A Resource for Academic Administrators

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INSIDE

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

After Institutional Restructuring: Chairing a "New" Department

Julie Watts

Institutional restructuring—impacting people, programs, and processes—is "widespread and frequent" (Cherry et al. 2023, 53). Layoffs, incentivized retirements, hiring freezes, support staff reductions, "academic prioritization" (Flaherty 2016), and cuts to base funding drive restructuring while uncertainty, frustration, and low morale often result.

Over the last decade, my university incrementally reduced the number of its colleges from four to two and its academic departments from twenty-two to sixteen. In 2021, the first year I became chair, communication studies faculty and staff were shifted into my English and philosophy department. For communication studies faculty, this was their third department in as many years while English and philosophy had not altered its department structure in decades. Together, both groups experienced firsthand many of the restructuring drivers identified earlier.

Our new department began with one chair and one department administrative assistant, yet we possessed two separate office suites (same building, different floors), no department name, and two sets of department bylaws, policies, and procedures.

Chairing a "new" department like mine in the wake of institutional restructuring calls for an approach that gives department members a sense of stability and control, honors the legacy of each contributing department but moves forward as one efficiently and equitably, and capitalizes on and messages the new department's strengths.

Collaborate on the department naming process. Ensuring that faculty and staff have a voice in the department renaming process is important. *Department Name* was an agenda item for our first department meeting, where possible names were identified and the renaming process was discussed. For several weeks following, everyone was encouraged to submit name ideas to me via email. We included these on a ballot and voted to recommend our new name for approval by the dean.

Although the process was participatory, communication studies faculty and staff were outnumbered by English and philosophy colleagues, and the name reflected that, reverting to a naming pattern that the majority deemed most comfortable (Department of English, Philosophy, and Communication Studies). Chairs also need to ensure that the name change is updated across all platforms. Despite following institutional procedure, we discovered places where the name was incorrect—forms, random building and office suite signage, and calendaring and reservation platforms.

Unify physical space to cohere interdepartmental relationships. We spent nearly two years officed on separate floors of the same building. Eighteen months after we restructured, the dean stipulated that our department consolidate, requiring that communication studies faculty and staff move to occupy vacant English and philosophy third floor offices. Although this made sense from a space management perspective, it was another upheaval punctuating four-plus years of instability for communication studies—their numbers relative to English and philosophy again meant they had to move, this time physically.

In retrospect, the benefits of occupying one floor as a group seem to outweigh the move's disruption. By working out of one main office, we are more efficient. Department members are more adjacent, which encourages relationship-building. We are more apt to have casual hallway and breakroom conversations with everybody. My visibility as chair has increased. Understandably, students and others find it easier to locate department members.

Lean on familiar processes that work, retooling as necessary. One of the earliest decisions I made as chair involved staffing courses during Winterm (my institution's "third semester" between fall and spring semesters) featuring accelerated, mostly online courses. Because Winterm teaching assignments receive an overload payment, multiple instructors often compete for a handful of sections.

My scheduling decisions had to be made rapidly, and turning to a committee or an ad hoc group to assist was not doable. Instead, I relied on a scheduling protocol devised by the personnel committee of my previous department that had been in use for several years. To staff Winterm, I emailed the department with my request for instructors and framed my email by linking to the scheduling policy, describing its usefulness for English and philosophy, noting that I planned to employ it. My email was met with no policy questions or concerns, and Winterm staffing was completed without a hitch.

Sometimes the best way forward is to lean on familiar-to-many, tried-and-true processes. Three years on, this policy is still the one I use.

Cohere department bylaws deliberately and collaboratively. One important step toward unifying a department is to tackle bylaws. The conversations that result reveal values, differences, and similarities among individuals and disciplinary groups. To begin, I called for volunteers to serve on an ad hoc committee convened to examine each historic department's bylaws to identify overlaps and differences and to recommend how to move forward. I received three volunteers, two English and philosophy faculty and one communication studies faculty. Ad hoc committee progress reports occurred monthly at department meetings.

The ad hoc committee turned over its recommendations to the personnel committee, which was at the time our only elected committee comprised of faculty and staff from both historic departments. They dug in deeper to discuss policy differences and then recommended language revisions that were brought to the department. One year later, the department voted to approve the bylaws.

Having the smaller ad hoc group examine the bylaws first gave the personnel committee a head start on its work. Overall, this ad-hoc-to-elected committee approach moved the work along and helped ensure representation. In addition, having eyes from two different departments engaged in this work not only unified our governance document but also improved it. Our bylaws now more accurately connect to university guidelines and have led to other work to streamline and better articulate department policies and procedures.

Manage department priorities through a committee structure. After institutional restructuring, my department increased in size, which made department management more

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difficult, especially without an associate or a vice chair. Creating a deliberate constellation of department committees has been invaluable—helping me launch and track department initiatives and deliver communication efficiently. Department committees also build community and are productive sites for discussion, feedback, and professional development.

My department includes two elected committees: personnel and governance. During the second year after restructuring, we established the latter committee to assist with bylaws, department identity, and strategic planning work—tasks that had historically fallen to the personnel committee but with our increased department size became untenable for them. The remaining committees are disciplinary in nature—each roughly conforming to the courses we offer—and tend to focus on curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Department members are not required to participate in their disciplinary groups, but most do, and several participate in more than one. Committee meeting agendas are circulated to the department, and chairs report out monthly at our department meeting. After restructuring, two new disciplinary committees were formed—communication studies and philosophy.

I launch and track department initiatives through committees. At our first department meeting of the academic year, I circulate two documents. One memo identifies the charges I give to each department committee. To draft this, I meet separately with each committee chair and discuss ideas and process. The charges can be new or ongoing but all relate to institutional and department goals. I also circulate a progress report, updating the work done by committees during the previous academic year.

Identify department leaders and leverage their roles, network, and advice. In a new department like mine, I had to work quickly to identify what Mallard (2009) calls unofficial leaders—colleagues with points of view (roles, experiences) distinct from mine who are respected by others and who are willing to offer me their opinion.

I reach out to unofficial leaders in my department to get feedback about a new idea before I discuss it more broadly. Doing so not only gives me feedback but also helps to hone my message. When I am poised to communicate about a new initiative or change affecting the department, especially one that may be met with opposition, I use what I call the meeting before the meeting approach. Before discussing it at a department meeting, I talk with my unofficial leaders about it. This strategy allows me to read the temperature of the room in advance, helping me to prepare clarifying remarks. During the department meeting, because they have had a chance to consider the topic in advance, unofficial leaders often also chime in to help me message it.

Initially, I tapped unofficial leaders from my department's newest disciplinary group (communication studies), mainly because I felt I knew less about their perspectives and ideas. However, my unofficial leaders now come from across the department and include faculty and adjunct instructors.

To conclude, remember that departments are not *new* for very long, so take advantage of this status and use it as justification to rethink processes or strategies and to examine unarticulated norms and values. What is not working about your policies? How are decisions made? Capitalize on the opportunity to reflect on and rethink current processes and structures to move forward as a unified department in a more equitable, efficient, and positive manner. ▲

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Chair Tip

How can chairs make a difference in operationalizing institutional diversity goals?

Because chairs operate at the nexus between faculty and administration, they play a pivotal role in leading and implementing diversity efforts. In promoting an inclusive workplace that values and respects each individual, chairs work in collaboration with faculty to eliminate subtle and overt forms of exclusion within day-to-day interactions and operations. They can offer professional support and mentoring to minoritized faculty, provide valuable insight into unwritten rules and political minefields, and intervene in situations that involve marginalization, bullying, and harassment. Chairs can assist minority faculty who may be faced with cultural taxation when called on to mentor diverse students or participate in university or college diversity committees, limiting the time they have to pursue their own scholarly research. And because underrepresented scholars are more likely to enter the workforce in low-paid, contingent faculty positions, chairs can provide needed career support to those seeking more stable employment opportunities. They can work proactively with institutional diversity and human resources offices to diversify tenure-track faculty lines.

—Edna Chun is chief learning officer for HigherEd Talent, a national human resources and diversity consulting firm.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Using Force Field Analysis to Facilitate Conversations That Chairs Need to Have About Change in Faculty Evaluation

Jennifer P. Mathews, Laura M. Hunsicker-Wang, Cabral Balreira, Jorge Colazo, and Judith Norman

Chairs often feel isolated within their departmental silos, and the very idea of bringing about change can feel exhausting. In addition, stakeholders frequently exhibit resistance, including competing solutions, silence, or even covert sabotage. However, when chairs work together, we can learn from one another, help with shared resources, and generate ideas to lower obstacles to change. We propose that by using the force field analysis model, chairs can act as change agents. They can identify barriers working against change and recognize resources needed to disrupt the equilibrium that keeps transformation from happening. At Trinity University (a primarily undergraduate institution in San Antonio, Texas, with approximately twenty-seven hundred students), five department chairs formed a working group to improve faculty development and evaluation. We used the force field analysis model, developed from Kurt Lewin's work, to produce five broad recommendations, with action items within the area of transparency and equity to improve the experience of all faculty at the institution.

To assess the obstacles and resources for enhancing faculty evaluation and development, we gathered information from several sources, including data on promotion and tenure at Trinity University, departmental promotion and tenure documents, teaching evaluation practices and academic literature, university practices related to faculty service evaluation, information networks at Trinity, and feedback from focus groups made up of approximately 10 percent of the total faculty, including members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee, department chairs, and faculty engaged in teaching, research, and service in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Equity and transparency emerged as themes in the resulting data and feedback. In writing this article, we hope to share the insights gained so that others can use these recommendations. We also aim to give a framework for how to approach change in the deeply embedded practice of faculty evaluation and how to apply the ideas of force field analysis to move those changes forward.

Force field analysis identifies the factors that are both in favor of and against change and attempts to move the balance toward change. Positive forces include resources and forward momentum while barriers include resistance and lack of knowledge and resources. In force field work, we identify the obstacles and sources of resistance and provide resources, training, and community to disrupt the resistance and turn them into factors for change (Kardia et al. 2022). Patterns in our data led us to five categories of major recommendations, including the improvement of the following:

- The promotion and tenure process
- Evaluation of teaching
- The faculty experience through mentoring and reducing bias in the evaluation of service
- Faculty awareness and expertise
- Recourse for inequities

These are five conversations that chairs should be engaged in to help promote positive change in their departments and across the university.

Conversation 1: Improving the Promotion and Tenure Process

The first recommendation comes from recognizing the challenges faced at Trinity over the last several decades in promotion and tenure. We requested data from institutional research regarding the tenure and promotion of faculty over thirteen years. Data indicated that the hiring, retention, and promotion rates for minoritized (by race) and female faculty fall behind the rates for white and male faculty. Although Trinity has focused on recruiting and retaining minoritized faculty by increasing their numbers as assistants and associates, these efforts have not yet translated into moving this group into the rank of professor. As universities attempt to become more diverse and inclusive institutions, they must address systemic obstacles in the retention of minoritized faculty.

First, the language used to ascertain the merit of scholarship within promotion and tenure documents is often vague and left open to interpretation, a situation that might create inconsistent standards that leave candidates vulnerable to biases. We suggest creating a task force to look at departmental promotion and tenure documents with an equity lens and following up with examples of improved language, workshops for chairs to talk through approaching departments on this process, and the requirement of incorporating those changes into tenure documents. In addition, we recommend adding anti-bias training for the members of the Promotion and Tenure Committee and training for chairs in writing clear and fair letters for candidates in their departments.

Conversation 2: Improving the Evaluation of Teaching

There is a need to evaluate teaching using mechanisms other than student evaluations (Berk 2005), as they are flawed instruments (see, for example, Chávez and Mitchell 2020; Emery et al. 2003; Gormally et al. 2014.). To provide a more meaningful framework for evaluating faculty teaching, student evaluations must be complemented by other forms of teaching evaluation, such as peer reviews. These must be deployed uniformly to faculty of all ranks so that all faculty members are evaluated with the same set of instruments and have a strong formative component to avoid being punitive or judgmental. We recommend that student course evaluations be revised with an eye on equity so that they can be more useful and be made consistent across the university. We also suggest that merit evaluations reflect multiple types of feedback on teaching.

Conversation 3: Improving the Faculty Experience

The third category of recommendations is to improve faculty experience through mentoring and increased transparency, which are fundamental ways to strengthen faculty resources. With mentoring, one faculty member might have a very different experience than another. A department might have great mentoring that easily happens between senior and early-career faculty, but another department might have little to no mentoring in place. In the second department, the faculty member would have to seek out others to talk with and might get information or advice that would not work in their department. In particular, competent mentoring is a mechanism for negotiating the obstacles that prevent minoritized faculty and women from gaining promotion. We suggest that one-on-one mentorship be offered to faculty who request it. We also recommend less formal peer-to-peer networks (by and for faculty) such as workshops, happy hours, support groups, or roundtable lunches to engage in broader conversations about the promotion process. Such group conversations have the potential to allow for more productive and interactive conversations and to bypass the limitations of a one-on-one mentorship relationship.

To improve transparency, we recommend appointing a task force to evaluate service duties and to develop a service rubric. In particular, the extra work that minoritized faculty perform (such as informally mentoring other minoritized faculty as well as students) is not typically counted, and yet they are asked to do the same additional work that majority faculty do (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group 2017). There must be a way to value the invisible work that minoritized faculty perform. Faculty are also often assessed on outcomes that are not under their control. For example, if a candidate does not have control over which university committees they are assigned to, they should not be assessed negatively for failing to secure certain committee assignments.

Leadership positions should be advertised so that they are open to all people willing to serve, and selection should be through a fair and transparent process. Too often, prestigious committees are appointed, and administrators allocate leadership roles through a top-down process. Mentorship opportunities should be extended to all faculty seeking leadership roles, and the process for department chair selection and succession must be communicated and not decided through backroom deals.

Conversation 4: Improving Faculty Awareness and Expertise

At Trinity, we found that some of the biggest obstacles to faculty working on issues of equity and transparency are a lack of background in the topic, bandwidth to take on this difficult work, and resources. We first recommend creating a centralized digital library that would host materials such as peer-reviewed articles, links to resources, best practices guides, promotion and tenure and merit review documents, leadership succession documents, and course evaluation questions for all departments.

Chairs need spaces for candid conversations and freedom of expression at events not run by the administration. These exercises could be workshops, panels, lunches, or happy hours with agendas driven by the chairs. Even more broadly, we advocate for the democratization of information so that all faculty have equal access to policies, procedures, and data.

Conversation 5: Improving Recourse for Inequities

To reduce barriers related to inequality, we advocate for the creation of an ombudsperson position to facilitate resolution processes where human resources is not appropriate. For universities with ombudspersons, the position should be publicized and the resolution process simplified where possible. To track long-term trends in tenure and promotion of minoritized and female faculty, there should be a regular and public review of tenure and promotion rates. The university should be accountable for changes that ensure a more transparent and equitable climate.

Conclusion

We share these results and recommendations so that other universities can benefit from what we found and how the use of force field analysis guided the suggestions. As we work to make the professoriate a more inclusive environment, department chairs can have a powerful role in these changes. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Reframing and Reclaiming the Dirty Words of Academic Leadership

Elise Radina, Jerry Schnepp, Jolie Sheffer, Mary-Jon Ludy, John Koolage, and Lisa Hanasono

Leadership in academia is often framed as a dirty word. If you are reading this as an academic administrator, you probably have been accused of joining the dark side. Such pejorative language depicts leadership as morally dirty, a kind of betrayal of one's colleagues or principles. But you've decided not to let that get in the way of making change and providing stewardship in these challenging times. With that in mind, we reexamine some common dirty words in higher education leadership that deserve a closer look. These are words that, to paraphrase *The Princess Bride*, may not mean what others think they mean. Certain oft-used terms are dirty words because they are laden with gendered, racialized, or ableist ideas. Others may be so overused that they've lost their specific meaning and power. If we stop to wash these terms of their accreted negative associations, we can distinguish the good from the bad and learn to recognize and value different leadership strengths.

Reexamining negative terms follows recent work in philosophy, moral psychology, and cognitive science, which have focused on reconsidering so-called bad emotions or traits (Protasi 2021; Strohminger and Kumar 2018). This work has revealed the evolutionary and social utility of "negative" emotions such as anger, disgust, and envy. For example, envy, far from being a deadly sin, can be understood as offering insight into our deepest aspirations and curiosities about other lives and choices. Considered in this way, envy helps direct our attention and efforts to objects or paths that could make our lives better. By clarifying and reclaiming academic dirty words, we hope to ameliorate some of the stained connotations of academic leadership as well as reveal the ways our language may contribute to creating barriers to leadership. Even more importantly, when we rediscover or clear away dirty versions of these terms, we may be better poised to notice new leaders or new forms of leadership that have been overlooked. Consider seeing past the person who we think is a leader simply for how busy they are and instead recognize the hidden leader who is always in the zone as they seek to address new challenges. By casting off calcified notions surrounding certain leadership terms, we might expand our pool of potentially transformative leaders hiding in plain sight.

Word 1: Ambition

Ambition is frequently associated with the idea of climbing the ladder, which is rewarded with increased financial and personal power. It is often lauded as an important drive to get ahead or to make a name for oneself. It is also frequently associated with hard work, a cherished American value. However, it has negative connotations as well, carrying a whiff of Machiavellian power-seeking. For women and people of color who are interested in leadership, the word *ambition* can be weaponized to imply having excessive self-interest, abandoning core values, and seeking personal gain at the expense of collectivity. We reject these notions of ambition.

Ambition need not be motivated by the desire for attention, titles, influence, or power. The beating heart of ethically motivated ambition is the drive to put one's energies, passions, and talents toward a goal beyond oneself. Ethical ambition is internally directed, focused on wanting to put one's skills toward building, improving, or stewarding something valuable. One can be ambitious to make more efficient use of limited resources, build community, and expand access to opportunity. These connotations are worth recognizing as we think about widening the pool of future leaders. Leaders with this kind of ambition may not always self-select but can be tapped to take on greater responsibility—for the benefit of all (see table 1).

Word 2: Busy

In higher education, as in so much of American culture, there is great value placed on being *busy*. Colleagues often exclaim how full their plates are as an indicator of their institutional importance. Some of this stems from the American culture of hustle and productivity, which presumes that not being busy is a sign of laziness or lack of ambition. In higher education, faculty, staff, and administrators are increasingly called on to do more with less, leading to overwhelm and burnout. When being busy is about doing tedious or unimportant work that does not require intellectual or emotional stimulation (i.e., busywork), then there is little of value being accomplished.

An uncritical valuation of busyness perpetuates notions of capitalist hyperproductivity that can lead to serious mental health outcomes like workaholism, anxiety, and depression (Andreassen and Pallesen 2016). Consider workaholism, for example. Typically, this word has been associated with people who are obsessed

Table 1. Removing the Stain on Ambition

Traditional Conceptualizations of Ambition	Rethinking Ambition
Power over others	Power to harness one's talents
Self-interested	Committed to the collective good
Ambition is good or neutral in traditional leaders (white, cisgender, heterosexual men, etc.) but is otherwise dangerous or selfish.	Ambition is about recognizing potential talent, which shows up differently in different people.

with job-related tasks and who have difficulty establishing healthy boundaries—not knowing how and when to turn off work mode. Such behavior leads to a deprioritization of rest, relaxation, and relationships, which can damage colleagues' physical and mental health.

Instead of perpetuating this toxic model of busyness, we want to reframe and value *productivity* as aligning one's time and energy with key individual, relational, and collective priorities. A promising approach to productivity is connected to the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 2005). Flow is a state in which one is engaged or even engrossed in the work such that they may lose track of time. This kind of aligned productivity can occur only when one understands the value of the work, takes ownership of their contributions, and devotes time and space for deep focus. Leaders in higher education must seek to create conditions that allow for states of productivity that excite and motivate.

Instead of calculating how busy faculty and staff are with the *quantity* of responsibilities like merit, workload, and annual review processes, we should prioritize deep engagement and *accomplishment* around work that aligns with our employees' values and knowledge. We need this for ourselves as leaders, but we should also seek to cultivate these conditions of flow for those we mentor and supervise. With such a transformation, we might remove some of the capitalist stains associated with productivity and embrace the distributed expertise and responsibility on which shared governance was founded (see table 2).

Table 2. Individual and Institutional Strategies for Washing Away Misconceptions About Busyness

Individual Strategies	Institutional Strategies
Resist the urge to perform busyness. • Stop talking about busyness as a badge of honor. • Prioritize important goals over urgent but unimportant goals.	Streamline service. • Delete extraneous committees. • Optimize committee size. • Align workload assignments with values and skills.
Rest as resistance (Hersey 2022). • Ensure adequate sleep. • Prioritize regular downtime. • Create and maintain healthy boundaries around work and rest.	Normalize humanity. • Acknowledge and respect colleagues holistically. • Respect colleagues' time, expertise, and energy.
Engage in work that allows a sense of flow. • Seek tasks that provide opportunities for deep engagement. • Engage in work that is intrinsically motivating.	Remove barriers and provide resources. • Avoid frequent turnover of systems that require additional learning for short-term use. • Provide necessary tools, training, and support. Reward meaningful work and accomplishments. • Align rewards with the university's mission and values. • Stop rewarding busyness in merit, annual review, and promotion processes.

Word 3: Collaboration

Collaboration is another word that is omnipresent in higher education leadership but that is often misunderstood or misrepresented. Some leaders understand collaboration as mostly window dressing or performative behavior, giving the appearance of consulting stakeholders and building buy-in without the slow, hard work that is actually necessary. Other leaders claim to value collaboration when what they really mean is delegating or off-loading work to others. In these ways, collaboration becomes a false substitute for shared governance and collective problem-solving (see sidebar).

True collaboration is a process of working with others to achieve common goals through sharing diverse perspectives and skills. It requires decentering power, not delegating responsibility, so that everyone helps shape the conversation and contributes to solutions. Collaboration need not mean that everyone contributes equally, in terms of time or responsibility, but it does mean that all contributors have a substantive effect on the shape, direction, and outcomes of the conversation (see table 3).

For many hierarchical leaders, collaboration feels inefficient, as it requires a substantial investment of time at the outset for groups to coalesce around a shared sense of mission and for roles to emerge. Collaborators bring different perspectives due to their varied backgrounds, institutional experiences, and current responsibilities, which takes time to incorporate into a whole but ultimately yields stronger and more cohesive results.

In addition to the process, effective collaboration requires a clear goal that is communicated and shared by contributors. Without this shared vision for the work, the process will become unfocused and unproductive. Morale sinks if participants feel like their time is wasted. Therefore, it is important to maintain a balance between harnessing the advantages of a dynamic collaborative group and the rigor of a more focused and managed project.

Although the collaborative process must be inclusive, it need not be leaderless. Roles in a collaborative group tend to emerge

Table 3. Changing Perspectives on Collaboration

Misconceptions About Collaboration	Rethinking Collaboration
Collaboration is inefficient because it is time-consuming. It is faster and easier for one person to work alone.	Collaboration leverages the strengths of each team member, as diverse viewpoints lead to fresh perspectives and innovative solutions.
Collaboration distracts from individual work and accomplishments.	Each collaborator's unique strengths and perspectives contribute to a collective outcome that is greater than the sum of its parts.
Collaboration promotes laziness, as some group members do the majority of the work while others simply take credit.	Collaborators communicate transparently to support a balanced and equitable workload.
Collaboration is performative and is included only for its perceived value to stakeholders.	Collaboration is valued for its intrinsic benefit of creating more meaningful and impactful outcomes.

dynamically and organically, with members often gravitating toward familiar roles based on past experiences and comfort levels. This can be disrupted by assigning group members to unfamiliar roles and providing them with support. In this way, dominant personalities and people in positions of authority, who may monopolize discussions or suppress voices, can be redirected toward collective problem-solving. For a group to be truly inclusive and collaborative, its members must feel that they can make substantive and valued contributions, not merely be positioned at the table. Collaboration that is well conceived focuses on constructive behaviors, such as clarifying and process checking, thereby enhancing team effectiveness. All members must be included with genuine intent rather than as a token gesture. Leadership in collaborative groups resembles facilitation or arbitration, aiming to guide discussions and keep the group on track, more than traditional top-down authority. Leaders should thus focus on creating a productive environment where each member feels valued and empowered to contribute their expertise.

Perhaps the most important qualities of collaborative groups are transparency and acceptance. Collaborative spaces must be safe environments where people feel included, respected, valued, and motivated to contribute their unique insights without fear of judgment or dismissal. When decisions and expectations are openly communicated, leaders can foster alignment with the group's goals, resulting in a deep commitment to the collective outcome. This openness to differing viewpoints leads to richer discussions, more creative solutions, and a greater sense of ownership and commitment among group members.

Conclusion

The way we understand, use, and internalize words can be powerful in both positive and negative ways. We explored three concepts in leadership language that are often perceived negatively and have offered perspectives on the hidden positive dimensions of these ideas. In so doing, we invite readers to consider how this reframing allows us to adjust our notions of who is and can be a leader.

Problematic Versions of Collaboration

- *CEO version:* Collaboration is a waste of time, and everyone should just put their nose down and get their own work done.
- *Free riders:* Collaboration is a way to get one's name on something without needing to contribute substantively.
- *Gift authorship:* This is academic writing when one person writes the entire paper and asks "collaborators" to proofread and give their blessings (Chawla 2020).
- *Ghost authorship:* This is academic writing where the person(s) who contributes meaningfully to a piece of scholarship is not credited as an author.

Although ambition is typically associated with a desire for self-aggrandizement, it is critical to our motivation and ability to stay with projects that matter to us. Unfortunately, ambition retains uncomfortable connections to patriarchy, taking on additional negative layers when applied to women and people of color. It is important to identify these gendered and racialized uses and move away from them. Instead, consider the "ambitious" colleague who seeks agency to contribute to the greater good as leading.

Busyness is often associated with a focus on institutional metrics to the detriment of actual effectiveness. However, productivity when seen in light of its associated components, such as being in flow and experiencing satisfaction, can highlight the joy in our daily ability to advance things that matter to us. Quickly dismissing the desire for productivity as a capitalist agenda misses the good in feeling productive and accomplishing goals. Therefore, consider the colleague who is fueled by passion and curiosity as not simply productive but as one who is leading by example.

Finally, the term *collaboration* can take on a pernicious flavor. Common usage can be dismissive when associated with leaderless spaces, meandering discussions, or pointless brainstorming. It can also be used to co-opt the work of others or to trammel a group space with one's own agenda. Such versions of collaboration are attached to patriarchal authority, requiring greater care to ensure that we don't reproduce problematic social norms. However, collaboration has a critical democratic component that can reveal hidden assumptions, empower knowers who aren't normally at the table, and redistribute historically uneven work assignments. Collaboration and inclusion ought to be properly aligned. Colleagues who are truly collaborative and who bring others together in meaningful and thoughtful ways have arguably the greatest potential to lead from an equity-minded perspective.

In sum, leadership concepts, such as ambition, productivity, and collaboration, can be empowering and useful ideas that we want to reclaim on behalf of moral leadership and for the good of our institutions, projects, and fellow leaders. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

The Department Chair Operating System, Part 1: Building and Sustaining a Leadership Practice Around Prioritization

Jennifer Scott Mobley

The role of department chair of today has grown increasingly complex, with nearly every constituency—students, faculty, administration, staff, alumni, parents, and employers—registering their expectations and demands. This evolution of the job description changes the playbook for successful leadership. What was once out of scope is now in scope, forcing difficult decisions about who and what to prioritize.

Effective prioritization is undoubtedly one of the most challenging and critical higher education leadership practices. Through my research on higher education leadership and my experience coaching and training hundreds of department leaders, I have seen firsthand that prioritization is particularly challenging for chairs given their unique role. Straddling administrative and academic worlds, chairs face enormous pressure as they navigate the needs of faculty and administrators and often experience tension maintaining their identities as scholars and teachers amid the daily grind of leading a department. They are pulled in multiple directions by their many constituencies but receive minimal training and support essential for effective prioritization.

If chairs are to deliver against their new job description, they must become a different kind of leader: someone who can build and sustain a leadership practice around prioritization. From establishing criteria for determining priorities and communicating those choices to finding the time and energy to implement them, chairs must master the art of prioritization. Successfully doing so requires establishing a process that sharpens their decision-making, assists in identifying criteria for determining priorities, and leverages communication tools and strategies for articulating and reinforcing these choices.

Cultivating a leadership practice around prioritization begins with defining clear priorities—the work to be done, the highest-impact problems to be solved, and the most important opportunities to be pursued. Demonstrating the necessary skills, characteristics, and capabilities to establish priorities is essential. However, the job of chairs becomes less about establishing priorities and more about influencing and supporting other people in implementing them. Chairs do this by affecting how decisions get made and conflict is handled; how empowered people are to speak up, challenge thinking, and contribute new ideas; and ultimately how engaged faculty are. In other words, chairs create a holistic operating environment to help their people understand and adapt to multiple and sometimes conflicting priorities.

Just as a computer's operating system manages finite resources across competing demands, chairs must constantly decide where to invest their limited time and energy. Based on my work coaching and training hundreds of chairs, I have developed a framework called the Department Chair Operating System (DCOS) to help them be more strategic and less reactive in their roles. The DCOS approaches this challenge through three integrated practices: prioritization, perspective taking, and systems thinking. This article focuses on prioritization—the essential task manager of academic leadership that helps chairs allocate resources effectively. Through four key drivers (time/energy management, values-based behaviors, strategy/processes, and culture), chairs can build a sustainable system for making and implementing prioritization decisions.

Time and Energy Management

Prioritization is first and foremost an inner journey with a focus on understanding how you choose to use your time and energy. The sheer volume of emails, meetings, and decisions can lead to a fragmented schedule, leaving little time and energy for pivotal tasks that drive progress. The first practice is to conduct an audit and assess how you currently spend your time and energy. Begin by determining what you want to learn: Are you looking to find more balance, reduce stress, or increase productivity? Track your time for at least two weeks to gain insights into how you allocate your hours (the first few weeks of the semester are usually atypical, so you may want to wait until the third or fourth week). Document every activity in increments of at least fifteen minutes and the time you start and end (you can use a time-tracking app like Toggl or RescueTime to help you). Alongside each activity, note your energy level. You can use a +/- or color code with red and green or even employ a five-point scale from low to high. Next, analyze the results and look for patterns and areas for improvement. Ask yourself:

- What are you spending the most time on, and what is their impact on your overall goals?
- Are you focused on the work that only you can do? Where are you wasting your time?
- What is the ratio of energy-draining and energy-boosting tasks in your week?
- Are there ways to delegate, automate, or minimize time spent on tasks that drain you?

Values-Based Habits and Behaviors

How we spend our time and energy is inextricably linked with what we value. Our values are what we use when we identify and evaluate priorities, and they determine how we sit with the consequences of those priorities. The second focus of attention in building a prioritization practice is about identifying and aligning personal, departmental, and institutional values with behaviors. This is where you begin to examine what influences your behavior outside of your immediate awareness—your beliefs, biases, and fears. It is also about identifying new behaviors and habits that will be required to change. Ask yourself questions like these:

- What are a few personal values that you hold dear, and how do they align with your departmental values?
- What are a few behaviors that support your values?
- What are early indicators or warning signs that you're living outside your values?
- What are the boundaries you need to set and manage to support your values?

Strategy and Processes

Once you have identified your core values and desired behaviors, you can now look at strategically building structure and process around them, including identifying and evaluating the departmental priorities and resources at your disposal (i.e., time, skills, finances, and support). Departmental priorities (especially change initiatives) typically start with identifying critical tasks and changing key processes like course scheduling, faculty recruitment, or curriculum updates. But change occurs through real conversations linked together over time. Start by identifying the five most critical conversations or meetings in the semester that can enable the change you envision. List them and be clear about what you want people to know, feel, and do after the meeting. Ask yourself questions like the following:

- What do you need to be ready for your most important leadership conversations?
- How do these conversations link to one another optimally in time and message?
- How do you envision an A-plus outcome compared with a C-minus result?
- How can you redesign meetings to achieve your ideal outcome?

Culture

The fourth driver of culture helps us recognize that prioritization is about owning responsibility as chair and building a culture that promotes successful and sustainable prioritization. At the core of this work is something we rarely discuss when it comes to prioritization—knowing when to let a priority go and communicating why. According to Leidy Klotz, author of *Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less* (2021), when we're trying to take things from how they are to how we want them to be, our first instinct is to think, *What can I add?* But according to Robert Sutton and Huggy Rao, Stanford professors and coauthors of *The Friction Project* (2024), that leads to "addition sickness"—the proliferation of unnecessary rules, procedures, communications, and roles that seem to inexorably grow and stifle productivity and creativity. As an antidote to addition sickness, Sutton and Rao recommend playing the subtraction game, an exercise where you ask people what is getting in the way and what can they do to remove those obstacles. As a chair, you can help shape a culture by routinely asking yourself and faculty questions like these:

- What is getting in the way of serving students?
- What can we stop tomorrow without hurting students?
- What projects, events, or committees can we put on the back burner for now?

You can tell your colleagues what you chose not to do and provide opportunities for faculty to share what they are subtracting in their teaching or research to help build a culture of vitality and mitigate burnout. Playing the subtraction game is a simple yet powerful way to help you let go, remove, and subtract so that you can prioritize better—and inspire others to do the same.

Building and Sustaining a Prioritization Practice

Taken together, the four drivers illuminate the importance of aligning the inner and outer work of prioritization—time, energy, and values-based behaviors with departmental and institutional goals, processes, and culture—so that you can make meaningful change without burning out. As new realities emerge, chairs must continually question their approach to managing each of these four elements. There are many inflection points that will necessitate chairs to review and update their operating system: when starting the role or beginning a second term, when facing new realities within the department (such as a new organizational structure or a drop in enrollment), or when adjusting personal priorities in the face of issues such as health challenges, relationship changes, or urgent family needs. Making space to regularly reflect on and adapt your approach to prioritization is an essential practice for chairs. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Fostering Academic Integrity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Gina Panozzo and Elizabeth Ritt

Increasingly, academic leaders are grappling with developing policies, procedures, guidelines, assessment methods, and learning activities that promote ethical academic work and reduce the incidence of academic integrity violations or misuse of artificial intelligence. The ongoing opportunity to reevaluate and revise academic curricula and program operations with a keen focus on AI is imperative when addressing matters related to academic integrity (Morris 2018). Thus, this article aims to clearly define AI, discuss key academic integrity considerations, and provide value-added recommendations for academic leaders.

AI continues to evolve and influence higher education's teaching and learning environment. The complexity and widespread adoption of sophisticated AI tools pose ongoing challenges as academic leaders continue to foster academic integrity and provide programs of the highest quality. AI involves the ability of machines to emulate human behavior (McGrow 2019) or even exceed human learning, reasoning, communication, and decision-making. AI incorporates computer, cognitive, and mathematical sciences to develop the cognition of machines, like how the human brain uses neurons to send and receive neurotransmitters (Sharma and Sharma 2023). Specific examples include algorithms that interpret vast amounts of digital data, resulting in predictive models like chatbots (O'Connor et al. 2023). AI chatbot tools, like ChatGPT technology, are large language models. It significantly affects the interactive learning experience for students by producing responses that emulate exchanges resembling conversations among humans.

With AI's rapid growth and development, it is critical to explore its relationship to academic integrity. Academic integrity is an integral, ethical component of the delivery of higher education. All members within the academic organization are accountable for fostering academic integrity, which aligns with the foundational principles of sound decision-making in educational practices, research, and scholarship.

Academic dishonesty, often referred to as misconduct, is defined as a lack of compliance with rules or expectations in the educational environment. Examples of violations of academic dishonesty may include fabrication and falsification of data, documentation of academic performance that does not accurately reflect the work performed, use of one's work in more than one course without the faculty's awareness, copying the work of another, exposing information on exams, using external help to complete an exam, forgery of any forms or documents, plagiarism to include self-plagiarism, and use of unauthorized AI (Carter et al. 2019; Morris 2018).

Key Academic Integrity Considerations

It is necessary to consider the various uses of AI in higher education and its relationship to academic integrity across program operations and curriculum design. Thus, academic leaders should collaborate with faculty to encourage open communication and clear guidelines regarding academic integrity when using AI. Foremost, well-crafted institutional and department-wide policies serve to clarify the appropriate use of AI while maintaining academic integrity.

Failure to engage in academic integrity could result in cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information. Academic dishonesty is against professional standards. For example, ChatGPT might provide fictitious titles and authors, which not only goes against veracity but also further warrants the lack of reliability in accuracy of information provided. Such considerations could contribute to prominent journals opposing ChatGPT as an author. In scientific writing, accuracy and reliability are of the utmost importance, thus tools that have reliability concerns should be used with caution (Caprioglio and Paglia 2023). It is critical to carefully evaluate the information for relevance, accuracy, and reliability when using ChatGPT and other AI chatbots.

Students enrolled in professional programs are guided by evidence-based practice; however, AI assistive tools may lack evidence and reliability. Furthermore, AI assistive tools are not accountable for misleading or inaccurate information. The student must maintain academic accountability together with academic integrity.

Recommendations for Academic Leaders

There is a dynamic relationship between AI and academic integrity across learning environments, such as in the classroom (in person, hybrid, and virtual), laboratory, simulation, and clinical practice. Recommendations highlight expectations regarding communication approaches, policy and document review, evaluation strategies, learning activities, and the use of AI detection software.

- Define all terms related to academic integrity and the use of AI in documents such as institutional catalogs, student handbooks, and course syllabi (Morris 2018; Surahman and Wang 2022).
- Review existing policies regarding violations of academic

integrity for clarity, relevance, specificity, and consequences. Recognize any gaps in current departmental policies and develop measures to address them.
- Address the appropriate use of AI. All department members should take steps to evaluate its ongoing use.
- Create a student orientation program to engage in ongoing dialogue regarding the appropriate use of AI as it relates to fundamental principles of academic integrity and professionalism (Surahman and Wang 2022).
- Ensure that a written academic integrity policy is consistently used across academic programs within the department.
- Reinforce a culture of professional responsibility that communicates the consequences associated with violations of academic integrity.
- Encourage faculty to use AI detection software as appropriate for specific assignments with clear instructions.
- Collaborate with faculty to develop opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection activities that foster real-world personal and emotional experiences, which are lacking in AI-generated text.
- Promote individualized assignments such as in-class discussions or online posts, live and recorded presentations, and debates to reduce the incidence of violations of academic integrity.
- Reinforce the use of concise guidelines and rubrics to clearly communicate the expectations of academic work and the appropriate use of AI.

Conclusion

Higher education continues to be challenged to examine the use of diverse types of AI while ensuring academic integrity. As AI continues to grow and disrupt higher education, it necessitates ongoing dialogue among academic departments to evaluate its influence on teaching and the evaluation of student performance. Academic leaders are uniquely positioned to facilitate the development of clear and concise communication, relevant policy and documents, appropriate evaluation strategies, and current guidelines for using AI detection software that promotes academic integrity. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

The Agile Mentor-Leader

Richard J. Holden and Malaz Boustani

In the domain of faculty affairs, academic leaders often play the mentor role for their faculty, in addition to recruiting, retaining, and leading those faculty to execute the mission and vision of a department, school, or center (Kruse 2022). To succeed as mentors, model best practices for fellow faculty, and manage conflicts of interest from their dual job as mentor and leader, these mentor-leaders must overcome unique role-related challenges.

- *Role overload:* Along with other leadership goals, academic leaders are ultimately responsible for helping their faculty learn and succeed. Because necessity can make busy leaders de facto mentors regardless of their capacity, mentor-leaders need a replicable, easily applicable, minimally burdensome approach to mentoring.
- *Role ambiguity and conflict:* Leaders can be simultaneously mentor, evaluator, adviser, boss, disciplinarian, advocate, collaborator, and friend. To avoid conflicts, mentor-leaders need specific mentor competencies and tools independent from their other roles.
- *Role preparedness:* Few receive mentor training, and leadership appointments rarely require mentoring experience. Mentor-leaders need a method that can be safely learned and practiced on the job.

To manage these challenges, we find that academic leaders can practice Agile mentoring by adopting an Agile mindset and using Agile tools, processes, and strategies.

Agile Mentoring Defined

Agile mentoring is a project where one or more mentors give instrumental and psychosocial support that, with coaching, a mentee iteratively implements to attain success. We frame mentoring as projects with sequential inputs and outputs because both mentoring and projects should be purposeful (Bland et al. 2009) and because projects, inputs, and outputs can be defined, designed, and measured. This complements but does not negate aspects of mentoring that are relational and unquantifiable. We also position mentoring as a nonreciprocal giving of support from mentor to mentee. As with other selfless servant-leader philosophies, the payoff for mentors is mentee success, and other benefits are icing on the cake. Lastly, mentees ultimately implement the support they receive, but someone (often a mentor) should coach the mentee to be a successful implementer.

If mentoring is a project, we can make it more manageable for mentor-leaders by using Agile project management, a century-old approach that gained popularity for developing software in short bursts of teamwork (Rigby et al. 2016). Our decades of work with Agile (Boustani, Azar, et al. 2020; Boustani, Holden, et al. 2020) in parallel with mentoring experiences as academic leaders produced the Agile mentoring competencies, mindset, and processes recommended next.

Agile Mentoring Competencies

Among the broader suite of competencies for Agile leaders (Mehta et al. 2023), five are essential to mentor-leaders.

1. Deep observation. Learning by triangulating information of many types and sources and directly observing behavior to supplement self-reports. *Example:* Mentor-leaders notice behaviors caused by stress, marginalization, and work-life disharmony that mentees may not self-report.

2. Associative thinking. Seeing relationships and similarities between two or more otherwise dissimilar things, people, or ideas. *Example:* Mentor-leaders bridge or connect mentees to strategic others.

3. Nudging. Architecting the physical, social, and digital environment around people to guide, not force, their behavior toward mutually preferred goals. *Example:* Mentor-leaders make goal-aligned options more salient but preserve mentees' autonomy to choose.

4. Storytelling. Depicting situations to match familiar ways of thinking about the world that are therefore more compelling and memorable. *Example:* Mentor-leaders explain academic norms in terms understandable to relative novice mentees.

5. Social awareness. Being able to see oneself and others truthfully in the social world. *Example:* Mentor-leaders appreciate the social power and privilege differences that oblige them to sacrifice their goals in favor of mentees' goals.

Agile Mentoring Mindset

Agile mentoring requires the Agile mindset, whose tenets are the 3 Ss (Holden and Boustani 2020).

Sprints. These are tiny experiments of a prototype—called the minimum viable product—that is "good enough for testing." An Agile approach to mentoring requires the mentee, with mentor support, to identify a problem they truly demand to solve. They then look for candidate solutions, ideally in published literature, that they adapt into a personalized solution. As soon as possible, they run an initial sprint with a finite timeline and a clear set of evaluation and termination criteria, followed by additional sprints to refine the solution.

Example: A mentor-leader and faculty mentee agree the latter should use their time more deliberately on grant proposals. They find an evidence-based method—say, blocking time—and adapt it to the mentee's specific needs as quickly as possible, knowing it is merely the first prototype. With mentor-leader coaching, the mentee does the following:

1. Sets up a sprint timeline to evaluate the prototype solution in action (e.g., seven days working on a particular grant).
2. Selects key outcomes to measure (e.g., grant pages written) and decision criteria for when the outcome is (a) so bad that the solution is terminated, (b) so good that it should be standardized and deployed as is going forward, or (c) promising and worth refining for another sprint.
3. Conducts the sprint, adhering to the process as in a rigorous scientific experiment and trusting their a priori decision criteria.

Sensors. These are measurement instruments used to assess outcomes during sprints and to track mentee progress toward longer-term goals. Formal sensors should be established early, regularly checked, and updated when new data sources emerge. Informal social sensors are useful, too, for detecting gossip, opinion, and reputation. Good sensors help keep mentees from cheating on themselves—that is, avoiding or rationalizing undesirable outcomes.

Example: A mentee seeking to achieve promotion (longer-term goal) works with the mentor-leader to create a scorecard with outcomes that, if met, are very likely to lead to promotion. For the outcome of peer-reviewed articles, a simple formal sensor is a running count of submitted, accepted, and published papers. This sensor can be used for sprints testing different interventions to improve publication rates. An informal sensor would monitor for negative ("their publications are weak") and positive ("their papers are few but game-changing") signals.

Safety. This is the psychological safety necessary for mentor-leaders and mentees to honestly conduct rapid sprints with minimal perfection paralysis, fear of judgment, and self-doubt.

This is critical for mentees whose mentor-leader also formally evaluates or supervises them. Because Agile project management is incremental and often tests imperfect solutions that sometimes fail, psychological safety is essential.

Example: A mentee received feedback from student evaluations about disorganized class lectures. If the mentee has a psychologically safe mentor-leader, the mentee will work honestly with them to address, not hide, this feedback. The mentor-leader must repeatedly demonstrate that they will not judge or punish the mentee for admitting a weakness or for trying solutions that may fail. A mentor-leader can also institute safety norms into their unit to support mentees seeking help from other senior colleagues without fear of negative future evaluations.

Agile Mentoring Process

Mentor-leaders can use three Agile processes thoroughly described elsewhere:

- *Agile implementation* (Boustani et al. 2019) is an eight-step process to adapt and incrementally test existing evidence-based solutions for mentee success.
- *Agile innovation* (Holden et al. 2021) is an eight-step process to develop new solutions.
- *Agile diffusion* (Boustani et al. 2025) is a five-step process to market and spread tested solutions.

Two tools used in all three processes are most practical for Agile mentoring (Lindroth et al. 2023).

Time and space is an Agile project management hallmark for mutual accountability, progress evaluation, and coaching (Mehta et al. 2023). Without time and space, mentor-leaders may inadvertently neglect mentees who are hesitant to "bother" their perpetually busy mentor, especially when the mentee feels stuck or unproductive—precisely when the mentor is needed. We recommend thirty minutes weekly for synchronous meetings or sixty minutes every other week. Meetings should be canceled only by the mentee, not the mentor, and contain minimally structured agenda items and unstructured freestyle mentoring. Here is one meeting structure we use:

- Discuss crises (requiring immediate attention).
- Discuss distractions (barriers to solve or acknowledge).
- Review successes since last meeting.
- Review the global performance scorecard, described next.

The *global performance scorecard (GPS)* is an artifact mentees update weekly to assess progress toward a critical goal. This goal is a single explicit and specific outcome to be met on a specified data that drives mentees' work. The GPS uses sensor data to display the following:

- *Lagging measures*—those that, if met, will nearly guarantee the goal is achieved

- *Leading measures*—those that are likely to over time result in positive lagging measures
- *Daily activities*—the ones that result in leading measures (all other activities are noise, whether they are essential to other goals or not)

The GPS is based on accountability scorecards described in various industry approaches. Without a GPS, a mentor-leader may avoid giving critical feedback that can be interpreted as subjective or threatening.

Five Principles for Agile Mentoring

Taken together, a mentor-leader who possesses the five Agile mentoring competencies and who practices the following five principles can make their mentoring work more manageable, better managed, and a benefit—not a burden—of leadership.

- *Principle 1:* Work with mentees to develop and conduct iterative sprints of solutions to their problems.
- *Principle 2:* Help mentees develop formal and informal sensors to evaluate the efficacy of solutions in the short term and progress toward major goals in the long term.
- *Principle 3:* Establish a culture of psychological safety before undertaking any performance improvement initiatives that can be threatening.
- *Principle 4:* Commit time and space of thirty minutes per week on average for structured and freestyle mentoring.
- *Principle 5:* Develop and consistently consult a global performance scorecard toward the mentee's most critical goal. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Your Temper: The Sixth Man in a Meeting

Leah P. Hollis

Through my years of consulting and researching workplace bullying, I have witnessed firsthand how employees respond to authority figures. The power differentials between leaders and subordinates, even in academic ranks, can be used to bolster a subordinate's career or relegate them to a wallflower stance. When subordinates feel safe to express their thoughts or even make mistakes, they are more likely to engage with colleagues. However, if subordinates sense that their well-being is threatened by the leader's anger or temper, they naturally behave in ways to avoid provoking that anger. This raises a crucial question: Is a leader's anger an uninvited sixth man, changing the dynamics of staff meetings?

The sixth man is a basketball term where the starting team of five on the court relies on a sixth player to substitute in and change the trajectory of the game. Red Auerbach, head coach for the Celtics in their heyday, used the term to reference Frank Ramsey, a talented player who did not start the game but who strategically substituted throughout to create a substantial impact (Abrams 2009). Today, the NBA recognizes the importance of this role with the Sixth Man of the Year Award.

In the basketball context, the sixth man is a positive and tactical entry, an outside influence on the game's progression. In a meeting, however, if anger is the sixth man, that volatile behavior adversely changes the trajectory of the meeting and future projects. When employees witness a boss abruptly yell, get loud, or make accusatory remarks, their reasonable reaction is to avoid the volatility.

McGregor's 1960s theory X operates on the assumption that employees are lazy, lack ambition, and have no insight into solving problems. Further, theory X emphasizes the need for strict control over employees through rigid hierarchies. Such leaders control employees with manipulation, punishment, and coercion. Berkowitz's (2012) cognitive-neoassociation theory explains anger, including verbal and physical threats that jeopardize working and social relationships (Crick and Grotpeter 1995). Acting with anger to control employees mirrors theory X assumptions—that employees need punishment to work—and supports the idea that controlling and manipulative measures motivate them. However, coercive measures in a modern workforce produce the opposite effect: disengagement (Chance 2009). Employees withdraw from angry behaviors, often associated with workplace bullying. Avoidance behaviors emerge among staff, along with diminished morale and compromised creativity.

Bullying behaviors used to motivate staff, such as yelling, cursing, berating, and gaslighting, convey to subordinates that the workspace with that angry boss is not psychologically or emotionally safe (Hollis 2017). The Short Negative Acts Questionnaire, developed by Einarsen et al. (2009), lists "being shouted at, being the target of spontaneous anger, and intimidating behaviors such as finger-pointing" as physically intimidating behaviors that constitute workplace bullying. Bullies exhibit such behaviors as a show of power and domination. The result is that targets feel as if they are "living on eggshells" and are afraid to do anything that might "wake the beast," leaving them in a constant state of stress and defensiveness (Higgins 2024, 34).

Heffernan and Bosetti's study (2021) examines incivility and bullying from the faculty dean's position. They assert that incivility erupts as a flashpoint of anger under a dean's leadership. Although the deans in their study viewed angry episodes as having a clear start and stop, employees perceived such episodes as emblematic of mercurial unpredictability. Furthermore, the deans could not anticipate the repercussions of incivility and bullying, which created lingering negative effects. Those in leadership positions were expected to just deal with such problems as part of their duties, often compounding the issue. Inappropriate control and coercion tactics lead to stress-related outcomes among employees, such as anxiety, panic, headaches, and high blood pressure. When anger becomes the uninvited sixth man in a meeting, employees become more focused on their safety than on the objectives forcefully conveyed to them.

Higher education faces unprecedented stress and fear, particularly following the election of the forty-seventh president. With grants being shuttered and mass deportations destabilizing higher education's function, anger and frustration may be natural responses. If the national instability in the weeks following the January 20 inauguration is emblematic of the next four years, higher education colleagues must prepare themselves psychologically and emotionally to employ civility in a radically changing political landscape. Unlike the sixth man in basketball, who can save the game, when anger is the sixth man, it creates even more damage within the team. Consider some strategies to keep that sixth man of anger on the bench:

- Honestly recognize the frustration that leads to anger.
- Acknowledge it and journal about it before meeting with staff.
- Seek psychological or coaching support to help manage the angry sixth man.
- Read the room to observe whether faculty or staff are engaging with suggestions or averting their eyes—aversion can be a sign of fear and disengagement.
- If you lose your temper, apologize immediately and sincerely. Briefly explain what contributed to the angry outburst and commit to preventing future occurrences.
- Avoid giving gifts as apologies. This tactic, often seen in domestic violence, can seem false and disingenuous.
- Use "I" statements to de-escalate anger.
- Consider a ten-minute walk before a meeting to calm your thoughts.
- Practice deep breathing and positive imagery to focus on thoughts that do not trigger anger.
- Conduct a 360-degree evaluation with peers to learn how you are perceived. Keep the circle wide to ensure that respondents remain anonymous.

Researchers comment that higher education is an environment ripe for workplace bullying (Goodboy et al. 2022; Hollis 2017). Although higher education comprises some of the greatest minds in the country, those on the deficit end of a power differential often experience humiliation, yelling, and isolation as part of a bully's tactics. The strong personalities and laser-focused work ethic required to excel in this field may also give rise to a dark side of hubris, fostering morale-crushing behaviors to demonstrate superiority. The sector already faces significant challenges in creating and maintaining a civil workplace for all who enter. The result is a threat to employees' health, productivity, and institutional commitment.

In 2025, the political threat to higher education looms large. The initial weeks of the Trump presidency reveal tectonic shifts in the foundation of higher education. Too many uncertainties are on the horizon for colleagues to be further splintered by unnecessary outbursts, anger, and gaslighting. In a time when higher education colleagues are already living in fear under this presidential administration, exacerbating the problem with unwanted and unneeded anger is counterproductive. With the increasing pressures in higher education, leaders must be particularly mindful of their emotional responses. A volatile sixth man of anger does not win games—it fractures teams. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

A Participatory Model for Academic Department Strategic Planning: From Ideation to Implementation

Anne Schmitz, Renee Surdick, and Marya Wilson

Strategic planning is essential for academic departments to guide decision-making and resource allocation. This article presents a collaborative approach implemented within an engineering department with thirty faculty, instructors, and support staff serving one thousand students. By prioritizing participation, our department aimed to foster shared values and align goals with broader institutional objectives.

Idea Generation and Prioritization

To kick-start the strategic planning process, we organized a daylong workshop facilitated by an external consultant. The purpose of engaging an external facilitator was to ensure an objective and unbiased perspective. The workshop involved a series of forty-five-minute activities designed to generate a wide range of ideas and perspectives. The forty-five-minute time limit encouraged rapid ideation, emphasizing intuitive thinking and minimizing overanalysis.

- *SWOT analysis:* Participants were divided into small groups to identify the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Each group recorded their ideas on large Post-it posters that were then displayed on the wall for all participants to view. This visual representation facilitated discussion and helped to identify common themes and divergent perspectives.
- *Balanced scorecard:* Participants used a balanced scorecard approach to assess the department's performance in four key areas: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth. These were also displayed using large Post-it posters.
- *Appreciative inquiry:* Participants engaged in a future-oriented activity inspired by the appreciative inquiry method (i.e., dreams phase) to envision their ideal future for the department. Each group created a poster showcasing their dreams and aspirations that were then shared with the entire group.
- *Post-it note prioritization:* Participants prioritized the ideas generated from the SWOT, balanced scorecard, and appreciative inquiry activities by placing Post-it notes on the posters corresponding to their top three choices for each of the three time frames: one year, three years, and five years.

Following the workshop, an asynchronous survey was conducted using Qualtrics. The survey presented participants with a list of the prioritized items identified through the Post-it note exercise. Participants were asked to select their top three choices for each time frame. This asynchronous survey provided an additional opportunity for attendees to share their input, particularly those who may not have been able to fully participate in the workshop or who prefer a more reflective approach to decision-making. By offering multiple avenues for participation, we aimed to ensure that a diverse range of perspectives was considered in the initial phase of idea generation and prioritization.

Thematic Analysis

To identify overarching themes within the prioritized ideas, the facilitator conducted a thematic analysis of the survey results. By grouping similar goals and ideas, the facilitator was able to distill the collective input or prioritized ideas into a concise set of key themes. The thematic analysis resulted in a table that categorized the prioritized items under specific themes and rephrased them as actionable goals (see table 1). These goals were carefully aligned with the broader strategic objectives of the college and institution and of the overall university state system. This alignment ensured that the department's strategic priorities were consistent with the institution's direction.

Goal Development and Refinement

To ensure the effectiveness and feasibility of the prioritized goals, the department engaged in a collaborative process to refine and develop SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) goals.

SMART goal development.

- *In-person meeting:* The department convened in person to discuss the prioritized items and develop specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals.
- *Performance indicator identification:* For each goal, the department identified key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress and success.
- *Asynchronous feedback:* A second Qualtrics survey was distributed to gather feedback on the clarity and feasibility of the goals and performance indicators.

Table 1. Example of Theme and Related Goals

University EG, FOCUS, and/or UW Priority*	Theme	Due Date	Goal (i.e., prioritized item)
F 3,4 EG 3	Partnerships	1 Year	Strengthen current partnerships through connection (on-campus visits, on-site visits, class visits, etc.).
F 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 EG 7		3 Year	Work with foundation and alumni association to create events for partnerships.
F 2, 3, 5		5 Year	Engage in more engineering organizations (attend more conferences, etc.).

*University EG = University enduring goal

FOCUS = University FOCUS 2030 strategic plan

UW Priority = State system goal

- *Goal refinement:* Based on the feedback received, the facilitator revised the goals and KPIs.
- *Final review and approval:* The department reconvened to review the revised goals and KPIs, and a final Qualtrics survey was administered to gather feedback on the wording of the goals and the selection of lead and lag measures.
- *Department-wide adoption:* The department voted to formally adopt the final set of SMART goals and their corresponding lead and lag measures (see table 2).

By involving the entire department in the goal development process, we aimed to foster a shared sense of ownership and commitment to achieving the department's strategic objectives.

Sharing the plan. To enhance transparency and facilitate collaboration, the department shared its strategic plan with the college dean and School of Engineering director. By openly communicating our goals and values, we aimed to do the following:

- *Enhance resource allocation.* Ensure that resources are effectively directed toward initiatives that best support our strategic priorities.
- *Facilitate cross-campus collaboration.* Foster alignment with the broader campus-wide plan and college-level action plan.
- *Improve communication and transparency.* Promote open communication and transparency within the college.
- *Identify new opportunities.* Leverage the dean's office's connections and resources to support the department's goals.

Implementation and Future Directions

To operationalize our strategic plan, we've implemented a practical approach that involves a combination of in-person meetings

Table 2. Example of Theme, Related Goals, and Performance Measures

University EG, FOCUS, UWS Priority, College Priority*	Theme	Goal (i.e., prioritized item)
E 3, 4, 5 F 2, 4, 5 S 3, 4, 6 CRR	Enhance team relationships through communication and team connections.	SMART goal 1: Foster a strong sense of community within the department. • Lead measure: Number of communication channels within the department • Lead measure: Number of office hours across the department • Lead measure: Number of cross-functional collaborations • Lag measure: Department meeting attendance rate

*University EG = University enduring goal

FOCUS = University FOCUS 2030 strategic plan

UW Priority (S) = State system goal

C_ = College priority

Table 3. Example of Parking Lot Item

Idea	Status (parked, under consideration, moving forward)	Action Item	Target Review Date	Projected Impact (number of department themes aligned to)	Projected Effort	Type of Task
Establish best practices for department mentors.	Moving forward	Establish working group, proposal of best practices to department for feedback.	February department meeting	2	2	Big project

and digital tools. A key element is our virtual parking lot, an Excel spreadsheet that tracks ideas, their status, and their alignment with our strategic goals (see table 3). This tool has proven to be highly effective in capturing and prioritizing ideas, ensuring that no valuable insights are lost. By categorizing ideas based on their projected impact and required effort, we can strategically allocate resources and prioritize tasks. We use a simple matrix to categorize tasks:

- *High impact, high effort (big projects):* These are significant projects that require substantial resources and time but that have the potential for significant benefits, aligning with multiple strategic themes.
- *High impact, low effort (quick wins):* These are quick wins that can be implemented relatively easily and that have a significant impact, aligning with multiple strategic themes.
- *Low impact, high effort (thankless tasks):* These are tasks that require significant effort but that may not have a significant impact on strategic goals.
- *Low impact, low effort (fill-in jobs):* These are routine tasks that require minimal effort and that have limited impact on strategic goals.

We assess the impact of each idea by determining how many of our strategic themes it aligns with. For example, a project that aligns with three themes would be considered a high-impact project. Similarly, we estimate the effort required to complete each task and categorize it as high, medium, or low. Regular department meetings serve as opportunities to review the parking lot, discuss progress on ongoing initiatives, and identify new opportunities. By prioritizing tasks and aligning them with our strategic goals, we ensure that our efforts are focused and impactful.

Challenges and solutions.

- *Data accessibility:* One of the primary challenges has been accessing necessary data to track performance measures. To address this, we are collaborating with the dean's team to facilitate data sharing and to ensure alignment with institutional reporting requirements.
- *Sustaining engagement:* Maintaining consistent engagement throughout the semester-long process has been another challenge. To mitigate this, we have combined in-person meetings with asynchronous surveys to provide multiple avenues for participation.

Future directions. To further refine our strategic planning process and maximize its impact, we propose the following areas for future exploration:

- *Leveraging AI:* Investigate the potential of large language models like ChatGPT and Google Gemini to streamline the thematic analysis process and identify emerging trends.
- *Exploring digital tools:* Experiment with digital tools such as Microsoft Forms or word cloud generation tools to facilitate real-time feedback and identify common themes during workshops. ▲

This article is based on a presentation at the annual Academic Chairpersons Conference, February 5–7, 2025, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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Chair Tip

Understanding the Dean

With every job comes role expectations, both for the kinds of tasks that should be performed and for the public face that should be presented. Deans are expected to display a level of gravitas that engenders a confidence in their wisdom. And although some deans mirror their public selves with qualities that suit them particularly well for their offices, the reality of deans is that they are not all alike. Although deans have greater positional power than chairs, they are but one administrative level above chairs. Furthermore, not all deans are equal. Some deans are masters at their jobs. Other deans have much to learn. All deans, however, are like chairs in that they must navigate the institutional bureaucracy and vie with competing officers to get their jobs done and to gain the support of their superiors.

—Don Chu is a former professor, chair, and dean.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Special Topics: Program Transformation

Curriculum Changes Now to Avoid Program Cuts Later

Joseph P. McGarrity

Enrollment has been dropping at most of the public universities in Arkansas. Many of these schools reacted by eliminating programs. The University of Arkansas at Fort Smith cut five programs, including BAs in political science and Spanish (5News Web Staff 2024). Arkansas State University responded by eliminating nine programs, including a BA in music (DeMarrais 2023). Henderson State cut twenty-five degree programs, including chemistry, biology, and math (Kruse 2022). When universities eliminate programs, they can fire tenured faculty who serve those programs. Indeed, at Henderson State University, forty-four tenured faculty members lost their jobs. Such cuts sent chills through the state's university system, and faculty members in disciplines with low enrollments began to worry—with good reason.

The faculty in the economics program at my school were concerned about the security of their jobs. The University of Central Arkansas graduates only a few economics majors each year. Our department must increase enrollment before our school's administrators start looking for programs to cut. As department chair, I took a first step in this direction by evaluating the courses that we provide. Our economics major had an emphasis in international trade. I have been at my university for twenty-nine years, and we have yet to have one of our majors get a job in international trade. In an attempt to boost our enrollment in economics classes, my department decided to offer an educational experience that better prepares our students for careers that they may actually go into. We identified three areas where our students might get jobs.

First, economics is a good background for law. Some scholars argue that judges decide common law so that their decisions are economically efficient. If true, then students who know economics will understand common law. Further, economics majors often do very well on the LSAT exam, which gives our major a way to sell itself to students who want to go to law school. Realizing that students who want to pursue law school may be interested in an economics program tailored to their needs, we developed an economics major with a prelaw concentration.

To serve this major, we created a class in law and economics, and it has been popular. The prelaw concentration has also been popular, and it has increased the demand for other upper-division-level economics classes; notably, it increased the demand for Public Sector Economics, which is a required class in the prelaw program. The enrollment in Public Sector Economics had gotten as low as five students in a semester, but now the enrollment is three times as high. The prelaw major also requires classes from outside the economics department, including the Symbolic Logic class from the philosophy department. This class should help students excel on the LSAT exam. The prelaw major also requires students to take a writing class (one option is Introduction to Rhetoric). A writing class should help our students after their undergraduate graduation, since law students do so much writing, as do lawyers.

Second, economics is useful for some jobs in health care. Economists can contribute to this field by teaching people how to allocate resources efficiently and by teaching them how prices are determined. In this case, we did not create a new major. Instead, we developed a new minor called the economics and insurance of healthcare administration. The minor requires students to take three insurance classes and three economics classes. One of these economics classes is Healthcare Economics, a course we'd had on the books and just started teaching again.

We believe this minor will be successful because the healthcare administration major, housed in the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences, recently revamped their major. The major used to have some classes from the College of Business Administration. But the new major omitted all business classes and required students to take a minor from the College of Business. Our department, housed in the College of Business, offers the only minor specifically tailored to the needs of students majoring in healthcare administration. All the other minors in our college may have one or two courses that are relevant to healthcare administration majors. The other four or five classes in those minors will have a focus that does not help these majors.

Third, economics is useful in the trucking, supply chain, and logistics industries. Perhaps because I-40 runs through it, Arkansas is the home of several trucking companies. In addition, it is home to Walmart's headquarters, a company that excels at logistics. Because serving these industries is such an obvious thing for our university to do, we already have a center for supply chain management and logistics that is run out of the marketing and management department. My department decided to create a new class, Transportation Economics, which will help an existing program at my school. Although the new class does not give our department more majors or minors, it does give students an upper-division-level economics class that they can use in pursuit of a career in logistics or supply chain management.

The hope is that by filling our upper-division classes, the economics program at the University of Central Arkansas won't be eliminated when the school encounters challenging fiscal times. The experiences of the other Arkansas universities provided us with a warning that we could face cuts just like they did. The steps we took may inoculate us against future cost cutting at our school. We think we achieved this security by changing the focus of our course offerings away from an area that students did not use (international trade) toward areas that are relevant to many career paths (law, healthcare administration, and supply chain management and logistics).

Other department chairs can take a lesson from our experience. Our changes can serve as a template to chairs in other departments that face low enrollment. These chairs should get their departments to modify their course offerings, like we did, so that their departments provide more classes that are relevant to the jobs their students will ultimately seek. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Special Topics: Program Transformation

Building Excellence: Lessons in Programmatic Transformation and Accreditation Success

Vannesa Mueller

In 2018, I accepted the position of program director for our master's program in speech-language pathology, fully aware that the role would bring challenges. Early in 2019, an emeritus faculty member whom I had never met requested a meeting. Over the course of an hour, we reviewed every aspect of the program. He took notes as we discussed our faculty, curriculum, and goals. At the close of our conversation, he revealed a serious concern: University administration was actively considering discontinuing the program. Shortly thereafter, I received confirmation from leadership that closure would be unavoidable if the program failed reaccreditation. This news had profound implications for our faculty, our students, and the community we served.

The challenges were compounded by minimal administrative support, dissent among faculty, and the departure of four faculty members in 2019. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 further complicated operations. Despite these obstacles, I worked to gather evidence to demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards. However, the 2021 site visit, conducted virtually, highlighted critical deficiencies, including inadequate data tracking, inconsistent stakeholder engagement, and insufficient financial resources. Our reliance on paper records created further challenges as we scrambled to scan files for remote review, leading to organizational issues that hampered the site visitors' ability to verify compliance.

After being informed that the program was out of compliance with several key standards, I prepared a detailed two-hundred-page report addressing each concern. This effort secured reaccreditation, preserved the program's future, and set the stage for its ongoing transformation.

The reaccreditation process exposed critical weaknesses in our program, prompting a transformative effort to restructure and elevate its operations. Over three years, we implemented targeted changes, strategic resource management, and data-driven improvements to rebuild the program, achieving both compliance and long-term sustainability. This article shares the strategies and insights from this journey, offering guidance for program directors facing similar challenges.

Our experience serves as a case study in overcoming constraints such as budget limitations, faculty turnover, and resource scarcity. By treating accreditation requirements as a road map for improvement and fostering unity among faculty and stakeholders, we cultivated a culture of accountability and continuous growth, demonstrating that even struggling programs can achieve lasting revitalization.

Reframing Accreditation as an Ally for Change

The reaccreditation outcome, although challenging, became a turning point for our program. Along with highlighting areas of noncompliance, the agency's feedback served as a blueprint for improvement, directing our energy and resources toward critical areas of growth. Viewing the feedback as an opportunity rather than as a criticism transformed our mindset, turning a potential setback into a catalyst for meaningful and lasting change. Achieving reaccreditation, despite the hurdles, renewed our commitment to strengthening the program and provided a clear direction for moving forward.

Leveraging Accreditation Standards

The accreditation report became a powerful tool for securing critical resources, particularly with the support of new upper administration. The report provided clear evidence of infrastructure gaps essential for compliance and student training, enabling me to successfully advocate for a digital system to replace outdated paper records. It also validated the need for administrative support, leading to the approval of a new staff position to manage records and streamline operations.

With written assurance of a consistent annual budget, we gained the stability needed to plan and allocate resources effectively. The combination of objective accreditation feedback and renewed administrative support proved transformative, providing the clarity and confidence to drive meaningful change.

Building Faculty Cohesion and Shared Mission

A critical step in our program's transformation was rallying the faculty around a shared mission of excellence that extended beyond compliance. Rather than treating accreditation as a checklist, I reframed it as an opportunity to elevate the program for the benefit of the students, the faculty, and the community. By communicating the why behind each change and emphasizing their positive influence on student outcomes and community reputation, I helped faculty see these adjustments as proactive steps toward excellence.

Transparency and collaboration were key. Faculty were invited to provide input during open discussions, fostering collective ownership of the program's direction. To further strengthen relationships, we prioritized community-building through regular social events. These gatherings dissolved barriers, boosted morale, and created a sense of camaraderie among faculty and students. For students, these events offered a supportive space to connect and seek guidance, fostering the trust and empowerment essential for their growth.

By integrating collaboration and community-building into our efforts, we cultivated an environment of shared purpose and mutual investment. This supportive culture became the foundation for our program's revitalization and collective commitment to excellence.

Getting Organized and Developing a Systematic Approach

A key element of our program's transformation was establishing a systematic approach to managing the accreditation process. Initially, I engaged the entire faculty, distributing responsibilities for evidence collection. However, this decentralized approach led to inconsistencies and gaps, as faculty were balancing other critical responsibilities. Recognizing the need for a more cohesive strategy, I took full ownership of the process.

This centralized approach, although demanding, ultimately saved time and reduced stress by ensuring consistency and eliminating the need to redo incomplete work. Faculty continued to provide key materials such as syllabi and evaluations while I compiled, verified, and aligned documentation to meet accreditation standards. To streamline the effort, I implemented a structured system that included the following:

- A framework mapping standards to required evidence
- A centralized digital repository for documentation
- A clear timeline for data collection and review
- Open communication to align faculty contributions with compliance goals

This system addressed every accreditation element with precision and consistency. It also fostered a culture of continuous improvement through processes for stakeholder feedback and outcome analysis. Although challenging, centralizing responsibility streamlined the process and laid the foundation for a sustainable program management system.

Tracking Documents

I created detailed tracking documents that mapped each accreditation standard to the specific evidence required. These documents served as a checklist, enabling me to monitor progress and identify gaps in real time. Each standard was broken down into actionable components, with corresponding columns for evidence sources, deadlines, and responsible individuals. This approach ensured that no detail was overlooked and that every requirement was addressed systematically.

Centralized Data Management Practices

A centralized digital repository became the cornerstone of our data management efforts. I established a secure, organized system where all evidence, including student performance data, faculty meeting minutes, course syllabi, and stakeholder feedback, was stored. Files were categorized by accreditation standard and year, making it easy to retrieve and update information as needed. This digital system replaced our outdated reliance on paper files, significantly improving efficiency and accessibility, particularly when preparing for our next site visit.

Regular Compliance Check-Ins

To maintain momentum and accountability, I scheduled regular compliance check-ins throughout the year. These meetings provided an opportunity to review progress on evidence collection, discuss challenges, and ensure alignment with accreditation standards. Faculty were kept informed of the program's progress, and their input was incorporated into decisions about data collection and program improvements. These check-ins also allowed us to address any potential gaps proactively rather than scrambling to resolve them closer to the site visit.

Outcome Data Integration

I developed processes for systematically collecting and analyzing outcome data, including student performance metrics and stakeholder survey results. This data was used not only to demonstrate compliance but also to guide programmatic decisions. For example, survey findings were reviewed during faculty meetings and directly informed updates to the curriculum, clinical training, and resource allocation.

Annual Review System

To ensure that compliance was a continuous process rather than a last-minute effort, I implemented an annual review system. Each year, we revisited tracking documents, updated materials, and reviewed stakeholder feedback. This proactive cycle reduced the stress and workload often associated with reaccreditation while keeping the program consistently aligned with accreditation standards.

Streamlining the process for faculty was key. I focused their contributions on essential materials such as updated syllabi and student evaluation rubrics, allowing them to prioritize teaching and mentoring. Meanwhile, I handled the time-intensive tasks of data management, reporting, and evidence tracking. To simplify their involvement, I provided clear, concise requests with detailed guidelines, highlighting specific sections for alignment with standards rather than overburdening them with unnecessary work.

This balance of delegation and centralized oversight fostered trust and collaboration while ensuring efficiency. By taking responsibility for the logistical and administrative aspects, I created a system that allowed faculty to contribute effectively without being overwhelmed. This approach not only enhanced compliance but also established a foundation for continuous improvement and streamlined operations.

Conclusion

Over the past three years, our program's transformation has brought significant benefits to our faculty, our students, and the community. By constructively addressing accreditation feedback and implementing strategic changes, we strengthened infrastructure, streamlined operations, and enhanced educational and clinical training quality. Faculty now enjoy a more cohesive and supportive environment, reduced administrative burdens, and renewed pride in their work while students experience improved learning and clinical opportunities, knowing they are part of a program committed to their success.

This journey demonstrates that even daunting challenges, such as accreditation pressures and budget constraints, can be catalysts for growth and innovation. I hope our experience inspires other academic leaders to see such challenges as opportunities to reflect, adapt, and rebuild, creating programs that meet accreditation standards and exceed expectations, leaving a lasting impact on students, institutions, and communities. ▲

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Special Topics: Program Transformation

How Departments and Chairs Can Benefit from a Move Toward Skills-Based General Education

Tammy Rogers

As a department chair in the College of Business, curriculum development in general education may not seem to be the most natural fit. However, in 2012, our university was in a unique position to reexamine the general education curriculum. We were facing internal pressure because the program assessment and structure was problematic for a variety of reasons and because of external pressures due to new legislative requirements and accreditation compliance issues. During this time of heightened focus on general education, there was a significant discussion about the role of general education in the broader curriculum of all majors at the university. Our provost decided that a focused review of the general education program was necessary and formed a task force to develop a proposal for a new general education program. The task force had representation from every college, and I was appointed as the representative for the College of Business.

Prior to the formation of the task force, the university conducted focus groups with students and employers to gather information about their perceptions of the general education program and the elements that should be included as part of a quality general education program. The student focus groups' results indicated several student concerns with the general education program, including a perception that their general education courses lacked relevance and a desire for increased flexibility to allow more general education courses to satisfy requirements in the major. The employer focus group identified key skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological competency as critical elements for a good undergraduate education, mirroring results at the national level. The Hart Research Associates report, *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn* (2010), and the AAC&U employer report (Finley 2023) echo these same skill sets as important elements of a quality program. During the task force work process, we started looking at general education as a method of developing the skills that all of our graduates need as they enter the workforce or pursue further education.

There were four general skills-based themes that ran through the discussions about student learning outcomes that are critical for all students graduating from our university: effective communication, critical inquiry, appreciation of diverse viewpoints, and responsible living. We studied best practices in general education and determined that these skills can be developed better when practiced within a discipline. We wanted departments to identify existing courses that already had a strong effective communication focus where students would naturally be developing and applying these skills using knowledge from a specific discipline. For example, nursing majors must be able to interact with diverse populations as well as effectively communicate a treatment plan and answer patient questions about their course of treatment while business majors must be able to give a short elevator pitch-type speech that highlights the critical points of their product or analysis of a business decision. Writing across the discipline programs or writing across the curriculum programs are good examples of how effective written communication is needed in all programs, but it may look very different from one discipline to the next.

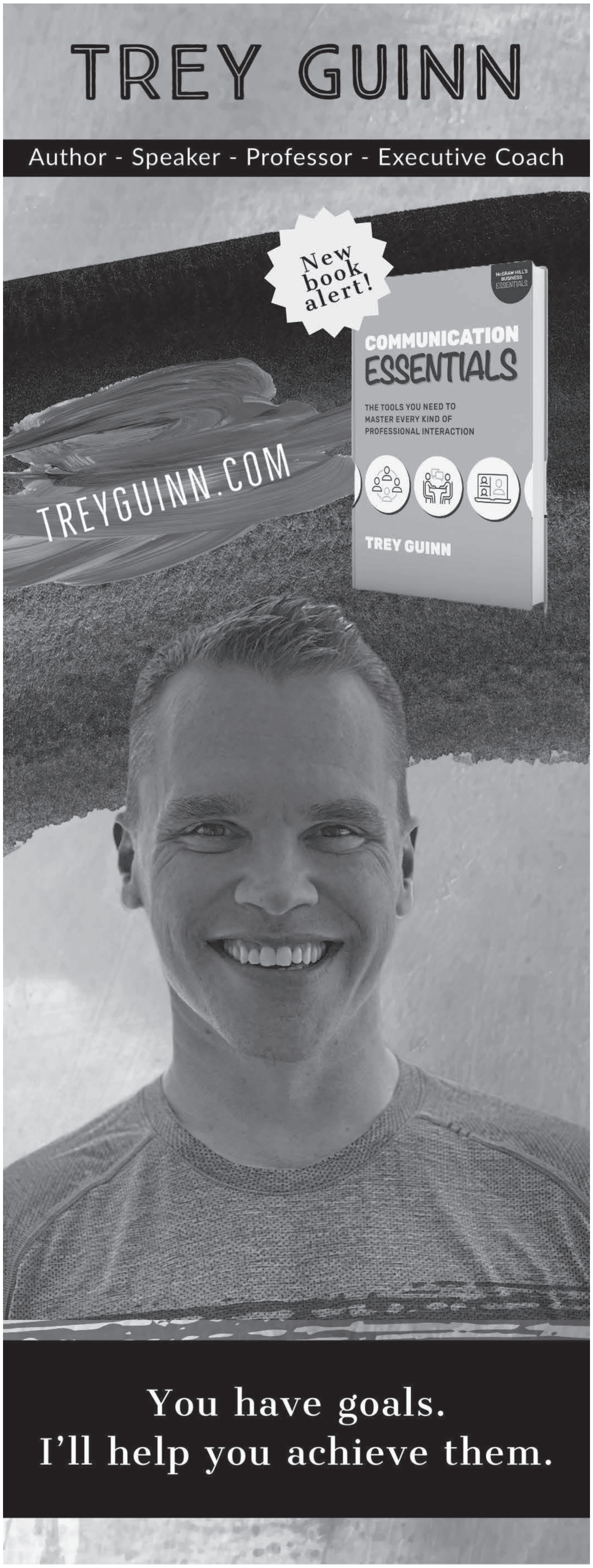
The focus on a skills-based curriculum allowed us to look at general education and see how multiple disciplines offer courses that develop similar student skills in a meaningful way. Ultimately, a business communication course may offer the oral communication skills that students need just as effectively or maybe even more effectively than a traditional speech course. An interpersonal communication course may better meet the needs of nursing and education majors. All students will be learning critical oral communication skills, but they'll also be learning them in a way that is meaningful for their major. Conversely, it may benefit programs to have students taking courses offered from other disciplines across campus. For example, a laboratory science class develops a critical inquiry approach that students can then apply in other contexts. I frequently tell my finance students that a good financial analysis report is organized similar to a science lab report. Because they have all had that common experience, they understand the structure that I'm talking about when I make this comparison, having already gained those skills in their science classes in the general education curriculum.

By focusing on a skills-based general education curriculum, the new curriculum created several advantages for our institution and our departments. We were able to decrease the number of credit hours in the program at the lower division, but we created general education designations for upper-division courses where students further apply the skills they gain in their lower-division general education program. Departments are able to propose new or existing courses that align with the general education skills for inclusion in the general education curriculum. The change allows programs that might be considered outside of the general education program an opportunity to demonstrate how their courses may fit within the skills outcomes of the curriculum. Every course in the curriculum is reviewed by the general education council to verify that the desired skills are being taught or applied in the course.

The skills-based curriculum allowed for some significant curricular development opportunities for departments across campus. For the College of Business, we went from having only two courses included in the lower-division general education curriculum in 2012 to having twelve business courses included in 2024. A business student is not likely to take all of these courses, but they can apply up to four courses in both their general education curriculum and their business program requirements. Between the reduction in credit hours at the lower division and the introduction of additional courses that meet general education requirements and major requirements, business majors gained a potential additional fifteen hours of free electives. This change allows our majors the opportunity to pursue a minor in a different field of study either inside or outside our college based on student interest. We went from three minors offered in the college to thirteen minors and some certificate programs as well. Most of this would not have been possible without the general education curricular changes. We see more double majors and more minors, and we have more students graduating with honors designations. We developed general education courses that can be offered as part of a study abroad program leading to additional student participation. Undecided students have the opportunity to experience a business course as part of general education and potentially choose to become a major in our college. By including a few major-specific courses in the general education curriculum, we allow declared students to connect with their major sooner and transition more smoothly to the college environment. All of these curricular changes that have bolstered student recruitment, enrollment, engagement, and retention were made possible by moving to a skills-based general education program.

A skills-based program simplified assessment for the general education program. There are now only eleven learning outcomes distributed across the four skills areas of the curriculum compared to the eighty-three learning outcomes of the earlier general education model. Each skills area is assessed on a rotating four-year cycle. Faculty members teaching in the general education curriculum collect artifacts of student work that are submitted directly to the general education director and scored by a committee during the summer. Using this method simplifies the process both for the faculty members teaching and for the reviewers. Departments no longer have to submit assessment reports for general education that then must be cobbled together into a university-level report. The general education director is able to easily produce a unified report from the data provided through the process.

A final significant advantage of the skills-based general education program comes when talking to prospective students and their parents as well as potential employers. We can readily articulate what a student will learn as part of the program and explain the variety of different courses that a student can choose from to meet their general education requirements. The question of "Why do I have to take this course?" is simply answered when we talk about



skills development. We have an easy to explain desirable skill set that students will acquire in pursuit of a degree at our university.

In summary, as a department chair, I recognized several advantages of being an active participant in the general education process. At my university, I found that developing a skills-based general education program generated the following benefits:

- Provides an easy to explain set of desirable skills that students will acquire in the pursuit of their degree, which supports recruitment efforts
- Allows for additional general education courses from less traditional disciplines based on the skills content of the course, thus promoting a potential for earlier connection with major-specific content by students and bolstering retention efforts
- Allows for additional curriculum development at the major/minor level
- Allows for clear assessment and feedback for student learning in general education where assessment is often fractured and haphazard in nature ▲

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Case Studies for Academic Leaders

Peter Facione, a principal at Measured Reasons, which provides leadership coaching, institutional planning, and workshops for higher education and beyond, has created a list of case studies on topics affecting academic leaders and provided them on academia.edu, an open-access platform. Cases include such timely topics as the following:

- Using AI, someone has produced and posted an extremely negative deepfake video.
- An instructor tries to handle a verbally aggressive and disruptive classroom visitor.
- A chair seeks the dean's advice on making a very difficult colleague take on a needed assignment.
- An angry and aggrieved assistant professor accuses a senior colleague of plagiarizing research.
- Senior faculty members compare inconsistent interpretations of college budget policy.

Visit https://independent.academia.edu/PeterFacione/Cases for the complete list of case studies for chairs, deans, and other academic leaders.

LAWSUITS AND RULINGS

Accommodations

Case: *Harmon v. Texas Southern University*, No. 14-21-00125 (Tex. Ct. App. 06/15/23)

Ruling: A Texas Court of Appeals reinstated a dismissed claim in a suit against Texas Southern University.

Significance: A disabled employee who needs an accommodation must explain that the adjustment in working conditions she is seeking is for a medical condition, but she doesn't have to use the phrase *reasonable accommodation.*

Summary: The plaintiff was a TSU instructor with degenerative knee joint disease. In November 2018, a TSU benefits specialist told the plaintiff she was entitled to leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act to undergo knee surgery scheduled in January 2019.

On December 14, the department chair asked the dean to deny the plaintiff permission to teach in the spring 2019 semester because he claimed that she wasn't available for students during required office hours, didn't return student calls and emails, was "abrupt" and "bullying" toward students, graded students too harshly, and refused to serve on committees.

On December 17, the department chair sent an email to the plaintiff stating "Required meeting 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, December 18, 2018, 309 Hannah Hall" to discuss the termination of her employment.

The plaintiff, who was working from home because the TSU fall semester had ended, responded by immediately sending one email to the department chair and another to the dean.

The email she sent to the department chair stated, "I regret that I will not be able to make the meeting. I have a doctor's appointment." The department chair responded, "I must insist on your presence at the meeting tomorrow morning at 9:30. Your continued employment is contingent upon you meeting us."

The plaintiff's email to the dean stated, "I am unable to meet because I have a doctor's appointment. I have been struggling with a knee injury. The knee is so swollen, it is difficult for me to bend. Please let me know what this meeting is about."

The plaintiff filed a suit after she was fired for failing to attend the December 18 meeting, and one of her claims was a failure to accommodate. She also filed an appeal when the trial court judge eventually dismissed the claim.

TSU advanced several reasons to justify the dismissal, and one of them was a failure to request a specific accommodation. But the appellate court said that it was easy to understand from the December 17 emails that the plaintiff needed the meeting either canceled, moved to another time or date, or perhaps conducted by video or teleconference.

In addition, it said that a disabled employee wasn't required to come up with a solution on her own because an employee's accommodation request triggered an employer's duty to engage in an interactive process so that both the employer and the employee could arrive at a solution. The appellate court reinstated the claim and sent the suit back to the judge for trial. ▲

Gender Discrimination

Case: *McKnight et al. v. Board of Governors of Glenville State University et al.,* No. 23-ICA-345 (W.Va. Ct. App. 06/11/24)

Ruling: A West Virginia Court of Appeals reinstated a claim against Glenville State University.

Significance: An actionable hostile work environment because of sexual harassment exists if verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature has the purpose or the effect of either unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Summary: The plaintiff was employed by GSU as an assistant professor of music and the director of bluegrass programs. She eventually filed a suit asserting several claims, alleging that the provost and the department chair wouldn't let her serve on committees, deprived her of a full slate of student advisees, prevented her from instructing students in the bluegrass program, kept her from teaching core classes, stopped her from teaching a course she had taught for the previous ten years, wouldn't let her run the Pioneer Stage Bluegrass Music and Education Center she had created, kept her from receiving the stipend for running the center, prevented her from teaching a full course load as required by GSU, and didn't pay her at the same rate as similarly situated male employees.

In her claim of a hostile work environment caused by sexual harassment, the plaintiff alleged that the department chair once said a female colleague must have been sleeping with someone to get promoted and that the provost once referred to the plaintiff in a meeting with the board of governors by saying "this girl" shouldn't be on the faculty. The plaintiff also filed an appeal after the trial court judge dismissed the claim.

The appellate court said that an actionable hostile work environment because of sexual harassment existed if verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature had either the purpose or the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

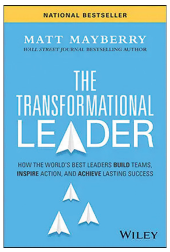
The court also said that whether workplace sexual harassment was sufficiently severe and persistent to seriously affect the psychological well-being of an employee was a question to be decided by evaluating the totality of the circumstances.

The panel reversed the trial court's decision, ruling that the plaintiff had sufficiently alleged sexually discriminatory remarks directed at her and other female employees, actions of the provost and the department chair meant to embarrass, and gender discrimination regarding compensation and job opportunities. ▲

BOOK REVIEW

The Transformational Leader: How the World's Best Leaders Build Teams, Inspire Action, and Achieve Lasting Success

Matt Mayberry
Wiley, 2024
288 pp., $28.00



The Transformational Leader by Matt Mayberry provides solid insights for any leader to consider. The lessons come from sports, military, corporate, and nonprofit leaders, and many parts are translatable to higher education. For example, any leader benefits from more intentional and self-reflective practices, and this book provides numerous stories and examples of how to begin to be more self-reflective. There are some areas in particular that will resonate with chairs and those who are considering being chairs in colleges and universities. Successful academic leaders are thinking about the future of higher education and what their place will be in it, and this book provides some fodder for that thinking and some specific prompts for actions to improve.

At times it takes some imagination when reading this book about how to apply the lessons in an academic context and specifically to department chairs. The author's points about the team and playing to the strengths within a team are really useful as one thinks of departmental culture and how departments can be more effective teams, particularly in rotating chair models where peers lead and are also led by one another.

There are plenty of things to glean here about the ways you can use the chair role to make things better even if you are a reluctant chair leader taking your turn with a job you maybe did not want. The book offers ways to think about leaving things better than you found them and adding value to the department while you are in the role.

The section on how to attend to your own energy and have it work to serve your goals can be useful to academic leaders of all levels and for faculty as well. The right time to do certain things makes a big difference in how well you do them and how you feel about doing them. This section prompts some self-discovery so that you can identify how your energy waxes and wanes and then use your energy in the best ways to achieve your goals.

I was also intrigued by the section on practices to become a team that trusts one another. The author talks about how to get to know the people in your department in new ways outside of work. I often hear from chairs that their department members sometimes function like several independent contractors rather than as a team and also that in general no one has an appetite for what they see as a waste of time with icebreakers. Finding the right tone is key to avoid forced fun. But once you hit on something that works, it can provide tremendous benefits. One department at my institution has created an annual scavenger hunt where students, faculty, and staff participate together. It has become a highlight of the year. The intention was for the hunt to be for new students before a whole department gathering to greet first-year students, but because it was new, both returning students and colleagues could do it together the first time. It was such a hit that the chair now has to create a new one each year so that the whole department can participate.

Although I appreciate the notion of playing to strengths, the book does not do as much to help with how you attend to weaknesses on the team, particularly when you did not hire nor cannot fire anyone. That is more specific to an academic context, but accountability really does look different at a university than at the organizations Mayberry usually describes. The rotating nature of chair leadership on many campuses means that any department member might next be the leader. That can make for a tough time addressing mediocre players.

The book provides many suggestions for self-work, which is crucial to all leadership. Even though essential, finding the time for those patterns is like learning to type. It takes time up front but is worth it in terms of the results.

I thought the book could benefit from more discussion around cultural humility, an insufficient but necessary ingredient to be a solid academic chair. Also, the author took a curious approach in chapter 24, "The Game-Changing Power of Diversity." I'm not sure how Mayberry is defining DE&I, but the way the chapter reads, it plays into unfounded concerns regarding what it's all about in a corporate or an academic context. He says he's not an expert so therefore will not approach the topic from that frame, yet the whole chapter does in fact focus on both diversity and inclusion as the frame. He argues for thinking differently but then states, "Still, I'm not saying compromise your exacting standards or hire less qualified candidates in the name of diversity—again this is not about DE&I." But then the sentence that follows says, "Instead, rethink and reshape your recruiting process to ensure it is inclusive, expansive, and perpetually aligned with an undeniably diverse future" (p. 213). That sentence uses the *D* and *I* of DE&I in it. So maybe the equity part is what the author is attempting to distance from, but the deficit frame at the end of this chapter is unfortunate, particularly when the rest of the book is appreciative and not lacking in approach.

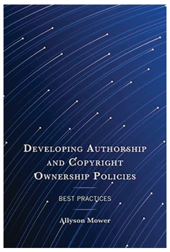
Chapter 17, "Unlocking the Power of Inspirational Leadership," provides some good examples of how to put the principles into practice. However, the principles are not data driven but rather derived from looking at leadership and perhaps commonsense approaches playing into our human tendency to believe things we want to be true or only question when we disagree (see above related to my own questions about DE&I). ▲

Reviewed by **Brooke Barnett,** provost and executive vice president at Butler University. Email: bbarnett@butler.edu

BOOK REVIEW

Developing Authorship and Copyright Ownership Policies: Best Practices

Allyson Mower
Rowman & Littlefield, 2024
114 pp., $45.00



Developing Authorship and Copyright Ownership Policies: Best Practices is beautifully written and concise and offers invaluable and practical information to academic chairs about how various types of authorships relate to copyright ownership, the scholarly communication process, and best practices with authorship policy development and implementation. The author, Allyson Mower, MA, MLIS, exhibits the expertise and experience to convey this unique information to readers, given that she's served as a scholarly communications and copyright librarian at the University of Utah Marriott Library since 2008. At a high level, Mower discusses differing types of authorship; the various types of copyright ownership each of these authorships may obtain; a brief history of copyright in the United States; how the scholarly communication process relates to copyright; and best practices for developing authorship policies using a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by design approach. She also offers several helpful and understandable sample authorship policies that academic chairs may use as a starting point.

Chapter 1 defines and offers a distinctive discussion on different types of authorship such as an author-as-employee, scholarly critique of an original expression authorship, academic/research authorship, and author-as-convener. This chapter also conveys a brief history of authorship efforts in the United States involving colleges (Puritan's College, now Harvard, 1636), scholarly societies (American Philosophical Society, 1743), scholarly journals (*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 1771), government efforts (Smithsonian, 1846), university presses (Cornell University Press, 1869), and others. Furthermore, Mower describes timelines of DEI firsts related to scholarly communications at various institutions. This chapter also presents useful brief summaries of types of authorship and DEI authorship history that will be helpful for academic chairs to reference for their own pedagogy or research.

Chapter 2 discusses the elements of copyright ownership, a brief history of copyright law and registrations, what may and may not be copyrightable, and how various types of authorship relate to copyright. For example, the author defines and offers detailed discussions of the elements of copyright ownership in the current United States Copyright Act, including copyrightability, exclusive rights, works-for-hire, joint authorship, and compilations and collected works. Of particular importance, the author devotes a portion of this chapter to analyzing how work-for-hire products interact with copyright policy and the importance of understanding current institutional copyright policy and how said policy may affect students' rights as authors. This chapter offers great value to academic chairs seeking to understand how to craft and understand current copyright policy and how it may affect various types of works.

Chapter 3 offers a discussion of various parts of a scholarly communication system. These parts may consist of journals, books, reports, websites, databases, oral histories, and art. Mower also illustrates some racial inequities currently existing in scholarly communication systems and how certain policies might correct these injustices. This chapter is invaluable to academic chairs seeking information about the parts that make up a scholarly communications system and offers thorough definitions and examples of each part. This chapter also highlights how the differing types of authors (author-as-convener, author-as-employee, etc.) may contribute to a scholarly communications system. One other valuable and exceptional part of this chapter is the author's discussion of the unique scenarios that works of art manifest within a scholarly communications environment. Some of these situations include a discussion of the types of art: textiles, paintings, sculptures, dance, song, and the like and how each relates to copyright; the challenges of locating art publishers; and the uncommon but crucial significance of including authorship policies for art. For academic chairs who work with art, this is a must-read chapter.

Chapter 4 presents guidance for implementing best practices in policy development. Some of the sage advice offered directs policy developers to initially offer a simple statement that provides a clear purpose of the policy itself. For example, the policy developer may consider crafting an opening statement that expresses who the policy affects, the value-add, what is affected, and the why behind the policy. Mower also offers several collaborative options for policy development and guidance such as looking to professional associations that can offer policy examples, social media sites, and others. The author suggests approaching policy development in an iterative manner instead of a static option. Another significant recommendation is gathering a diverse working group to develop policy so that many perspectives are present to vet and develop a robust and successful policy. Other helpful information for academic chairs is the suggestion that when crafting policy, the developers must remain cognizant of other ancillary but related policies that may affect or even overrule content they are trying to craft, such as academic freedom issues, data ownership, and privacy. Overall, chapter 4 presents valuable information for academic chairs regarding pragmatic approaches to policy development.

Chapter 5 offers academic chairs important advice regarding how to create holistic authorship policy that may result in shared copyright ownership. This allows for nonexclusive copyright ownership where authors, artists, and other types of creators become partners with publishers rather than competitors. This chapter also presents helpful tips on how thoughtful policy development can prevent discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, gender expression, veteran status, religion, ability, or ethnicity.

Chapters 6 and 7 share full-text sample copyright ownership policies and sample authorship policies. For academic chairs and their staff who do not know where to begin in crafting such a policy, these chapters offer templates one may reference to help develop a policy that meets their specific copyright and authorship requirements. These sample policies cover a panoply of scenarios such as copyright and art; copyright and economic development; specific authorship rights; and how to improve and promote authorship accuracy, fairness, equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts.

In summation, this book is a must read for academic chairs and their staff who are seeking to revisit or gain a better understanding of the various types of copyright ownerships that different kinds of authors may obtain. Readers will also gain fresh knowledge regarding the current synergies of copyright law and scholarly communications. For those seeking to craft copyright ownership or authorship policies, this book offers a treasure trove of concise examples. I highly recommend that academic chairs read this work and offer it to their department members. ▲

Reviewed by **Kris Helge**, part-time faculty at Rutgers University and deputy director of information management at the Colorado Judicial Branch. Email: kh771@rutgers.edu