreements are handled though private, informal discussion and dialogue between the two parties. The far right of the conflict continuum (level 5) represents the more formal, regulated, public process involving third parties and lays the groundwork for litigation. In between the extremes of level 1 and level 5 are three of the most commonly used techniques in conflict situations: negotiation, mediation, and arbitration.

Chairs can deal more effectively with conflict if they know the key characteristics and use the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches as outlined in table 1. For example, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration can be used as separate or as complementary approaches (see Fisher and Shapiro 2005; Ury 2007). They are not mutually exclusive but, in some circumstances, can be seen as sequential phases in a conflict resolution process. Remember, as chair, most of your conflict emanates among faculty, not against you, so it is important to know which of the following strategies best suit your situation.

Level 1: Discussion—When academics agree to disagree. Disagreements pitting faculty against each other can arise in almost any department. However, they are usually resolved through informal problem-solving discussions by sharing ideas and perspectives to come to a common understanding.

Level 2: Negotiation—Escalation of disagreement to dispute. Informal discussion could escalate into a dispute when two parties or faculty are unable or unwilling to resolve their differences. At this point, a common method to reach mutually acceptable agreement is through negotiation, which is designed to educate the other about their needs and interests. Left unchecked, many times negotiation between unequal parties (senior versus untenured faculty) results in win-lose solutions. Ideally, negotiation produces a wise win-win agreement and preserves or improves the relationship between faculty.

Level 3: Mediation—When three heads are better than two. If negotiation between faculty starts to break down and reaches an impasse, you may need to step in and move to mediation. This process follows a different resolution pattern from traditional negotiation, as it requires you to get faculty to voluntarily meet to reach a mutually acceptable settlement so that you may preserve the relationship between them. You facilitate the discussion through listening, guiding, suggesting, and persuading the parties.

Level 4: Arbitration—Last chance before the attorneys take over. Arbitration is also voluntary, but it sometimes requires disputants to request the help of an impartial and neutral third party to make a final and binding decision. At this point, faculty lose personal control over the outcome and leave settlement to the ombudsperson, legal counsel, or other party in the university.

Level 5: Litigation—Legal recourse and conformity. Historically, most chairs haven't worried about lawsuits from estranged faculty, but in today's age of

legal reasoning, many academic leaders face grievances that turn into lawsuits and require expensive and time-consuming litigation. At this point, disputants have little control over the outcome, as the final decision conforms to case law or legal statutes. Once academic differences reach the litigation state, costs soar, and preserving relationships becomes very difficult.

Chairs must understand and be prepared to take any one of these five interventions. Academic disputes may escalate from the discussion level to the litigation stage. The choice you make among these interventions depends on several critical issues, such as the emotional intensity of faculty, the skills and capability of disagreeing faculty, the pressure of deadlines and time constraints, the value differences between faculty, the power to identify options to satisfy both parties' interests, and the availability of on-campus alternative methods of resolution.

The Chair as Mediator

Because most of a chair's conflict is among faculty colleagues, you should recognize your role in helping faculty resolve conflict among themselves. In addition to developing negotiation skills, you should also understand the roles and skills required to mediate their conflict. To illustrate the importance of taking the right action at the lowest level possible, consider the following scenario and what action you might take.

Over the summer before the start of the new semester, a key faculty member decided to retire, leaving two core classes without an instructor. The chair asked the program faculty to suggest a solution. The two remaining program faculty discussed the problem (level 1) but could not come to an agreement. The

Table 1. Chair's Conflict Resolution Continuum

	←	Increased Use of Power and Less Control by Parties		→
Resolution Levels	**1. Discussion**	**2. Negotiation**	**3. Mediation**	**4. Arbitration**	**5. Litigation**
Formality of the process	Informal/voluntary	Semiformal/voluntary	Voluntary	Voluntary/required	Formal/required
Type of decision	Reduce tension	Resolve dispute	Mutual gain (win-win)	Right versus wrong rectification	Conformity to case law/ statutes
Role of individuals	Air differences	Address issues/interests	Explore solutions	Submit evidence	Submit evidence through attorney
Outcome	Develop promises	Decision by disputants	Guided disputant decision	Arbitrator decision	Authoritative edict

Adapted from Gmelch and Miskin (2011).

chair observed that the discussion escalated to a nasty dispute potentially reaching higher levels. Emotional intensity among faculty rose to the point where they did not have the skills to resolve it by themselves, and an imbalance of power existed among the faculty (tenured versus nontenured). Issues became more complex and politicized, and when the dean heard of this, she wanted to impose a solution. Knowing this escalated to possible arbitration by the dean (level 4), the chair felt that it was time to intervene in the best interests of both parties before the dean stepped in. As chair, what would you do?

The chair decided on mediation as the next step. How would you conduct the confrontation meeting(s) between the faculty members? Although the role of negotiator is often intuitively understood, mediation requires a different process and skill set. Chairs as mediators must perform the roles of conflict assessor, process convener, resource expander, reality tester, and active listener.

The mediation process follows a different resolution pattern from the traditional negotiation session. As developed by several dispute resolution centers, mediation follows a distinct procedure and is as much a science as an art. If you, as chair, accept the role of mediator, eight generic procedures should be used in the mediation process.

1. Clarify the chair's role as mediator. The mediator's main role is not to make the final decision but to get both sides to suggest solutions. Therefore, your strategy is to be impartial and to facilitate the presentation of facts, feelings, and proposals. To do this, you must remain objective and represent both sides of the disagreement, use supportive and nonjudgmental language, and create a nonthreatening environment where the disputants feel comfortable and safe in expressing themselves, their needs, and their aspirations. You must also help the parties understand each other's needs and interests and facilitate a mutually acceptable solution.

2. Invite opening statements from the disputants. Have each of the faculty members separately make opening statements as to their expectations of the

mediation process. Reinforce that mediation is a voluntary process that can be terminated at any time but that the next step moves it up a level, and they will have less control over the outcome.

3. Develop presentation of issues and feelings. Have each faculty member separately lay out the facts and feelings of their side of the case. Your responsibility is to actively listen and have the parties generate data.

4. Clarify and elaborate the facts. Ask for clarification of perceptions and verification of the facts as stated by each party. You may need to ask for more detail on specific issues and even have the parties repeat what was said as a means of sorting

> Chairs as mediators must perform the roles of conflict assessor, process convener, resource expander, reality tester, and active listener.

out errors in understanding. Through the use of summarization and paraphrasing, ensure appreciation and understanding of each other's point of view.

5. Help the parties move toward resolution. Assess whether both parties are willing to begin resolving the conflict. In full session or by private caucus, ask for proposed remedies or points on which they agree, then help them isolate the issues that need to be resolved. You should realize that mediation may extend over a period of several sessions, with caucusing and perception-checking taking place in between sessions.

6. Solicit suggestions and contributions. Have each of the parties

equally contribute to solutions that may satisfy both of their needs. The more they develop their own solution, the more likely they will be to feel committed to uphold it.

7. Reality-test solutions. Once they have proposed solutions, ask how they arrived at them. Based on what criteria? How would the suggested solution satisfy the other faculty member's interests? Remember, interest satisfaction must be achieved if conflict is to be resolved.

8. Summarize agreement and commitment. It is your role to summarize what has been agreed on and commit them to it, either in writing or by your witness as an objective third party. Each must leave with a clear picture of what has been achieved and what each party is obligated to do. Although some conflicts may not be totally resolved, they may be better managed in the future.

Finally, congratulate both parties and reinforce anything they have found useful in resolving the current dispute. Remember, it is critical for the mediator to be objective, neutral, and nonaligned with either party. However, this neutral role poses some problems if faculty have disproportionate power bases and abilities to articulate their cases. You must then encourage the less vocal faculty to speak up and express their needs, for the minority opinions today may be the majority tomorrow.

Ingredients for a Satisfying Resolution

A durable resolution should be achieved at three levels of settlement: substantive, procedural, and psychological. Regardless of the approach you use, whether it is mediation or negotiation, the key rests with its durability and how it will stand up over time. To avoid conflict aftermath, you must ensure that each party obtains all three levels of satisfaction to the greatest extent possible.

Substantive satisfaction. Although conflict response styles speak to trading off substance against relationships, it is imperative that no matter the trade-off, both parties feel a sense of adequate resolution. This can be present only if a reasonable level of interest satisfaction is achieved. The key

to substantive satisfaction is not ultimate resolution for one party over another but an acceptable level of satisfaction for both.

Procedural satisfaction. The basic question is whether the parties were satisfied with the conflict proceedings before, during, and after the resolution. Who initiated the process? Where did the meetings take place? Were the meetings in your office, in a faculty member's office, or in a neutral place such as a conference room? The parties must feel that they had control over the process and were not forced into any unusual, uncomfortable, or disadvantageous procedures. The ultimate test of procedural satisfaction is whether the parties would use the same process again.

Psychological satisfaction. A balance between relationships and substance must be achieved if parties are to be psychologically satisfied. If both parties feel better after resolution than before, psychological satisfaction has most likely occurred. Rather than feeling like a winner or a loser, parties should seek a wise outcome such that each disputant has a sense of equity in the resolution and ownership in the solution.

In the process of day-to-day interaction, all communities, universities, departments, and interpersonal relationships experience conflict at one time or another. The department environment, the diversity of faculty members, and the differences in chairs' preferred conflict resolution styles all limit the possibility of having collegial and civil academic colleagues who function as a team.

Conclusion

This article reintroduces many concepts already known to chairs intuitively. The purpose is to expose you to the issues surrounding conflict mediation and to help you organize your conflict resolution approach into a creative, useable framework. This is not an exposé on how to win in battle against or for faculty but instead how to deal with interests such that you and your faculty find satisfying resolution while enjoying mutual respect and maintaining positive and productive relationships. If you believe that the principles discussed in this article will help you, share them with your colleagues

and with your adversaries. Unlike most other strategies, if the other side becomes equally skilled, it becomes easier, not more difficult, to reach agreement. The next step is yours. As a wise Chinese philosopher once said, "To know, and not to use, is not yet to know." Use it so that you may know it.   ▲

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Gratitude as the Cornerstone in Promotion and Tenure

MICHAEL BUGEJA

Gratification is about oneself. Gratitude is about others. Gratification culture is competitive, exclusive, and fleeting. Gratitude culture is collaborative, inclusive, and enduring. Gratitude requires transparency, equity, inclusion, celebration, and, above all, mentorship. It culminates in advancement, inspiring civility and collegiality.

The problem with promotion and tenure (P&T) advice, no matter how practical or progressive, is the presumption of a strong department foundation. Many units do not enjoy such a foundation. Faculty meetings may be disorganized or polarizing, annual reviews may lack standards or consistency, and faculty awards may seem arbitrary and preferential. Worse, mentorship is viewed as an unrewarded component of service.

P&T policies are formulated in faculty meetings. Annual reviews document trajectory, and faculty awards showcase impact and status—all required in promotion to associate or full rank.

Transparency ensures that everyone knows or helps shape P&T policy, merit raise criteria, and award nominations. If not, department culture may be tainted by gratification rather than gratitude.

Gratification is short lived; you need a daily dose, especially if chairs and senior professors are self-satisfied by their own achievements and view their roles as gatekeepers. Mentorship, in fact, may be

scant or nonexistent. Chairs and colleagues who earned tenure in easier times may possess undesirable traits that make life miserable (Adams 2014), including constant criticism, passive-aggressive feedback, victimization, negativism, narcissism, and micromanagement.

According to an exposé in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, promotion and tenure are in jeopardy across the nation, resulting in more rigorous standards (Wong 2021). In 1993–1994, 56.2 percent of faculty had tenure, as opposed to 45.1 percent in 2018–2019. Declines were driven in part by losses of full-time faculty positions. In 1970–1971, nearly 80 percent of the professoriate was full-time. That plummeted to 55 percent in 2018–2019. State legislatures also have been attacking tenure. In Iowa, a bill to abolish it failed in 2021 (Gruber-Miller 2021).

Because of these and other factors, administration and faculty should nurture a culture of gratitude to showcase the value of advancement.

The Foundation

You can't have a collegial, impartial P&T process if faculty meetings are uncivil and partisan. Factions evolve in such environs, which undermines the process from the get-go. If a department lacks a governance document, stating how meetings should

be run, votes tabulated, and committee memberships assigned—all overseen by a parliamentarian—the process is further undermined.

They're called *faculty* meetings for a reason. If the chair sets the agenda, rather than standing committees, including P&T, shared governance suffers. All motions should be in writing and proceed via committee to the faculty as a whole. If the chair has a motion, they also should go through committees. P&T policy is at the heart of shared governance, and senior faculty mentors are the guardians thereof.

The process for annual reviews plays a key role, especially in research and teaching. If the institutional template lacks mention of mentorship and P&T preparation, the chair should request and include that. Data from five or six years of such reviews shape the promotion dossier.

Future problems often are spawned at the annual review stage. The chair might conduct an informal meeting with a faculty member without minutes or notes so as to avoid difficult discussions or potential challenges. Chairs should not only provide a letter about annual review outcomes, noting achievements and/or areas for improvement, but also have a written process so that the professor can respond to the analysis. Thereafter, chair and professor should sign and date the review and response.

Mentors should meet with protégés following annual reviews. Feedback is critical at this stage. Mentors can consult on upward trajectories or recommend remedies for any shortcomings. Such meetings ensure that everything is on the record. That may prove pivotal later on in case of a P&T dispute or split vote between the chair and the faculty.

Reputation is paramount in the process. In addition to scholarship, institutional and association awards affirm a candidate's status in the discipline. The award process is linked to the P&T process. Advancement templates usually have a section on honors and awards.

Faculty should decide who is nominated. When chairs alone nominate colleagues, overlooking others, resentment may build because the process appears biased. The

department can distribute an anonymous online survey listing criteria for each award, along with the names of professors who meet basic qualifications. Respondents get one vote per name per award. Colleagues garnering a sufficient number of votes are officially nominated.

It is one thing to be nominated and another to get others to write support letters. If a department has a poor mentorship record or a hostile climate, the process quickly founders. Too often, the P&T dossier section for honors and awards is left blank. This is especially true for external awards that may have specific requirements addressing issues or philosophies associated with the discipline.

Internal and external support letters take time and effort, with little, if any, acknowledgment. Nominees may be reluctant to contact others for letters. Mentors not only can make those contacts but also should

> # Gratitude culture is collaborative, inclusive, and enduring.

compose support letters. Their voices may matter most. They also can review nomination packets and suggest revisions to make the packet as robust as possible. Chairs should affirm nominations with their own letters, honoring the wishes of the faculty and making note of subsequent honors for promotion and tenure.

Transparency is essential throughout the P&T process. External reviews may be confidential, but the candidate should see sample correspondence templates inviting scholars from peer institutions to evaluate the dossier.

Sometimes chairs solicit external reviews. Sometimes P&T committees do. Those letters should be factual and impartial, with citations from the faculty handbook regarding an institution's standards for advancement. They must never state anything personal about the candidate or make any comparison between the home institution and that

of the invited reviewer. If solicitation letters misstate P&T standards or imply that a candidate is worthy or unworthy of advancement, challenges are sure to arise later.

Mentorship is vital before a P&T dossier is formally submitted. The mentor acts as editor and the protégé as author. Writing should be crisp and without jargon, with external reviewers—not department colleagues—as the intended audience. Research and teaching philosophies should align, complementing each other.

The dossier should also have a theme associated with impact. To identify a theme, a mentor asks two questions: What is your research/teaching about? (That's the topic.) What is it about *really*? (That's the theme.) External reviewers already know the topic. They remember themes.

When mentors invest time and effort in the P&T process, a lasting collegial bond is formed with candidates. Collectively, this enhances climate.

The Culture

A key to shape a culture of gratitude is the pairing of mentors with protégées. If mentoring is voluntary, without a formal process, chances are that such pairings will be ineffective. There are other considerations. Traditional pairing assumes that the mentor is older and more experienced, without much else in common. Meetings are unplanned and infrequent.

A 2011 study suggests that this strategy "does not encourage collaboration, but instead reflects a hierarchical structure, which may prompt intimidation" (Davis, Boyer, and Russell 2011). Effective pairings take into account shared expertise between mentor and mentee, perhaps inspiring scholarly collaboration. Race, ethnicity, and gender also may be factors in successful pairings. The study also recommends implementation of a discussion group of mentors and protégés with roundtables that allow peers to hear multiple perspectives on a given topic.

This has been a feature of Iowa State's Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication. Assistant professors meet with the director and members of the P&T Committee to review research plans and consult on teaching and service. This

reminds assistant professors about productivity and trajectory and keeps them focused on advancement. Moreover, participants share research methodology and work collaboratively with senior faculty on projects.

When participants "graduate" from the roundtable and attain associate professor status, they eventually may serve on the P&T Committee. They already will know the work of colleagues from past roundtable meetings.

Such meetings mitigate against what one P&T guide calls the "intoxicating" adulation of short-term gratification, warning about "over-investing in aspects of the job simply because they are personally satisfying or offer immediate gratification" (Siliciano and August 2019).

Gratification is a quick fix; gratitude requires method. When senior professors, chairs, and deans meet regularly with protégés in roundtable meetings, mentorship becomes a shared effort. Ideas and methodologies are exchanged, networks expanded, and partnerships formed.

New York University's School of Medicine (2017) celebrates mentorship in its *Faculty Mentoring Handbook*, reminding protégés to be "grateful and express thanks for the time and effort and expertise your mentor has voluntarily extended to help you in your career." According to the handbook, a grateful culture enhances recruitment and retention, mobilizes resources for research, increases job satisfaction, and "promotes the success of the institution at large."

The Goal

Departments seeking to create a grateful climate must remember that advancement remains the top priority. Too often, however, everyday challenges and tasks distract us. How to keep focus on the goal? Every level has responsibilities.

Chairs need to do the following:
- Uphold the importance of promotion and tenure to constituents, including alumni and stakeholders.
- Create venues for collaborative roundtables and mentor-protégé pairings.
- Encourage associate professors to establish mentor partnerships with colleagues

at full rank.
- Affirm shared governance and transparency in faculty meetings, annual review procedures, and award nominations.
- Work collaboratively with P&T committees on wording for external review solicitation and share templates of those letters with candidates.
- Thank external reviewers for their time and effort with formal letters of acknowledgment, copying their supervisors, deans, or provosts.
- Celebrate successful candidates *and* their mentors with credit for effective service to the department and institution.

Mentors need to do the following:
- Schedule regular meetings with protégés with a focus on research and scholarship.
- Invite protégés to collaborate on research so that the partnership is mutually beneficial.
- Participate in P&T roundtables and seminars with other senior faculty.
- Keep track of changes to P&T policy at the college, provost, and faculty senate levels.
- Remind mentees about deadlines for midterm and mandatory reviews and the processes that both entail.
- Help hone the language of midterm and mandatory dossiers so that content is free of jargon, has a theme affirming impact, and includes future research plans to document upward trajectory.
- Celebrate successful cases in official letters to protégés, copying the chair, dean, and provost, and mentioning the value of mentorship on the department climate.

Candidates need to do the following:
- Stay focused on scholarship while teaching effectively.
- Attend roundtables and seminars on advancement.
- Come prepared to meetings with mentors with questions about progress, research, and process.
- Share ongoing research with mentors and consider collaboration to establish a strong bond.
- Update content and vitae monthly for annual reviews, midterm evaluation, and promotion and tenure.

- Work with mentors as editors so that drafts of dossiers read crisply, factually, and thematically.
- Express gratitude as occasions arise to enhance the mentor-protégé partnership.

All parties should remember that gratitude is a communal experience. By all means, chairs should feel gratified by improvements to the P&T process, mentors by climate enhancements, and protégés by their accomplishments. But gratitude is a continuing contribution to your own and your unit's reputation. Embrace it. ▲

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Shape the future of
The Department Chair
We invite you to help guide the future of this newsletter through a brief survey.

Addressing Workload Equity: Seven Strategies for Chairs

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AUDREY J. JAEGER

Faculty workload within a department is often unequally distributed. Some faculty members do more research while others do more teaching, mentoring/advising, and service. Workload becomes unequal in a variety of ways: some faculty members are asked to do more service or advising while some are asked less frequently or are more likely to say no (O'Meara et al. 2017). Some faculty members volunteer more and are conscientious committee members while others do not contribute their share. Although these discrepancies may seem small, over time, workload inequalities accrue and contribute to longer times to advancement and promotion, lower satisfaction, and increased departure (Misra et al. 2021). Moreover, these discrepancies are not felt equally by all faculty members: women tend to do more teaching and service (O'Meara et al. 2017), and BIPOC faculty tend to engage in more mentoring/advising and diversity, equity, and inclusion-related service, with BIPOC women particularly burdened by inequitable workloads (Jimenez et al. 2019; Pittman 2010). Because many workload decisions are made at the department level, chairs play a critical role in strategically addressing faculty workload to maintain the health and productivity of the department.

In this article, we describe the work of the Faculty Workload and Rewards Project (FWRP), a National Science Foundation–funded research project aimed at enhancing fairness in the way faculty workloads are taken up, assigned, and rewarded. Our project worked with fifty-three departments in twenty different universities to analyze unit-level workload data, identify equity issues, and develop policies and practices to address them (O'Meara et al. 2021). We engaged directly with department members and department chairs to self-identify workload equity issues and develop new workload practices that succeeded within their local context(s) and cultures. Based on these experiences, we offer advice to chairs about ways to engage their departments in the process of strategic, equity-minded reform. We identify seven strategies chairs should consider as they address workload reform.

1. Don't bury your head in the sand. Faculty workloads have expanded in recent years, and they exploded during the pandemic. Our project reaffirmed the vast social science research that workload inequalities are real and also that they are gendered and racialized. Importantly, our project also showed that faculty are *keenly aware* that workload inequality exists. For example, women of color were more likely to report that they did not receive credit for the work they did while white women were more likely to report that the distribution of workload in their department was unfair (Misra et al. 2021). Given the implications of workload inequality for advancement, retention, and satisfaction, department chairs cannot afford to pretend that workload inequality does not exist. Not responding to workload inequality *is* a response, and it is likely to lead to a less diverse and less happy department.

2. Gather and use data. Lack of transparency is one of the major reasons workload inequalities emerge and persist. Chairs often do not know which department members are doing what and/or how much effort some faculty members expend as compared to others. Sometimes faculty activity reporting systems or annual/ merit review processes will capture these data, but they still are not shared in a way that allows faculty members and chairs to benchmark individual workload against others. Creating easy-to-use, department-level work activity dashboards, or basic counts and averages of different kinds of work activities in table or graphic form, can therefore help chairs understand who is doing what, how much they are doing, and if some faculty members are over- (or under-) performing. We have previously laid out how to create these dashboards (O'Meara et al. 2020), including recommendations for how committee roles can be assigned different point values so that high-intensity work is not treated the same as low-intensity work.

3. Identify concrete issues to address. Using a work activity dashboard, chairs can better understand what the equity issues are and the groups they most affect. For instance, in our project, many departments analyzed their workload data and discovered that women associate professors did the bulk of department service work. Other departments realized that some faculty were assigned the vast majority of undergraduate advisees while others had few or none. Using a dashboard allows chairs to investigate what is going on in their department and to pinpoint the concrete places where more attention is needed.

4. Go for small wins, not total overhaul. Of course, it may be the case that a work activity dashboard reveals several different kinds of workload issues with multiple potential strategies that could be used to address them, and indeed, we report on several of these different policies and practices from our project (O'Meara et al. 2021). Rather than attempting a total overhaul of the department's entire workload, we recommend that chairs use a more incremental approach by addressing a specific workload issue, identifying a specific workload policy to attend to it, and ensuring that that policy is adapted and codified within the academic year. For example, in the case of the department where women associate professors were doing the bulk of committee service, creating faculty work expectation guidelines that outline

minimum service requirements by rank and appointment type can help better distribute the service load among department members. Likewise, creating a new advisee assignment system can help reduce the burden on faculty who are consistently sought after as advisers. Many chairs may feel that addressing service imbalances—for example, through giving teaching releases to overperformers—is not feasible. But we show that there are a wide range of policies that can be adopted (O'Meara et al. 2021). The point here is that no single policy will address all issues, but tying specific policies to specific issues and making changes over time helps ensure that progress is made in an ongoing way and helps department members feel that the process is worthwhile.

5. Engage department members. Throughout our project, it was evident that most department members and leaders care deeply about their departments and want to be engaged in making the department workload more equitable and fairer; they just do not know how to make change happen. Department members who prefer the status quo are not in the majority. Engaging the full department in the process, from presenting aggregate work activity dashboard data to getting feedback on the workload policies to be adopted, is critical for ensuring that policies are not viewed as a unilateral reform. Engagement can also enhance the extent to which faculty members feel agentic in their ability to make change within their departments and help to norm equitable workloads within shared decision-making. At the same time, chairs need to remain involved in these efforts and not pass off the "work" of workload reform to a department committee. Engagement from the chair emphasizes workload reform as a priority and ensures that it remains on the department's agenda.

6. Anticipate resistances and develop rationales. Chairs will always encounter resistances to change, no matter how well intentioned. We encourage chairs to anticipate resistances and to develop rationales for addressing them. For instance, we sometimes heard that departments were fearful that college or university administrators would use dashboards

as a form of surveillance. In these cases, departments took precautions to clarify that the dashboard would only be used internally and would not be shared outside of the department. Alternatively, sometimes chairs worried that workload reform was possible only in departments with many resources to create tangible rewards like course releases. However, we worked with departments that found other ways to reward work, such as by giving back time, providing recognition and the ability to bank contributions, and/or having service commitments rotated. Anticipating resistances and clarifying the goals of workload reform will help chairs garner long-term buy-in to their efforts.

7. Consider equity issues on an ongoing basis. Our project engaged departments over a twelve- or eighteen-month period, during which departments

> ## Faculty workloads have expanded in recent years, and they exploded during the pandemic.

identified, diagnosed, and implemented workload equity policies. We subsequently heard from these departments that their initial efforts had sparked ongoing department conversations about workload equity. Many departments continued to update their work activity dashboards and modify their workload policies, and these departments were more likely to see the work as successful. A short-term engagement with workload reform is less likely to have long-term effects. We encourage departments and department chairs to continually monitor and evaluate workload equity, particularly as new faculty members come into the department and/or there are departures, retirements, or promotions. As in other societal domains, equity in faculty workload will not be "achieved" but rather addressed, bit by bit, in an ongoing matter, with the involvement of all department members.

Our Faculty Workload and Rewards Project revealed that there are more tools in a department chair's toolkit for addressing workload equity, including aggregating and examining workload data, developing and adopting a wide range of strategic and equity-minded policies and practices, and engaging the department in the process. We encourage chairs to be proactive and hope the strategies we outline here will help them successfully address workload inequities. ▲

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The SAIL Institute's Department Chair Virtual Academy, Part 1: Chairs Can Learn to Lead

CAROLYN MATTISKE WITH
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Can leadership be taught? This is a question that has long been discussed, written about, and hotly debated and will continue to be discussed, written about, and hotly debated. The State University of New York's Strategic, Academic, and Innovative Leadership (SAIL) Institute's Department Chair Academy came about because of a need to impart leadership skills and mindsets to support the critical work of chairs across the vast sixty-four-campus system. As a system-wide institute, our mission is to create and provide cutting-edge leadership and professional development training for faculty, staff, and students across all the campuses and strengthen the pipeline of leaders in the SUNY system and beyond.

The SAIL Institute is grounded in the concept that colleges and universities need leaders who are strategic and innovative and who have a firm understanding of the special nature of the academic core of the institutions they serve. The average tenure for college presidents is six and a half years (American Council on Education 2017), and provosts serve for even less than that. However, effective and lasting change often takes much longer to become integrated into organizational culture (Kotter 1996). Undeniably, the consistent contingency in higher education is tenured faculty, and they may very well be the group that will provide the long-term, sustained leadership necessary to incorporate change into the culture of higher education. Academic departments are key to making progress in several crucial performance areas. Yet without good leaders and leadership training, how can we expect our academic departments to lead the change that campuses need? The SUNY SAIL Institute has been communicating with new department chairs that we don't want them to have their heads down and keep the department "on track." Rather, we aim to inspire them to lift their heads to see what is happening around them and make sure that the department is responding effectively to internal and external factors and opportunities.

> Academic departments are key to making progress in several crucial performance areas.

The work of chairs is critical and unique. Because we expect them to span the boundaries between faculty and administrative leadership, SAIL's core mission is to prepare chairs for the swirling and shifting contexts in which they are poised to lead. In 2017, SAIL formed a design team made up of experienced chairs, other faculty, and academic leaders to understand first and foremost the learning needs of newly appointed chairs. Learning objectives were drafted and agendas were planned, and for the first two years, the academy was offered as a two-and-a-half-day, in-person retreat taking place after the spring semester ended. Those seventy-two academy graduates from 2017 and 2018 spent largely carefree hours in a classroom at the Carey Institute for Greater Good, a serene location situated in rural upstate New York. Participants enjoyed several meals, resulting in organic networking with colleagues from across the state. Campus presidents held fireside chats that extended the bliss well into the evenings. Then COVID-19 hit, and plans for the May 2020 retreat quickly shifted to a virtual format. Those with an appetite for a newly designed virtual learning program transferred their registration to SAIL's online academy. We were pleased to welcome the brave dozen to our Zoom classroom and put the remaining majority of the chairs on a waitlist for 2021. We all had high hopes that life would resume as "normal" and that we could return to the preferred retreat center in the coming year.

It is not shocking that the economics of COVID-19 then began to take hold and our beloved Carey Institute, that was reliant on in-person events such as ours, went out of business. Since this time, the program has evolved to fully embrace virtual learning and doubled down to appreciate and meet the emergent needs of chairs when it comes to leadership development. The academy continued to adjust to the larger context in which we are all operating (COVID-19, racial reckoning, tighter and tighter budget constraints, etc.). The result was a successful summer during which we prepared chairs for whatever the academic year would throw at them.

The 2021 SAIL Institute's Department Chair Virtual Academy was a blended learning experience comprising both live online growth sessions (seven sessions totaling eighteen hours) and asynchronous coursework (totaling ten hours). The academy took place over five weeks in July. Thirty-six leadership-thirsty chairs advanced through the summer intensive format as a cohort, taking full advantage of the networking and social learning opportunities included throughout the experience. COVID-19 may have forced this multiday, magical learning experience to go online, but these chairs made space in their full calendars and mustered up the energy and courage to come together to increase their leadership capacity. The personal resilience that these chairs demonstrated was remarkable. We spent time together making sense of all the upheaval, coming to terms with the fact that a very serious job lies ahead. We were in this together.

SUNY SAIL Institute's 2021 Department Chair Virtual Academy included the following sessions:

• Setting the Stage: What Have I Gotten Myself Into? (a panel discussion with 2020 academy graduates)

• Are You Ready to Engage in Crucial Conversations?

• Unpacking Your Working Style (DiSC Work of Leaders personal assessment debrief)

• Managing Up: Working with the Dean

• Time Management

• Strategic Thinking Model

• Setting the Strategic Vision

• History of SUNY and How SUNY Works

• Higher Education Data Trends

• Effectively Using Data Analytics to Drive Student Success, Engaging Part-Time/Contingent Faculty, Supporting Faculty in Pedagogical Pursuits, and Faculty and Staff Professional Development and Evaluation (breakout sessions)

• Managing the Department Budget

• Hiring Practices: Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

• When to Call the Campus Lawyer

• Building a Transformative Research Culture

The chairs cover a tremendous amount of ground over the course of the summer series. Some of the most valuable learning took place during the Crucial Conversations training. Based on the positive feedback about this asynchronous course and hands-on practice sessions with higher education–specific case scenarios, more of these examples will be added in the year ahead. Specifically, the SAIL design team will be drafting a case to help these eager chairs to negotiate with the dean. "Getting to yes" will be a focus of the next article in this three-part series. Furthermore, although there was discussion on higher education data trends, the 2022 academy will include additional advice on how to use data to lead.

A participant quote from the feedback survey that brings a huge smile is the following: "This turns out to be not what I expected in a good way!" Maybe this is why the waitlist for 2022 keeps growing! As director of the SAIL Institute, I can attest to the fact that there is pent-up demand

for training for newly appointed and even experienced chairs. And if you need any more convincing that you should develop or invest in a program such as this, take into consideration this feedback from another 2021 participant: "This was an excellent experience that I think should be offered or even recommended as mandatory for all full-time faculty, whether department chairs or not. The fact is that the more they know about the role of a chair and the possible impact that they can have in a program, they will be more willing to take on the challenge."

You can look forward to these upcoming articles that will be authored by the devoted and talented friends of the SUNY SAIL Institute: "Teaching Chairs to Manage Up" by Jack Oliva and Sue Phillips and "How Can Chairs Support Faculty Development?" by

Ann Hawkins and Chris Price. The SUNY SAIL Institute appreciates the support of all our talented friends as they form the engine that keeps the institute moving forward in positive directions.   ▲

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Chair Perspectives on Leading through Prolonged and Intersecting Crises

RALPH A. GIGLIOTTI

Department chairs and individuals in similar academic leadership positions serve a critically important function across our institutions. On many campuses and within many departments, the chair is responsible for department administration and planning, faculty development, internal and external communication, personnel management, and student support. In what some might characterize as the tensions of middle management, these academic leaders are consumed with the busywork of day-to-day responsibilities and are caught between the diverging interests of faculty and administration. In normal circumstances, the work of the department chair is often viewed as complicated, ambiguous, overwhelming, and underappreciated. The convergence of interconnected and intersecting crises in recent years—including the COVID-19 pandemic, growing economic concerns, sweeping racial unrest, heightened partisan

polarization, and the ongoing impact of climate change—complicate further the work of academic leadership.

In this article, I will explore some of the prominent findings from a two-part survey of department chairs across the Big Ten institutions, along with several implications and recommendations for individuals in these positions and others who play a role in onboarding and supporting academic department chairs.

Upon receiving IRB approval, a survey was sent via email to 783 department chairs from across the 14 Big Ten universities in several waves during April and May 2020. A follow-up survey was distributed to this same group in August 2021, with the request that active chairs during the 2020–2021 academic year complete the survey. Despite differences in the questions posed in both surveys, the findings reveal a common theme—the exigencies of recent years

present both challenges and opportunities for those engaged in department leadership, and overwhelmingly, chairs indicate feelings of stress, struggle, and solitude in leading during a period of prolonged uncertainty and disruption.

2020 Survey Findings

As summarized further in Gigliotti (2021a), the results of the 2020 survey point to intensified leadership challenges for chairs, the need to pivot extensively in addressing the various stakeholders with whom one engages as department leader, and the existence of competing perceptions of higher education reinvention. For those who expressed a favorable view of reinvention, respondents described the opportunities for innovation, creativity, and growth that have been made possible due to the impact of the pandemic. However, others characterized the reinvention of higher education in a more skeptical or neutral light, pointing to the existential challenges posed by recent crises and the ongoing uncertainty of what the future might mean for institutions of higher education. As one chair indicated, "There are currently far too many unknowns, recognizing that perspectives on reinvention will continue to evolve as institutions of higher education come to terms with the short- and long-term impact of the pandemic." These findings from the initial survey reinforce the liminality of the academic chair role, illuminate the challenging conditions within which department leaders work, and offer a reminder of ensuring that the broader perspectives of department chairs are included in efforts to reinvent institutions of higher education (Gigliotti 2021a).

2021 Survey Findings

Following up on the 2020 survey, department chairs were invited to complete a survey in August 2021. Respondents included 115 chairs representing all the Big Ten schools, and the results echo those from the first survey in regard to the difficulties facing department leaders as they navigate the various interconnected exigencies of this historic moment (Gigliotti 2021b).

Leading through crisis has presented some unique opportunities for chairs. For example, as detailed in table 1, as a result of serving as department chair during the 2020–2021 academic year, nearly 75 percent of respondents (N = 84) indicated that they are more confident in their crisis leadership abilities. Approximately 65 percent of the chairs (N = 72) indicated feeling better prepared and more secure in their ability to engage in difficult conversations. And, perhaps of little surprise, almost 95 percent of the respondents (N = 107) are more confident in their capacity to facilitate virtual meetings.

Serving as department chair during a remarkably challenging academic year has led these individuals to indicate limited confidence in the strategic direction of their institutions and of higher education in the United States more broadly. In addition, only 22 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would be more likely to serve another term as department chair, and when asked whether they are interested in future leadership opportunities in higher education, nearly 50 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

When asked to consider the qualities one views as most critical for effective leadership as department chair, there was widespread consensus among the respondents. Themes such as compassion, empathy, flexibility, decisiveness, transparency, honesty, resilience, and organizational skills were noted with great frequency. Responding chairs reflected on the importance of having a "high tolerance for bureaucracy," demonstrating a "steady hand at the helm," and "making decisions with incomplete information—and being okay with the outcomes when they aren't what you desired." The ability to communicate and collaborate with one's various stakeholders and to cultivate department community— critical during times of normalcy—take on heightened significance during times of disruption. Referring back to the earlier theme of intensified challenges facing department leaders, one respondent remarked on the quality of being able "to prioritize effectively and to give oneself permission to not be excellent at every task in the chair's overstuffed portfolio. In a 'normal' time, it's very easy to get lost in the mountain of details; that has been doubly true during the pandemic."

Chairs were asked to indicate in what ways they felt least prepared to address the various challenges of the last academic year. The open-ended responses pointed to a wide array of complications, including the "lack of forethought and decisiveness" from leaders across the institution and the need to adapt to an endless stream of "changing directives," the difficulty of motivating colleagues and supporting students in the midst of crisis, the barriers to leading effectively in a fully or partially remote environment, and the "emotional load" of serving as chair during such a difficult period. As one respondent noted, "I don't think that there was anything I could have done to prepare, and even long-serving chairs were ill-prepared for this year."

Looking ahead to the upcoming academic year, chairs were asked to reflect on how they might approach their roles differently. Many responded to this question by describing shifts in their individual leadership strategies, including the desire to be more communicative, flexible, decisive, empathetic, and willing to delegate. As one respondent suggested, "The skills that make a good department chair in a pandemic are largely the ones that make a good department chair at any time—sympathy and empathy and strong communication skills and a strong sense for fairness." The importance of effective communication appeared again in the following quote: "It has made the importance of excellent communication more evident. We will continue to work to improve the quality of our communication and ensure that it remains bidirectional. It has demonstrated the importance of having protocols and processes that are robust enough to work in times of crisis as well as during 'normal' times. We are continuing our efforts to ensure that our processes and protocols function effectively in all circumstances." Moreover, similar to the results of the initial survey, department leaders continue to hold competing views of the postcrisis reinvention of higher education, with thirty-five respondents indicating a negative view of reinvention, twenty-six indicating a positive view of reinvention, and thirty-five remaining neutral.

Describing with great frequency the feelings of burnout, stress, and exhaustion, numerous chairs emphasized a renewed commitment to stress management, balance,

and wellness during the upcoming year. For example, as one chair suggested, "Honestly, I feel jaded and exhausted. I just hope I can muster the energy to struggle through this year." Pointing to a shift in thinking regarding the work required of chairs, one individual noted, "The experiences of the last year have shifted my attention away from metrics of national recognition and brand building back toward creating and maintaining work-life harmony and setting realistic goals for individual circumstances in an equitable environment." Finally, another chair highlighted, "It has changed everything. Every aspect of being in the trenches with my team has a different feel to it, and my response to individuals in my unit has me thinking more about how to work with each individual and their strengths within the collective."

Implications

Despite the success stories and lessons learned from leading during an unprecedented period that were shared in many of the responses, the data from both surveys paint a picture of academic leaders in distress (Gigliotti 2021a, 2021b). Acknowledging the isolation of the role, the heightened demands, the emotional pressures, and the ongoing uncertainty as we enter another year of the pandemic, it is clear that department chairs and individuals in similar roles could benefit from focused opportunities for learning and development, stronger linkages with other chairs navigating similar circumstances,

additional institutional support, greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, active engagement in school and institutional planning and priority setting, and, perhaps above all, the chance for renewal.

Recognizing that formal training and development of individuals in the role of department leader remain areas for improvement, institutions may continue to explore ways of meaningfully preparing individuals for these important leadership roles. In their recollections of leading through disruption, responding chairs acknowledged their disciplinary expertise, extended leadership tenure and past leadership experiences, and participation in formal training and development opportunities as three areas on which they could lean in order to address the various challenges in this role.

As Solnit (2009) writes about the emergence of community during times of discord, "When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, people step up— not all, but the great preponderance—to become their brothers' keepers. And that purposefulness and connectedness brings joy even amidst death, chaos, fear, and loss" (3). Academic leadership, in normal circumstances, is often described as a lonely endeavor—and this isolation is understandably magnified when leading from a distance, as many have been forced to do since the outset of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Bringing department leaders together to build community, learn from one another,

and restore some sense of shared purpose and connection ought to be prioritized across the higher education landscape. As one respondent noted, "The chairs at my institution have developed a 'Chairs' Dinner' that has been in existence for many years. This results in a strong support system and creates the opportunity for chairs to work together for the common benefit of their departments and the institution."

Programs such as the Chairs' Dinner— formal and informal gatherings of academic leaders to discuss contemporary topics, generate solutions to crosscutting university challenges, share exemplary practices and lessons learned in an inclusive and collegial environment, and provide a forum for networking—can prove advantageous in building collegiality and community during an otherwise stressful and isolating experience.

In addition to these implications, institutions may consider strategies for providing department leaders with additional institutional support, greater clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, opportunities for active engagement in school and institutional planning and priority setting, and, perhaps above all, the chance for individual and collective renewal. Recognizing poor emotional well-being and loneliness as a public health crisis (Murthy 2020), Shushok and Matson (2021) suggest, "It's time for higher education to lead a cultural transformation with wellbeing as the foundation for advancing the outcomes we desire, for not only our

Table 1: Survey Results

# Field	(1) Strongly disagree		(2) Disagree		(3) Neither agree nor disagree		(4) Agree		(5) Strongly agree		Total
1. I am more confident in my crisis leadership abilities.	0.00%	0	3.48%	4	22.61%	26	56.52%	20	17.39%	20	115
2. I am better prepared to engage in difficult conversations.	0.00%	0	5.22%	6	31.30%	36	53.04%	12	10.43%	12	115
3. I am more confident in my ability to facilitate virtual meetings.	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	6.09%	7	50.43%	50	43.48%	50	115
4. I am satisfied with my relationships with faculty colleagues in my department.	0.00%	0	13.04%	15	20.00%	23	46.09%	24	20.87%	24	115
5. I am satisfied with my relationships with staff colleagues in my department.	0.00%	0	6.14%	7	18.42%	21	43.86%	36	31.58%	36	114
6. I am satisfied with my relationships with students in my department.	2.61%	3	15.65%	18	22.61%	26	46.09%	15	13.04%	15	115
7. I am satisfied with my dean's response to the challenges of the 2020–2021 academic year.	6.96%	8	13.91%	16	21.74%	25	39.13%	21	18.26%	21	115
8. I am satisfied with the response from senior administrators at my institution to the challenges of the 2020–2021 academic year.	10.43%	12	29.96%	31	18.26%	21	34.78%	11	9.57%	11	115
9. I am more confident in the direction of higher education in the United States.	13.04%	15	37.39%	43	39.13%	45	7.83%	3	2.61%	3	115
10. I am more confident in the strategic direction of my institution.	9.73%	11	32.74%	37	38.05%	43	15.04%	17	4.42%	5	113
11. I am more likely to serve an additional term as department chair.	33.91%	39	23.48%	27	20.87%	24	13.04%	15	8.70%	10	115
12. I am more interested in future leadership opportunities in higher education.	26.09%	30	22.61%	26	22.61%	26	19.13%	22	9.57%	11	115

students but also our world." This line of thinking may be extended further in considering the ways in which we can best care for and provide support to department leaders who are situated at the nexus of faculty, administration, and students—and the rippling effect such an investment may have on both the employee and the student experience.

Conclusion

The findings from this two-part study—although not necessarily generalizable to chairs across the higher education landscape—are instructive for better understanding the department leader experience during a period of prolonged and intersecting crises. Although each chair will have distinct needs and goals, and each school and institution may approach chair programming, development, and support in different ways, we can continue to learn from one another by providing an infrastructure that allows

chairs to heal, grow, and succeed. Our departments—and our institutions—will be better for it. ▲

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just a few. For example, in 2017–2018, President Lee Bollinger of Columbia University committed $100 million over a five-year period for the hiring of faculty from underrepresented groups, adding to the $85 million the university had already committed since 2005 ("Columbia Commits $100M" 2018).

There is no evidence that limiting tenure appointments would enhance faculty diversity. Actually, the reverse is probably true. Already approximately one-fourth of contingent faculty are faculty of color, and the same percentage holds for tenure-line faculty. For the most part, institutions of higher education have not viewed contingent faculty as the pipeline for tenured appointments, so simply increasing the number of contingent faculty will not guarantee the growth of minoritized incumbents.

The editorial's ageist perspective on senior faculty contributions also lacks empirical support. In fact, a recent research study of over 167,000 tenure-line faculty found that senior faculty who had held their PhD for thirty-one or more years publish as much as their junior counterparts, and they exceeded their junior counterparts in production of longer-format works such as books or book chapters that focus on the evolution of ideas (Flaherty 2021).

The real issues on college campuses are the exact opposite of what the editorial indicates: the steady erosion of tenured positions over the last four decades and the lack of opportunity for newly minted, diverse PhDs seeking to find a secure home in the academy. With the closure of many academic departments and even college campuses due to financial exigencies during COVID-19, institutions have taken the drastic measure of eliminating their diminishing numbers of tenured lines. In fact, tenure itself is in danger. At the University of Akron, an arbitrator ruled in favor of the university's invocation of its force majeure employment clause, which refers to unanticipated "catastrophic circumstances," that then allowed the university to eliminate unionized faculty positions. The effect on students has been devastating as faculty advisers and mentors have been laid off. For example, Kaylie Yaceczko, a senior English major and editor of the student-run literary journal at the University of Akron was in

A Plea for Faculty Tenure

EDNA B. CHUN AND JOE R. FEAGIN

On May 9, 2021, the *Boston Globe* featured an editorial titled "Academic Tenure Is in Desperate Need of Reform." The editorial seemed remarkably out of touch with the current faculty employment situation in higher education. Key takeaways from the editorial were the unsupported assertions that setting term limits for tenure would free up faculty appointments for adjunct faculty, allow for greater diversity, and foster academic freedom so that budding scholars would not have to worry about pleasing tenure committees. The editorial presented no evidence for the statement that tenure "too often" permits "subpar teaching." Threaded throughout the narrative was an apparently ageist view of the contributions of senior tenured faculty.

The editorial clearly overlooked the big picture: the current imbalance between contingent and tenured faculty and the dramatically shrinking number of tenured faculty positions. Today, nearly three-quarters of faculty are serving in contingent part- and

full-time *nontenured* roles. And *almost half of faculty are part-time*, with another 20 percent holding full-time contingent positions. The movement to a predominantly contingent faculty workforce has not allowed greater academic freedom due to the precarious nature of nontenure employment. Tenure is the vehicle for the exercise of academic freedom or, as the American Association of University Professors (2021) states, "The principal purpose of tenure is to safeguard academic freedom." Further, the AAUP emphasizes that tenure guarantees the independence of faculty from influence from outside forces and that "society does not benefit when teachers and researchers are controlled by corporations, religious groups, special interest groups, or the government."

We know, too, that colleges and universities have made substantive progress in hiring more diverse tenure-line faculty with many aggressive outreach initiatives underway, such as the substantial investments at Columbia, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Yale, to name

shock. "You build a repertoire [sic] with a professor and you get to know them. They help you with your education as a student and growth as a person, and that was taken away without any warning." She added, "That threw a huge wrench in my plans. I'm really sad, because I'm leaving the university with a bad taste in my mouth that I didn't have before this" (Marshall 2020). And some colleges have even eliminated tenured faculty without invoking fiscal exigency.

In our newly published book, *Who Killed Higher Education? Maintaining White Dominance in a Desegregating Era* (Chun and Feagin 2022), we highlight the enormous impact of the defunding of state higher education by conservative legislatures beginning about 1970. By 2017, most state colleges and universities received more funding from tuition than from government appropriations. We also chronicle the subtle incursion of private foundations on college campuses, sometimes secretively financed by the Koch Foundation and other "dark money" sources with their own political agendas.

There are solutions to the current funding crisis in higher education and the steadily diminishing number of tenured positions. What if state legislators recognized the importance for a democratic society of supporting the educational process for a diverse new generation of students? What if more full-time contingent faculty lines could be converted to tenured positions, offering even greater potential for faculty diversity? What if greater administrative attention was paid to the working conditions of contingent faculty, including more equitable compensation and job security? What if universities remedied the imbalance in teaching resources and inverted current teaching ratios from predominantly contingent faculty to more tenured positions? As several colleges have closed their doors and layoffs of adjunct faculty have been viewed as the budgetary escape valve, the need for faculty tenure has become even more urgent than ever. Reinforcing faculty tenure is critical to the survival of higher education as we have known it and to the maintenance of academic freedom and the attainment of quality educational outcomes. ▲

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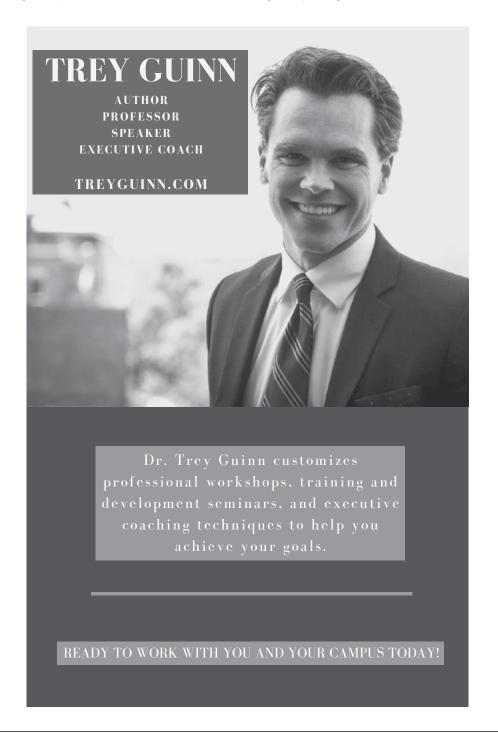
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Honor the Award

STEFAN NIEWIESK AND KRISTA LA PERLE

Dr. Z is a well-known researcher in your department who has been harassing and bullying his graduate students as well as some staff and faculty. By now, you have ample documentation of his behavior, but it is difficult to act because his research is extramurally funded and he received a lifetime achievement award from his professional society last year. Recently, he has been vocal about leaving for another university, where, in his words, "he is valued for his research accomplishments." To placate him, you nominate him for the college graduate education award. Concurrently, the associate dean of research awards Dr. Z some intramural funds for a pilot project. Both awards are announced at the annual college research day and in the department newsletter. Some faculty and staff are upset that Dr. Z has received these awards despite his behavior. Dr. Z expresses that he is entitled to these awards and does not change his behavior toward others. You begin to realize that things did not go as anticipated.

We hope that you will not be confronted with the challenges presented in this fictitious case; however, this scenario embodies important points to consider with regard to honors and awards.

What is the purpose of honors and awards? When we think about honors and awards, what typically comes to mind is recognition of student accomplishments. Here, however, we wish to share some perspectives on faculty honors and awards. Although there is a slight difference between honors and awards, for the purpose of this article, we will treat them as one item and simply use the term *awards*. The reasons for awarding department and college recognitions and funds are varied. On one end of the spectrum, awards recognize the hard work, success, and accomplishments of faculty while, on the opposite end, they are used to placate troublesome faculty (oil the squeaky wheel). From the college

perspective, it is anticipated that awards will create a sense of belonging, encourage faculty engagement, and make faculty feel valued. Awards are also used to invite donors or eminent speakers to campus and to connect with them. Another aspect of awards is to showcase the department and college by featuring the number of high-performing faculty in the college to donors and parents. Sometimes we allow stakeholders, such as students or alumni, to choose faculty for certain awards to engage them in the department or college. These are all valid reasons for awarding recognition. As we have now defined potential reasons for awards, how should we decide to award them?

> ## It pays in the long run to structure the award process.

What should we consider when developing the recognition process? Regardless of whether we wish to recognize faculty for their research or teaching accomplishments, deciding who will participate in leadership training, represent the college as a nominee for a national award, or receive intramural grants is key for engaging faculty and creating a sense of belonging. It should be determined who is eligible, who may nominate candidates, and what nomination materials are needed. Self-nominations may alleviate the time-consuming preparation of nomination materials, but they typically reduce the reputation of the award. A description of the characteristics and accomplishments of the desired awardee must be developed. Metrics such as the number of publications and grants are easy to measure, whereas the quality of work (e.g., mentoring) is more

difficult to assess. The description and the metrics should not only help with the decision about the award but also ensure consistency in the level of performance necessary to dispense the award from year to year. Prospectively, guidelines should also be established in the event that none of the candidates fulfill the expectations for the award. Is it acceptable not to bestow an award on a candidate with marginal qualifications, or is it necessary to award, in the absence of an ideal candidate, the best person on the list? Another aspect of the process that should be addressed is the method for announcing the award. Some awardees may be upset if the award is announced via email one year and at a formal ceremony a subsequent year.

What should we avoid doing? There are several issues to take into account to ensure that honors and awards do not have unintended effects. One concern is the devaluation of an award. This is often observed when an award is seen as a popularity contest rather than performance based, when it is awarded because we need someone and it is Dr. X's turn, or when self-nominations are allowed and "win" in the absence of other nominations. A more serious issue arises when awards are given to candidates who do not represent the values of the college. In our earlier example, giving an award to Dr. Z is interpreted by some faculty, staff, and students as college support for his inappropriate behavior. Although this concern is often dismissed by administrators, it is an important one in the eye of the college public. The general assumption is that the college awards faculty for desired behavior and performance. If the behaviors of awardees are not aligned with the expressed values of the college, their recognition may upset faculty who have previously won the award, and it often devalues the awards in the eyes of eligible faculty whom we wish to reward. In addition, worthy candidates are not being nominated and/or supported in their nominations. It is important to remember that the good intentions of administrators are not the deciding factor but rather the perceptions of the college public. To ensure

that candidates are aligned with college values, department chairs, who know the most about faculty issues, should be involved in the decision-making process (if only to say that no issues are known).

What about supporting faculty for university or professional awards? Many considerations that apply to department and college awards are applicable to nominations for university awards, national awards, and awards by professional organizations. These awards are sometimes used for department, college, or university external evaluations or rankings, and so it is in the department's interests to support faculty nominations. Often the processing of the nomination package is supported by administration (either the chair or the associate dean). As a rule of thumb, faculty should not be supported in nomination for these awards if they would not be nominated for internal awards due to their unprofessional behavior. If, for example, an administrator requested letters of support from alumni for a national award nomination and simply discarded the negative ones, it would raise ethical issues and potentially discredit the reputation of the college. Several professional organizations are now applying code of conduct standards to their awards. It will not reflect well on the department or college should they nominate a candidate with questionable behavior.

Chairs are often inundated by their administrative duties, and attending to award nominations is low on their priority list. However, it pays in the long run to structure the award process, as that will lead to less work moving forward and will mitigate the risk of making decisions that will embarrass the unit or infuriate the college public. If one keeps a current list of potential nominees for regularly recurring nominations, one does not have to frantically search for candidates when the time comes. An administrative assistant can prescreen nominations and help nominators to complete their nomination package. In addition, a collection of exemplary nomination letters facilitates the development of the final recommendation/nomination letters.

Why are we not doing it? If a case can be made to give awards to the good eggs and not the bad apples, why do situations like the one with Dr. Z occur? A presumptive issue is the unspoken notion that unprofessional faculty behavior (particularly in support of one's own career) is to be expected and tolerated to a certain degree, and only when excessive should it be moderated and redirected but not punished (e.g., making faculty ineligible for awards). Often administrators who take a different stance are faced with strong pushback by other administrators and faculty. If this notion is prevalent in your unit, it may help to openly discuss it in general terms so as to make this attitude transparent.

In summary, when considering honors and awards, it is useful to think about the purpose of the award, the process to award it, and whether the recipient is deserving of it in the eyes of stakeholders. ▲

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This Chair Needed Support

ROBERT E. CIPRIANO

You are serving in your first year as department chair. You are an external hire and were not forewarned that your new department is dysfunctional and in turmoil. There are five faculty in the department, four of whom are tenured. Three of the four tenured faculty have met with you and expressed their opinions that their nontenured faculty member, Dr. Dolittle, is a terrible teacher, does not engage in research, and is noncollegial to students, staff, and faculty. In your brief time as chair, you agree that Dr. Dolittle is not a viable candidate for tenure. This is his penultimate year for tenure.

You follow the rigorous protocols regarding the policies for tenure and recommend that he be denied. This recommendation is in concert with the Department Evaluation Committee comprised of the four full-time faculty in the department. Your academic dean also recommends that he be denied tenure. According to the contract, he will have one more academic year at the university and then be terminated.

The provost and president of the university decide that Dr. Dolittle should be awarded tenure. They write to him expressing their pleasure that he is now a tenured associate professor. You and your department colleagues are dumbfounded. They indicate that they can't stand to think of working with him for the next twenty years. You realize that this decision will deleteriously affect the department. Dr. Dolittle will not forgive and forget that the chair and his fellow colleagues were unanimous in trying to have him fired. He will undoubtedly pursue an avenue of revenge and destruction.

What could the chair have done? It is agreed that faculty make tenure recommendations to the president, who then has the final decision. The example presented in this article is a reasonable facsimile of what happened during my first year as chair. I was not educated or trained for the position and was twenty-eight years old with a doctorate received two years prior to my selection to serve as chair. In retrospect, I should have met with the provost and, if possible, the president prior to the start of the tenure process. I should have documented all the reasons why he should not receive tenure, discussed the reasons, and left copies with them. I should have asked them if they would back me and the department in denying him tenure before we had to make our recommendation. If they would not support our recommendation, we would recommend him for tenure with provisions (e.g., develop one new course, improve his teaching, publish two articles). We would then revisit his file during the post-tenure review.

Meeting with the decision makers before a process is scheduled to begin in order to obtain insight into their thinking is a proactive approach that will help chairs save time and energy. I have seen how people unleash a fusillade of detritus if they believe that their colleagues are trying to harm them. A vitriolic and rancorous person can kick up a maelstrom of problems that lead to a dystopian department. The chair should do everything in their power to foresee potential problems and to proactively mitigate them. ▲

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Chairs: The Faculty Advocate

JWHARH MADGALI

Whether department chairs are managing resources, handling students, dealing with faculty, or overseeing the day-to-day administrative work, leading from the middle requires elements of advocacy in much of what they do. In a university with a centralized system, the focus might be more on daily operations, policy implementation, and the often perplexing priorities of central administration, where attention to faculty can be overlooked. Ultimately, chairs are responsible for the quality of the faculty's activity overall and the management of work assignments, despite most members working independently. Often they must ensure the promotion of professional development among their staff and sometimes deal with unsatisfactory performances or terminations. They must communicate the plans or expectations of the university and encourage the faculty to participate in matters of importance to the department. In short, Hecht and colleagues (1999) summarize the key roles of chairs as the following: department governance and office management, curriculum and program development, faculty matters, student matters, communication with external publics, financial and facilities management, data management, and institutional support.

Context

For universities that are going through a transition period toward entering the global market, the need to build a strong team within the faculty is vital, and the chair is at the center of this. Effective chairs must understand their role as a faculty advocate in addition to other responsibilities. This article will focus on the role of chairs as faculty advocates from the faculty perspective and what they expect to see in their chair in order to lead an academic department effectively. Interviews were conducted with twenty faculty members to explore their views and perspectives. Faculty were asked what effective leadership for department chairs looked like and what was needed for their department and institution as a whole. Thematic analysis of the reported findings was conducted with the hope of informing better practices. Quotes are used to illustrate the aspects that were found to be essential from the voices of the faculty.

Chairs as faculty advocates. Faculty

members voiced the desire for a considerate leader who focused on providing support for professional growth and development while being mindful of individual needs. One participant stated that leaders "need communication skills [and] social skills" and should be able to bring the faculty together through conviction and reward. The faculty must also feel like a cohesive unit. It was also found that leaders with vision were desired, and open communication with faculty members on their own requirements for teaching or research was greatly appreciated. Above all, faculty professed an interest in leaders who would help them work toward their own goals and show commitment across the board.

Consideration of faculty needs. Leaders must pay attention to each individual and the differences among faculty members. The use of an open door policy as well as open communication allows chairs to build trust and interpersonal communication with their faculty members and strengthen their understanding of the department's needs. Participants want leaders who can understand and work around faculty strengths and weaknesses. A consideration of the culture and ability of different faculty members is also desired. One participant professed a wish to have a leader who gets to "know more about [their] people." Professional support and the sharing of information should be provided for faculty based on their needs and related with full transparency and honesty. Chairs must ensure that all department members are informed about different activities and opportunities and that they have access to relevant facilities. A sense of individuality in the consideration provided by leaders was seen as desirable.

Goal setting with faculty. Both faculty members and senior leaders claimed that, as department leaders, chairs must make requirements and expectations clear to the faculty and set plans and expectations for each individual faculty member. Participants suggested that faculty had to be aware of what was required from them and how they were going to be evaluated. One faculty member recognized the difficulty of the situation but stated that leaders must ensure that the faculty are held accountable to the plans the leader puts in place to confirm that everyone works toward the goals set within the faculty. Goals can be department wide or for individual faculty members, and they must always be clear in their intentions. One chair stated that the faculty are always consulted before new roles are filled or new goals are set, and feedback from the faculty informs goal setting and increases morale.

Motivation. Leaders who possess motivational skills were seen as desirable. The promotion of staff compliance through a reward and punishment system or a carrot-and-stick approach was seen to work for many faculty members in terms of assuring faculty quality and enhancing overall performance. One chair expressed his views on providing healthy competition among faculty as a model of improvement, and another stated that certain goals, such as publishing a paper, would be rewarded with support for conferences, and vice versa. This is seen as a way of increasing productivity and performance. A climate of celebration when achievements or goals are reached also

improves morale and motivation, and the correct delegation—an understanding of which is built on by leaders who recognize their faculty's needs—can also encourage performance.

Delegation of faculty responsibilities. Chairs, in the view of participants, needed to be able to delegate tasks and responsibilities to staff and faculty. The importance of delegation was stressed by the faculty, who discussed it in a comprehensive manner. It was stated that delegation was important in assigning roles and responsibilities across a wide array of tasks and objectives. Participants also discussed how delegation should be applied and where. The process of delegation had to be pursued through effective strategies and in a planned way. However, good delegation required significant synergy and cooperation or else it could lead to negative outcomes. In terms of how to delegate successfully, one senior leader stated that delegation of work should be based on offering support and clear direction for accomplishing the task, along with being fair and firm. Understanding which faculty members excel in research and which excel in training allows for more systematic delegation and improves relationships and performance.

Mentoring faculty members. Participants emphasized the importance for leaders to ensure the quality of their faculty's output. Some faculty indicated that junior colleagues often relied heavily on their chairs for advice and consultation. They also expressed a desire for a mentor who was not judgmental and who applied an informal approach. Several chairs emphasized to their faculty the importance of mentoring as a form of support that a good leader should provide. They suggested that regular follow up, whether formal or informal, should take place to ensure good achievement. Importantly, providing feedback and criticism was also seen as part of mentoring that was required by a good leader. Participants emphasized how feedback should be given and that leaders must not be judgmental of their faculty.

Implications

These findings offer a variety of suggestions for how chairs can be better leaders in higher education.

- Ensure that you act as an advocate for your faculty by being attentive to the needs of individual members and working together as a cohesive unit.
- Work toward both individual and department goals by being a figurehead for the change desired or required.
- Act as a motivational leader and aid in the personal and professional development of faculty members, which may necessitate a role model approach.
- Ensure the correct delegation of responsibilities based on ability, and provide regular mentorship to support faculty members.

Conclusion

Being a leader is a tricky balance between reaching the goals set by your own superiors while also being mindful of the needs and desires of your faculty, who will often look to you for advice or support. Buller (2013) summarizes this well by stating that "positive academic leaders look for opportunities people can use to develop their skills and pursue activities they find interesting and rewarding" (128). Chairs who are able to foster a relationship with their faculty that is sensitive to their requirements and who lead from within are more desired by faculty. Chairs do, of course, have their own responsibilities within the university and must be able to juggle a complex amalgamation of roles, but above all they must ensure that the environment in which they and their staff work is healthy and collaborative. ▲

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Time: The Ever-Elusive Resource of an Academic Administrator

DAVID C. SCHWEBEL

If you ask a university administrator what their most precious resource is, they may recite common answers like skilled personnel, quality facilities, or a stable budget. But upon reflection, another answer may emerge also: time. Most every administrator struggles to manage their time.

There are always more tasks to complete than time to complete them in, and we must constantly prioritize and delegate to manage our workload as well as to balance personal and professional priorities.

Such juggling is not a new phenomenon; philosophers dating to Ancient Greece have contemplated the concept and distribution of one's time. Consider the wisdom of Theophrastus, renowned student of both Plato and Aristotle: "Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend." In today's world, hefty books are devoted to offering time management advice, but I offer here five tidbits focused specifically on the challenges we face as university administrators.

1. **Read an email only once.** There are exceptions of course, but a general guideline is to read each email only once and either delete or respond immediately after that reading. If the message goes unaddressed, it will require a second reading. That rereading may take three seconds or three minutes, but in either case is a repetitive act that absorbs valuable seconds and minutes from your busy life.

2. **Organize and run meetings efficiently.** We've all been in meetings that run long, that are diverted by unrelated or irrelevant tangents, and that involve lengthy debates over petty topics. We've all experienced meeting participants who dominate interchange with off-topic

soliloquies, and those who sit in the corner stewing with creative ideas they feel uncomfortable sharing amid a bullying crowd. To avoid such situations, meetings must be organized and planned in advance. Flexibility is necessary, but an agenda should be laid out, shared, and followed.

As meeting chair, you are in authority. Interrupt dominators and seek opinions from all. Divert tangents back on-topic and gracefully discourage or interrupt repetitive and lengthy "I agree" statements. If a meeting is scheduled for an hour, don't prolong it beyond that time period—in fact, work to adjourn after forty-five minutes, if possible. Both you and the rest of the group will appreciate extra time to tackle the next task.

3. Don't allow petty emotional issues to interfere with big-picture priorities. Every administrator faces strong personalities. These people may push or break rules and policies. They may make inane statements or behave in inappropriate ways, absorbing disproportionate time and attention.

What's the solution? Don't allow their actions, behaviors, and statements to distract you. Attend to their inappropriate activities—that is our obligation as administrators—but do so promptly and efficiently and then move on. It is too easy to become emotionally absorbed in such individuals, and this is a mistake.

Instead, we must address and move on, focusing our emotional energy on advancing strategic priorities of the unit rather than distracting sideshows of strong personalities behaving inappropriately.

4. Write, don't talk. There are plenty of instances when meetings and phone calls are the best choice. Confidential, personnel, and legal matters must often be discussed and may sometimes be better left undocumented in writing. On many occasions, however, five-minute discontinuous email exchanges accomplish the same objective of a thirty-minute conversation. Be strategic with your time and leverage the most efficient vehicle to accomplish your goals.

5. Recognize when time should be allocated. Don't thoughtlessly seek efficiency in a reckless manner; at times,

professional tasks do deserve ample time and focus. Dinner with a potential six-figure donor? Don't rush it, even if you become bored with their reminiscences. Recruitment interview with an all-star researcher? Take your time—make sure to recruit your top candidate, even amid a long list of competing priorities. Commencement time (again)? You've been to dozens and they can grow repetitive, but remember how special this moment is for the students and their families. Enjoy and celebrate with them. The list could go on, but the point is made: There are times to gain efficiency in your life but other times when it is necessary and important to slow down and spend time with people. It's all part of the job that deep down, even amid the chaos and hecticness of our daily professional lives, we love to accomplish.   ▲

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Special Topics: Netflix's *The Chair*

You Need a Lifeboat: Analysis of *The Chair* and the Necessity of Support Networks for Chairs of Color

JENNIFER ESPOSITO

The Chair, a comedy series developed by and streamed on Netflix, was released on August 20, 2021. The description on Netflix reads, "At a major university, the first woman of color to become chair tries to meet the dizzying demands and high expectations of a failing English department." The series stars Sandra Oh who plays Ji-Yoon Kim, a Korean American professor in her forties who becomes the first woman chair of color in a predominately white and predominately elderly department. As the first Latina chair of my department and in the College of Education, and as a scholar of intersectional analyses of popular culture texts (Edwards and Esposito 2020), I immediately binged the six-episode series. Unfortunately, I found that it lacked real engagement with the issues of race and gender it purports to address. The show's understanding of racial and gender justice is based on a limited conception of what justice is—namely, more women of color in the field (and assimilating into their roles) without compelling the institution to change to make women of color's experiences more humane. What also stood out to me in this series' representation of chair life is how utterly alone the department chair was as she navigated her commitment to upper administration, her faculty, and the department's students (all of whom had competing interests). As the first woman of color to become chair of her department, Ji-Yoon Kim was set up to fail. Just because she was the first woman of color appointed as chair, it doesn't mean the university changed to fit her. Instead, she was forced to continue to navigate a climate that was hostile to white women and, more

so, to women of color. She couldn't handle this alone, nor should she have to. Thus, in this article, I explore how valuable it is to have a support network of other chairs because institutions are slow to change and welcome us as chairs of color.

The series' plot follows Ji-Yoon, recently appointed chair, as she navigates pressure from the dean to boost declining course enrollments, resistance from faculty encouraged to do a better job connecting with students for whom the age gap may span almost fifty years, and student demands for racial justice. Subplots include Ji-Yoon raising an adopted Latina daughter (Ju-Hee ["Ju-Ju"] played by Everly Carganilla), her clear love of and excuse-making for an incompetent white male professor, Bill Dobson (played by Jay Duplass), and Ji-Yoon's pressure on herself to assist in helping the young, untenured, Black woman professor (Yazmin "Yaz" McKay played by Nana Mensah) earn tenure. In the end, Ji-Yoon appears to fail miserably at being chair as the faculty hold a no-confidence vote and appoint Elliot (played by Bob Balaban), a former white male chair, as interim. The sixth episode ends with Bill telling Ji-Yoon, "Not being chair suits you."

Leading up to the no-confidence vote, we see Ji-Yoon literally running from meeting to meeting as she navigates the complexities of chair life. All chairs serve at the pleasure of the dean, which Ji-Yoon reiterated when faced with pressure from faculty to push back against upper administration. Ji-Yoon senses that she has been set up to fail as pressure to cut the number of faculty while boosting enrollment looms. She stated,

"I don't feel like I inherited an English department. I feel like someone handed me a ticking time bomb because they wanted to make sure a woman was holding it when it exploded." To make matters worse, Bill makes a Nazi salute in the classroom (seemingly as a joke, but this is never actually clear in the series) and then refuses to apologize or listen to university guidance regarding how to handle the mistake. Ji-Yoon spends a lot of time figuring out how to deal with the situation as upper administration pressures her to be tougher with Bill and students are incredulous that she appears to be siding with a Nazi. As Ji-Yoon spends so much time on this situation, her professional and personal lives begin to unravel.

Professionally, faculty are slowly losing trust in her leadership. For example, Ji-Yoon gave Yaz the distinguished professorship and then did very little when the dean's wife instead appointed a celebrity to give the lecture. Ji-Yoon also promised to help Yaz with tenure, but she then does almost nothing to oversee Elliot's letter to external reviewers. When Ji-Yoon encourages Elliot to include reviewers who are familiar with feminist scholarship critical race theory, Elliot yawns and then is silent. He eventually states that he will "send her work out to respected scholars who will view it objectively." If Ji-Yoon understands anything about feminist scholarship and/or critical race theory, it should be that there is no such thing as objectivity. Yaz senses that her support is a bit performative and loses trust in her as an ally, saying to Ji-Yoon, "I see why you feel sorry for him [Elliot]. He only got to rule the profession for the last forty years." In this instance, Yaz clearly wants Ji-Yoon to push back, to demand a space be carved out for Yaz's work, which doesn't fit in the traditional European canon and shouldn't be judged as if it should.

Meanwhile, Joan (played by Holland Taylor), a white woman professor who reveals she made almost $20,000 less than her male peers when she started teaching thirty

years ago, engages in a Title IX fight because her office was inexplicably moved to the basement without Wi-Fi while male faculty of lower rank were not moved. Although the Title IX filing was Ji-Yoon's idea, Joan must handle it with no support from Ji-Yoon, who continues to not show up for her due to other matters pulling her away.

On the personal front, Ji-Yoon's adopted daughter, Ju-Ju, continues to battle feelings of not belonging. She has trouble in school with friends and seeks her mom's attention while simultaneously pushing her away. Ji-Yoon handles this by focusing more on work-related issues than she does on her daughter, who is clearly in crisis. Ji-Yoon's father (played by Ji-yong Lee) clearly struggles with how much time he spends watching Ju-Ju, and to make matters worse, Ju-Ju finds a way to encourage all babysitters to quit.

Toward the end of the series, Ji-Yoon tries to help Bill's teaching assistant, a young woman of color named Lila, who Bill has clearly taken advantage of by exploiting her labor to cover his own incompetence and by refusing to read her dissertation. Ji-Yoon advises her to seek another advisor. Grateful, Lila (played by Mallory Low) says, "You're putting me on a lifeboat." And then, because she clearly recognizes that Ji-Yoon is overwhelmed, Lila asks her, "Do you have one?" The next scene finds Ji-Yoon crying in her father's bathroom. She is alone in her misery. She can't talk to the dean or provost, who only want her to uphold university regulations. She can't talk to faculty because, as the dean reminded her, they are not her peers. And she can't talk to students because it would be inappropriate to burden them. Ji-Yoon does not have a lifeboat.

All department chairs need a support network as they navigate the competing demands of administration, faculty, staff, and students. This issue is compounded by the fact that many chairs have very little experience with or prior training in leadership. They are thrown into a complex situation with little to no guidance. Such was the case with Ji-Yoon. The dean told her to cut faculty and boost enrollments with no sense or support regarding how to do that. Up until she became chair, Ji-Yoon had been

a scholar and a teacher but not a leader in the traditional sense. In addition, although it appeared to many on campus that she had the authority to solve problems for faculty, almost any power she had was usurped by upper administration. Ji-Yoon had no one to counsel her regarding best leadership practices and no one to vent to about the struggles she faced in trying to meet competing demands. She had no idea how to help keep faculty and students happy while also satisfying upper administration's desire to adhere to policy and procedure. More importantly, chairs of color like Ji-Yoon especially need a support network, as they are often the only faculty member or leader of color in their departments or colleges. Although institutions love to "count" how many faculty of color they have, there is often little done to make the climate more inviting and the institution more equitable. Thus, chairs of color are in an especially precarious position as they navigate a leadership role and an institution that do not always recognize their full humanity (Evans 2021). Such was the case in *The Chair*. Ji-Yoon desperately needed a lifeboat. She needed a support network.

Having both a mentor (a woman of color department chair with years of experience) and a small group of other chairs (both within and outside my university) has been invaluable to my work as chair. As issues arise, I have a safe haven to seek advice, brainstorm solutions, and, most especially during these times of pandemic stress, vent

to peers who may understand and who may face similar struggles. Although chairs already have a lot on their plates, it might be worthwhile to engage in learning communities with other chairs at the university. This doesn't have to be a huge time commitment, but creating safe spaces for chairs, especially chairs of color who may already feel and who probably are marginalized on campus, might be integral to our success. Perhaps if Ji-Yoon had a support network, she would have been better able to navigate life as chair and would not have lost the confidence of her faculty. Perhaps if Ji-Yoon had a mentor, she would have had someone to help her figure out how best to handle the difficult (yet common) situation of a faculty mistake and the way that power and privilege influence how one faces up to consequences. Ji-Yoon needed a lifeboat. Many people may watch the series and believe that Ji-Yoon failed as chair. I believe, however, that the faculty and the university failed her for not providing her the support she needed as the first woman of color department chair. ▲

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Electrifying or Merely Shocking? Being Sent to *The Chair*

JEFFREY L. BULLER AND SANDRA C. MCCLAIN

It's generally not a good idea to assume that a television program provides an accurate image of the real world. After all, if you expect those present at your next surgery to include every doctor in the hospital because that's what happens on *Grey's*

Anatomy, you're likely to be sorely disappointed. You're likely to be disappointed, too, if you expect your faculty office to be as large or as elegantly appointed as the ones you see on the Netflix series *The Chair*. Perhaps appropriately, both series assigned

a prominent role to Sandra Oh, an actress who also played the title role in the British spy series *Killing Eve*. Spoiler alert: Oh is not actually an MI5 agent either.

The Chair is a dramedy, that combination of comedy and drama that originated with the series *Lou Grant*. It's set at the fictional Pembroke University, a "second-tier Ivy" located in an imaginary Massachusetts town. As the first woman of color to chair the Department of English, Oh's character, Ji-Yoon Kim, supervises a highly bimodal (and sometimes bipolar) faculty: on the one hand, overpaid senior professors who read dry, antiquated lectures to nearly empty classrooms, and on the other, underpaid instructors whose classrooms are filled with lively and engaged students, with barely anything else in between. As such, *The Chair* confirms a large number of stereotypes about academia and professors that almost every academic leader has already experienced. The series, it's only fair to say, does the world of academics no favors, particularly since its audience is probably divided into two groups: those who have worked in higher education and thus have enough experience to recognize what is exaggerated or inaccurate and those who believe they know how a college is run simply because they attended one as a student. The latter observation is about as accurate as proclaiming yourself a violinist because you once went to the symphony.

To give *The Chair* its due, the series does draw attention to important aspects of academic life today that are rarely encountered elsewhere in popular entertainment. The series makes it clear how difficult being a college administrator can be because the job entails coping with the at times irreconcilable demands of people who are passionate about their work and thus unwilling to compromise. Even more effectively, it illustrates just how much that difficulty is increased when women and members of minority groups become administrators. More than one department chair must have watched Oh's character reacting to the unreasonable demands that are placed on her as a scholar, a leader, and a parent and thought, "Been there. Done *that*." Moreover, the series effectively captures tensions

that can arise between junior and senior faculty members when the former wish that the latter would simply retire ("Okay, boomer!") and the latter feel that the former don't appreciate the trails they've blazed ("These millennials!").

The problem with *The Chair* isn't that it fails to tell an interesting story but that many viewers will assume it tells *the* story of higher education today rather than merely *a* story of higher education today. Other movies and television programs about college faculty members—such as *Educating Rita*, *The Paper Chase*, *Californication*, and *Community*—also included examples of what might be called the extreme personalities we've all encountered in the ranks of the faculty, but it was always clear that those characters *were* extreme personalities. In *The*

> It's only in rare cases that entire units are as problematic as the department presented in *The Chair* appears to be.

Chair nearly every member of Pembroke University's Department of English is so idiosyncratic that the word *dysfunctional* doesn't even begin to do it justice. The challenge of working in higher education is, for most of us, the challenge of working with a few people who cause a lot of problems. It's only in rare cases that entire units are as problematic as the department presented in *The Chair* appears to be. Don't get us wrong. Bad departments do exist. They're just not the norm, and the casual viewer of this series may well miss that distinction.

The type of school Pembroke is supposed to be—small, private, and highly selective—may cause some viewers to draw conclusions about college life that simply aren't true at other institutions such as those that are

large, public, and open to applicants with a broad range of abilities. We all hear mottos at our schools like The Students Come First and We're All about the Students, but Pembroke University isn't just a student-*oriented* institution; it's a student-*dictated* institution. Despite the attention that cancel culture is receiving these days, deans and presidents simply don't start firing faculty members because a student has complained about a random remark in class. Similarly, the process of replacing the department chair depicted in the series (a simple majority vote that can occur at any meeting during the academic year) may well exist at some schools, but it's far from common. There are ways in which the position of chair in the series is more similar to that of a *committee* chair (with the added advantage of including a substantial salary increase and that massive office mentioned earlier) than that of a traditional department chair. Because nonacademics already have trouble sometimes distinguishing *department* chairs from *endowed* chairs, any further confusion along these lines isn't particularly helpful.

The Chair, unfortunately, reinforces several false impressions the public may have about academic life today, including the following:

• Being a member of the teaching faculty is largely a sinecure. You can prepare for your classes (or not) if you want to, show up to teach (or not) if you want to, and only work during the time your classes are scheduled. Administrative positions are thus really only sought by people who covet the extra money, the illusion of the power these positions convey, or both. But the lives of academic leaders instantly become much better when they give up the false allures of Mammon for the genuine pleasures of teaching students, all of whom will inevitably be bright, dedicated, and eager to learn.

• Teaching at the college level involves little more than pontificating about issues that may or may not be relevant to the course and insisting that students simply agree with everything you say. This view of higher education is particularly insidious now since so many parents, legislatures, and members of governing boards accuse faculty members of indoctrinating students, telling

them *what* to think rather than teaching them *how* to think. *The Chair* will only encourage them to become more active in seeking to control what can and cannot be taught in the college classroom.

• Scholarship and creative activity in the arts and humanities does not require anything near the rigor required by research in STEM disciplines or professional fields. Publishing a novel (or, in the case of the actor David Duchovny who plays a slightly fictionalized version of himself in the series, merely *starting* a dissertation and then becoming rich and famous) can lead to a tenured position as a professor of literature. Once tenured, professors then have to do little of anything, since firing them is all but impossible (except in the case of a random student complaint as mentioned earlier).

These concerns may lead readers to say, "But it's a television show, for heaven's sake! No one is going to mistake *The Chair* for a documentary on academic life today." And yet the problem is that many people may do exactly that. In 2010, Caroline Roberts, who received a master's degree in English literature from the University of California at Irvine, spoke of "the alcoholic horndog tenured professor stereotype" that was then becoming prominent in film. Two years later, in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article titled "Old, Boring, White, and Mean: How Professors Appear on the Small Screen," Jenny Rogers (2012) feared that "some students will remain hesitant to reach out to professors in part because of what they see on television." Now, with specific reference to *The Chair*, Julia Métraux (2021) believes that these fictional images of the professoriate could have a direct influence on people's careers: "Movies and other forms of pop culture about professors may affect how young people think about their instructors and treat them in response, especially through course evaluations."

Admittedly, that's a heavy burden to place on a mere television program, but popular entertainment has been known to have an outsize effect on student perceptions. In the 1970s, there was a surge of enrollments in journalism programs once the novel and movie *All the President's Men* appeared. Archaeology programs experienced

a brief increase in popularity a decade later with the release of the Indiana Jones films. And at least some of the current student interest in theoretical physics and the health professions can be traced to television series like *The Big Bang Theory* and *Grey's Anatomy*. Those of us who work at colleges and universities can easily distinguish truth from fiction. But that's not always possible for those who are looking at higher education from the outside.

The British journalist Alexander Larman (2021) provides one example of the conclusions that at least some viewers of *The Chair* will draw about life on American campuses: "The great joy of [series creator Amanda] Peet and her co-creator Annie Julie Wyman's show is that it takes aim at several sacred cows of the contemporary American university experience and serves them up medium-rare. These include ancient, past-it academics dribbling on because tenure has rendered them unsackable; populist multiethnic lecturers with their eye on career ambitions; money-obsessed deans who seek to bring in wildly unsuitably celebrity guest dons to secure much needed donations from impressed alumni; … and, of course, the bovine mob of students, easily whipped up into outraged protest because someone has told them that they should be triggered. The program is a combination of liberal wish-fulfillment and bracing political incorrectness."

This characterization is likely to make anyone who loves higher education cringe. Nevertheless, survey after survey by TIAA (Webber 2018), the Higher Education Research Institute (Southwestern University 2020), ATLAS Leadership Training (Cipriano and Buller 2021), and others indicate that the vast majority of college professors have a high degree of job satisfaction today and would make the same career choice if they had to do it all over again. We're all frustrated at work from time to time, but few of us actually seem to be running to the hills to escape Larman's "bovine mob of students."

The simple truth is that *The Chair* presents a fictionalized version of life that academic leaders can relate to, at least in part if not entirely, but it doesn't represent

the experience of the typical department chair any more than *Ted Lasso* represents the experience of the typical coach or *Station 19* represents the experience of the typical firefighter. As academic leaders we would be wise to enjoy the story, try to solve the genuine problems that *The Chair* highlights, but also remind ourselves that even the best television series can never offer anything more than a highly curated view of reality. ▲

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CALL FOR PAPERS
We invite our readers to submit articles for possible publication in *The Department Chair*. The subject should be relevant to department chairs, and the focus should be on practical applications and strategies. We also welcome ideas for subjects of interest to academic leaders that we should develop into articles.

Articles submitted for consideration should be 1,000 to 1,500 words and can be sent as email attachments to editor-dch@wiley.com.

Lawsuits and Rulings

TITLE VII

Case: *Henson v. Texas Southmost College District*, No. 1:18-CV-174 (S.D. Texas 01/30/20)

Ruling: The US District Court, Southern District of Texas, granted summary judgment in favor of Texas Southmost College.

Significance: To pursue a retaliation claim under Title VII, a plaintiff must show that she engaged in activity protected by the statute, that an adverse employment action occurred, and that a causal link existed between the two events. If an employer claims poor performance as its legitimate reason for the adverse employment action, the plaintiff must prove pretext.

Summary: Texas Southmost College hired the plaintiff as a professor in 2016. The plaintiff was the only employee from the Philippines, and most of her colleagues and supervisors were Hispanic females.

In 2017, an acting department chair told the plaintiff about student complaints against her, including many changes to her syllabus, ineffective instruction, last-minute assignments, failing to timely return graded assignments, and requiring them to avoid speaking Spanish.

In January 2018, the department chair sent a "Memo of Concerns" to the plaintiff itemizing a lack of collaboration with faculty and scheduling problems.

A dean issued the plaintiff a "Notice of Warning" in February because two students had complained about unclear course requirements and scheduling changes. The notice also claimed that there was a "lack of team work and collegiality" between the plaintiff and another instructor.

The plaintiff filed a discrimination complaint with TSC in May, and the college refused to renew her contract in July.

The plaintiff filed a suit, and one of her claims was retaliation for complaining about discrimination.

TSC filed a motion for summary judgment, arguing that the reason for nonrenewal was poor performance. In response, the plaintiff argued that her performance was poor because TSC didn't provide adequate support.

The district court judge dismissed the claim, stating that he had never heard of proving that an employer's stated reason was false because the employer didn't support the employee. ▲

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Case: *Isabell v. The Trustees of Indiana University et al.*, No. 3:18cv364 (N.D. Ind. 01/07/20)

Ruling: The US District Court, Northern District of Indiana, refused to dismiss a claim in a suit against Indiana University.

Significance: A university search committee should ask the same questions of each applicant. Acting otherwise can lead to a skewed assessment of who would be best for the job.

Summary: The plaintiff published a pro-life blog article a couple of weeks after Indiana University hired her as an adjunct nursing professor in August 2016. Later in the year, she and another candidate applied for the position of assistant professor.

In early 2017, both applicants were interviewed by a committee and participated in a mock teaching exercise. The committee chair then sent the dean an email advising against hiring the plaintiff.

The dean hired the other candidate, and the plaintiff filed a suit claiming retaliation against her blog in violation of the First Amendment.

The university filed a motion for summary judgment, arguing that there wasn't any evidence of any search committee member knowing about the plaintiff's blog at the time.

However, the district court judge ruled that a reasonable jury could decide the committee chair somehow became aware of the pro-life blog because she had asked the plaintiff during the interview, "How would you discuss controversial topics, healthcare controversial topics, and introduce them to students in a teaching manner?"

The judge also said that one committee member had subsequently complained to the university because a pro-life question had been asked of the plaintiff but not of the other applicant.

He also said that another member was troubled because she considered the interviews inconsistent and because the committee chair made a recommendation to the dean without getting any input from anyone else.

The judge refused to dismiss the claim, ruling that a jury would decide whether the committee chair had rigged the selection process because of hostility about the plaintiff's blog. ▲

STUDENT AFFAIRS

Case: *Doe v. University of Delaware*, No. 19-1963 (Del. 10/29/20)

Ruling: The US District Court, District of Delaware, refused to dismiss a claim in a suit against the University of Delaware.

Significance: A student claiming a breach of a contract created by a university's sexual misconduct policy is required to allege that a specific promise was made to him. A clause in a university's policy requiring it to immediately give a student accused of sexual misconduct a copy of the accuser's written complaint cannot be ignored.

Summary: John Doe was an undergraduate University of Delaware student who filed a suit after being suspended for the stated reason of sexually assaulting a female classmate.

In his claim of a breach of contract, Doe asserted that the Title IX coordinator didn't inform him of the specific allegations and that an investigator interviewed him before providing a copy of the accuser's written complaint. The university filed a motion to dismiss.

Although the judge dismissed other portions of the complaint, she ruled that Doe had successfully alleged that the university had breached its specific written obligation to provide him a copy of the accuser's written statement before interviewing him. ▲

Book Review

Reframing Academic Leadership, Second Edition

Joan V. Gallos and Lee G. Bolman

Wiley, 2021
416 pp., $46.00 (plus $6.00 s/h)

The original edition of *Reframing Academic Leadership* had an important influence on my professional development. By shifting the conceptual "frame" from procedures to leadership metaphors, Bolman and Gallos helped me develop a more sophisticated understanding of my possibilities, redefine my role, and improve my focus as an academic leader.

The new edition brings two major changes. First, while retaining the engaging structure of opening chapters with case-based examples, the authors provide updated cases highlighting contemporary challenges. The new content reinvigorated the discussion of leadership frames, bringing new light to the powerful leadership metaphors that remain the core of the revised book.

The second significant revision includes new content on a range of issues under the umbrella of "Leadership in a Changing World." These chapters address a variety of topics, including changes in student demographics and needs; money and technology; leadership, strategy, and governance; and ethics and leadership. Although these are relevant topics, the discussion of each tends to lack complexity. These chapters highlight important issues rather than provide detailed understanding.

I would be remiss if I did not attest to the enduring value of the content that was not significantly revised from the original edition. Three aspects of the book retain much of their original power and instructional value for academic leaders. First, the "Knowing What You're Doing" chapter presents the extremely helpful Model I and II assumptions and habits of learning for leadership effectiveness. These basic models and recommendations are valuable to leaders at all levels of academic institutions. Second, the four leadership metaphors remain powerful conceptual guides to the possibilities open to leaders. These metaphors provide leaders with options to choose goals and tactics that fit the needs and constraints of each unique organization. Third, the "Leading from the Middle" chapter remains essential reading for all department chairs. It perfectly describes the multiple constituencies and goals that chairs must serve and pursue.

I was surprised that the revised book did not address two important contemporary topics. The first is the mandate to make gains in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals. The authors devote a scant four pages to DEI. The treatment of the range and breadth of challenges related to DEI is disappointing in two ways. First, their discussion does not reflect the urgency for academic institutions to increase representational diversity in students, faculty, and staff; enhance the quality of the academic experience for all students and faculty; and ensure that DEI gains benefit all stakeholders. The second disappointment is the limited discussion of how academic leaders can directly address racial oppression, injustice, and inequality on campus and in the community. I would have welcomed a consideration of how the architect, politician, servant, and artist frames can be used to attend to these issues within the context of the institution's mission.

My second surprise was the omission of a robust discussion of cancel culture in higher education. News coverage of higher education reflects political controversies regarding academic pursuits, such as the 1619 Project and critical race theory. Academic leaders also struggle with protecting liberal and conservative student voices as well as faculty voices within the tradition of dedication to academic freedom. How do leaders position their institutions to respond to the possibility that videos of awkward or unskilled campus interactions will be publicized and amplified by groups dedicated to "exposing anti-conservative bias" in higher education? Even minor controversies can gain widespread notoriety and serve as fodder for talk radio segments and political campaigns. Guidance from the authors on this crucial topic based on the leadership frames would have been welcome.

Beyond these omissions, I am puzzled that Gallos and Bolman have not done more to synthesize their leadership metaphors with constructs from dominant leadership theories. Their metaphors share common ground with the positivist approaches of transformational, authentic, servant, and adaptive leadership. Many leadership development programs rely on constructs from contemporary leadership theories. A synthesis of the frames of leadership with constructs from the main positivist theories, which are supported by rich bodies of empirical research, may serve to make the authors' perspective more accessible to a broader range of academic leaders.

Lastly, it may be time to reconsider the core Gallos and Bolman metaphor of "leader as prophet," which connotes charismatic and pseudotransformational leadership. Even a modest amount of humility requires recognition of the numerous failures of higher education leaders to act with sufficient regard for moral and ethical principles and, even worse, to operate within the law. Ongoing use of prophet as a leadership metaphor does not seem to account for the real dangers of charismatic leadership that have been manifest in recent national politics. A new metaphor that reflects consistent striving to act in legal and principled ways may be in order.

In all, I recommend *Reframing Academic Leadership* to all department chairs. It offers a combination of conceptual sophistication and practical advice for chairs of all experience levels. ▲

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