Personal Survival
(or, how to really do the job)
Your primary job is to stay sane enough to respond to the madness on your desk.

Fred Schwarzbach
Dean of Liberal Studies at New York University
(in the Chronicle of Higher Education)
Accept that you are an authority figure.
At least temporarily.
Accept also that you will now have to play a dual role.

“Sometimes that means speaking truth to power, other times it means speaking truth to colleagues.”
Kevin Gannon
Grow a thick skin (if you can).
Find a confidant(e).
Be aware of your own particular vulnerabilities.
Question yourself regularly, but don’t second-guess everything.
Meaning, don’t go here...

“The job is hard because it’s hard, not because you’re defective.”
C.K. Gunsalus,
The College Administrator’s Survival Guide

“I’ll leave you alone with your thoughts,” she said. How cruel.
It’s okay to have negative feelings.

Jenette Goldstein, Aliens, 1986
Remember that the academy has a high tolerance for eccentricity – and that it can reward behaviours you may not like.

Emma Thompson as Professor Sybill Trelawney in the Harry Potter films
Don’t be confrontational – but don’t avoid necessary conflict.
There are some people you just cannot argue with.
Don’t try to go it alone – better to be safe than sorry.
Be clear on expectations with everyone.
Write it down!
But be very careful about what you put in writing or put in a file.

Conrad Black on security video
Hollinger Inc. Headquarters
Toronto
20 May 2005
“Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine.”

Don’t let yourself be pressured by importunate requests.
Corollary: don’t answer anything right away, even if you like to be efficient.
Abraham Lincoln’s advice to Edwin Stanton, his Secretary of War:
‘Write a sharp letter.’
‘Then put it in the stove.’
On the other hand, don’t delay delivering hard news.
Take responsibility – but sometimes you can blame the policies or blame the Dean.
Try not to make mistakes, but it’s not the end of the world if you do (usually).
In impossible situations, err on the side of generosity.

The Judgement of Solomon
Nicolas Poussin
1649
Cultivate a sense of humour.
But it’s okay to cry.

Sean Astin
*The Fellowship of the Ring*
2001
Keep Tylenol and alcohol in your desk drawer.

And Kleenex.
Feedback?
Yes, please.