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Poetry, Leadership, and the Informal Moments of Organizational Life

Angelo J. Letizia

Leadership in higher education and other organizations entails vision. In the broadest sense, leadership requires imagining new ways of doing things. Although this formulation sounds uplifting, imagining a new world may seem like an arduous or futile task when you are bogged down with organizational conflict, seemingly mindless paperwork, meetings, bureaucratic hurdles, and other unpleasant organizational realities. The status quo can seem overwhelming and oppressive. Although leaders might be captive to many forces out of their control, they must at least try to facilitate the creation of a vision and positive organizational change. In this article, I propose a new method for problematizing the status quo and reimagining and creating a new world through the use of poetry. Specifically, leaders can use poetry for self-reflective purposes and then employ these insights to lead meetings and inform their practice more generally. As the title of this article implies, sometimes attention to the quiet or informal moments in organizational life is an ideal place to start. I am a department chair at a small private, urban Catholic university, where I lead the initial certification programs in the School of Education, which oversees all functions related to preservice teachers and their training. I will draw on my own experience using poetry for leadership.

What Is Leadership?

This question, to say the least, is complex. From the literature, there are several different leadership paradigms. Moreover, throughout history, leadership has also been framed differently. Early conceptions of leadership usually centered on "great men," and leadership was seen mostly as something inborn (King 1990; Northouse 2022). As the twentieth century wore on, leadership moved from a trait you were born with to a set of skills and behaviors. Later, leadership was seen from a process and systems perspective where power was distributed among different parties as well as from the perspective of the followers (Greenleaf 2002; Heifetz 1994). In the later twentieth century, some saw leaders as only symbols (Pfeffer 2000), and in the most extreme, some viewed leaders as powerless and often at the whims of

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forces out of their control; indeed, leadership was conceived of as “anarchy” (Cohen and March 2000). Although there is great variability in leadership studies, this variability offers an opportunity to scholars and those in leadership because there are many viable ways to conceive of and frame leadership. And if we are to take building a new world seriously, then we will need all the conceptual tools available to us.

Two important leadership paradigms for this purpose are adaptive leadership and servant leadership. Servant leadership centers on followers and views leaders as servants first. The main test of servant leadership is how well leaders help their followers grow and become better people (Greenleaf 2002). Adaptive leadership sees the leader as a sort of facilitator who does not bark out orders but rather who gets people to work and solve issues that do not have predetermined answers (Heifetz 1994). Servant and adaptive leaders realize that they cannot just order people around or impose their will. Both of these leadership paradigms, while varied, call attention to some important aspects of leadership—namely, that of truly listening to and engaging with followers, seeing followers as equals, and, perhaps most important, fostering and harnessing the creative capabilities of followers and unleashing them to facilitate meaningful change (Letizia 2018).

Why Poetry?

How can poetry help leaders? At first, the use of poetry may seem at odds with leadership. Poetry is abstract, theoretical, and impractical in a day-to-day sense, and leadership is about getting things done. Yet I believe there is a synergy here if framed in light

of adaptive and servant leadership due to the focus on creation, as highlighted earlier. To foster creativity in others, leaders must also cultivate creativity in themselves. Reflection and experience are critical to leadership. In my own position, I constantly reflect on my practice. I also read existing poetry and write my own poetry, which not only helps me reflect on my practice but also allows me to see new possibilities. The following are two poems that I wrote. I will analyze each one and explain how they helped me to reflect on my leadership practice. This is the first:

*The clay pots
Are not what we thought
Absurd containers
Which hold the water
But exclude the infinite
Truth
Is not a scientific proposition
Truth is
Truth [...]*

Here is the second:
*glue dries
and
the fence post
and February
all the other things
Of this world
slowly, inexorably
d e t a c h*

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they were temporary anyway

Our arrogant arrangement

Which could have been

So many

Other ways

What do these poems mean, and how do they relate to leadership? The first poem was not written with any specific leadership ideas in mind. But upon rereading it, it helped me to reframe some of my own practices. Specifically, the clay pots could be a reference to our leadership practice. What is leadership but really the imposition of order? This is similar to our ancestors who built tools to help them tame a harsh world. Our leadership practices sometimes do not work as intended. They might become defaults that, from the adaptive leadership perspective, are solutions to problems that worked in the past but that have now become obsolete. Yet leaders sometimes become stuck and keep offering yesterday's solutions to today's problems (Heifetz et al. 2009). As a leader, I have realized that "the truth" is not a narrow, specified set of guidelines but rather a complex, fluid, and evolving thing. In some sense, a group builds truths to use. For instance, in my department, we formulated our charge to facilitate the creation of effective teachers. I presented the group with a skeletal idea that was open to revision. The definition of what an effective teacher is constantly changes, and we as a department must be sensitive to that. In a sense, the truth of teaching changes every day.

I also did not write the second poem with any leadership ideas in mind. But I think the line that reads "our arrogant arrangement" calls attention to the ephemeral aspect of all things and, specifically, the human standards we impose. Humans can be arrogant, and many times we believe that our view of the world is true, but there is so much we do not understand and that is out of our control. We must come to realize that what is will not always be and that we as leaders and organizational members cannot get stuck in our defaults. We must see the power of creativity and foster that creativity in others (Greenleaf 2002; Heifetz et al. 2009; Letizia 2018). As a leader, this reflection forces me to stay humble. I also must remember that although leaders are not powerless, many times they must contend with forces outside of their control (Cohen and March 2000).

Conclusion

Where does this leave leaders who are not poets (who are probably the vast majority)? Although I encourage leaders to try their hand at writing a poem or another creative piece, reflecting on an existing poem or even song lyrics can have the same effect. Poetry can help leaders break out of their own defaults and stay humble. Leaders can then bring these insights to the meetings they lead and to their practice more generally. Whether they read their own poetry or use an existing poem and deliberately employ it to facilitate hard discussion, these actions could help organizational members reframe their views. I have learned that leadership often takes place in quiet and informal moments. We may remember a good conversation more than we ever remember the content of one of the countless meetings we are forced to attend. A little discussion of more abstract ideas in the quiet and informal moments can help people frame their work and ground their routine activities in a higher purpose. ▲

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The Chair's Role in Fostering Equity, Part 2: Family-Friendly Policies

Lynn K. Bartels, Susan M. Morgan, and Leah C. O'Brien

Institutions that support faculty in addressing life concerns while they perform their faculty roles are places that will retain talented faculty. Institutions able to meet faculty where

they are—working with them to create schedules, departmental norms, and equitable evaluations—will improve academic workforce stability.

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Each faculty member has unique needs. The goal is to meet those needs *equitably* rather than being concerned about whether everyone is being treated *equally*. For example, some women or their partners need accommodations early in their pregnancy with morning sickness or preterm labor while others want to work right up until they go into labor. After the child is born, some faculty parents are fortunate to have supportive partners or family nearby to help with childcare while others do not. Department chairs must approach each faculty member's needs with flexibility and ask what type of support they require, addressing their individual needs on a case-by-case basis.

Occasionally there is time to come up with a plan that anticipates the faculty member's needs, such as with a scheduled surgery. However, there are many scenarios when an agile response is required for an unexpected situation and the faculty member may be unavailable for consultation, such as an unanticipated medical emergency. Chairs must take responsibility for developing an immediate strategy for handling these situations and do so without compounding the faculty member's feelings of conflict or guilt. For example, it must not be the faculty member's responsibility to find a replacement instructor or to find an interim mentor for a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow.

Use of family-friendly benefits can increase long-term productivity and job satisfaction for faculty.

Many institutions have enacted family-friendly benefits and policies beyond Family and Medical Leave Act benefits (including intermittent FMLA). These benefits may include stopping the tenure clock, flexible scheduling, and parental leave. Unfortunately, these benefits are underused. For example, Drago et al. (2005) reported that 33 percent of university women and 19 percent of men did not ask for a reduced teaching load when they needed it for family reasons for fear of negative career outcomes. Informal norms and perceived sanctions pressure faculty to avoid using the available options.

Use of family-friendly benefits can increase long-term productivity and job satisfaction for faculty. Therefore, using family-friendly benefits and scheduling must be normalized for all faculty. Chair support is crucial in this effort for faculty to balance work and family and has been shown to be influential (Drago et al. 2006). In this article, we present ways that department chairs can support their faculty in using family-friendly benefits to help manage their work and family demands.

How Do You Get Started?

Chairs and deans rarely receive information or instructions about implementing family-friendly policies. However, chairs and deans are vital because they can help the faculty member navigate their options based on their specific situation. Human resources or the provost's office should be good sources of information to get started.

Chairs must also be able to communicate information about policies and benefits to their faculty and indicate that they support

their use. It is not enough for an institution to have family-friendly policies and benefits if no one knows about them or if faculty are afraid to use them.

Faculty must understand formal university policies and how these might play out at the department level. Teaching tends to be the most pressing concern. Some options to consider include the following:

- Is there time to shift courses or the teaching load across semesters?
- Which courses could be canceled?
- Which courses could be moved online?
- Which courses could be moved to a half-semester format? Or the number of days per week or time of day changed?
- Who will teach the course(s)? If unpaid leave is used, there may be lapsed salary available that could be used to support overload or hiring a part-time instructor.

Remember that there may be major service assignments that also need to be covered, and depending on your institution type, student advising or research mentoring may also be factors. In the interest of equity, ideally additional work should not be assigned to current employees without reducing their own workload or providing additional compensation.

Handling Questions about Leave

What should you do when a faculty member comes to you with questions about leave? Here are some suggestions:

- Support your faculty.
- Do not grumble, as they (and you) have every right to these benefits.
- Ask if they have spoken to someone in human resources. (Leaves can affect both current and future benefits.)
- Talk to them about (and point them to) the institution's family-friendly policies.
- Listen to their priorities and suggest options tailored to their needs.
- Give them time to digest the material, consider their options, and identify their preferences.
- Make schedule changes and find replacement instructors, if needed.

Note that it is also okay to reach out to a struggling faculty member and suggest that they explore their leave benefits.

Conclusion

Department chairs play an important role in assisting faculty members when they need work accommodation to deal with their personal or family life circumstances. Assisting faculty in navigating their challenges can help set them up for long-term success, which will also benefit the department.

In addition to supporting faculty with family-friendly benefits, chairs can also help create an equitable climate by supporting inclusive excellence in faculty recruitment and hiring and faculty evaluation for tenure and promotion. To learn more about these additional topics, check out our follow-up articles in the winter and summer 2024 issues of *The Department Chair*. ▲

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Facilitating Faculty Retention and Professional Development through External Peer Mentor Networks

Maria Bertagnolli, Chrystal Bruce, Sarah Kirk, Hala Schepmann, and Victoria Turgeon

Academic institutions spend quite a bit of time and money recruiting faculty. However, once hired, faculty are not always provided adequate mentoring and can struggle to feel connected to their university community. Observations and feedback are often done for the purpose of assessment and evaluation rather than to support the professional development of colleagues, leaving faculty unsure about whether they are making appropriate progress toward meeting criteria for tenure and promotion. Having autonomy to develop and deliver courses, manage daily schedules, and select the focus of scholarship, service, and administrative activities is certainly a benefit that faculty enjoy but, without guidance and support, can cause a sense of isolation, undermine confidence, lead to burnout, and result in failure to meet advancement expectations. The pandemic magnified this siloing effect, profoundly impacting new faculty and those hired for the diversity they brought but not provided the resources or support necessary for their success. All these factors can prompt faculty to leave academia. How can we as administrators and department chairs provide support for faculty to not only stay but also thrive in the academy? Although there are many effective strategies, we present here a powerful faculty peer mentoring model that we have been implementing and expanding for the past twelve years that builds community, confidence, and the capacity to take on increasing levels of leadership and that ultimately supports advancement and career development.

Our experience with the peer mentoring model began in 2012 when we participated in the NSF ADVANCE ASAP project, *Advancing the Careers of Women in STEM at Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions*. Mentoring alliances were created based on career stage and discipline. Over a four-year period, our group of midcareer chemists from different institutions (our "alliance") met monthly in a remote capacity and annually in person. During our time together, we discussed our scholarly efforts, teaching

methodologies, service activities, and career plans. We reviewed one another's grant proposals, manuscripts, and tenure and promotion documents. We also shared numerous pedagogical and scholarly resources; professional development and funding opportunities; and information about campus practices, policies, and infrastructures. Our alliance provided us the support, mentorship, and networking needed to grow both professionally and personally. We addressed the challenges that were holding us back, prioritized the many competing demands on our time, and held one another accountable to pursue our goals. We also realized that our voices had the power to affect systemic change.

As the confidence and capacity of each member of our alliance increased, so too did our desire to support other faculty. As we grew in our own leadership, we expanded our community to the current team that sought and received funding from the NSF ADVANCE Partnership Program to create regional, interinstitutional peer mentoring networks that now exist in the Northwest, Midwest, and Southeast. In contrast to more traditional mentoring models, in which junior faculty are paired with more senior members in their home department, our ASCEND model (Advancing STEM Careers by Empowering Network Development) brings together faculty from similar disciplines and stages of their career who work at different institutions. Members of the peer mentoring alliances are more comfortable asking questions and speaking openly about their experiences with colleagues outside their institutions knowing that they will not be formally evaluating one another's work. The specific aims of our grant were focused on promoting the advancement of midcareer women in STEM disciplines; however, this model can be applied to faculty in any discipline and at any stage of their career.

Here are the major considerations that we have found to be important when building successful interinstitutional peer mentoring networks:

- *Geographic proximity* maximizes opportunities for participants to interact with one another (same time zone; may be able to gather in person periodically) and recognizes the value of understanding shared common regional cultures.
- *Related disciplines* allow alliance members to provide informed guidance to one another, particularly with respect to scholarship and teaching.
- *Institution type*, including teaching, scholarship, and service expectations, as well as similar financial situations, are also important factors to consider.
- *Four to five members per alliance* provides space for all voices to be heard; everyone in the alliance can fit in one car when traveling together.
- *Intersectional factors* intentionally encourage participation by faculty from minoritized backgrounds. Faculty who are underrepresented in their academic disciplines, particularly those with intersectional underrepresented identities, encounter more significant barriers to success in their academic careers and typically shoulder higher service and advising workloads. This “hidden work” is often not acknowledged or valued in comparison to excellent teaching and productive scholarship in the evaluation of tenure and promotion applications.

To facilitate the formation of peer mentoring networks, we recommend making use of existing regional consortia or organizations that would allow faculty from different institutions to engage with one another. Academic leaders can also provide structural support and serve as resources. To foster independence, we recommend identifying a convener within each group to schedule monthly virtual meetings. For these meetings, it is helpful to provide a framework to guide the discussions while allowing groups flexibility to focus on timely topics of interest. To develop and maintain a trusting and supportive community, we incorporated community-building activities into participant meetings and collectively created a community of trust agreement. Participants were encouraged to bring their whole selves to the conversations, recognizing that our personal lives impact our professional lives.

One of the first activities we asked of our ASCEND participants was to create individual professional development plans. They were encouraged to discuss these with one another periodically; modify them based on achievements and new interests and skill sets; and hold one another accountable to support progress toward their goals. In order to be responsive to the needs of each alliance, we asked alliances to report back after their meetings so that we could address questions and provide resources to support them as they worked toward their goals, which notably evolved and changed over the years. In particular, we responded to their requests for education, training, and professional support related to their interests in developing leadership skills and for gaining a better understanding of policies and practices at their own and peer institutions.

The impact of peer mentoring networks can be profound. They provide a sense of inclusion and empowerment, which fosters resilience in the face of expected and unexpected challenges. Peer

support not only benefits the individual but also promotes the collective advancement of groups, which can positively influence departments and lead to institutional transformation. Each member of our own alliance, which now includes eight women in STEM disciplines, has experienced significant professional growth and development, has taken on increasing levels of academic leadership, and has benefited personally from our alliance. Several have been recognized at their institutions through awards for their leadership, teaching, scholarship, and service. Through surveys and interviews, participants of our ASCEND alliances have shared that their confidence has grown significantly as a result of the support they have received from their alliance and the network of alliances created through the ASCEND project. Specifically, they now feel more prepared to hold leadership positions, are more aware of opportunities for professional growth, and feel more prepared to develop their own mentoring relationships. Several have been promoted to full professor. Others have taken on the role of department chair, and many are recognizing ways in which they can apply their skills, knowledge, and interests to help support colleagues at their own institutions. Importantly, their activism has moved beyond self-advocacy to advocacy for others and promotion of cultural and institutional change.

Peer support not only benefits the individual but also promotes the collective advancement of groups, which can positively influence departments and lead to institutional transformation.

As we continue to focus on recruiting excellent faculty who can best support not only today’s students but also those who will be seeking a college education in the coming decades, we must ensure that we have strategies in place that will promote faculty retention and provide them with opportunities for growth and development throughout their careers. This support can and should come from a variety of sources, including mentoring from colleagues at their home institution, with frequent check-ins outside of formal evaluations to review immediate and longer-range goals and the progress made toward those goals. But there are many additional benefits that come from building mentor networks with peers outside of our home institutions with whom we can share our challenges and successes, serve as sounding boards when making decisions about how best to focus our time and energy, serve as sponsors for professional development and career advancement opportunities, and broaden exposure and access to different aspects of academia. Peer mentoring networks that help faculty make meaningful connections with colleagues at other institutions within their region, who are at similar stages of their career and in similar disciplines, ultimately benefit not only the individual but also the institution. Faculty who feel supported are more likely to stay in academia, be successful in their careers, and make meaningful contributions that positively impact the academic community. ▲



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Managing Change, Part 2: Successful Planning

Donna M. Buchanan

The impact of change on higher education organizations and their people has been devastating (Buchanan 2023), and it's likely that one or more areas of your institution have diminished capacity to function optimally for student recruitment, learning, experience, or outcomes. It is profoundly important that academics understand and engage in the change management process in this new environment, regardless of their role or level of responsibility.

This article builds on my 2024 article, “Managing Change, Part 1: Pivoting into the Future,” and my 2022 piece, “Managing Change: Five Common Hindrances to Navigating Disruption in Higher Education.” The purpose is to provide more context for common hindrances and additional insight into the vital roles department chairs and deans play when it comes to their institutions' capacity to meet students' needs in this new epoch of higher education. Academic leaders can advocate for improved organizational change management expertise both to ensure that there is a collective understanding of how the organization works and its current capacity to accomplish desired goals and to foster collaboration between faculty and project implementers to problem-solve, innovate, and achieve goals.

Change management involves accurately assessing where you are, determining where you want to go, anticipating and mitigating the obstacles to getting there, and then transitioning methodically through obstacles to get to the desired outcome. It means understanding *how* people and organizations transition from one phase to another and managing expectations accordingly.

Change management habits should be integrated into existing planning activities and daily operations as a systematic approach to implementing new programs, policies, and changes in ways that maximize successful adoption and build agility to shift rapidly in a changing environment. It's not surprising that managing change was cited as “one of the toughest challenges I face as an administrator” by 72 percent of higher education administrators in a survey conducted by the Chronicle of Higher Education and Watermark (Anft 2022).

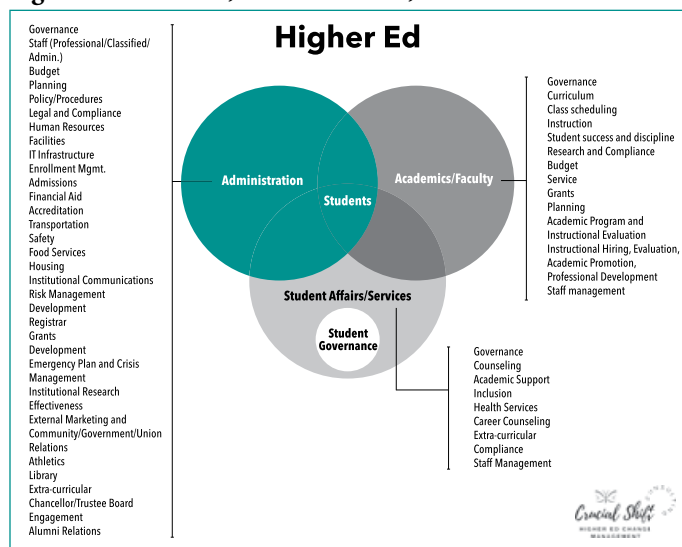
On the surface, the unique impact of change on parts of each institution may seem distinct and separate, but organizations are a complex and complicated ecosystem of people, resources, systems, policies, procedures, processes, and culture. Figure 1 illustrates the distinct triad of major functions that comprise a higher education organization: academics, administration, and student affairs,

which are often led by three separate leaders such as the president, the provost or vice president of instruction, and the vice president of student services, respectively. In most other types of organizations, all the functions report up to one leader (president or CEO) who has final decision-making authority and accountability.

In higher education, typically two of the three leaders (administrative and academic) have ultimate decision-making authority for their respective areas. As a result, boundaries and accountabilities blur, and the resulting dynamic is often at the core of the five hindrances. In a shared governance structure, it can be difficult to engage administrators, academics, and student affairs professionals about the same topic, at the same time, at the same table. It's not uncommon for each group to focus so intently on their own areas that they forget that they're all inextricably bound. Therefore, all three leaders may make independent decisions that depend on the same resources and infrastructure without consideration of the connection with, or the impact on, the entire institution, which further diminishes institutional capacity.

The idea that the three groups may have equal value is often antithetical to academic sensibilities (and perhaps even offensive to some). However, a paradigm shift proposes that without the

Figure 1. Academics, Administration, and Student Affairs



administrative roles, there are no students, there is no teaching or learning infrastructure, and the bills don't get paid. Without students, there's no purpose for its existence, and without dedicated student support, students will likely flounder. Without faculty and academic administrators, there is no institution of higher learning.

Ultimately, it's important to think beyond how campus units support institutional operations and to focus on how each unit directly supports student learning, experience, and outcomes. This paradigm shift lays the foundation for faculty, students, administrative leaders, and staff to work together to address institutional challenges. (For example, the impact of the transportation department is not just that students get from point A to point B. Providing enough shuttles with the correct scheduling helps students to rely on getting to class, arriving on time, and not missing exams, all of which can impact their learning, experience, and outcomes.) Similarly, what's the learning impact of having a quiet, clean, pretty place to study and healthy, delicious, affordable food to eat? These reflections should be made for every campus unit.

One might imagine that the relationship between student affairs and academics would be inherently collaborative. However, O'Halloran identified the following barriers to collaboration (Advancing Campus Community 2020):

- Most institutions have no system in place for rewarding faculty and student affairs professionals who engage in collaboration.
- There is a difference in culture and mission.
- For faculty, collaboration is often devalued in comparison to research and teaching, with the opposite true for student

affairs: scholarly activity is devalued and recognition is based on evaluation and performance in meeting student needs.

- There are competing assumptions about fostering learning and education.
- Support for and sources of resistance to collaboration must be identified.

When department chairs and deans help mitigate the barriers to collaboration, the space is created to invite faculty, students, student affairs, and administrators to convene around an ecosystem approach. Class scheduling, for example, is under the purview of academics and may therefore appear to only impact faculty in terms of their availability, discipline and convenience, academic calendar, academic budget, and academic staffing. In the best-case scenario, other areas to consider may include the following:

- Student interest and availability; institutional research data; financial aid; registrar; enrollment management; campus security; and public, government, and industry relations (to determine industry needs)
- Classroom availability, transportation schedule, and campus food availability
- Technology support for professors and students; academic counseling and other support such as access to labs, fieldwork, internships, and study abroad; technology upgrades and staffing bandwidth for the updated scheduling process; and communication systems and messaging regarding scheduling changes
- Athletics (practices, games, requirements)

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I challenge the reader to find a single campus initiative that is completely self-contained within one campus unit.

Project Management: Planning and Implementation Matter

Desired outcomes don't happen unless ideas are converted into a clear, concrete, relevant, and *practical* plan that is implemented in a tangible and sustainable way that achieves the intended results in a timely and effective fashion. When done correctly, the strategic planning process and the plan itself provide the institution with clear direction, goals, responsibilities, and measurements for accountabilities. Until everyone's activities flow directly from the strategic plan, efficient and effective outcomes are less likely to occur. However, I've heard several reasons for pushback on strategic planning:

- "They are too time-consuming and costly, and they just get put on the shelf."
- "They are unnecessary because new leaders come in with their own vision."
- "They are a waste of time because life is too unpredictable."
- "As long as each institutional area is aligning its activities with the college's mission and vision, it doesn't matter what everyone else is doing."

Sometimes it's the process itself that is considered problematic. A survey of faculty senate chairs and other faculty governance leaders at about fourteen hundred four-year colleges conducted by Hans-Joerg Tiede, director of research for the American Association of University Professors, found that although 57 percent of respondents felt as if faculty members at their institutions had some opportunity to participate in strategic planning, 22 percent felt that strategic planning had been handled unilaterally by the administration (Gardner 2021). Unless the planning process has been perceived as genuine, transparent, inclusive, rigorous, and unbiased by each group, there will not be great confidence in the outcome. Department chairs and deans are perfectly poised to help create informed and trusted coalitions to create sound strategic plans.

Here's a checklist of questions that deans and department chairs can raise:

- Do we have all the right people at the table from beginning to end?
- Are we willing to consider opposing viewpoints to inform our goals?
- Have we attempted to understand how our decisions, questions, actions, and assumptions impact implementation?
- Is there agreement about what it means to be student-centered rather than structure- or function-centered?
- Do we have a systematic and transparent way to move us more quickly and effectively from idea to goal achievement? Have we factored planning and implementation time and resources into our process, timeline, and budget?

Five Common Hindrances to Navigating Disruption in Higher Education

1. Underestimating the tumultuous impact of change on the institution's capacity (people, culture, systems, processes, and resources) to achieve the mission.
2. Overabundance of disparate initiatives that compete for the same limited bandwidth (timing, staffing, resources, systems, etc.).
3. Inconsistent institutional agreement about shared governance (decision-making authority, process and protocol) and academic freedom.
4. Ineffective stakeholder engagement and insufficient communication with diverse stakeholder groups.
5. Underestimating the level of courage necessary to fill the gap between words and actions.

- Who has the expertise and authority to plan and implement initiatives?
- What does accountability look like?
- Do we have the discipline to persist?

Conclusion

By understanding the five common hindrances to change and by doing the following, department chairs play a critical role in maintaining organizational capacity to pivot through disruption so that students have the best opportunity to thrive:

- Asking themselves, "Am I willing to challenge (or to be challenged about) my own operating paradigms?"
- Supporting stakeholder loyalty to the institution's mission and a student-centered perspective—as opposed to loyalty to turfs across campus, academic discipline, or socio-political ideologies
- Supporting alignment of organizational goals into one integrated strategic plan to foster clarity, consistency, effectiveness, sustainability, and accountability
- Working with a diverse group of stakeholders (including students) to assess capacity and calibrate expectations and to work accordingly by answering the questions, "What are our priorities, and what is possible given organizational capacity versus what is desired or expected?"

Department chairs play a critical role in maintaining organizational capacity to pivot through disruption so that students have the best opportunity to thrive.

Ultimately, chairs and deans can help everyone move in unison in one direction to hear, see, and act in new ways that build—not destroy—a culture of trust, collaboration, and effectiveness to increase the value of their institution to its constituents and to ensure equitable student outcomes in the face of unrelenting change. ▲

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The Faculty Search Process as an Opportunity for Mentoring, Part 2: Hiring and Formal Onboarding

Letizia Guglielmo and John C. Havard

Faculty searches are one of the most impactful forms of service performed in academic departments, but scholarship on department leadership typically frames them in light of hiring effective faculty rather than as a stage in the mentorship process. Extending our exploration of mentoring within the early stages of the search process in part 1 of this two-part series, here we provide strategies for the second stage of the search process.

Once an official offer has been made and accepted, the period between hiring and formal onboarding offers a significant opportunity for ongoing mentoring and for the department chair to continue to support and advocate for new colleagues. Research on early-career faculty success identifies "three core issues, which can negatively affect the productivity and success of early career faculty: expectations for performance, particularly the tenure process; collegiality and community; and balance among professional roles and between personal and professional life" (Austin, Sorcinelli, and McDaniels 2007, 57). The time between hire and formal onboarding or orientation can offer an opportunity to begin to anticipate and address these issues. Even before a prospective faculty member accepts an offer, the offer itself also reinforces what is valued and how the department and institution will support new colleagues in meeting expectations and finding balance in their work; this support is evident in teaching load, number of teaching preps for the first semester or first academic year, opportunities for the new colleague to teach in areas of expertise, support for research and writing, and expectations for service.

Part of this mentoring support also includes demonstrating that the personal is just as important as the professional, especially when new colleagues are making decisions to move themselves, and perhaps loved ones, to new cities and towns with or without established connections. Although new and prospective colleagues may be willing to ask questions and/or to request resources while they are considering or after accepting a formal job offer, as chair you should consider proactively offering to answer questions and to connect new hires with other department colleagues who can serve as part of the mentoring network. Search committee members may

be a likely set of colleagues to begin filling these mentoring roles given the amount of time they will have spent with prospective and new hires, yet a chair should also facilitate connections with colleagues who can provide a variety of perspectives (neighborhoods and housing, cultural sites and campus life, benefits and resources from the perspective of a faculty member and not HR alone, etc.). This proactive mentoring can be particularly critical in the midst of leadership transitions at the hiring institution, which may leave new colleagues feeling unsure of how they will be supported when they arrive and in a liminal space between having formally accepted an offer but not yet on contract for the academic year.

The period between hiring and formal onboarding offers a significant opportunity for ongoing mentoring and for the department chair to continue to support and advocate for new colleagues.

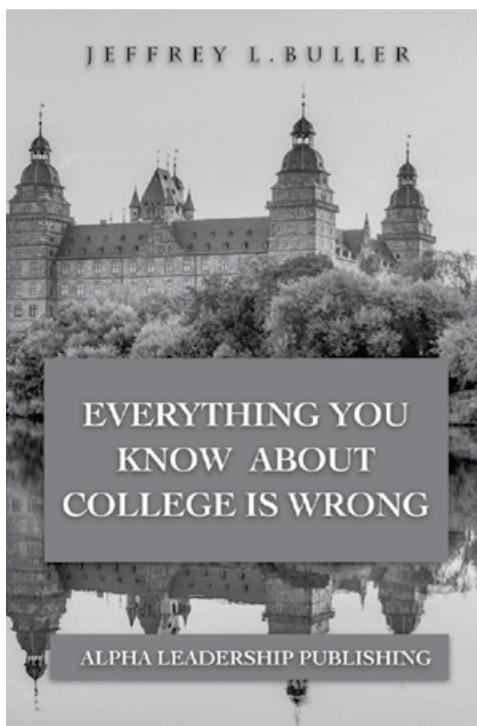
Collegiality becomes particularly significant to faculty success, as Austin and colleagues (2007) explain that "faculty want to pursue their work in a community where collaboration is respected and encouraged, where colleagues serve as mentors and role models, where friendships develop between colleagues within and across departments, and where there is time and opportunity for interaction and talk about ideas, one's work, and the institution" (61). As chair, then, you should encourage department members to collectively play an active role in building relationships with new hires, orienting them toward university resources, and beginning to demystify processes connected to areas of faculty work. Equally important is envisioning how the support you and your department colleagues offer as part of the search and hiring process will complement and provide entry into more formal orientation programs and ongoing mentoring available for new faculty at your institution. Essential to this process is having some knowledge as a chair about what those institutional, college-level, or department-level resources will look

like and how to preview that support without overwhelming new hires. For example, if orientation or onboarding will include sessions on faculty reviews and preparing for promotion and tenure, you might point new hires to guidelines for these reviews but also assure them that they will receive a more complete introduction during orientation that will prepare them for success in this area. Consider further demystifying the review, tenure, and promotion process by advocating sharing sample narratives within the department and holding open discussions about the process, including hearing from colleagues who have navigated the process and being frank about challenges. Reinforce for new hires that it is also the department's and chair's responsibility to help prepare them for promotion and tenure and that a variety of support systems will be available at various points throughout the process.

If sessions on teaching or other professional development topics will be available as part of formal onboarding or orientation and/or through a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at your institution, that information should be shared with new hires as they are preparing for their first semester. This is another opportunity to involve department colleagues who may have engaged in faculty development work at the department, college, or university level and who can become part of the mentoring network. Similarly, consider sharing or previewing resources for scholarship support in the form of faculty development (manuscript completion programs, writing accountability groups, etc.) that may be or will be available in the coming academic year and offer suggestions for how new hires might plan ahead for those. What other resources exist for workshops, learning communities, and mentoring programs,

and must the faculty member be proactive in identifying those? Finally, in terms of teaching, help new hires identify other faculty teaching similar courses. Are sample syllabus documents available? Can new hires reach out to those colleagues, and can you (or an associate chair or other department administrator, depending on who is in charge of creating faculty schedules) facilitate those connections to contribute to those broad networks of support? A note of caution is warranted here, as practices and sometimes policies may dictate how much contact chairs should have with new hires before official contracts begin for the academic year. Furthermore, chairs should take a nuanced approach to this posthire mentoring before new colleagues are officially on contract, as frequent email and sharing of resources also may send messages about expectations and department culture, another important facet of the mentoring process. To that end, consider the timing and frequency of messages as well as your expectations for response, and remain mindful that new faculty still may feel pressured to respond to and engage with these communications regardless of the expectations you set.

New faculty success and satisfaction are very clearly connected to strong social networks and "to interdependent networks of people who support one another's work" (Seltzer 2015, 94), and we argue that this networking and success are fostered by a mentoring approach to the search and hiring process. Not simply an opportunity to identify and select the right people, as much of the current literature would have us believe, the hiring process offers an opportunity for reciprocal and dynamic mentoring grounded in equity, inclusion, and transparency. To that end, we invite additional conversation on and encourage chairs to consider how this kind of mentoring can



Accreditation. Mission statements. Merit salary systems. External rankings. Outcomes assessment. Program review. These strategies for improving the quality of higher education have become so common that most colleges and universities simply take them for granted. But how many of them actually work? And, of the strategies that do work, how many of them are cost effective?

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Everything You Know About College Is Wrong is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Signed, Sealed, & Delivered. Visit jeffbuller.com.

become an intentional part of the search process for those who are hired and for those candidates who are not. Recognizing the realities of the academic job search, and the scarcity of full-time, including full-time tenure-track, positions in many disciplines, how might a mentoring approach to the job search also include candidates who are not hired “who described feeling muddled, discombobulated, and disoriented by [a] lack of closure” (Andrzejewski 2023) when they were effectively ghosted during the hiring process? ▲

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External Review Letters in Promotion and Tenure: Recommendations for Chairs

Cinzia Cervato, Canan Bilen-Green, Carrie Ann Johnson, Carla Koretsky, and Adrienne Minerick

Institutions are increasingly scrutinizing the external review component of faculty evaluation for promotion and tenure decisions. Recognizing the pivotal role of external review letters in shaping the trajectory of academic careers, we surveyed external letter request templates from doctoral-granting universities with very high research activity (R1) and high research activity (R2). The primary objective was to summarize prevailing practices, highlight potential biases, and propose strategies for improvement, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the fairness and transparency of academic evaluation.

Studies have shown that tenure and promotion processes, touted as merit-driven, are influenced by gender and racial biases (Garrett, Williams, and Carr 2023; Llorens et al. 2021). Women face disparities in tenure outcomes, and biases intensify for individuals with multiple marginalized identities. Tenure and promotion practices are unique to higher education and are often veiled in confidentiality. A vital component of the process at most institutions is using external letters solicited from experts in the candidate’s field. Systemic biases manifest in unintended gendered and racially biased language within the selection process for external reviewers; the content of the external review letters; and assumptions made by promotion and tenure reviewers, including department chairs and evaluation committee members, about the content of the letters (Madera et al. 2024).

Unintended bias may negatively influence promotion and tenure decisions. To contribute to developing more inclusive institutional practices, we conducted a thematic analysis of seventy-five external review templates from 279 doctoral-granting US institutions. We focused on themes such as procedure and confidentiality, assessment criteria, probationary period, and the impact of COVID-19 that may add or counter potential biases in how disruptions manifested and were addressed.

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Findings and Recommendations

The results of our thematic analysis revealed critical patterns in the external review templates and highlighted aspects related to procedure and confidentiality, assessment criteria, probationary periods, addressing potential bias, and COVID-19 impacts (see table 1). The complete analysis is summarized in Cervato et al. (2023). Here we offer recommendations for department chairs for a more inclusive external review process in promotion and tenure.

Studies have shown that tenure and promotion processes, touted as merit-driven, are influenced by gender and racial biases.

Procedure and Confidentiality

Only one R1 institution specifically asked chairs and P&T committee chairs not to modify the template’s content. R1 institutions tend to emphasize the confidentiality of external review letters as allowed by state laws, underscoring the need to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation process. In contrast, unionized R1 and R2 campuses leaned toward transparency, sharing external review letters with candidates. This divergence in approaches prompts institutions to reflect on the ethical considerations surrounding reviewer confidentiality and encourages explicit communication of expectations to reviewers, mitigating potential biases.

Recommendation: Standardize the external review process.

- If available, use the Office of the Provost template to request reviews from external experts.
- Clearly outline the purpose of external reviews in the request letter, providing explicit information about evaluation criteria, institutional policies, and tenure/promotion expectations.

- Refrain from unnecessary modifications to the letter template. Any adjustments should be limited to providing context regarding the teaching load and resources offered to the candidate within that department and including information on unintentional biases.
- Collaborate with faculty to standardize procedures for selecting external reviewers, encouraging a random selection process from a diverse pool to minimize representational bias.

Assessment Criteria

According to our study, all requests asked the external reviewer to evaluate scholarly contributions, with many templates asking to comment on the candidate’s teaching and service. Promotion and tenure portfolios at research institutions traditionally have included the candidate’s teaching philosophy statement; tabulated results of student evaluation of teaching compared to the departmental, college, or institutional average; and occasionally peer teaching evaluation letters submitted by departmental colleagues. However, over the last few decades, extensive research has shown that course evaluations by students mostly measure instructor likeability rather than teaching effectiveness and that student evaluations are biased against faculty of color, faculty with accents and Asian last names, LGBTQIA+ faculty, and women faculty.

Recommendation: Limit external evaluation scope.

- Direct external reviewers to focus solely on assessing scholarship and professional service at the national or international level.
- Explicitly instruct external reviewers to comment on teaching

aspects only if they have firsthand experience or if they have directly observed the candidate’s teaching.

Comparison to Other Scholars and Ability to Earn Tenure

More than 80 percent of R1 and half of the R2 templates asked the external reviewer to compare candidates to others at similar career stages, highlighting an emphasis on benchmarking against peers. Slightly less than half also requested an assessment of the candidate’s future growth potential. In addition, approximately one-third of external review templates solicited explicit comments on whether the candidate would earn tenure at the reviewer’s institution. However, the absence of detailed information regarding the institutional support available to candidates and potentially enormous differences across institutions poses challenges in conducting fair evaluations. Typically, external reviewers are full professors at comparable or higher-ranking institutions; their perception of the candidate’s institutional/departmental context is likely incomplete.

Recommendation: Provide institutional context and explicit expectations.

- Include in request letters the institutional context, encompassing promotion and tenure expectations, typical teaching assignments, support structures, availability of research facilities, grant writing support, seed money, and more.
- Ask reviewers to avoid comparing the candidate to other scholars or assessing their likelihood of earning tenure at the reviewer’s institution.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of the External Letter Request Templates Grouped by Institution Type

Statements	R1 Institutions N = 52			R2 Institutions N = 23		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
Statements that were deemed neutral or with the potential to reduce bias included:						
Mentions COVID-19 impact	17 (32.7%)	35		3 (13.0%)	20	
Reference to diversity, equity, inclusion	3 (5.8%)	49		0	23	
Use of gender-neutral pronouns	25 (48.1%)	27		11 (47.5%)	12	
Notes on how to evaluate changes to the standard probationary period	18 (34.6%)	34		1 (4.3%)	22	
Confidentiality of letter	28 (53.8%)	17	7	6 (26.1%)	8	9
Request to evaluate research	36 (69.2%)	16		17 (73.9%)	6	
Request to evaluate creative work	27 (51.9%)	25		9 (39.1%)	14	
Request to evaluate scholarship	29 (55.8%)	23		15 (65.2%)	8	
Statements with the potential to introduce bias in the evaluation:						
Request to evaluate teaching	30 (57.7%)	22		9 (39.1%)	14	
Request to evaluate service	28 (53.8%)	24		10 (43.5%)	13	
P&T criteria: Future growth potential	25 (48.1%)	27		10 (43.5%)	13	
P&T criteria: Comparison to other scholars	42 (80.3%)	10		13 (56.5%)	10	
Opinion on tenure at the reviewer’s/candidate’s institution	19 (36.5%)	33		7 (30.4%)	16	
P&T criteria: National recognition	5 (9.6%)	47		4 (17.4%)	19	

The first group includes neutral statements that may be intended to reduce bias. The second group includes statements that may introduce bias in the evaluation.

Addressing Potential Bias

Only two R1 institutions explicitly acknowledged potential biases, sharing research on how COVID-19 more strongly impacted faculty of color and women faculty. Also, only half of the templates used gender-neutral pronouns.

Recommendation: Inform reviewers about bias in academia.

- Request templates should inform external reviewers about unintentional biases and offer specific methods to minimize bias.
- Reference research findings on biases in student evaluations, language disparities, tenure clock stoppages, and perceptions of caregiving responsibilities.
- Integrate gender-neutral pronouns in external review request templates to prevent subconscious gender bias and to ensure a more inclusive evaluation process.

Probationary Period

Despite the availability of extensions to the tenure clock at most institutions, only one-third of the external review templates, all but one from R1 institutions, communicated institutional policies regarding tenure clock extensions and how to consider them in the review process.

Recommendation: Explicitly ask to exclude extension year(s).

- Explicitly request exclusion of tenure clock extension year(s) and provide guidance to ensure uniform and equitable assessment of candidates.

COVID-19 Impact

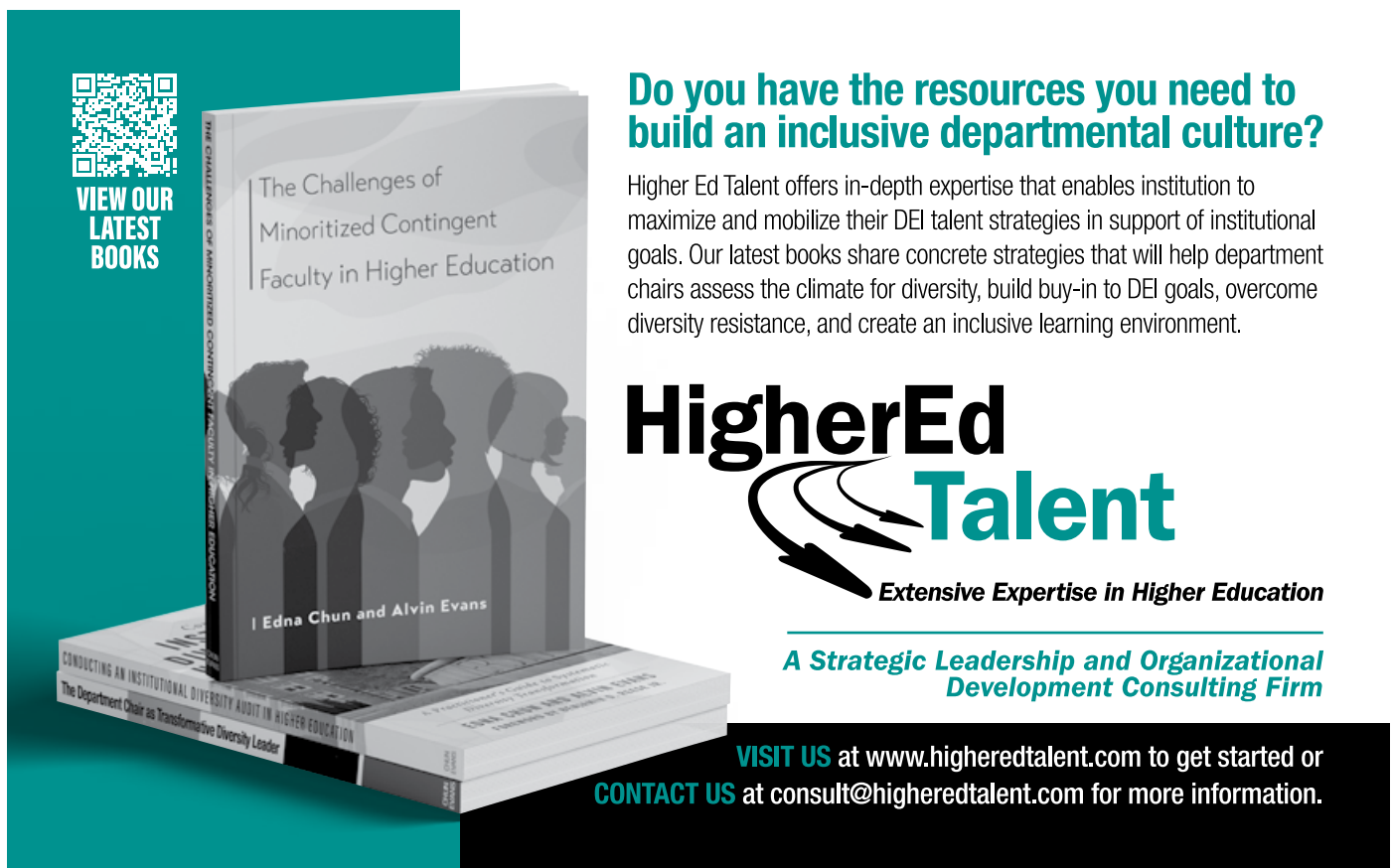
Most templates did not mention the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly because they were written before 2020. The twenty letters out of seventy-five referencing COVID-19 included a summary of institutional policies to mitigate its negative effect on faculty. However, only a few acknowledged its disproportionate impacts on specific faculty populations, like caregiver faculty, faculty of color, and pretenure faculty.

Recommendation: Communicate the impact of recent events.

- Acknowledge the differential impact, within external review request letters, of events like the COVID-19 pandemic and post-George Floyd occurrences on faculty productivity, especially those with family caregiving responsibilities and faculty of color.

Finally, we recommend that reviewers, including department chairs and departmental committee members, independently assess tenure portfolios before reviewing external letters to avoid a negative characterization of the candidate based on their perception of what is hinted, implied, or omitted from external review letters (Stewart and Valian 2018). ▲

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From Crossing Campus to Crossing Continents: Faculty, Chair, and Global Partner Perspectives on an International Sabbatical

Emily Faulconer, Beverly Wood, and Stephen George-Williams

A sabbatical—a period of paid leave granted to faculty for research or study—is a construct in higher education that has experienced ebbs and flows in its favorability, though there are persistent arguments that it is important for research-active faculty. The day-to-day responsibilities of faculty can distract from and dilute efforts aimed at strategic planning, long-term planning, and reflection necessary to achieve promotion. It follows that faculty place a very high value on sabbatical leave time for its impact on career progression, with one study ranking sabbaticals second only to successful external funding (Smith et al. 2016). Faculty and institutions can benefit from sabbaticals through collaborative ideation to reveal new research ideas, development of new expertise, strategic dissemination efforts, and much more. Faculty who have participated in a sabbatical report stronger engagement with colleagues and a sense of social responsibility, with a higher tendency toward teamwork, creativity, and innovation. Sabbatical could also reduce the gap between academics and nonacademics through "experimental" sabbaticals (e.g., a year of consulting). It is important to note that benefits to students are not inherent, as one study reported no difference in student evaluations of teaching before and after sabbatical (Miller and Kang 1998), though faculty overwhelmingly agreed that sabbatical improved their attitude, making them a better faculty member (Miller and Kang 2006).

A sabbatical can be complex due to departmental, institutional, and external factors. Departmental factors like teaching commitments, service appointments, and joint appointments can reduce flexibility for faculty seeking a sabbatical. Furthermore, faculty must consider how their leave will impact their existing research activities, including student research supervision and advising. Faculty perceive the department chair as having both positive and negative influences on their ability to take a sabbatical, having notable oversight over the faculty responsibilities while on sabbatical (Miller and Kang 2006; Smith et al. 2016). External factors include

family and social responsibilities like childcare, eldercare, flexibility of partner's career for travel, and community obligations.

International sabbaticals can offer a unique life-changing opportunity for cultural immersion, providing crucial context for teaching and research while building a more robust professional network. If we wish our students to develop twenty-first-century skills to succeed in a global marketplace, we must be able to model them. For this reason, an international sabbatical is in direct support of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Some studies report increased scholarly productivity as a result of international research collaborations (e.g., Castillo and Powell 2020). International sabbaticals can also bolster name recognition, landing speaking invitations at prestigious events. Interdisciplinary and diverse research teams increase funding success.

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In spring 2023, I formally requested my international sabbatical for the purpose of establishing a professional network with faculty outside the United States who are active in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) within STEM learning environments. The stated objectives were to network with STEM faculty at multiple Australian higher education institutions, attend an international education conference, and establish an interdisciplinary research team focused on undergraduate STEM education (either concentrating on high-impact practices or on humanizing online learning).

The Planning

Sabbaticals were not a part of the culture within my college or even within other colleges at my campus. Upon first inquiry, I discovered no formal process beyond a brief mention in the *Faculty Handbook*. My experience reflects research findings that the application process for a sabbatical can be frustrating because of unclear and inconsistent processes (Smith et al. 2016). However, I viewed this as an opportunity to forge a path without preconceived notions.

Although the process of requesting and planning *any* sabbatical will have challenges, the process for an international sabbatical is notably more difficult (Bowman 2020). Some suggest it can take eighteen to twenty-four months to plan an international sabbatical (Schulz 2009), though I planned mine in five months. I submitted my proposal without having formed any preliminary relationships to leverage, though my proposal did include background research on high-value points of contact. This approach felt daunting, but it encouraged me to forge a network from scratch rather than relying on existing connections.

There was a negotiation with administration regarding the scope of my work and my intended deliverables, a normal process in balancing the needs of the faculty member and the institution (Miller and Kang 2006). Once approved, the real planning for the international sabbatical occurred. Tasks included securing visas for myself and my immediate family, exploring health-care coverage and addressing gaps, ensuring up-to-date immunizations, procuring an international driver's permit, securing lodging, and enrolling my son in virtual education for his fourth-grade year. I established

property management for my time abroad, packed much of my belongings, and acquired long-term pet care. I wish that I had discovered Bowman's book *Modern Sabbatical* (2020) before planning, as it covers so many steps in helpful detail as well as considerations once you land at your destination and reentry after sabbatical.

Some faculty feel that international sabbaticals should have increased funding provisions (Smith et al. 2016). My institution did not take the nature of my sabbatical into account. Faculty at my home institution receive their standard income for either "one-term" (half of an academic year) or half of their standard income for a "two-term" (entire academic year) sabbatical. This approach is fairly typical (Schulz 2009). The level of financial support could impact faculty decisions regarding when or where to travel but was not a factor in my sabbatical. Faculty can seek funding programs for faculty exchange, including the US Fulbright Scholars Program (<https://us.fulbrightonline.org>) or certain NSF programs like the Partnership for International Research and Education: Use-Inspired Research Challenges on Climate Change and Clean Energy (<https://bit.ly/42pfzGx>).

The Outcomes: Faculty Perspective

Overall, I feel that my international sabbatical was a success for me, my institution, and my global partners. From the stated sabbatical objectives, I developed the following research goals:

1. To explore strategies to lead an international conversation on humanizing undergraduate STEM teaching and learning environments

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2. To engage in research contributing to the larger understanding of humanized STEM education in an international context
3. To share my sabbatical experience with relevant academic communities

Goal 1. To lead an international conversation on humanizing undergraduate STEM education, I set an objective to launch a journal special issue on the topic. I secured co-guest editors from the University of Sydney and Monash University, and the *International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education (IJISME)* approved the proposal for September 2024. A second objective was to engage in interinstitutional events as an ambassador for humanized STEM teaching. I discovered an existing highly connected network of STEM education researchers that spans many Australian institutions. Through this network, in November 2023, I was invited to present at the University of Technology Sydney's Learning Lunchbox Series for their Department of Mathematics and Physical Sciences. I was also invited to present in October 2023 to the Science in Australia Gender Equity Committee. In addition, I participated in ten other events at multiple Australian institutions.

Goal 2. In support of engaging in humanized STEM research, I set an objective to form an international research team to explore the impact of a small-scale course redesign effort to implement culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in the discussion prompts in a general chemistry course. Two Australian faculty agreed to review the CRT implementation in the course redesign, one drawing on their expertise in equity and inclusion and the other on their expertise in chemistry education. That project is currently in the data collection phase. The second objective for this goal was to submit a funding proposal to launch a student-submission blog that would allow for public sharing of artifacts created in humanized STEM classrooms so that their efforts would not end at the gradebook, measuring the impact of this action on STEM identity and attitudes, STEM career ambitions, and a sense of personal social responsibility. This four-institution international proposal was submitted to the Spencer Foundation's Small Grant Program in December 2023.

Goal 3. In support of sharing my sabbatical experiences with relevant academic communities, I established an objective to share my experiences on forming international SoTL and DBER (discipline-based education research) collaborations. This editorial is currently in progress. The second objective was to share an editorial on my experiences engaging in an international sabbatical, which I am doing here. Finally, I set an objective to facilitate a roundtable discussion at a conference for planning for and engaging in an international SoTL/DBER research sabbatical. The proposal was submitted to the 2024 Lilly Asheville conference in November 2023.

Future work. In the future, I would like to use my newfound research network to prepare a narrative review article on humanizing STEM education within international contexts. To further engage the educational community regarding humanized STEM education, I would like to work with my new research network to craft an infographic for humanizing STEM education. Furthermore, I am curious about forming an international virtual research group for humanizing undergraduate STEM. I am optimistic that future as

yet unknown project collaborations will also come from continued engagement with my Australian research network.

Reflection. It was informative to witness the lived experiences of faculty in higher education at another institution and within the cultural context of another country. Although I am aware that the residential campuses in the United States tended to revert back to in-person teaching in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had not given much thought to this trend globally. It was interesting to learn of their experiences, as governments and institutions in Australia responded differently to the pandemic. For example, the University of Southern Queensland evaluated the conditions postpandemic and decided to place value and resources behind a high-quality in-person experience.

One of the notable challenges of my sabbatical was my lack of access to travel funds, which limited my networking opportunities. I was invited to attend a conference where multiple contacts in my new network would be, but without institutional funding, I was unable to go. In addition, all travel related to my sabbatical was paid out of pocket, without mileage or per diem that would typically accompany work-related travel. This resulted in notable personal expenses, but I planned the scope of my work to fit within my personal budget for the in-person meetings necessary for my sabbatical objectives, including attending research meetings, networking and professional development events, and in-person collaboration sessions.

This international sabbatical had a profound impact on my academic and personal growth. The achievement of the set research goals and related objectives demonstrates significant contributions to the field of humanized undergraduate STEM education. I worked to improve my networking skills, and I embraced leadership roles like serving as lead guest editor for the *IJISME* special issue. The international context also worked to develop my cultural literacy, giving me a broader understanding of higher education in other contexts, including differing values, roles, patterns, and perceptions.

Department Chair Perspective (Dr. Beverly Wood)

The first inquiry Emily made regarding a sabbatical brought to light the lack of a formal process or precedent on our campus. The university's *Faculty Handbook* outlined eligibility requirements, stipend, and obligations incurred following return from sabbatical. Application policies and procedures were left to the campuses, with the only firm statement being that "the proposed sabbatical activity must be designed to achieve one of the purposes stated in the opening paragraph." Five potential purposes for a sabbatical are given:

1. Enrichment of teaching
2. Work within the industry
3. Faculty exchange with other institutions
4. Creative work and research
5. Other programs of equal value

Crafting an acceptable sabbatical proposal to begin (from scratch) research collaborations in another country, however, was challenging. Making the case that it partially satisfied purposes 1, 3, and 4 to meet the "equal value" qualifier of the fifth purpose

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required conversations with our dean as well as revision of the draft proposal being reviewed. Expectations based on more typical sabbatical experiences at other universities—namely, publications and presentation of research completed during sabbaticals—softened over Emily’s detailed plan to engage with faculty she had not yet met.

It was a great pleasure to help navigate the vague process toward approval and make suggestions on the proposal drafts. I am unsurprised that she exceeded the expectations noted in her proposal. She has set a great precedent for other tenured faculty in our department, the college, and our campus. Now it is time for me to work with our Handbook Committee to codify the process and smooth the way for others.

Global Partner Perspective (Dr. Stephen George-Williams)

Networking, especially with international colleagues, is not easy to do. This is further compounded by relatively few education-focused staff having access to travel funds, particularly outside the United States and the NSF funding grants. As such, when Emily reached out to me asking to connect during her international sabbatical, this was a clear boon to us both. By having Emily attend our internal research group meetings and being able to sit with her in person and talk for extended periods of time, it was much easier to form a working relationship. In this particular case, it has resulted in an upcoming special issue in a well-known Australian journal, *IJISME*. Such an undertaking occurred only because Emily was able to connect while in Australia, underscoring the impact of such a trip. The only shame is that Emily was not able to attend our annual conference (ACSME) and connect with more people.

Conclusion

For faculty who are aiming for promotion to full professor, engaging in an international sabbatical can help establish an international research network that will increase name recognition and reach. Although international sabbaticals have additional challenges to consider, I am hopeful about the future of this opportunity for faculty to engage in collaboration while learning new skill sets and developing cultural competencies. ▲

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Orienting and Engaging New Faculty

Pamela MacRae, Robert "BJ" Kitchin, and Brenda McAleer

There is a substantial learning curve as new faculty come on board an academic institution, no matter how long they have been in academia and/or serving at other institutions. First-year faculty can benefit from personal, relational, and professional support (Riley 2017). As administrators, whether in the role of provost, dean, or department chair, it's important to consider the best ways to support new faculty to set them on a path to success. Developing a new faculty orientation program that follows a learner-centered model can help you create a dynamic experience that will foster support and retention (Whitney et al. 2016).

It's important to consider the best ways to support new faculty to set them on a path to success.

The ability of universities and colleges to support new faculty orientation programs differs significantly, and an individual institution's capacity to support such programs often comes down to funding availability. This results in some institutions not being able to provide course releases to dedicate the much-needed time to orient new faculty. Recent feedback from colleagues at other institutions that are unable to provide dedicated time for orientation have commented that new faculty attendance and engagement are sparse in orientation programming when not required and when time is not allotted through a course release. This can be appreciated, as we know that all new faculty face what we compassionately refer to as the wall of prep, as new faculty adjust to new learning management systems and organizing lectures and labs, all while navigating new academic policies, governance structures, and institutional organization.

Some colleagues have also shared that given the turnover in administration and staff, they are often left in the position of building a new program or augmenting an outdated one and that new faculty orientations often do not really reach beyond the department. Conversely, others have provided examples of robust orientation programs with extensive mentor programs that also include compensation and/or release time for the mentors. Moreover, some institutions have the funding to support all new faculty attending a teaching excellence conference or other professional development opportunity within their first academic year; this was one author's

experience at their first full-time teaching position at a community college.

This discussion will explore one university's approach to delivering a new faculty orientation program that aims to build community, explore institutional resources, provide learning resources, build trust, and establish positive communication pathways between faculty and administration from the beginning.

New Faculty Orientation

The University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) is the third largest public university in Maine. In addition to its main campus in the state's capital, UMA also serves students at its campus in Bangor (UMA Bangor) and through UMA centers around the state and is part of the University of Maine System. Although faculty orientation programs differ among universities in the system, this discussion focuses on the institution's approach to new faculty orientation and offers suggestions for engaging new faculty in a multi-campus university.

During the first semester of employment, all new full-time faculty are required to participate in the New Faculty Orientation Program. The purpose of the program is to orient new faculty to the greater University of Maine at Augusta community. Orientation topics are covered over a fourteen-week period during the fall semester. Guest speakers are brought in from across the campus, including but not limited to information technology, dean of students office, registrar's office, academic dean and provost offices, Faculty Senate, union and committee representatives, academic operations, Faculty Development Center, institutional research, financial aid, enrollment, and admissions and advising offices. These sessions typically run for two and a half hours a week, once a week, for fourteen weeks. The New Faculty Orientation Program comes with one course release for the fall of the new faculty's first semester. This course release is provided no matter the experience level of the new faculty and is independent of whether or not the individual has taught with the institution previously (e.g., as an adjunct faculty member).

Resources and topics provided include but are not limited to the following:

- Grant opportunities

- Academic forms (substitutions, waivers, teaching assistants, independent studies)
- Professional development requests
- Faculty handbook
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council
- Instructions and timeline for reappointment and promotion

Our new faculty orientation is delivered by distance synchronously; however, it is important to note that if you are at a multi-campus institution or one that primarily runs asynchronously with numerous remote faculty, a fully asynchronous online format for a new faculty orientation can be an effective delivery method as well (Moore 2020).

The UMA New Faculty Orientation Program is supplemented by the assignment of a mentor by the college deans in collaboration with the provost. This should not be mistaken for a career mentor, who should really be selected by the faculty as a longer-term adviser and mentor. Rather, this mentor is primarily to support new faculty as they build their portfolio toward tenure and a colleague who would reasonably support the annual reappointment application documents completion. Each faculty is assigned a faculty mentor from outside their department, school, or college. The intent is to provide a connection to someone who will not serve on their peer review committee so that they can reach out to this mentor with questions, support, and the like without any concerns of impact on their review. The provost's office connects the mentees with the mentors and offers to buy them lunch but originally makes the connection by organizing an evening event on campus or, at times, at the president's home. We often hear positive feedback about this initial reception from new faculty and mentors, which emphasizes the importance of establishing a connection and building community from the outset. The intention of the mentor relationship is that they stay connected for at least the first academic year, but often this connection is longer lasting and is the beginning step in connecting new faculty to the university and not just to their department.

Faculty Development

A critical piece that every university and college should have is a Center for Teaching Excellence. At UMA we have a robust Faculty Development Center (FDC), staffed with instructional technologists, learning experience designers (instructional designers), academic logistic support, and others. When new faculty are hired and offer letters are signed, the Faculty Development Center reaches out and begins a connection right away. New faculty are notified of upcoming presemester workshops, although not required, and introduced to all the opportunities the FDC has to offer (see <https://mycampus.maine.edu/web/uc-faculty-portal/home>). We also offer the Learning, Experience, and Design course to support faculty in gaining a deeper understanding of multiple aspects of course design, including a variety of learning theories, universal design, accessibility, and authentic learning experiences and assessments. This course has been widely lauded as an invaluable resource, especially by those faculty who do not have as much experience with

online teaching and a variety of learning management systems. Throughout the academic year, the FDC actively seeks input from faculty about their professional interests and goals. This feedback is essential in shaping and customizing professional development programs to ensure that they are directly aligned with the evolving needs and aspirations of faculty.

The FDC is a one-stop shop for faculty and staff seeking assistance virtually or in person with distance teaching, student engagement at a distance, and implementation or use of educational technology. They are available to answer questions on technology in teaching, troubleshoot Brightspace or Kaltura, explore tech tools to suit faculty needs, and help them align the design of their online learning assets to their teaching goals. The FDC services offered are listed next and can be delivered in the following formats: virtual live support, on-campus live support, appointments, tickets, and chats:

- First things first: Get to know your tools
- Technology and pedagogical training and support
- Personalized consulting on curricular and instructional design
- Content development and support
- Course design analysis

Each year the UMA FDC leads a Teaching Institute for all faculty and staff across the state system of universities. These institutes occur each spring and are often a hybrid experience, combining online asynchronous, face-to-face, and online synchronous learning experiences for faculty and staff, with professional development content available on demand throughout the year. The daylong retreat each spring includes options for lodging, and meals are included. In addition, the FDC puts on monthly seminars and workshops to support faculty.

Effective onboarding of faculty is crucial, as it not only informs them about the range of services available through the university's Faculty Development Center (or Center for Teaching Excellence, as it may be called at other institutions) but also guides them on how to use these resources effectively. This comprehensive orientation helps faculty understand the rationale behind each resource, empowering them to integrate these tools and methodologies into their teaching and course design for improved educational outcomes and student engagement.

Course Design

Full- and part-time faculty are also invited to apply for a distance course development grant when they seek support to design or redesign and develop an innovative new distance course. The grant provides either course release time or a stipend as well as intensive support from a learning experience designer with the FDC and the full academic services team, per the course's goals. The application includes a detailed list of instructions for the application and clearly articulates the expectations of the faculty and the FDC in this collaborative process. Linking faculty to instructional designers in the first semester is imperative with supporting faculty as they develop new classes and build their courses to meet specific program and course learning outcomes. These learning experience

designers (instructional designers) specialize in assessment, and this collaboration between faculty and staff is invaluable, especially for online classes. A resource like this can offer a tremendous amount of support for a new faculty member, as it provides the opportunity for time and/or compensation for additional work to develop distance-based courses.

Conclusion

The development and delivery of new faculty orientation programs may fall on the department chair, dean, or provost. No matter who is organizing the work, the important thing is that it is provided and budgeted appropriately, even when funds are tight. As you consider an approach to supporting new faculty, we highly encourage all administrators to think about investing in their new faculty by providing some, if not all, of the services, opportunities, and resources mentioned here. Additional organizations that can support this work are the National Center for Faculty Development (www.ncfdd.org), the American Conference of Academic Deans (<https://acad.org>), the Council of Independent Colleges (www.cic.edu/programs#), and the National Institute for Staff and Organization Development Teaching and Leadership Excellence Conference (www.nisod.org/face-to-face/conference) as well as the resources by Phillips and Dennison (2015) and Ko and Zhadko (2022). ▲

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What I Did over the Summer Break: Chair Edition

Gordon B. Schmidt and C. Allen Gorman

For department chairs, summer tends to be a good time to tie up loose ends, look ahead to future semesters, catch up on long-neglected research and scholarly activity, and engage in needed self-care. College campuses are typically less crowded during the summer, with fewer classes, fewer students in the hallways, and nine-month faculty on hiatus for the break. Having collectively been department chairs for several years, we have accumulated several tips and strategies that we believe can help those new to the position (Chu 2019) as well as established chairs who may be looking to rejuvenate and retool during the downtime of summer.

Note, of course, that your own context and needs should be your guide. We aren’t looking to give any of you mandatory summer homework, and the particular times of summer that will be busy or not for a specific chair may vary. But we do agree with Buller (2011) that small steps and acts as a department chair can be helpful and build up over time. So pull up a beach chair and a cold beverage and read some of our ideas that might help you to get ahead for the next school year or further into the future.

After Academic Year Reflection

During the academic year, there is often lots to do and little time to reflect. The summer being typically calmer gives a department chair some time to reflect on the year, its successes, its failures, and what could be done differently. This kind of reflection can also reveal skills to learn or processes that need to be built or refined for greater future success. Think back on a few major happenings during the school year and reflect on what worked and what did not.

One reflection technique that we like to use is the after-action review or report. In this structured review, a person or group considers for a past event what was expected to happen, what actually ended up happening, what was successful, and what could be improved for the future (Salem-Schatz et al. 2010). In this way, even an event that went poorly can be used to learn lessons and so do better when a similar situation arises again.

With thoughtful reflection, a chair may be able to distinguish a situation that had a positive result due to a good process or just good luck. For example, one of us had an event that went well, but when it repeated the next year, it was a lot more chaotic and had more hiccups. With a little more reflection, it would have been

realized that the depth of understanding of what made the event successful was superficial. Thus, warning signs of trouble were missed the next time it happened. Thoughtful reflection helps us to understand when we've been lucky or unlucky and when we've actually done the right thing.

Plan for the Next Academic Year

Reflection is important, but just as important is forward planning. If we don't think toward the future, we will be stuck in the good and bad of the status quo. The summer offers some time to think about where your unit can go. What are your goals for the next school year? For the next five years? What are the short-term and long-term priorities for your department?

This can be a time to sketch out what is needed to reach those goals in terms of new skills, resources, or people. Doing your own SWOT or similar analysis for your programs and faculty can help to determine what goals are reasonable, what needs more work, and which goals to let go. As an example, one of us developed a strategic plan for the department at their previous institution in collaboration with the faculty, and each year the faculty would revisit the goals and priorities. This review would determine whether they had met each goal and which goals needed to be refined or abandoned. Summer is usually a good time to revisit the department's strategic plan and start gathering data/metrics that are relevant to the goals established for each year.

Summer is the time to brush up on your research skills and commit to maintaining your scholarship.

Talking to your own boss is also helpful. Does your boss have any feedback on how they think your department fared the previous year? What do they see as crucial for the coming year? What are their priorities for the next year, and how do your department's goals align with the college's/school's goals? Is the department's strategic plan still in alignment with that of the college/school? Deans are typically in planning mode over the summer as well, so this is a great time to coordinate strategies and goals. Being forward-thinking helps us to be intentional in what we do.

Catch Up on Research and Scholarly Activity

Because summer is typically much quieter and less hectic than the fall or spring semesters, this makes it a great time to catch up on research projects that have been left by the wayside while you've been putting out fires during the school year. The quiet of summer is a good time to engage in much-needed deep work (Newport 2016), which has been identified as increasingly important for researching, developing, and producing original and creative content. It is very easy to let your scholarship and research productivity slip as a department chair, given the many distractions and the time and cognitive demands of trivial activities such as email and meetings.

This can be disastrous for associate professors who still want to achieve the rank of full professor, which can be a barrier to entry

for those wishing to climb the academic ladder to dean or other high-ranking positions. Neglecting research for long periods can also be demotivating to faculty who may have started their academic careers as highly engaged and productive scholars in the research process. Perhaps you've been mulling over a book idea, or maybe you have some data that you collected that you haven't had time to write up, or maybe you would like to attend some workshops to catch up on the latest and greatest research methods in your field (and for many of us, all of the above to various degrees). Summer is the time to brush up on your research skills and commit to maintaining your scholarship.

Prioritize Yourself

Although we have given several suggestions that are good for your job and department, it is also important to take the time to prioritize yourself. Self-care is critical for everyone but especially for those in demanding jobs like department chair. If we enter the summer run down and don't get any time to recover, we will not operate at full strength. It is also a disservice to everyone if you are too worn out for both your job and your life. Summer is one of the few times as a department chair that you might have time for vacation or some spa days. What hobbies have you been putting off? Are there opportunities to reconnect with family and friends? How about the exercise that you said you would get back into for your New Year's resolution? Also, let your faculty and staff know that you are taking some time away from the office for yourself, and encourage them to do the same. It's important for us to model the behavior that we promote, so turn off your email and let people know that you are taking much-needed time away for recovery. Trust us, the work will still be there when you get back!

Conclusion

These are just a few of our ideas for ways you can use your time wisely during the summer. What do you do? We'd be happy to hear your own tips for passing the summer days. You can find us on the beach (or on LinkedIn) and tell us your summer tips! ▲

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SPECIAL FOCUS: CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION

The Impossible Meeting: Can a Chair Table Terrorism?

Leah P. Hollis

During the Thanksgiving 2023 holiday, academics and Americans alike enjoyed a much-needed respite from our harried lives. However, in our increasingly interconnected global society, not everyone enjoyed a peaceful week. I am referring to the impact of the Hamas terrorist group that attacked the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023. According to ABC News, Hamas murdered more than 1,200 people and injured another 6,900 (Frayer 2023). An additional 200 to 250 people were taken hostage. To be clear, El Deeb (2023) wrote, “The group [Hamas] was founded in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, [and] has vowed to annihilate Israel and has been responsible for many suicide bombings and other deadly attacks on civilians and Israeli soldiers. The U.S. State Department has designated Hamas a terrorist group in 1997. The European Union and other Western countries also consider it a terrorist organization.”

Faculty and academics are continuously left contemplating how to react or respond to a wartime crisis that envelopes campus colleagues and students.

The seven-day cease-fire in late November 2023 led to the release of hostage Abigail Edan. She is a beautiful, bright-eyed little Jewish girl who saw her mother murdered and then fled to her father, who was gunned down while she was in his arms. According to news reports, she crawled out from under his bloody body and ran to a house, only to be among those taken hostage.

Abigail’s horrendous story and those of others taken hostage are juxtaposed with hate crimes against both Palestinians and Jews in the United States. Fall break ended with three Palestinian twenty-year-old men, Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdel Hamid, and Tahseen Ahmed, being gunned down in an apparent hate crime just outside the University of Vermont. They were simply taking a quiet walk while donning a keffiyeh, the traditional Middle Eastern black-and-white checkered scarf.

Amid generational trauma that affects the Jewish and Palestinian communities, academic communities scramble to offer a response. With powerful donors pulling support from Harvard University and The University of Pennsylvania because they claim universities are tiptoeing through their institutional response to Hamas, academics from adjuncts to associate provosts generally feel they must walk a tightrope in conversations about the October terrorist attacks that instigated the Israel–Hamas War (Meyersohn 2023).

On campus, academics are faced with navigating Israeli and Palestinian perspectives. The post–World War II 1948 creation of Israel is at the inception of such multiple realities, with the Arabs rejecting the two-state solution. A war ensued as Jews were motivated by their history in which six million Jews were slaughtered during

the Holocaust. The Arabs felt the region, formerly of the Ottoman Empire, should be Arab controlled (Stone 2019). I recognize this is an oversimplification of history, yet the question remains: How can deans and department chairs respond when the tides of generational discord wash upon their desks?

How can deans and department chairs respond when the tides of generational discord wash upon their desks?

My colleague, Dr. Javier Casado Pérez, and I grappled with the history and the effect on contemporary university services. We noted that painful brutality continues to hurt both Palestinians and Israelis, as witnessed in the news about anti-Semitic and anti-Palestinian strife simultaneously manifesting stress, anxiety, and distrust among all communities involved. We also noted that within a divisive history of Jewish and Arab relations—now more than a century old—the spiraling generational trauma that preceded Israel and the continuous unrest has only crystallized Middle Eastern conflict. Multiple realities exist simultaneously from varied perspectives, yet we still strive to quell anxieties for all parties on our campuses to coexist peacefully and respectfully. The heightened urgency was witnessed on national television when Congress grilled Presidents Claudine Gay, Sally Kornbluth, and Liz Magill, respectively, of Harvard, MIT, and Penn, asking them to defend intuitional responses to the Israel–Hamas War.

The historical Israeli/Palestinian conflict has precipitated seventeen wars, starting with the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, inclusive of the 1967 Six-Day War, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and the 1982 Lebanon War, to name a few (Bregman 2016). Reasonably, if the Israeli/Palestinian strife has not been resolved in over a century, one could recognize that faculty meetings or mission statements will not provide sufficient balm to soothe these generational wounds. Nonetheless, the cry for an institutional response keeps coming. In addition, various faculty, regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, may not feel safe in addressing the Middle East wars in the context of their work lives. Nevertheless, students may bring their concerns to class, expecting the professor to adopt a side in an extensive generational problem with no apparent resolution. Hence, academics still must contend with the paradox found in an immovable object (the Israeli position) facing an unstoppable force (the Palestinian position).

Within this historic conflict-filled milieu, department chairs might serve themselves well to keep the following in mind:

- Try to learn the breadth of the historical problem regarding Israel and Palestine relations, which means understanding the dynamics before the 1948 creation of Israel.
- Understand that Hamas is a recognized terrorist group and not representative of all Palestinians.
- Recognize the generational trauma for all parties and that faculty meetings or other forums likely will not resolve decades of trauma but instead might inflame sensitivities.
- Respect multiple faculty positions if one moves forward to discuss the October 7 terrorist attack and surrounding discord at a faculty meeting, and be braced for passionate arguments from some while others disengage to protect themselves.
- Junior faculty and graduate students are the most vulnerable in such controversial discussions. Asking these groups to engage in this conversation while senior faculty who control tenure, promotion, and dissertation defenses are present may create a scenario that will punish these more vulnerable academic colleagues.
- Consider restorative processes for those parties seeking validation for their specific position. But note that although restorative processes may provide relief, such processes are time-consuming and expensive.
- Offer safe spaces outside of formal meetings for all parties as a place to emote and find support. Such spaces should have professionals trained in trauma management.
- Take a quiet pause or time for reflection after the most recent incident. Lapsed time between the inciting incident and the next meeting often can help people recenter themselves.
- Try to depersonalize vitriolic topics. Heated discussions can put the chair leading the meeting on the defense. Allow it to pass to avoid further escalation.
- Be careful of statements on controversial topics or of asking colleagues to sign petitions in support. Note again that junior faculty can be highlighted and remain among the most vulnerable.
- Amid discussing the Middle East, be clear about one's own position personally and remain grounded as a leader while managing this very contentious topic should it arise.

I have served higher education for over thirty years, with administrative positions in academic affairs, student affairs, and athletics, coupled with earning tenure through research that examines power and organizational behavior in higher education. I see that regardless of institutional type, we are all about advancing thoughtful and critically engaged students at all levels. In addition, I recognize the risk I take in writing this piece because there are understandably inconsolable parties on all sides, though I rebuke the sexual assault and inhumane atrocities perpetrated by Hamas against Jewish women. With genuine concerns about the human condition, I join colleagues in higher education to focus on humanitarian efforts to see a path in supporting all students.

In our discussion that reasonably could not solve the century-old Middle East conflict, Dr. Casado Pérez and I agreed that the side of humanity is a viable way forward. Consider bringing

together the families of Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdel Hamid, and Tahseen Ahmed with Abigail's family to discuss the atrocities that they all have endured. Is Abigail's life and that of her fallen parents as significant as the lives of Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdel Hamid, and Tahseen Ahmed? The audacity of such a question belies humanity, with the potential assumption that one group is worth more than another. Further still, the audacity coexists with the right of any group to defend itself against violence and oppression. The ongoing US civil rights history continuously confirms those rights. Amid such tensions, leaning into humanitarian positions instead of politically divisive positions may provide safe passage in navigating tense meetings. Our goal should always be to err on the side of students' emotional and psychological safety, despite the enduring threats to such in our global society. ▲

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The Department Chair Leadership Podcast

Created and hosted by Chris Jochum, chair of the Department of Teacher Education at Fort Hays State University

Are you serving as a department chair or in a related leadership position in higher education? Do you want to improve your organization and the professional lives of those you serve by becoming a better leader? If so, this podcast is for you. Based upon the notion that leadership is a people business and can be defined as influence through service, relationships, courage, and character, this podcast will look at all aspects of chair leadership, which includes guests from inside and outside of higher education. Take some time to improve those you serve by improving yourself as a leader.

Access the episodes on Apple Podcasts: <https://apple.co/47GwZPy>.

LAWSUITS AND RULINGS

Title IX

Case: *Charlton-Perkins v. University of Cincinnati, et al.*, No. 21-3840 (6th Cir. 06/03/22)

Ruling: The US Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, reinstated a claim in a suit against the University of Cincinnati.

Significance: A rejected job applicant's suit claiming a violation of Title IX because a hiring search was canceled to avoid hiring him didn't require somebody else being hired.

Summary: In 2017, a host of candidates applied for a posted opening for an assistant professor at UC. After a four-member search committee winnowed the list down to the plaintiff and eight other candidates, one committee member disclosed her collaborations with the plaintiff on various projects over the years. However, the disclosure didn't result in her being removed from the committee or in the plaintiff being stricken from the list.

The search committee issued invitations for on-campus interviews to the plaintiff, another male, and two females. After the interviews, the plaintiff was rated the favorite by the search committee pursuant to a vote of 3 to 1.

In February 2018, the department chair told the committee that the dean had decided UC would hire two assistant professors and that the committee should "focus on the women candidates first."

The search committee member who knew the plaintiff told the department chair that putting two lower-ranked candidates up first was "plain discrimination." Nobody was hired because the dean canceled the hiring search a week later.

The plaintiff filed a suit asserting a failure to hire because of gender discrimination in violation of Title IX, and UC filed a motion to dismiss, arguing that nobody was selected. The trial court judge dismissed the claim, and the plaintiff filed an appeal. The appellate court reinstated the claim, ruling that the plaintiff was required to allege that somebody else was hired. ▲

Adult Learner

Case: *Astarae v. Villanova University*, No. 20-1522 (E.D. Pa. 12/18/20)

Ruling: The US District Court, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, refused to dismiss a breach-of-contract claim against Villanova University.

Significance: The relationship between a private educational institution and an enrolled student is usually considered to be contractual in nature, and the terms of the "contract" are contained in the written guidelines, policies, and procedures given to the student.

Summary: The plaintiff was an Iranian. When he was a Villanova doctoral student, the department chair was a white American female.

When the plaintiff failed his oral examination in April 2019, the plaintiff's advisor allegedly told him a week later that there wouldn't be a second chance because the department chair disliked Iranian men.

The plaintiff filed a suit seeking reinstatement after he was dismissed, and one of his claims was a breach of the contract created by the student handbook because Villanova allowed the department chair to overrule the decision about retaking the oral exam and refused to allow him a second chance. Villanova filed a motion to dismiss.

The district court judge said that Pennsylvania law defined the relationship between a private educational institution and an enrolled student as contractual in nature, and the terms of the "contract" were contained in the written guidelines, policies, and procedures given to the student.

He also said that the relevant handbook language stated that "the examining committee will award the grade of Pass or Fail. If the student receives a grade of Fail, the Committee may, at the discretion of the Advisor, grant the student a second opportunity to take the Comprehensive Examination."

The judge decided that the plaintiff had successfully stated a claim of breach of contract because the quoted handbook language vested the advisor with the sole discretion to allow a second chance. Although he dismissed other portions of the suit, the judge allowed the student handbook breach contract claim to proceed. ▲

Title VII

Case: *Liu v. Georgetown University*, No. 22-157 (D. D.C. 07/06/22)

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

Significance: A plaintiff claiming a violation of Title VII must allege that he is a member of a protected class, that he suffered an adverse employment action, and that the unfavorable action gave rise to an inference of discrimination. Employment actions may give rise to Title VII liability where they adversely impact the employee's potential for career advancement.

Summary: Even though he spoke English poorly, the plaintiff, a native of China, was hired as a Georgetown laboratory research specialist in 2017. A couple of years later, the lab director assigned another researcher to present the plaintiff's work at an international professional conference because he wasn't fluent in English.

After the plaintiff was fired not long after complaining about the lab director's decision, he filed a suit claiming a violation of Title VII because allowing someone else to present his work was national origin discrimination and because the real reason for being fired was complaining about it.

Georgetown filed a motion to dismiss, arguing that the allegations didn't depict the requisite adverse employment action.

However, the district court judge refused to dismiss the claim, ruling that a decision adversely impacting an employee's potential for career advancement was an adverse employment action.

The judge refused to dismiss the claim. ▲

National Origin Discrimination

Case: *Mahdy v. Morgan State University*, No. SAG-20-2715 (D. Md. 09/28/23)

Ruling: The US District Court, District of Maryland, dismissed a claim in a suit against Morgan State University.

Significance: A professor who files a suit claiming illegal retaliation must prove that she engaged in an activity protected by some law, that she suffered an adverse employment action, and that there was a causal connection between the protected activity and the adverse action. The term adverse employment action means something likely to dissuade a reasonable worker from making or supporting a discrimination charge.

Summary: The plaintiff was an MSU professor from Egypt who filed a suit claiming national origin discrimination. One of her claims was illegal retaliation because of a harassment and abuse complaint she had made against the department chair.

According to the plaintiff, the department chair committed two retaliatory events after she reported him. The first incident happened in October 2018, when the plaintiff sent an email telling the department chair to cease all contact with her.

Part of the chair's response was to remove her from the departmental email chain. According to the plaintiff, the removal caused her to miss at least one department-wide vote before she was reinstated to the email chain.

The second event occurred in February 2019 when the department chair removed her from teaching a master's-level class.

During the litigation, the department chair testified that the removal happened because the plaintiff said the course depressed her and that another graduate-level course was assigned to her in 2020.

MSU filed a motion for summary judgment. The district court judge dismissed the claim.

She first ruled there wasn't any proof suggesting the plaintiff had been harmed by the temporary removal from the email chain because she never bothered to check what she might have missed.

She also held that the removal from teaching a graduate course couldn't support the plaintiff's claim because she hadn't contested the department chair's testimony about being depressed and she had been assigned to teach another graduate course. ▲

Disability

Case: *Ponzoli v. Technical College System of Georgia*, No. 3:22-cv-50 (M.D. Ga. 10/23/23)

Ruling: The US District Court, Middle District of Georgia, dismissed a claim in a suit against the Technical College System of Georgia.

Significance: A former employee claiming a failure to accommodate her disability in violation of the Rehabilitation Act must show that she has a disability within the meaning of the statute, that she is a qualified individual, and that the employer failed to accommodate her disability. However, the employer doesn't have a duty to provide an accommodation until the employee makes a specific demand for an accommodation and demonstrates the reasonableness of the requested modification.

Summary: The plaintiff, who wore hearing aids because of hearing loss in both ears, became the program chair of the TCSG culinary arts department in 2017.

When she was told in early February 2020 to meet with several administrators about her behavior, the plaintiff said she needed some accommodations for the meeting because she couldn't hear spoken words easily.

She asked for closed captions, a teletypewriter, and a normal-hearing person to be present to assist her. The administrators didn't grant her requests, but they did take steps during the meeting to compensate for her hearing loss by removing their COVID masks, asking her to speak up if she had trouble hearing the conversation, and offering to provide an alternative form of communication upon request.

The plaintiff was eventually fired for the stated reason of a failure to improve her behavior. She then filed a suit, and one of her claims was a failure to adequately accommodate her disability because the administrators didn't provide any of her requested accommodations at the February 2020 meeting.

TCSG filed a motion for summary judgment. The district court judge dismissed the claim even though the plaintiff didn't get her preferred accommodations after an audio recording of the meeting convinced him she had meaningfully participated in the conversation and vociferously advocated for herself. ▲

Title VII

Case: *Ogbonna-McGruder v. Austin Peay State University*, No. 3:21-cv-005 (M.D. Tenn. 05/19/23)

Ruling: The US District Court, Middle District of Tennessee, dismissed a claim in a suit against Austin Peay State University.

Significance: Title VII prohibits an employer from discriminating against any employee who files a racial discrimination charge. However, a plaintiff asserting retaliation in violation of the statute must allege facts depicting an adverse employment action, which is something likely to dissuade a reasonable worker from making or supporting a discrimination charge. A court evaluating whether alleged actions amounted to actionable retaliation must consider the issues of frequency and severity. But the court must also consider whether they were physically threatening and unreasonably interfered with the employee's work performance.

Summary: The plaintiff was a Black APSU college professor who filed a suit claiming retaliation in violation of Title VII. According to the plaintiff, her racial discrimination complaints resulted in being told to move to a basement office, excluded from participating in a grant proposal, and denied courses she had been teaching for years. APSU filed a motion to dismiss.

The district court judge said a plaintiff asserting retaliation in violation of the statute must allege facts depicting an adverse employment action, which meant something done by the employer likely to have dissuaded a reasonable worker from making or supporting a discrimination charge. He granted the motion and dismissed the claim after ruling the plaintiff's alleged incidents weren't sufficiently severe. ▲

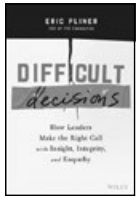
BOOK REVIEWS

Difficult Decisions: How Leaders Make the Right Call with Insight, Integrity, and Empathy

Eric Pliner

Wiley, 2022

224 pp., \$30.00



Difficult Decisions: How Leaders Make the Right Call with Insight, Integrity, and Empathy by Eric Pliner, a leadership consultant and CEO of YSC Consulting, targets organizational leaders in general and not specifically academic leadership. However,

this text does provide insight into making difficult decisions, regardless of context, which could be useful for department chairs and academic leaders.

Pliner structures this seven-chapter book primarily around a model created to guide leaders when making difficult decisions. The facets of this model include a deep understanding of personal morality (chapter 3), contextual ethics (chapter 4), and role responsibilities (chapter 5). Pliner reviews morality, ethics, and role responsibilities individually but then also explores how each of these forces work together and influence one another (chapter 6). Each chapter includes one (or two) case studies that are detailed and based on real-life instances where organizational leaders have had to make difficult decisions. These case studies are useful for exploring the concepts laid out in each chapter, but the author neglects to provide much guidance in interpreting the case studies. Each chapter also ends with a section that distills and identifies the chapter's key points.

Pliner grounds this book on a discussion of morality (chapter 3). He encourages leaders to explore and understand their own views on what is moral and what is not, which will help guide them when making difficult decisions. This is something he suggests many leaders neglect to do, and to their own detriment. Pliner cautions against both moral absolutism and moral relativism, yet in pushing leaders to have a clear understanding of their moral stances, he seems to lean a bit toward moral absolutism. One of the most valuable lessons Pliner shares regarding morality (and a lesson he also shares elsewhere in the text) is that a leader must be able to clearly convey their own moral stance.

In Pliner's discussion of ethics (chapter 4), he attempts to differentiate between morality and ethics, which is no small task. He explores what ethics is, and isn't, and how ethics is tied to context. He explains how ethics is about shared responsibility but is not connected to popularity. Ethics, according to Pliner, is not uniform and changes over time. Ethics, however, has exceptions and can sometimes be waived. Unfortunately, this brief but far-reaching discussion may leave the reader more confused than enlightened. The strong point in this chapter is Pliner's connection between ethics

and judgment. As he does throughout the book, Pliner emphasizes that leaders must be highly cognizant and thoughtful of the ethics relevant to their positions, and leaders need to be skilled in articulating how the difficult decisions they make are in alignment with (or not in alignment with) the relevant ethical standards.

The third and final facet of Pliner's model for making difficult decisions is for leaders to understand their role responsibilities (chapter 5). Though not addressed by Pliner, understanding your role can be one of the most difficult and fluid aspects of being a department chair. Pliner's most useful contributions in this chapter are his thoughts on understanding who a leader's stakeholders are, what the leader's socioemotional roles should be with each group of stakeholders, and which identities a leader should be expressing to these various groups of stakeholders. Pliner suggests that a greater understanding of a leader's role responsibilities combined with a deep understanding of personal moral views and complete awareness of the contextual ethics will create leaders who are better able to make difficult decisions.

Chapter 7 seems to be a catchall of the author's thoughts on leadership that are not directly connected to the model presented in the rest of the text. Half the chapter presents a ten-step process for making difficult decisions that would be useful for any department chair (yet, interestingly, this process does not address morals, ethics, or role responsibilities). The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to various leadership topics, including delegating, making clear your expectations when involving others in the decision-making process, and the importance of practice and experience in making difficult decisions. Again, these are important bits of advice, yet they have very little to do with what is discussed in the rest of the book.

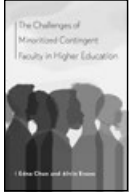
Throughout the text, Pliner asks the reader to engage in significant amounts of introspection, and he provides some exercises to assist the reader in doing this. The benefits of engaging in these exercises is clear, but it is hard to envision a busy department chair taking the time and mental effort necessary to complete them. It seems like these tasks would be better suited to a leadership seminar where attendees would have set aside the time necessary to complete them. And, considering Pliner's experience as a leadership consultant, it may be that these exercises were drawn from just such a seminar.

Overall, this book can be read quickly and provides some insights into and wisdom about making difficult decisions. However, I feel it provides more confusion at times than clarity, and department chairs seeking insight into making difficult decisions would be advised to look elsewhere. ▲

Reviewed by **Jeff Youngquist**, associate professor in the Department of Communication, Journalism, and Public Relationships at Oakland University. Email: youngqui@oakland.edu

The Challenges of Minoritized Contingent Faculty in Higher Education

Edna Chun and Alvin Evans
 Purdue University Press, 2023
 218 pp., \$24.99



Edna Chun and Alvin Evans, two powerful and cogent voices in higher education, have written a compelling and timely book, *The Challenges of Minoritized Contingent Faculty in Higher Education*. It consists of six tightly organized chapters, with each logically leading to the next by providing context and first-person narratives that capture the reader's interest. The book is well researched and well written and should serve as a framework that addresses the need for the development of enhanced contingent faculty working conditions. From this vantage point, chapter 6 includes practical strategies that colleges and universities can use to address the many issues raised in the book.

Chun and Evans interviewed numerous contingent faculty to obtain a real-time assessment of the many day-to-day challenges faced by these faculty. The introduction presents a sound overview of the current state of contingent faculty working conditions. The tenuous employment conditions of contingent faculty are discussed in light of the two-tiered faculty structure that currently exists throughout colleges and universities. The lack of employment security of contingent faculty is heightened by poor pay; absence of benefits; and a struggle for acceptance, recognition, and career stability. Importantly, the book highlights how the intersectionality of minoritized social identities, including race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, class, and religion, can compound and intensify experiences of marginalization and exclusion for contingent faculty.

Chapter 1 presents an analysis of how and why the educational situation has morphed so persistently that the stability of tenured faculty employment is in danger. This imbalance has led to overreliance on contingent faculty as a less costly alternative for teaching students.

Chapter 2 presents extensive data tables that clearly identify major demographic trends in the relentless growth of contingent faculty coupled with the erosion of tenure-line positions.

Chapter 3 includes compelling and often heartbreaking interviews as shared by marginalized contingent faculty. The interviews cast a spotlight on the precarious working conditions of these faculty in terms of low pay, lack of health insurance, uncertain employment conditions, heavy workloads, differential treatment, and much more. I have also witnessed the pressure contingent faculty can face to “reward” students with higher grades to help ensure positive student evaluations to keep their position(s).

Chapter 4 focuses on resilient coping strategies of minoritized contingent faculty such as identifying organizational sponsorship and finding a support system (sponsor or mentor) within the institution. Personal narratives are sprinkled throughout this chapter.

Chapter 5 discusses how to navigate the distance between tenured and contingent faculty ranks within the dominant hierarchy present in institutions of higher education. The authors cite laws in Florida and Texas that have had a chilling effect on faculty governance and that undermine the basic tenets of higher education. After recognizing the increasing role of state officials impinging on the functions of public higher education, including pushback against diversity, equity, and inclusion, Chun and Evans offer specific signs of hope regarding a recalibration of the contingent faculty reward strategy: monetary compensation as well as nonfinancial rewards (e.g., fringe benefits, professional advancement, career development, and work-life balance).

Chapter 6 offers pragmatic recommendations for enhancing contingent faculty working conditions. Contingent faculty are enormously important in helping realize the educational mission of universities and colleges. It is clear that contingent faculty will continue to play a leading role in student educational development given the prevailing prioritization of resources by decision-makers, budgetary constraints, and administrative preferences for flexibility and workforce control that have led to the progressive erosion of tenure-line positions.

The book concludes with specific concrete recommendations that not only bring to light the work and career perspectives of minoritized contingent faculty but also serve as a clarion call to administrators and faculty for the need to strengthen working conditions and build more inclusive cultures. This excellent book should be read by all institutional leaders, administrators, chairs, professors, students, and parents who are interested in understanding and addressing the many challenges of minoritized contingent faculty. A significant strength of this excellent book is that it does more than merely present the challenges faced by contingent faculty—it offers practical solutions to these challenges. ▲

Reviewed by **Robert E. Cipriano**, a former chair and professor emeritus of recreation and leisure studies at Southern Connecticut State University. Email: ciprianor1@southernct.edu

Resource Handbook for Academic Deans: The Essential Guide for College and University Leaders, Fourth Edition

Andrew Adams, Editor
 Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023
 416 pp., \$79.95



The fourth edition of *Resource Handbook for Academic Deans: The Essential Guide for College and University Leaders*, edited by Andrew Adams, provides a broad overview of the many situations academic leaders will encounter. It is divided into seven sections with short chapters authored by forty-five leaders who share their insights and experiences. For a leader new

to the role of dean, this book offers useful ideas to guide them as they assume the position. For seasoned leaders who may have read other books and attended leadership training and conferences, it may be of less value.

Part 1, *Leadership Insights*, advises building trust and respect, especially with your superior as well as with your faculty and staff; taking care of yourself to have the resilience to do the job well; and being the kind of dean for whom you would like to work. Further, it suggests developing a purposeful leadership style.

Next, part 2, *Leadership and National Contexts*, connects directly with current work on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Deans are significantly involved in contributing to the diverse, equitable, and inclusive focus of their school or college as well as being aware of the policies for the broader institution. The chapter authors point out that deans are expected to be familiar with and able to explain those policies to all stakeholders.

Part 3, *Leadership and Partnerships*, considers the interrelation between deans as academic leaders and ambassadors of the university they serve with other institutions of higher learning and with community organizations and community leadership. Perhaps most informative is chapter 9, “Searching for the Butterfly” by Del Doughty. This entry uses an elegant narrative to describe a dean’s careful navigation of relationships—between their home institution, other universities, and industry partners—as they secure and implement a complicated grant. Other vignettes in this section appear to illustrate facets of a dean’s life with highly location-specific anecdotes.

Part 4, *Leadership and the Institution*, focuses on the roles of the dean as a middle manager. The individual chapters describe how the dean is a colleague to the faculty yet also their supervisor who must maintain a working relationship with the provost and the president. Other contributors in this part illustrate the virtues of an effective partnership with the advancement office and how a dean may manage both up and down in specific circumstances, such as changes in institutional priorities.

Part 5, *Leadership and the College*, focuses on strategies for management. Contributors examine the role of budget and salary considerations, informed decision-making based on data, communication strategies, and the leadership team. Perhaps fittingly, the first chapter in part 5, “The Dean as Supporter in Chief” by Maria C. Garriga, provides readers with strategies for maintaining physical and emotional well-being, fostering a healthy work-life balance, and creating a welcoming and productive work environment for the dean and the faculty. The following chapter homes in on the use of data in institutional decision-making at the dean level. Because a dean’s responsibilities range from budgeting to student admissions and retention to faculty evaluation, there is a long list of available tools at a dean’s disposal. Chapter 24, “Creating a Culture of Possibilities” by George H. Brown, reframes the complicated question of salary equity in a positive light, using a specific example to show how a dean can creatively reallocate faculty salaries to implement the school’s priorities. The subsequent chapter, “The Line outside the Door” by Del Doughty, provides strategies

for resolving competing budgetary requests outside of the salary discussion.

A focus on the dean’s success appears in chapter 27, with an emphasis on communication—in multiple directions—and on having a reliable team in place. This section concludes with a chapter on the role of an associate dean, often a demanding position without much visibility and little direct power. The author argues that an associate dean has been purposefully selected by the dean to aid in their success and as someone who can manage multiple ongoing projects and who can connect the faculty to the administration. He also recommends building relationships as a crucial key to that success.

Part 6, *Leadership and the Units*, is somewhat broad. It discusses the necessity of developing department chairs because of the pivotal role they fill. Chairs are frequently culled from the faculty and come to the position with little or no training. Providing for their various needs is a challenge that may fall to the associate dean. Additional chapters provide insight into mentoring and preparing future leaders. It posits that deans and others should be on the lookout for those potentially interested in leadership and help them reach those goals. This section also returns to the topic of communication and emphasizes the value of empowering leaders to perform their role and leading by example. Next is a chapter on difficult conversations that suggests times, places, and ways to prepare for those conversations.

In part 7, *Leadership in the Future and in the Past*, chapter 33 tackles the topic of leaders returning to the faculty and why they might decide to do that. This is a tricky position due to the former leader having substantial knowledge but also not wanting to take on any major projects, new leadership roles, or appearing to know everything. It can be difficult to transition and redefine yourself in this new position. The book closes with a speech given in 1964 and that echoes the opening chapter, bringing the conversation full circle with observations that seem eerily current.

Resource Handbook for Academic Deans offers a wide spectrum of experiences and challenges regarding serving as a dean. The most salient information contained within the book can be gleaned quickly by browsing the takeaways, a bulleted list that appears at the end of each chapter. These are easy to refer to on an as-needed basis for any new leader. ▲

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