Becoming an Academic Chair/Director

Nancy Waite & David Taylor
Who are we?

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What do Deans want from their Chairs/Directors?

• Link the Department/School activities to the Faculty’s needs
• Manage well – “make my job easier”
• Present solutions or alternatives, rather than problems
• See the positive opportunities of the position (visioning, strategic planning, creative restructuring, etc.)
• Manage things relatively independently
• Contribute to and work with the Faculty’s strategic plan
• Succession plan
• The Deans want you to be happy!
What are Policies?

• Expressions of principles and governance: University policies document the principles and procedures to be followed in numerous aspects of University life and, as such, are binding on members of the University community. (Policy 1)

• In spite of the inclusion of procedures, policies ≠ always instructions.

• Policies often require interpretation.

• Policies generally emphasize legal responsibilities but need interpretation re advisable courses of action.

• Policies can also be aspirational in their language.
Policy 40: The Chair

- 2,557 words
  - Term of office: 221 words.
  - Appointment and reappointment procedures: 1,432 words.
  - Removal of the office holder before expiration of term: 540 words.
  - Qualifications, duties, and responsibilities: 360 words.
The chair has the **dual role** of representing the particular department’s policies and points of view, and, as an officer of the faculty, making independent judgments on total faculty matters.

The chair will report directly to the dean of the faculty.

In addition, the chair is a member of the university’s academic leadership team and as such contributes to the academic mission of the university through formal and informal venues, and interacts with chairs and other academic and academic support leaders from across the campus.
The principal duties of a chair shall include:
the advancement of the academic mission of the unit,
the upholding of the highest academic standards,
the assignment of equitable responsibilities,
the management of the departmental budget,
the implementation of the academic program,
the oversight of the department’s support staff,
the allocation of space,
the carrying out of annual performance reviews, and
recommendations on matters pertaining to promotion and
tenure,
new appointments and reappointments, and salaries.
Atlas Holding the Universe
Santiago de Compostela
Spain
Coping tactic:
Many, many, many of these burdens can be lightened with the assistance of the Faculty Executive Officer, other members of the Dean’s Office, and Department Administrative Assistant(s).
Each unit is different in how big it is, what it encompasses and therefore, what the Chair/Director does.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

Being ‘accountable’ does not mean that you have to do everything yourself.
But it may mean that you have to answer for things that you personally did not do.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

• The advancement of the academic mission of the unit and the upholding of the highest academic standards –
  • Includes:
    • strategic planning,
    • regular program review and renewal,
    • new program development,
    • support and dissemination of faculty research,
    • development,
    • networking,
    • community outreach...

• Assistance?
  • Graduate/Undergraduate Associate Chairs, Associate Deans.
  • Faculty (and School/Department) Development Officers.
  • Office of Research, Associate Deans of Research.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

- The assignment of equitable responsibilities –
  - Faculty: teaching assignments; distribution in timetabling; service tasks; sabbaticals; etc.
  - Staff: balancing tasks and respecting job descriptions (or changing them where necessary); protecting staff from disproportionate requests from faculty, getting the right staff to support faculty.
- Assistance?
  - Faculty Executive Officers, administrative staff support.
  - Human Resources.
  - FAUW.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

• The management of the departmental budget, the allocation of space –
  • Depends on size of unit
  • Assistance?
    • Faculty Financial Officers, Executive Officers.
    • Departmental support staff.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

• The implementation of the academic program –
  • Annual course assignments.
  • Scheduling (timetabling).
  • Allocation of graduate supervision.
  • Hiring of sessional instructors.
  • Assignment of teaching assistants.
  • Assistance?
    • Graduate/Undergraduate Associate Chairs.
    • Departmental support staff.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

• The oversight of the department’s support staff –
  • This might be direct or indirect.
  • Assignment of responsibilities, training and mentoring, provision for professional development.
  • Assistance?
    • Faculty Executive Officers.
    • Human Resources.
    • Departmental support staff.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

• The carrying out of annual performance reviews –
  • Staff: annual appraisal in accordance with Policy 18.
  • Faculty: annual or biennial performance review in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement, §13.
• Assistance?
  • Human Resources.
  • Faculty Executive Officers.
  • FAUW.
  • The Dean.
• ALP Workshop.
Chair/Director Accountabilities

- Recommendations on matters pertaining to promotion and tenure, new appointments and reappointments, and salaries –
  - Promotion and tenure: Policy 77.
  - Faculty appointments and reappointments: Policy 76 (see also 77).
  - Salaries: negotiating with new hires.
- Assistance?
  - The Dean.
  - FAUW.
  - ALP Workshop.
Does Policy 40 cover it all?

Sounds mainly transactional – which is likely 60-80% of the job. Other 20-40% are:
- Strategic and adaptive leadership
- Urgent turning points
- General welfare and career development for staff and faculty.
What other policies should you be aware of or familiar with?
Policy 33: Ethical Behaviour

Those with supervisory authority (academic or employment) are expected to be proactive in promoting respect for the general principles articulated in Section I and, with assistance and guidance from the Conflict Management and Human Rights Office (CMAHRO), are responsible for dealing with alleged violations of those principles.

See Guidelines on ‘Harassment and Discrimination’.
Policy 34: Health, Safety and Environment

§6.3 on the duties of supervisors: ‘Supervisors must provide for the health and safety of employees under their authority.’

Awareness, investigation, corrective action, education. See also Guidelines such as ‘Safety Guidelines for Field Work’.
Policy 42: Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence

Persons with supervisory authority have a duty to inform the University when they become aware of an incident of Sexual Violence. A Disclosure or Report to a “person with supervisory authority” can lead to an investigation by the University.

Persons with supervisory authority should consult with the Sexual Violence Response Coordinator when they are assisting someone who Discloses or Reports an incident of Sexual Violence.
Policy 61: Religious Accommodation

61: The university will provide time off to accommodate religious observances... Options must be discussed with the employee’s supervisor or manager and approved in advance of the time to be taken as a religious observance.

Policy 65: Equality in Employment

65: It is expected that all department Heads, managers, supervisors, and individuals in a position to influence a decision concerning employment of an individual or the status or working conditions of faculty and staff will ensure the consistent application of this policy and be aware of the legislation which governs these activities.
Policy 67: Employee Assistance Program (EAP, now EFAP)

Responsibility of the employee to partake in the program.
Responsibility of the supervisor to respect the confidentiality of the employee:

*No information is shared with supervisors or co-workers.*

When treatment requires absence from work, it is the employee’s responsibility to inform her/his supervisor, who is not entitled to know the details of the assistance but may confirm with the EAP Chair that EAP assistance is involved.
Policy 70: Student Petitions and Grievances

This is largely Associate Dean and Associate Chair territory.

But – Chairs/Directors may become involved in student grievances when it involves the reassessment of a piece of academic work.

They may also become involved if the student grievance turns out to be a Policy 33 matter.
Just be thankful that you are not responsible for alcohol (Policy 21), tobacco (Policy 29), and firearms (Policy 35).

Or pets (Policy 32).
The Chairs’ Handbook
What else to do...

• Make sure your mandatory and recommended training is up to date
• Attend sessions outlining new initiatives – support for indigenous students/curriculum, MTCU new regs or directions (on-line, funding...)
• Keep it fresh – go to programs in related but outside your discipline areas
• Make the job, your job
• Remember to find your confidante and book your vacations
What else to do...

• Mentoring and career development (staff and faculty).
• In general, watching out for the well-being of others (without being intrusive).
• Participate in Faculty and University governance.
“Want Happier Professors? Try Being Nice.”
Peter Schmidt, CHE April 28 2017

“When it comes to keeping tenured professors content in their jobs, you can catch more flies with honey than you can with big faculty-focused strategic initiatives, a new study suggests.”

“The study, based on survey data from more than 3,600 recently tenured associate professors at doctoral universities, found that their organizational commitment hinged far more on whether they believed they worked in a caring, supportive environment than on their sense that administrators had undertaken broad efforts to support the faculty.”
The ‘Acting Chair/Director’

• What an Acting Chair/Director should take on depends largely on the time limit of their appointment –
  • For a year? Everything, but the Acting Chair/Director should stay in touch with the Real Chair/Director.
  • For a few days or a week? Sign only the most uncontroversial of documents. And if there is an emergency, go straight to the Dean.
What Chairs/Directors DON’T do

• Get involved in academic discipline.
• Make academic decisions about students.
• Inquire into medical circumstances of employees.
• Let the Dean be blind-sided.
• Use the position to reward themselves.
• Try to get around policy or process.
• Communicate confidential information to others.
Survey of 3,000 academic Chairs in the US – the top five tasks for which Chairs said they needed help and guidance:

1. Dealing with problem faculty.
2. Guiding Department change.
3. Evaluating faculty and staff.
4. Nourishing Department climate.
5. Managing conflicts.

Whom to ask?

• The Dean
• The Associate Dean(s)
• Other Chairs or ex-Chairs
• The Faculty Executive Officer (or other staff in Dean’s office)
• Your administrative assistant
• The Secretariat (Alice Raynard, Associate University Secretary)
• Conflict Management and Human Rights Office (CMAHRO)
• FAUW
• HR
• Me, Nancy Waite nmwaite@uwaterloo.ca; 519-748-8622)
Some Practical Resources

- Academic Leadership Program website
- Chairs’ Handbook
Questions?