LAMAR UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT CHAIR HANDBOOK

A Guide Prepared by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement at Lamar University

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

YOUR ROLE **3**

LEADERSHIP **5**

PROMOTION AND TENURE **11**

TEACHING **12**

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES **17**

SERVICE **19**

ADMINISTRATION **19**

APPOINTMENTS **34**

EVALUATION OF CHAIRS **35**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is both to provide valuable guidance to individuals who may not have extensive experience in administrative roles and also serve as a resource to long-term leaders. It provides information to help quickly grasp important concerns and strategies necessary for effective leadership and management.

Your colleagues within the department, along with your dean and provost, have endorsed your appointment as department chair. This serves as a clear indication of the high regard they hold for you. However, it's important to acknowledge that the role will present challenges. Beyond the administrative and procedural aspects of maintaining the department's operations, you will also be responsible for managing relationships among faculty and staff both within and outside the department.

Equally significant, your role extends to collaborating with others to envision the department's future trajectory. This involves nurturing faculty aspirations and fostering an environment that is both vibrant and supportive for students, faculty, and staff. As external factors such as market dynamics, state funding, and demographic shifts exert greater influence on public higher education, department chairs are increasingly expected to comprehend the broader institutional landscape and ensure that their departments actively contribute to the institution's success.

In this multifaceted role, you'll need to strike a balance between day-to-day tasks, the department's institutional role, its overarching vision, and your personal objectives for growth as an educator and scholar.

The following sections offer general guidance, Lamar University-specific insights regarding beneficial programs, and practical suggestions pertinent to effective chair leadership.

YOUR ROLE

Per the Lamar University Faculty Handbook, department chairs shall report to the deans and be administratively responsible for faculty, curricula, programs, and student majors in the academic departments. In addition, chairs shall assist the deans in maintaining the standards and policies of the university. Other duties as described in the Faculty Handbook include but are not limited to:

- Acceptance of requests for retirement, resignation, and release from employment contracts to be forwarded to the appropriate channels.
- Amending student grades within the confines of Lamar University policies.
- Approval of invited speakers to address classes or other student assemblies such as student organizations.
- Arrangement for course continuation in the event of extended faculty absences. The department chair is responsible for the uninterrupted delivery of instruction.
- Assessment of applications for tenure and promotion to higher academic ranks.
- Assignment of faculty for advisement and registration duties.
- Assignment of teaching loads within the confines of the requirements of the faculty handbook.
- Assurance of faculty submission of syllabi and vitae in accordance with state law (HB 2504).
- Completion of annual evaluations of all faculty and staff within the department regarding performance and merit.
- Completion of purchasing for needed classroom supplies.
- Completion of requirements of Employment Exit Checklists for faculty or staff leaving the employment of Lamar University.
- Department approval of delivery style of courses (face-to-face, online, hybrid).
- Evaluation of faculty credentials for hiring and appropriate rank assignment.
- Formation and convening of departmental committees as needed or required to facilitate the policy and decision-making needs of the department.

- Maintenance of academic responsibility, professional integrity, and performance of duties to the official end of the semester or term, including commencement.
- Monitoring and assurance that additional employment does not interfere with faculty's university obligations.
- Oversight of any directors of academic programs within the academic department.
- Oversight of departmental peer review processes for post tenure review.
- Oversight of faculty-student relations issues at the department level.
- Participation in review of requests for salary increase.
- Prescription of orientation, evaluation, and professional development for full-time, part-time, and continuing adjunct faculty.
- Review and approval of adds, drops, and withdrawals to department courses.
- Review and approval of course examination policies and schedules.
- Review and approval of staff time sheet submissions and faculty leave reports.
- Review and evaluation of emergency and bereavement leaves.
- Review and evaluation of faculty absences from class in excess of one class day.
- Review and evaluation of requests for faculty to enroll as a student in course work.
- Review and evaluation of requests of faculty for outside employment.
- Review cases of academic dishonesty for potential disciplinary action.
- Review appeals to decisions of academic dishonesty investigations.
- Review of 2nd and 4th year peer reviews of tenure progress with the evaluated faculty member with discussion of any areas of weaknesses and provision of a plan for improvement.
- Review of faculty applications for graduate faculty membership.
- Review of faculty grading policies when requested formally by a student in the department.
- Review of content to be published about the department in promotional, marketing, and public relations materials and on social media platforms.
- Review of observance of faculty office hours.

- Service to the Council of Instructional Departments (CID) who advise the president and provost on policies and actions for the improvement of academic departmental administration and more effective communication within the organizational structure of the university.
- See Appendix A of the Faculty Handbook for a Summary of Academic Administrative Procedures which further outlines chair duties.

LEADERSHIP

Knowing Your Vision

For new department chairs in a university, understanding and cultivating a shared vision for your department is a fundamental aspect of your role. Your capacity to effectively build and communicate this vision will significantly influence the direction, cohesion, and success of your department. Here are strategies to help you accomplish the task of building a compelling and unified vision:

1) **Listen and Engage**: Begin by actively listening to your faculty, staff, and stakeholders. Understand their perspectives, aspirations, and concerns. This inclusive approach not only empowers you to address their needs but also demonstrates your commitment to collaborative leadership.
2) **Align with the University**: Your department's vision should align with the university's vision, mission, and values. A clear connection between your department's goals and the institution's overarching objectives fosters a sense of purpose and ensures a coherent collective effort. It is essential to recognize that departmental plans are integral components of the university's overall goals, values, and mission. Your department's strategy should seamlessly align with the institution's broader objectives, forming a cohesive framework for collective success. By harmonizing your department's vision with that of the university, you ensure a unified approach that magnifies the impact of both. This alignment guarantees your department's efforts directly contribute to the realization of university-wide aims, emphasizing the significance of your role within the institution. Moreover, as you weave the university's core values and missions into your strategic plan, you affirm your commitment to upholding the institution's academic principles and enriching its educational impact. This collaborative harmony between departmental and university objectives fosters an environment where your department plays a pivotal role in advancing educational excellence, research accomplishments, and community engagement, all while staying true to the university's distinct identity and values.
3) **Develop the Plan:** Obtain copies of your college and university strategic plans. Use them to generate or modify a department strategic plan. By developing or modifying a department plan, you are leading by example the importance of establishing and implementing a strategy to further success to your faculty, students, and stakeholders.

4) **Involve Your Faculty Colleagues:** It is essential to recognize that assuming the role of a department chair does not grant you the authority to unilaterally impose your viewpoints. Successful leadership hinges on collaboration and involvement of all those under your leadership. By involving your faculty colleagues in decision-making processes, you tap into a wide range of perspectives. A shared vision emerges when everyone contributes to its creation. Involve your team in brainstorming sessions, discussions, and workshops where they can contribute their ideas, insights, and aspirations. This collaborative approach instills a sense of ownership and commitment.
5) **Consider Your Competition:** Your plan should consider your department's position relative to similar departments at *other* universities.
    - What is your department's niche?
    - How can it be improved?
    - What choices will move it towards that goal?
    - How will you assess and evaluate those choices?
    - What are the emerging trends in your department's disciplines that should be addressed?
6) **Work with Leadership:** Use your dean as a source of advice and a partner in planning. Your dean can provide valuable guidance and mentorship, assist you in understanding the institutional landscape, help with resource allocation and support, offer perspective on planning and innovation, act as an advocate for your department needs, and assist in establishing strong relationships with others on and off campus.
7) **Define Core Objectives**: Identify key objectives that encapsulate the direction you envision for the department. These objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Each objective should contribute to the overall vision.
8) **Communicate Clearly**: Effectively communicate the vision in a way that resonates with your team. Use language that is inspiring, concise, and relatable. Storytelling can be a powerful tool to convey the vision's impact on individuals and the broader community.
9) **Connect with Values**: Tie the vision to shared values and principles. When the team sees the alignment between their values and the vision, they are more likely to engage wholeheartedly.
10) **Lead by Example**: Embody the vision through your actions and decisions. When your leadership reflects the values and objectives you have set, it reinforces their importance and authenticity.

11) **Set a Timeline:** A goal without clear definitions is simply a wish. Make a timeline that includes updating your plan, noting progress in achieving the benchmarks, and making them available to the department faculty. It is best if there is a concrete implementation strategy that breaks down your overarching objectives into manageable steps, allowing you to plan and execute each phase with little ambiguity. Accountability and progress tracking should be a part of the plan to keep the department on track. Transparency and communication of this process with your faculty will encourage faculty ownership of their roles in the plan. Document achievements. This documentation not only serves as evidence of progress but can also be used to showcase your department's successes to higher administration, faculty, and other stakeholders, such as program, department, or university accreditors. Consider a long-term vision. Your timeline should not be limited to short-term goals; it can also outline a trajectory for the department's long-term vision. By incorporating strategic milestones, you provide a sense of continuity and purpose beyond immediate objectives.
12) **Adaptability**: Recognize that the vision may need to evolve as circumstances change. Be open to refining and adapting it based on feedback, emerging trends, and challenges.
13) **Continuous Communication**: Keep the vision alive by integrating it into regular communications, meetings, and discussions. Regularly remind your team of the collective purpose you're working toward.

Embracing the role of a department chair at Lamar University is an exciting journey filled with opportunities to make a positive impact. While it is true that this position comes with its share of challenges, remember that these challenges are your steppingstones to growth and transformation. At Lamar University, where we hold our department chairs in high regard, you will discover that your role holds immense significance. As you embark on this rewarding path, keep in mind a few valuable skills that will aid you in being an effective chair:

1. **Fairness and Unbiased Leadership**: Your dedication to fairness and unbiased decision-making sets the tone for a harmonious and inclusive department. Upholding these principles not only earns the respect of your colleagues but also fosters an environment where every voice matters, driving collaboration and success.
2. **Listening: A Path to Connection**: A cornerstone of effective leadership is being a good listener. Taking the time to understand the perspectives of your faculty, staff, and stakeholders creates connections and demonstrates your commitment to their well-being. By giving each voice its due, you'll create an atmosphere of open dialogue and mutual respect.
3. **Resilience without Taking Things Personally**: In the dynamic landscape of academia, challenges may arise. However, remember that each challenge is an opportunity for growth. Do not take things personally; instead, view them as chances to refine your leadership skills and enhance your department's resilience. Embracing a positive outlook allows you to navigate these moments with grace and determination.

4. **Practice Integrity:** Upholding the highest standards of integrity is non-negotiable as a department chair. Trust is paramount in leadership, and it is built on a foundation of honesty and ethical conduct. Your commitment to transparency and ethical decision-making will resonate throughout your department, cultivating an environment where everyone can trust in your leadership. In doing so, you will empower your faculty and staff to perform their best, knowing that they are part of a department that values integrity above all else.

As you step into this pivotal role, remember that every experience, even the challenging ones, contributes to your personal and professional development. Embody these traits as you steer your department towards a future of success, innovation, and positive collaboration. You are not just a department chair; you are a catalyst for positive change in the lives of your colleagues and the Lamar University community as a whole.

Programs of Support

- The Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (CTLE), the Office of the Provost, Council of Instructional Departments (CID), and other programs on campus offer discussions and workshops on being an effective department chair and a leader within the Lamar University community.
- Chairs may request funding to attend leadership training programs and conferences outside Lamar University.
- The Texas Council for Chief Academic Officers and Sam Houston State University host the Texas Academic Leadership Academy. Lamar University may nominate campus leaders, including department chairs, for application to this program.

Resources

The Chronicle of Higher Education is often seen as the multidisciplinary standard for keeping administrators and faculty informed of cutting-edge issues in academia. *Higher Education*, also available online, is another leading publication.

Electronic resources can be incredibly valuable for new department chairs, offering a wealth of information, tools, and insights to navigate their roles more effectively. Here are some electronic resources that can benefit new department chairs:

1. **Online Training Platforms**: Websites like LinkedIn Learning (supported with a Lamar University accessible account), Coursera, and Udemy offer courses on leadership, management, communication, and other relevant skills. These courses can help you enhance your leadership abilities and tackle various challenges you may encounter.
2. **Professional Associations**: Joining associations specific to your field or discipline can provide access to webinars, forums, and resources tailored to the needs of your department. Examples include the American Association of University Administrators (AAUA) or the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS).

3. **Online Communities and Forums**: Platforms like HigherEdJobs' forums, Reddit's r/Professors, or Chronicle Vitae offer discussions, advice, and experiences shared by other academic leaders. Engaging in these communities can provide insights and answers to common challenges.
4. **Blogs and Podcasts**: Look for blogs or podcasts that cater to academic leadership. These platforms often feature articles, interviews, and discussions on various aspects of being a department chair.
5. **Academic Journals**: Journals in educational leadership and administration can provide research-based insights and best practices for effective departmental management.
6. **Webinars and Webcasts**: Universities, educational organizations, and professional associations often host webinars on topics such as leadership strategies, communication, and faculty development. These can offer valuable advice from experienced professionals. Many of these will be advertised by CTLE.
7. **Social Media**: LinkedIn groups, Twitter accounts, and Facebook groups related to academic leadership can provide a platform for networking, discussions, and sharing resources. Policies regarding social media use can be found here: https://www.lamar.edu/marketing-communications/brand-guidelines/policies-and-guidelines/social-media-policy.html
8. **E-books and Online Publications**: Many publishers offer e-books and online publications on topics ranging from leadership strategies to academic governance.

Remember, electronic resources are just a click away, and leveraging these tools can help you stay informed, connected, and empowered as you navigate the responsibilities of being a new department chair.

Strategies for Work-Life Balance and Well-Being

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance, preventing burnout, and delegating effectively are essential for the well-being of Lamar University chairs. Here are some helpful tips to strike that balance:

1. Prioritize Self-Care:

- Remember that taking care of yourself is necessary. Prioritize sleep, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle.
- Set aside time outside your working hours for activities you enjoy.

2. Time Management:

- Use effective time management techniques such as the Pomodoro technique, time blocking, or task batching to maximize productivity without overworking.

  Pomodoro Technique: The Pomodoro Technique is a time management method that involves breaking your workday into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length (called "Pomodoros"), separated by short breaks. After completing a set of Pomodoros, you take a longer break. This technique helps improve focus and productivity by working in short, concentrated bursts.

  Time Blocking: Time blocking is a strategy where you schedule specific blocks of time for different tasks or activities throughout your day or week. For example, you might allocate a two-hour block for focused work, another block for meetings, and another for email. This approach helps create structure and prevents multitasking.

  Task Batching: Task batching involves grouping similar tasks together and tackling them during dedicated time blocks. For instance, you might allocate a block of time to respond to emails, another for brainstorming, and another for administrative tasks. This technique minimizes context switching and enhances efficiency by allowing you to focus on related tasks consecutively.

- Utilize digital tools and calendars (Microsoft 360) to organize tasks and meetings efficiently. Support for these tools can be found with IT services, CTLE, or the Division of Digital Learning.

3. Set Boundaries:

- Clearly define your work hours and stick to them. Communicate these boundaries with your colleagues and team.
- Avoid checking work emails or messages during your personal time unless it is absolutely necessary.

4. Delegate and Empower:

- Recognize that you do not have to do everything yourself. Where appropriate, delegate tasks to capable team members and trust them to complete their responsibilities.
- Empower your team by providing them with the resources and autonomy they need to excel.

5. Learn to Say No:

- It is okay to decline additional responsibilities or commitments outside your role as chair when your plate is full. Saying no is a powerful tool for protecting your time and energy.

6. Seek Support and Communication:

- Build a support network of colleagues, mentors, or peers with whom you can share your challenges and seek advice.
- Encourage open communication within your department or team, fostering an environment where everyone feels heard.

- Engage in the CID where you can receive support of fellow chairs.

7. Time Off and Vacations:

- Use your allocated vacation days and take time off when needed. Vacations provide much-needed rest and rejuvenation.
- Ensure that there is a clear plan for your department or team to function smoothly during your absence.

8. Continuous Learning:

- Invest in personal and professional development to enhance your leadership skills.
- Stay informed about the latest management and leadership trends to become more efficient in your role.

9. Regular Assessment:

- Periodically assess your workload and responsibilities. Are there tasks that can be streamlined or delegated more effectively?
- Evaluate your work-life balance regularly and adjust as needed.

10. Set Realistic Expectations:

- Understand that you can't achieve perfection in every aspect of your role. Set realistic expectations for yourself and your team. Focus on the most critical priorities and delegate tasks that can be handled by others.

11. Seek Help for Burnout:

- If you find yourself experiencing burnout symptoms such as chronic exhaustion, decreased performance, or emotional distress, seek help from a counselor, therapist, or healthcare professional.

Remember that promoting well-being and maintaining a healthy work-life balance is an ongoing process. It is not about perfect equilibrium but about continuously striving to ensure that your work and personal life align with your values and priorities. By following these tips, Lamar University chairs can protect their well-being, prevent burnout, and create a sustainable work environment.

PROMOTION AND TENURE

As new department chairs at Lamar University, you hold a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of your faculty members' careers. Preparing faculty for promotion and tenure is not only a responsibility but a strategic investment in the academic excellence of our institution. By providing guidance, resources, and mentorship, you empower your faculty to excel in their teaching, research, and service endeavors. Ensuring that faculty understand the promotion and tenure criteria, offering constructive feedback, and fostering an environment of continuous development not only contributes to their professional growth but also enhances the overall quality of our academic community. Your proactive engagement in this process not only supports individual faculty members' achievements but also bolsters Lamar University's

reputation as a hub of scholarly achievement and innovation. Through your commitment to preparing faculty for promotion and tenure, you contribute to the enduring success of both our faculty and university as a whole. Please make sure that faculty know they are expected to be familiar with the Faculty Handbook, which contains information about (but not limited to):

- Appointments and their lengths
- Conditions of tenure and promotion
- Evaluation, reappointment, and promotion of tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty
- The role of personnel committees on appointments, promotion, and tenure

TEACHING

One of the main responsibilities of a department chair is to support, assess, and evaluate effective teaching of students within your department. You provide leadership to your colleagues, communicate the university's mission and commitment to student success, lead innovations in the curriculum, and balance faculty and student concerns.

- Assist faculty members in understanding that positive relationships with students are essential, including mundane things such as setting up appointments and maintaining consistent office hours.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (CTLE) provides a variety of resources to help faculty become more effective teachers. Examples include face-to-face sessions and workshops throughout the year; teaching and learning conferences; online resources, both video and text, available through https://www.lamar.edu/ctle and Blackboard Organizations; and one-on-one consultations and classroom observations. Find more information that is consistently updated at the weblink above.
- Help your faculty understand the helpful online resources for distance education at Lamar University, including work with the instructional designers, video team, and support service groups of the Division of Digital Learning. To learn more visit: https://www.lamar.edu/lu-online

Faculty Mentoring

New faculty (junior and experienced) benefit from having a mentor in the department. The culture and norms within your discipline and department will influence what kind of mentoring plan will work best within your department. When developing a mentoring program for your faculty, consider the following possibilities and arrangements.

- Assign a departmental mentor to new faculty.
- Encourage faculty to share resources related to teaching strategies.

- Develop a system for faculty colleagues to observe one another's teaching (perhaps reciprocally), with the goal of improvement rather than judgment. The CTLE staff is also available to observe and discuss teaching and teaching materials with faculty members.
- The CTLE offers mentoring for new faculty through the Mentoring Program for New Faculty. Learn more here: https://www.lamar.edu/lu-online/faculty-services/center-for-teaching-and-learning-enhancement/programs.html#mentoring
- Have at least two department meetings each year to discuss an aspect of teaching that is urgent within your department. The CTLE offers this service to departments. Request this service by emailing dept_CTLE@lamar.edu.
- Meet with every faculty member every year to discuss teaching.
- Use student evaluations to initiate a discussion of how performance can be improved. This meeting can be separated from or combined with discussions with the faculty about their teaching/scholarship load, course assignments, or their annual performance review. Consider that student evaluations should be examined looking for constructive criticism or reoccurring themes. Student evaluations may not fully reflect the teaching efforts of your faculty. Other faculty initiatives to improve teaching should be recognized and assessed for their value.

Faculty Teaching Responsibilities

Make sure that all faculty understand their teaching responsibilities. Faculty should be instructed to familiarize themselves with the guidelines in the Faculty Handbook. Ensure that your faculty are aware of all university and department policies that relate to teaching. Faculty minimally must:

- Be present and provide good content for all classes.
- Be accessible to students.
- Grade work in a timely fashion.
- Provide a syllabus that conforms to Texas House Bill 2504 (details can be found at https://www.lamar.edu/planning-assessment/house-bill-2504/index.html).
- Teach classes assigned to them by their department chair.

An effective university instructor possesses a combination of qualities that create a conducive and impactful learning environment for students. These characteristics go beyond subject matter expertise and encompass teaching methodologies, communication skills, and a commitment to student growth. Here are some key traits of an effective university instructor:

1. **Passion for Teaching**: A genuine enthusiasm for teaching and a passion for the subject matter inspire students and make learning engaging and exciting.

2. **Expertise in the Subject**: In-depth knowledge of the subject matter is essential for providing accurate information, addressing questions, and facilitating meaningful discussions.
3. **Effective Communication**: Clear and articulate communication, both verbal and written, is crucial for conveying complex concepts, facilitating discussions, and providing constructive feedback.
4. **Adaptability**: Being able to adapt teaching methods to accommodate various learning styles and adjusting to different levels of student comprehension ensures that all students have a chance to succeed.
5. **Approachability and Availability**: A willingness to be approachable and available for questions, discussions, and support outside of class fosters a positive rapport with students.
6. **Active Listening**: Taking the time to listen to students' questions, concerns, and feedback demonstrates respect and enhances understanding of their needs.
7. **Empathy and Understanding**: Demonstrating empathy and understanding towards students' challenges and backgrounds creates a supportive learning environment that encourages student engagement and success.
8. **Organizational Skills**: Effective planning, well-structured lectures, and organized course materials contribute to a smoother learning experience for students.
9. **Engaging Presentation**: Using a variety of teaching tools, multimedia, and real-world examples keeps students engaged and helps clarify complex concepts.
10. **Innovative Teaching Methods**: Incorporating active learning, group discussions, problem-solving activities, and technology-driven tools promotes critical thinking and enhances the learning process.
11. **Feedback and Assessment**: Providing timely, constructive, and actionable feedback on assignments and assessments helps students understand their progress and areas for improvement.
12. **Respect for Varied Perspectives**: Valuing varied viewpoints and creating a welcoming classroom environment fosters respect and enriches the learning experience.
13. **Openness to Continuous Improvement**: A commitment to professional development, attending workshops, adopting new teaching strategies, and staying current with educational trends keeps teaching methods effective and relevant.
14. **Ethical Behavior**: Adhering to academic integrity, treating students fairly, and maintaining a high level of professionalism are essential for building trust and credibility.
15. **Positive Role Model**: Demonstrating curiosity, enthusiasm for learning, and a growth mindset sets a positive example for students and encourages them to embrace lifelong learning.

Ultimately, an effective university instructor is dedicated to facilitating student growth, fostering critical thinking, and providing a supportive learning environment that prepares students for success beyond the classroom.

Planning the Curriculum

As the department chair, your task is to work with the Dean's Office to determine what classes are to be taught and when. This may involve coordinating with program or division heads within your department, with the Division of Digital Learning, individual faculty, or others, depending on your particular discipline and its connections to local or global industries.

The University Curriculum Council manages changes to the curriculum. Information and forms can be found at https://www.lamar.edu/faculty-staff/academic-affairs/curriculum-council/forms.html. The Graduate Council manages changes to the curriculum for graduate courses. Information and forms can be found at https://www.lamar.edu/graduate-studies/faculty-staff/graduate-council.html.

Navigating Student Concerns

Navigating student concerns and offering assistance as a new department chair can be a rewarding aspect of your role. Your position provides you with an opportunity to make a positive impact on students' academic experiences. As students encounter challenges, whether related to specific courses, faculty interactions, program plans, or personal matters, your supportive guidance can play a pivotal role in their success.

Remember, you are not alone in this journey. There are various resources available to help both you and the students you serve. Your dean, the Dean of Students, LU Care Team, Student Health Center, Writing Center, and STAR Services are valuable sources of assistance. These dedicated resources are designed to address a range of student needs and ensure their well-being.

As you embrace your new role, it is wise to familiarize yourself with these programs and establish connections with the professionals who oversee them. Proactively reaching out to these resources and building relationships can provide you with a strong support network. This proactive approach also ensures that you are well-equipped to assist students efficiently should any issues arise.

Approach these opportunities with positivity and the desire to make a difference in the lives of your students. Your dedication to their well-being and success not only contributes to a supportive academic environment but also reinforces the sense of community that defines our university. As a new department chair, you have the chance to foster growth, understanding, and positive outcomes for both students and your department alike.

Handling Student Complains about Faculty

A chair's work may involve handling student complaints about a faculty member.

Key issues to consider include:

- Follow university policy as outlined in the faculty and student handbooks. There is a structure and timeline involved in student/faculty complaints that involve grade appeals. Students should be informed about those guidelines before any other action is taken.
- Whenever possible, ask the student to try to resolve the issue with the faculty member as the first step, presenting that as the most immediate course of action.
- When appropriate, give students a hearing and listen to their story. Determine whether further information or action is needed. In some cases, a student may wish to inform you of an incident but will not want any other action to occur.
- Depending on your individual department organization or size, you may want to establish a committee or designate other appropriate faculty to monitor and evaluate student complaints.
- Always remember that there are many sides to every story or issues. Do not necessarily take everything a student has said at face value. Students may be deliberately deceptive or may accidentally forget to relate key elements of the problem or incident that is the source of their complaint. Always seek out outside verification before making any judgment, either from the involved faculty member or other sources (online documentation, other witnesses to events, etc.) to verify student claims.
- Always maintain open and transparent communication between yourself and everyone involved. Eventually, you may include upper-administration and/or arbitration committees, either internal to the department or beyond.
- Document every discussion with both students and faculty members related to incidents/complaints, including time, date, length of discussion, and conclusions. Maintain a file with this information and any other relevant communication (including e-mail, phone call conversations, etc.).

Discussing Student Complaints with Faculty

If the student would like you to discuss the issue with the faculty member, and you think it is appropriate, you will want to consider the following issues:

- Maintain good communication with the student regarding the process and eventual results of the discussion. In other words, inform the student of a general timeline in which a discussion will take place and when you will respond to them about that discussion.

- When first discussing the issue with the faculty member, be sure to present the issue from the student's perspective and encourage faculty members to explain their own understanding of events.

Other Issues to Consider

- If the situation is particularly troubling, and you are not sure what to do, seek counsel from your dean.
- Your role as department chair is focused primarily on academic issues, such as student complaints about clarity, excessive late return of assignments, frequent faculty absences, or obvious bias and/or arbitrary treatment of the student or other students in the class. If other issues arise, you will be best served consulting other programs/organizations in order to help resolve them. For example, the LU Care Team most typically gets involved when there are student behavioral issues within the classroom (such as unacceptable language or actions, displays of rage, medical complications that affect classroom demeanor, and emotional breakdowns), or the Accessibility Resource Center if the complaint centers around an issue of accessibility.
- Student and academic issues can frequently overlap. It is important that you know the academic deans are always available to help and advise you.

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

As Lamar University changes and grows, the role of research—broadly defined to include various forms of scholarship and creative accomplishments that results in publication or public performance—is becoming increasingly important. You can support your faculty members as they engage in scholarship and creative activities by setting clear expectations, providing specific feedback about their progress, and mentoring them as they balance their teaching responsibilities, service and leadership, and a research/creative activities agenda. Research is one of the pillars of evaluation for promotion and tenure.

Setting Expectations

Junior and new faculty are often anxious to know what it takes to “make it” in their field or at this university. You can help them by clarifying the expectations in your discipline and your department regarding such things as:

- Striving to achieve impact through a focused research program.
- The level of emphasis that should be placed on research proposals and grants.
- The relative importance of books vs. articles, single vs. multiple authored publications, presentations, posters, and the many other possible research avenues in the changing landscape of higher education, particularly in relationship to your own department, and your own discipline.

- The expected quantity and rate of publication.
- How important it is to present their research at other universities or professional conferences or meetings.
- The necessity that their body of research be regarded as high in quality, originality, and impact.

Creating a Collegial Research/Creative Activities Culture

You play an important role in setting the tone for research and creative activities in your department. To create a culture of quality research and creative activities, set targets for departmental and individual publications, proposal submissions, performances, and/or presentations in premiere venues. Encourage faculty to become aware of the scholarly interests and publication, presentation, and performance records of other members in the department, both to encourage collegiality and to help faculty establish expected benchmarks for themselves. If your department has the resources, you might consider inviting key scholars to hold seminars. Do your best to encourage an atmosphere where faculty help each other's careers, e.g., nominating colleagues for prestigious fellowships and awards/recognitions in professional associations. Some departments host brown bag research lunches in which colleagues take turns presenting works in progress and receiving feedback from the department. In others, groups of faculty have created writing accountability groups. The CTLE is happy to assist in developing “writing circles,” which have been shown to increase scholarly productivity and collegiality within and across departments.

Research Support

Make your faculty aware of the valuable resources on campus to facilitate research. One of the most important resources on campus to support sponsored research is the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP). Please make sure your faculty are aware of the rules and procedures associated with seeking external support for research, and that a conversation with the ORSP staff needs to begin well in advance of the application due date. Make sure that your faculty are aware that they should never apply to external institutions or programs for funding without first consulting ORSP. Violation of various federal/state regulations for funding can have negative consequences not only for the individual faculty who have applied for a grant, but also the university as a whole.

- Ensure that your faculty are aware of the research policies of the university, especially in relationship to:
  - Research proposals.
  - Classified and proprietary research.
  - Research involving human subjects.
  - Patent policies.

- Conflict of interest and ethics.
- Intellectual property.

SERVICE

For department chairs at Lamar University, understanding the dual importance of preparing faculty for service requirements of promotion and tenure while safeguarding their well-being from burnout is paramount. Recognizing this delicate balance will not only contribute to a thriving academic environment but also foster the growth and success of your faculty members.

It is not uncommon to recommend that faculty find areas to serve in four major areas: 1) Department, 2) College, 3) University, and 4) Profession or Community. Effectively guiding faculty in meeting these service expectations ensures their professional advancement, the department's reputation, and the institution's overall success. However, in this pursuit, it is crucial to be mindful of burnout risks. Faculty members often invest significant time and energy in fulfilling service commitments, which, if unchecked, can lead to exhaustion and decreased productivity. By implementing strategic support systems, workload distribution strategies, and opportunities for self-care, you can create an environment that promotes faculty development while safeguarding their mental and emotional well-being. This holistic approach ultimately results in a resilient and motivated faculty, contributing to the sustained excellence of Lamar University.

ADMINISTRATION

Budgeting and Financial Planning at Lamar University

1. Understand the Budgeting Process:
   - Familiarize yourself with Lamar University's budgeting process, including timelines, key personnel, and reporting requirements. Schedule a meeting with LU's Office of Budget and Financial Planning to learn more about the processes.
   - Learn about the different budget categories, such as operating budgets, capital budgets, and grant budgets.
2. Review Existing Budgets:
   - Examine your department's current budget, including revenues and expenses.
   - Identify sources of funding, including state appropriations, tuition, grants, and donations.
3. Collaborate with Financial Services:
   - Establish a working relationship with the university's financial services department.

- Seek guidance and support from financial experts who can help you navigate the budgeting process.

4. Set Departmental Goals:
   - Work with your faculty and staff to define departmental goals and priorities. Set guidelines to determine what goals will be funded.
   - Align your budget with these goals to ensure that resources are allocated effectively.
5. Prepare a Budget Proposal:
   - Develop a comprehensive budget proposal that outlines your department's financial needs for the upcoming fiscal year.
   - Justify budget requests with data, such as enrollment trends, program growth, and resource utilization.
6. Prioritize Spending:
   - Determine which expenses are critical to achieving your department's goals.
   - Prioritize spending on items that directly impact student success and academic excellence.
7. Monitor and Adjust:
   - Regularly monitor your department's budget throughout the fiscal year.
   - Be prepared to adjust based on changing circumstances or unforeseen financial challenges.
8. Explore Funding Opportunities:
   - Explore grant opportunities, endowments, and fundraising initiatives that can supplement your department's budget.
   - Collaborate with university development offices to seek external funding.
9. Communicate with Stakeholders:
   - Keep your faculty and staff informed about the budgeting process and decisions.
   - Foster transparency and open communication regarding financial matters.
10. Ensure Compliance:
    - Familiarize yourself with Lamar University's financial policies and compliance requirements. Ensure that your department adheres to all financial regulations and reporting obligations.
11. Seek Professional Development:
    - Consider attending budgeting and financial management workshops or seminars to enhance your financial acumen. Stay updated on best practices in budgeting and financial planning for academic departments.
12. Use University Resources:
    - Take advantage of resources provided by Lamar University's financial services.

- Collaborate with university administrators and financial experts when necessary.

Remember that effective budgeting and financial planning are essential for the success of your department. By working with LU financial offices and leveraging the resources available to you, you can ensure that your department's financial decisions align with its mission and goals, ultimately contributing to the success of Lamar University.

Faculty Search

As the department chair, you play a pivotal role in shaping your department through the faculty you hire. Hiring new faculty is likely the most significant and influential thing you will ever do as a department chair. Work with your faculty and dean to determine department needs and hiring possibilities. Strategies include:

- Use your own resources, such as colleagues in the field, conference connections, etc., as likely sources of good leads for finding quality applicants.
- Use faculty resources such as asking other senior faculty to make recommendations or seek out appropriate faculty.
- Make every effort to seek out a highly qualified pool of applicants. This aim can be supported at multiple points of the hiring process, including the wording of the advertisement, placement of the advertisement (HR handles this), and directing search committees to assist in the work to recruit quality professionals from the field.

University Service - Responsibilities and Assignments

The university system cannot function without a dedicated body of faculty and staff who work not just on individual instruction, but also on maintaining support and oversight of that instruction. Many faculty members in your program may be required to perform a significant amount of university service. Your position will require taking an active role in understanding the service requirements of your particular program and how your faculty members best fit into the overall service needs of the university.

Service of faculty includes:

- Performance of program, department, college, and university service including academic guidance, registration and commencement assistance, and service on committees.
- Service to the community or to the profession of the individual.

The Faculty Handbook gives details on the faculty member's academic and professional responsibilities. Factors to consider should be the following.

- The specific nature of a faculty member's teaching, research, and/or clinical service to the university may be adapted in accordance with the demands of the specific department or the demands of a particular faculty member's negotiated activity profile.

- For all faculty, their service expectations should be established through consultation and discussion.
- Avoid giving the appearance that faculty service is a burden or an obstacle to teaching and research. Appropriate service obligations can encourage collaboration among faculty and result in improved performance and morale.

Faculty Evaluations, Awards and Punitive Measures

Merit and Mid-Course Reviews

Merit evaluations include the following provisions:

- All faculty undergo an annual review which serves as the basis for merit increases. All faculty must submit annual F2.08 reports on their activity.
- The annual review is a particularly important opportunity for feedback for probationary faculty (tenure-track faculty who have not yet received tenure).
- Merit evaluations influence the dean's recommendations to the Provost on salary, as well as considerations of equity, market, promotion, and similar matters.

New tenure-track Assistant Professors undergo 2-yr and 4-yr reviews in preparation for eventual promotion and tenure evaluation. In all reviews, balance praise with constructive criticism, and avoid assurances to probationary faculty about what will be the ultimate evaluations by external reviewers and school and university tenure committees. If there are performance problems, and whenever you judge that a faculty member's work is unsatisfactory, consult with your dean to create a development plan. For problems related to teaching, the CTLE offers private and confidential consultations, classroom observations, assessments of faculty teaching materials, and mentoring that can support problem-solving and faculty improvement in the classroom. The Faculty Handbook provides for the annual possibility of a notice of non-reappointment for any probationary faculty member as well as any non-tenure-track faculty member. Non-reappointment is to be distinguished from dismissal for cause. Note that as a department chair you are subject to evaluation annually by your dean and every 3-yrs by your faculty. It is useful to understand the differences between the faculty evaluation process (involving the F2.08) and chair evaluation (F2.08c).

Promotion/Tenure

The criteria and processes for promotion and tenure are described in the Faculty Handbook. When new faculty members arrive on campus, make certain they have a copy of the Faculty Handbook and other departmental guides. Ensure promotion committees and other faculty involved in the process also have the guidelines. Take some time to meet with new faculty to go over the guidelines for promotion and tenure and give them the opportunity to ask questions. Clarify expectations for promotion and tenure by on-going discussions. Remind faculty that departmental advice or evaluations are no guarantee of an eventual decision, and that faculty

should be attentive to the fact that their tenure and promotion application must also meet the requirements of various committees and officials outside of the immediate department (e.g., college and university-level committees, officials in the TSUS system, and others). Be aware of deadlines for submission of promotion and tenure dossiers and 2nd and 4th year review documents. Departments must submit dossiers to department-level committees far enough in advance to allow ample school-level consideration before these deadlines. There are provisions for "stopping the tenure clock" given reasonable faculty requests. As detailed in the Faculty Handbook, documentation should be submitted by the individual to the Provost's Office, through the chair and dean, as soon as possible by any stated deadlines.

Leaves and Retirement

Requests for leave or retirement should be submitted by the individual, through the chair and dean, for consideration by the Office of the Provost. Requests for leave should include documentation sent through the same process. Colleagues contemplating retirement should discuss arrangements with their department chairs, their deans, and with the Office of Human Resources to determine the best course of action for faculty and the university. It is possible to arrange phased retirement over a several year period, with pro rata compensation.

Hiring and Managing Staff

Part of your job as a department chair is to hire staff and facilitate staff development. Remember that staff are employed by Lamar University, not by any individual faculty member.

Issues involved in staffing include:

- Hiring.
- Non-discrimination policies.
- Obtaining and providing employment references.
- Pre-employment screening.
- Recruitment.
- Terms and conditions of employment.

Partner with Human Resources (HR) to learn Lamar University policies and procedures. It is helpful to understand the different classifications for staff, including changes in benefits and responsibilities for full-time workers, part-time workers, student workers, graduate assistants, hourly workers, and others. When hiring staff, be aware of policies involving logging hours and maintaining sick leave documents and personal leave documents as you may be the individual who approves time logs and requests for leave.

Staff Management

It is your job to manage the staff who work for your department. Pay attention to the morale of your staff and make sure that all staff members feel respected and appreciated for the work

they do. As department chair, pay attention to faculty members to ensure that they too understand that staff members should feel respected and appreciated for the work they do.

Make sure your staff understand their job duties. Regularly review their job descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect position requirements. Every staff member undergoes a written performance review. As a department chair, you will be involved in the review process, particularly the review of your departmental Administrative Associate. Make adequate time to have an in-depth discussion of the staff member's strengths and challenges. If there is a need for performance improvements, follow up several times throughout the year to see how the employee is doing. Staff review may identify specific areas in which improvement of a staff member is recommended. Staff members can often get better at their jobs by taking advantage of staff development programs offered through Human Resources.

Chairs should understand causes for disciplining staff, including (but not limited to):

- Attendance.
- Breaches of confidentiality.
- Conflicts of interest.
- Violations of computer policies.
- Harassment.
- Dishonesty.
- Substance abuse.
- Misappropriation.
- Policy violations.

You must follow university guidelines and consult with HR for discipline and dismissal of staff. Disciplinary actions should occur in a progressive sequence from:

- Oral warnings.
- Written warnings.
- Disciplinary administrative leave.

If discipline becomes necessary, work with the dean and a Human Resources specialist to create a plan of action. Keep written records of disciplinary problems (shared with the dean), noting the date of the infraction, what occurred, what you did, and what happened as a result.

Mentoring Faculty and Staff

Faculty members need guidance, even (or especially) the ones who think they do not. Every faculty member can improve contributions to the department and university by listening to supervisors, peers, and colleagues, and it is your responsibility to facilitate that awareness and make faculty members aware of the opportunities available to them. Here are some suggestions for maintaining a positive mentor-mentee relationship with members in the department.

- Confidentiality is key. Faculty members need to know that when they have discussions or mentoring sessions with you that they are as public or as private as the situation warrants. Some faculty members may not want their career or teaching aspirations and plans known to others, or they may have other private concerns for which they come to you for advice.
- Always be aware that faculty and staff needs can be individual, but there are often collective problems for specific categories of employment. That is, the concerns of adjunct faculty are not the same as those of tenure-track faculty, full tenured professors, and so on.
- You may want to keep written records, either personal or official departmental documents, of various mentoring sessions, both to remember individual faculty problems and to support tenure-track faculty or others who may need evidence or letters of support for their various tenure/promotion activities.
- Be aware that mentoring is not always a process of helping enthusiastic faculty who are seeking avenues and directions for success. Mentoring can also involve working with faculty who are burned-out, disgruntled with their students or the university, or who are feeling ambivalent and apathetic about their position now that a significant goal (tenure, promotion, etc.) has been satisfied. Working with these faculty to redefine themselves and their careers is as essential for maintaining a viable department as any other activity.

  Suggestions for mentoring faculty through their changing careers include:

  - When an employee has achieved a significant milestone in their career, meet with them to discuss a 3-year plan for future teaching, research, and service.
  - Offer to look at work-in-progress, new teaching techniques, and other faculty activity.
  - Encourage them to make departmental or interdisciplinary connections with others in order to create new directions and ideas for scholarship.
  - Publicize the accomplishments of faculty, both to reward them for their success and to encourage others in the department to produce similar activity.
  - Remember that faculty themselves are the best resource for promoting faculty concerns. Others in your department likely have their own highly successful methods for dealing with career issues and problems, and they can be consulted or assigned as mentors as the situation warrants.

Punitive Measures

The chair should be familiar with the grounds for dismissal as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. If you believe faculty dismissal may be warranted for faculty with performance problems, immediately consult with your dean. It is essential to have consultation with the dean as early as possible when problems begin to arise with an eye to preventing problems before they

occur, but also in order to ensure that all appropriate steps are taken in accordance with university policy and employment law.

Program Assessment

Program assessment is a university priority. The effectiveness of Lamar University depends on valid and consistent evaluation of our programs and program goals. Departments should view assessment primarily as a tool for improvement at every level, and department chairs play a crucial role in ensuring there is good faculty support and participation in outcomes assessment. Assessment is a tool for program improvement and includes making sure program goals are clear for both students and faculty. Assessment is the primary means by which a department demonstrates accountability to the public at large and to any accreditation bodies overseeing both the particular discipline of the department and the university.

Assessment should not involve the evaluation of a single individual course, instructor, or individual students alone. Good assessment involves multiple methods of measurement, including direct measures (such as samples of student work, pass rates on qualifying exams) and indirect measures (such as student self-assessment or retention rates). The assessment process should be faculty driven, with faculty determining key needs and requirements of the departmental programs, both in terms of what needs to be assessed and what methods should be used to obtain data. While the assessment is faculty driven, chairs should take time to do periodic review of program content, including but not limited to syllabi, course content, degree plans, course order, faculty assignments, and the like.

Accreditation

Department chairs at Lamar University play a crucial role in helping maintain the standards and reporting requirements for accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). SACSCOC is the body responsible for accrediting degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states, including Texas, where Lamar University is located. Accreditation by SACSCOC is a vital aspect of ensuring the quality and integrity of the university's academic programs and operations.

Here's an overview of the importance of department chairs in this context:

1. **Standards Compliance**: Department chairs are responsible for overseeing and ensuring that their respective academic departments adhere to the standards outlined in the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement by SACSCOC. These standards cover various aspects of educational quality and institutional effectiveness.
2. **Data Collection and Reporting**: Department chairs are instrumental in collecting and reporting data related to their departments' performance, including student outcomes, faculty qualifications, and program assessments. This data is essential for demonstrating compliance with SACSCOC standards. Evidence of using this data in continuous program improvements is also crucial data to be collected for reporting.

3. **Quality Assurance**: Department chairs are at the forefront of maintaining and enhancing the quality of academic programs within their departments. They work to ensure that curricula align with accreditation standards and that faculty members are engaged in continuous quality improvement efforts.
4. **Peer Review and Self-Regulation**: SACSCOC values peer review and self-regulation as core principles. Department chairs participate in the self-study process, where they assess their departments' strengths and areas for improvement. They also collaborate with colleagues from other institutions during the peer review process, contributing to the assurance of educational quality.
5. **Accountability**: Department chairs are accountable for the academic performance of their departments. They work to meet the accountability standards set by SACSCOC, which include demonstrating student achievement, faculty qualifications, and institutional effectiveness.
6. **Student Learning**: Department chairs have a direct impact on student learning outcomes. They are responsible for curriculum development, faculty mentoring, and program assessment, all of which contribute to the improvement of student learning experiences.
7. **Transparency**: Transparency is one of SACSCOC's core values. Department chairs must ensure that their departments' operations and outcomes are transparent and accessible for assessment purposes and for the benefit of students, faculty, and administrators.
8. **Supporting Institutional Goals**: Department chairs align their departmental objectives with the broader institutional goals set by Lamar University. By doing so, they contribute to the university's mission and vision, which, in turn, supports SACSCOC's mission of assuring educational quality and improving institutional effectiveness.

In summary, department chairs at Lamar University play a pivotal role in upholding the standards and reporting requirements set by SACSCOC. Their efforts are integral to maintaining the university's accreditation, ensuring the quality of education provided to students, and contributing to the institution's continuous improvement and success in the higher education landscape. For more information about SACSCOC, visit https://sacscoc.org/ or contact the Lamar University Office of Accreditation and Assessment (https://www.lamar.edu/planning-assessment/contact-us.html).

Serving as a Liaison Between the Department and Upper Administration

An essential part of your job as chair will involve consulting with your dean on issues facing your department, not only to address specific problems and issues but also just to keep administration informed about the department's function, its accomplishments and achievements, and its current climate or culture. You are the primary representative of the department, placing you in a particularly difficult role in which you must promote not only departmental concerns as you see them but also inform faculty of the decisions and concerns of administration.

Part of your job will be, just as a faculty member solves classroom and student problems before they rise to the level of chair, solving intradepartmental problems before they become larger concerns. Examples of other issues that routinely call for dean consultation include the following:

- Changing assignments or responsibilities of positions within the department (new director or program appointments, etc.).
- Job searches.
- Curriculum or degree plan change.
- Course scheduling.
- Departmental advising changes.
- Faculty and staff evaluations.
- Personnel conflict.
- Multidisciplinary or multi-department collaborations.
- Classroom, office space, and other resource needs.

If a legislator, member of the Board of Regents, or politician will be visiting your department, make sure to inform the Provost and President of the University.

Serving as the Face of the Department

Embracing your role as a new department chair at Lamar University encompasses being the face of your department, embodying its values, and fostering a strong connection with various stakeholders. This aspect of your position is not only vital for your department's visibility but also integral to its growth and influence within the university and beyond.

Your role as a representative extends to multiple dimensions. First and foremost, you are the liaison between your department and upper administration. You are the conduit through which the department's aspirations, achievements, and challenges are communicated. This role demands effective communication skills, ensuring that your department's voice is heard, and its needs are addressed.

Equally significant is your interaction with students. As the face of the department, you play a pivotal role in shaping their academic experience. Being approachable and accessible to students fosters a supportive environment where they feel valued and heard. Consistency in office hours, especially during critical times like the start of semesters, registration, and advising periods, demonstrates your commitment to their success.

Your active involvement during campus and recruitment events, such as Welcome Days and sports events, provides prospective students and their families with an authentic insight into your department's offerings and engagement. Being present on these occasions allows you to showcase your department's strengths, engage with potential students, and answer their queries, making a lasting impression.

Utilizing social media platforms and other digital avenues can effectively promote your department's achievements and opportunities. Creating a strong online presence, whether through social media, blogs, or departmental listservs, helps disseminate information and engage with a wider audience. By leveraging these platforms, you enhance your department's visibility and accessibility.

Addressing issues of plagiarism and academic dishonesty reinforces your commitment to maintaining academic integrity. Clearly communicating the department's stance on such matters ensures a consistent and transparent approach, helping both faculty and students understand the consequences of inappropriate behavior.

Embracing your role as the face of the department is a privilege that extends far beyond administrative responsibilities. It is an opportunity to foster a sense of community, uphold your department's values, and enhance its influence and reputation. By embodying these principles, you contribute to Lamar University's legacy of academic excellence and community engagement.

Advising

Advising is one of the most important activities a chair can oversee in terms of maintaining graduation and enrollment rates and creating a viable, thriving departmental culture among students and faculty alike. Individual departments have their own unique advising cultures and structures in place. You should work with the university advising center and/or the College of Graduate Studies in creating the most viable advising structure for you own department.

Consider the following:

- How does departmental size or departmental program division affect advising? For example, is your department small enough that one central advisor can handle all assignments or are their individual programs which need special advising coordinators, etc.?
- The requirements of the core curriculum are new to most faculty and students. Advisors in your department should receive training in core course requirements, either from experienced departmental advisors or the university CTLE.
- Advisors should attune themselves not only to departmental needs and requirements but also to individual student problems or situations. Some students, for example, may intend to transfer to other institutions and will require advisement in classes that will have maximum transferability. Other students may not understand the intricacies of degree plan management (course rotations, pre-requisites, etc.), so quality advising requires being aware of everything that could affect a student's experience with the department.
- Remember that advising is not just a question of individual course or program requirements. Students often identify advisors as key individuals in helping them discover their educational and life goals. Make sure that you and your advisors

understand that students will often have questions and concerns that transcend their major or professional aspirations.

- Maintaining a positive working relationship with student support office, such as the Undergraduate Advising Center, Office of Registration, and STARS offices, will improve your ability to serve your students at the department level.

A Quick Overview of Effective Student and Faculty Advising

Advising students and faculty is a critical aspect of your responsibilities. The following provides steps for effective advising for both students and faculty members, ensuring their academic and professional success.

Understand Your Role and Responsibilities

- Familiarize yourself with the department's mission, goals, and academic programs.
- Understand your role in supporting student success, faculty development, and departmental initiatives.

Student Advising

For Student Success:

Build Relationships

- Develop rapport with students, creating a comfortable environment for discussion.
- Be approachable, empathetic, and actively listen to their academic and career concerns.

Know the Curriculum

- Understand the department's academic programs, including degree requirements and course offerings.
- Stay updated on changes to curriculum and degree plans.

Set Clear Goals

- Help students define their academic and career goals.
- Assist in course selection, ensuring alignment with their objectives.

Provide Resources

- Familiarize students with academic support services, tutoring, and career development resources.
- Offer guidance on research opportunities, internships, and extracurricular involvement.

Monitor Progress

- Regularly review students' academic progress and performance (LU Navigate, Degree Audit, and other tools will help you accomplish this goal).
- Identify early warning signs and intervene when necessary. Alert advisors on campus using Cardinal Early Alert.

Faculty Advising

For Faculty Development:

Identify Individual Needs

- Meet with faculty members to understand their professional goals and career trajectories.
- Tailor advising based on their specific needs, whether related to research, teaching, or service.

Encourage Scholarship

- Promote faculty research and scholarly activities.
- Assist in identifying funding opportunities and writing grant proposals.

Foster Effective Teaching

- Support faculty in enhancing their teaching methods and student engagement.
- Share best practices and encourage the use of innovative pedagogical approaches.

Promote Service and Leadership

- Identify opportunities for faculty to engage in service to the department, university, and community.
- Encourage leadership roles within professional organizations.

Mentorship

- Establish a mentorship program within the department, pairing experienced faculty with newcomers. Use the CTLE mentorship program for your new faculty to be mentored by persons outside their department.
- Encourage peer-to-peer mentoring and the sharing of expertise.

Continuous Professional Development

- Keep faculty informed about workshops, conferences, and seminars relevant to their disciplines.
- Facilitate opportunities for ongoing learning and skill development.

Assessment and Feedback

- Regularly assess faculty performance and provide constructive feedback.
- Recognize achievements and provide support for areas of improvement.

Remember, effective advising is a cornerstone of your role as a department chair. By following these steps, you can create a positive and supportive advising environment, contributing to the success of both students and faculty members at Lamar University. Your dedication to their growth and development will be instrumental in advancing our academic community.

Fundraising and Stewardship

Different departments have varying experiences in fundraising and building relationships with outside donors. As department chair, it is critical to maintain positive relationships with previous donors and work to develop relationships with future potential donors. Very often it is personal connections or interactions that are necessary to relationships with donors, and very often a department can be best promoted only by key knowledgeable faculty members or leaders within a given program. The Office of University Advancement should be informed of all fundraising efforts *before* you commence to avoid conflicts or duplications of efforts.

- Gifts and outside support can be an enormous resource, increasing opportunities for faculty and students. Encourage your faculty to seek opportunities that may result from their research and teaching.
- Fundraising can be used in as many ways as you can invent, including support for faculty research, travel, outside speakers, departmental colloquia, and student prizes and scholarships.
- Contact University Advancement and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs if you have questions about art or gifts as there are strict state and federal guidelines on acceptance and documentation.

Handling Day-to-Day Tasks

The department chair job will inevitably take you beyond a 40-hr work week if you allow it. To make your workload reasonable, consider the following:

- Delegate. While departments vary on assignments and responsibilities, department chairs should make a conscious effort to divide up tasks.
- Seek counsel. How have things been done in the past? When faced with a task that seems onerous or time-consuming, consult previous department chairs or current chairs and administrators in other departments. Don't forget that your staff is a valuable resource as well, not just for delegating workload but for suggestions and counsel in best practices.

Department Cultures

Departmental cultures can be perceived by department members as enriching and fulfilling, at one end, and dysfunctional and embittered, at the other. You might inherit a department with a rich and supportive culture or one that requires serious repair after decades of entrenched program and personnel difficulties. It is essential to inform yourself as much as possible about the existing departmental culture, keeping in mind that many aspects of your department and its history might have been previously unavailable or unknown to you prior to beginning your role as department chair. The most important suggestion is to always maintain open communication with faculty and staff. Important considerations in understanding and cultivating your department's culture include the following:

- Department size and nature (degree plans and programs, graduate and undergraduate community, number of majors, etc.).
- Proportion of tenured to untenured faculty, junior to senior faculty, etc.
- Number of junior faculty, adjunct faculty, or non-tenured faculty in decision-making processes.
- Amount of student involvement in department culture.
- Departmental hierarchies, whether explicit or implicit.
- Degree of administrative/chair authority or delegation.

Department Chair Styles of Governance

Different department chairs have different leadership styles. Your professionalism and personal leadership style have contributed to your appointment as chair. You should actively consider how your personal leadership style relates to the following factors involved in effective chair leadership.

- The amount of face-to-face versus e-mail or other impersonal communication.
- The use of more democratic versus authoritative leadership.
- Your approachability either for professional or personal problems.
- Your perception in relation to upper administration, e.g., are you perceived as a department representative who legitimately passes on faculty concerns, or are you first and foremost considered an administrator?

Overall Governance – The Big Picture

Becoming a department chair means taking a larger view of the university and your role in it. Understand the government of the university as detailed in the Faculty Handbook. Take some time to understand the key people who serve the university, such as the Provost, Associate Provosts, Deans, and other key staff and administrators. The Faculty Senate is the

representative body of the faculty. Resolutions from the senate can be found on their posted minutes. You may also find it useful to be aware of and understand the functions of the various university committees, which can be found on the university website.

Department chairs should work with their faculty to create a shared understanding of the university at large. This process may involve faculty meetings to discuss larger university concerns, assigning individual faculty to projects/committees outside of the department, protecting probationary (tenure-track) faculty from too much committee work or other larger university service, and other measures to ensure awareness of shared governance in your department. It is the responsibility of the department chair to clarify that all full-time faculty are expected to be part of the governance of the university.

Be aware that you may still serve in some capacity as a teaching faculty member, but as a department chair you are no longer a member of the faculty in the way you once were. You will be perceived differently, both by individual faculty in your department and by the faculty members of the university at large.

APPOINTMENTS

The following information about department chair appointments comes from section 28 of the Faculty Handbook.

28. DEPARTMENT CHAIR AND PROGRAM DIRECTOR APPOINTMENTS

28.1 APPOINTMENT. After receiving input from the faculty and after consultation with the provost, the dean shall appoint of department chairs and program directors. These appointments must be approved by the president and the Board of Regents.

28.2 SERVICE AND STIPEND. Department chairs and program directors serve at the pleasure of the academic dean. Any administrative stipend associated with these positions remains with the position when the occupant leaves.

28.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRS. Department chairs shall receive half-time administrative appointments (.50 FTE) and half-time instructional appointments (.50 FTE) during the Fall and Spring semesters, and half-time (.50 FTE) administrative appointments during each of the summer terms (Summer Sessions I & II). In addition, chairs shall receive a half-time (.50 FTE) instructional appointment during one of the two summer terms and, if summer funds permit, shall be in any departmental rotation for an additional half-time instructional appointment (.50 FTE) for the other summer term. Chairs may not receive both administrative appointments and/or both instructional appointments during one of the summer terms.

EVALUATION OF CHAIRS

The following information about department chair appointments comes from section 45 of the Faculty Handbook.

45. EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATORS

45.1 DEPARTMENT CHAIRS, DEANS, ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT DEANS, AND ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENTS/PROVOSTS. All department chairs, deans, associate/associate deans, and assistant/associate vice presidents/provosts shall be evaluated annually by their respective supervisors. Department chairs shall be evaluated as part of the annual faculty evaluation process (using the F2.08c form for chairs). Deans and associate provosts shall be evaluated by the provost as part of Lamar's staff evaluation process.

45.2 FORMAL EVALUATION OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS, DEANS AND ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT DEANS. After three full years of service, each department chair, dean, and associate/assistant dean shall receive a more thorough evaluation of administrative performance. This review shall include formal input from the respective faculty, shall occur during the fall semester that begins a fourth year of service, shall be conducted by the dean (for department chairs and associate/assistant deans) and the provost (for deans), and shall cover performance during the previous three years. The review year shall be the first year of the next three-year period. An administrator review committee (ARC) shall be formed to assist with the evaluation.

Each review shall be conducted using an evaluation instrument and a procedure approved by the provost. Upon conclusion of the formal evaluation, the appropriate supervisor shall inform the provost (in the case of department chairs and associate/assistant deans) or the president (in the case of deans) of the outcome and make a recommendation on whether to reappoint. Once the provost or president, as appropriate, has accepted the review and recommendations, the administrator and his/her respective faculty shall be provided with suitable summary information on the outcome.