From the Chair's Perspective:

Five Frequently Asked Questions

Context and Disclaimer: In May 2012, Faculty Development formed a Learning Community composed of 7 Departmental Chairs. Their task was to share their experiences and find a common ground for the kinds of advice they would share with Faculty and other Chairs regarding departmental climate, procedures, and roles. This document is not meant to represent every Chair nor every Department's way of doing business.

Five Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **What is the role of the chair? Who is the chair? What authority does the chair have?**
2. **What are common constraints Chairs face when making decisions?**
3. **How can Faculty and Chairs work together to promote a positive work environment?**
4. **Where can faculty and newer Chairs find information with regard to university structure, university policies, and personnel policies?**
5. **In addition to student resources, how can Faculty and Chairs be more helpful when advising students?**

1. **What is the role of the chair? Who is the chair? What authority does the chair have?**

From Section 600

Regarding Length of Position and Appointment

622.6 Appointment and Evaluation of Department Chairs.
1. Term of Office.
The term of office for Department Chairs shall normally be three years. A department may submit alternative policies specifying terms of a different length to the Personnel Planning and Review Committee. At the end of a term of office, the Department Chair position shall be considered to be vacant. The vacancy shall be filled by the Appointment Procedures that follow.

Regarding Personnel Processes

611.4 The Department Chair.
The Department Chair assumes leadership in developing instructional competence in the Department and:
1. Assumes initiative in recruiting new members of the Department and in developing effective recruitment practices.
2. Evaluates and makes recommendations on members of the Department relative to retention, tenure, promotion, and service salary increase (see also Section 612.5.2).
3. Transmits the Chair's evaluations and recommendations and those of the Department Personnel Committee to the Dean of the College.

Additionally…
   a. Chairs have managerial authority in People Soft.
   b. Chairs often make recommendations to Deans and other administrators. Chairs can be advocates, mediators, facilitators, and/or the voice of the department
   c. Chairs serve as a conduit of information in all directions from and to students, staff, faculty, and administrators. In this sense, Chairs are a kind of node or interface in a network including staff, administrators, other faculty, and students.
   d. Among the many managerial responsibilities, some of the more common, important Chair tasks are: making personnel-related decisions/recommendations, engaging in enrollment management, handling student concerns/needs, and managing the Department's budget.

2. What are common constraints Chairs face when making decisions?

a. People Soft and other software on which we depend
b. The faculty contract, staff contracts, and other union contracts
c. Rules particular to a College or to the campus regarding scheduling
d. Budget changes both in terms of budget reductions and changes in rules regarding what we can spend money on and how
e. Academic policies that are many and sometimes change
f. Rulings from grievances
g. Room allocations. There is a space crunch in the University.
h. Rules with regard to enrollment. We have FTES targets, targets with regard to F/S classes, enrollment caps that sometimes change at the last minute, etc.
i. Summer/winter teaching rules change as a result of contract changes and changes in whether there is state support for summer/winter classes.
j. Policy changes sometimes come quickly yielding a very short timeframe for decisions. Sometimes this means less time for consultation with faculty than is optimal.

3. **How can Faculty and Chairs work together to promote a positive work environment?**

> **On Collegiality (from the Board of Trustees, 1985)**
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> *"Collegial governance allows the academic community to work together to find the best answers to issues facing the university. Collegial governance assigns primary responsibility to the faculty for the educational functions of the institution in accordance with basic policy as determined by the Board of Trustees. This includes admission and degree requirements, the curriculum and methods of teaching, academic and professional standards, and the conduct of creative and scholarly activities. Collegiality rests on a network of interlinked procedures jointly devised, whose aim is to assure the opportunity for timely advice pertinent to decisions about curricular and academic personnel matters."*

a. Faculty (including Chairs) may not agree all the time but we need to be agreeable and collegial all the time. Understanding and upholding that every perspective is welcome will help foster collaboration and cooperation.

b. Faculty-to-faculty mentoring is important. Senior faculty need to model good departmental citizenship for junior faculty.

c. Faculty need to be good citizen of the campus beyond the department. Part of being a good citizen is being more involved on campus. Examples of involvement include: joining formal committees across campus, volunteer when asked to represent the department, and find ways to make your work useful to the University community.

d. There are departmental, college, and university rules and regulations about asking for supplies, equipment, forms, and travel reimbursements. Faculty benefit from a respectful relationship with Departmental staff.

e. Chairs like to hear good news too. Faculty and student accomplishments help Chairs sing the praises of the department and advocate for the department.

f. Chairs have a global perspective on what is happening in the department and can be a resource in letting faculty know what other faculty are doing and involved in.

4. Where can faculty and newer Chairs find information with regard to university structure, university policies, and personnel policies?

General and Faculty-Related

a. University Catalog
(http://www.csun.edu/catalog/)

b. For curriculum review
(http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/educational-policies-committee)

(http://www.csun.edu/research-graduate-studies/gsc-members)

c. Faculty Senate webpage / faculty governance
(http://www.csun.edu/senate/)

d. Policies that affect Faculty, Students, and Administrators
(http://www.csun.edu/faculty-senate/policies)

e. Section 600 (Academic Personnel Policies and Procedures)

(http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/section600_0.pdf)

f. "Policies Every College Leader Should Know"
(http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/policypresentation2014.pdf)

g. Resources for Faculty
(http://www.csun.edu/facultystaff/)

h. Resources to help Faculty with Teaching
(http://www.csun.edu/facdev)

Resources for Helping Students

a. Information on assisting students in distress
http://www.csun.edu/counseling/faculty-and-staff

b. Responding to disruptive students

http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/responding_to_disruptive_students_feb2011.pdf

c. Information and phone numbers for students:

  i. University Counseling Services: (818) 677-2366

  ii. Disability Resources: (818) 677-2684

  iii. National Center on Deafness (http://ncod.csun.edu)

  iv. EOP advisors by college (http://www.csun.edu/csun-eop/eop-satellites)

  v. International and Exchange Student Center: (818) 677-4191

  vi. Office of Veteran's Affairs: (818) 677-7676

  vii. CSUN Help line: (818) 349-HELP (4357)

d. General resources for students
(http://www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/)

5. **In addition to student resources, how can Faculty and Chairs be more helpful when advising students?**

   a. Know where to look for information on the Major
   b. Know where to look for information on GE
   c. Know where to look for information on advising (http://blogs.csun.edu/ugs/academic-advisement/)
   d. Demonstrate a willingness to provide advisement to students
   e. Understand students forms and filing procedures (http://www.csun.edu/senate/form-routing-table.pdf)

Additional Nuggets for Newer Chairs:

1. **What are some practices that have helped Chairs be more successful?**

   a. Regularly make faculty aware of key policies including:

      i. Grade grievances (http://www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/forms/appeals.htm)

      ii. FERPA (http://www.csun.edu/anr/disclosures/#ferpa)

      iii. Section 600, Section 700, College and Department Personnel Procedures (http://www.csun.edu/faculty-affairs/policies)

      iv. Scheduling processes

   b. Thank faculty and recognize faculty achievements.

   c. A departmental Moodle site can help departments disseminate information and provide a one-stop shop for departmental policies, data, and documents.

   d. Foster transparency, fairness, and exchange of complete information, and allow faculty to participate in key decisions.

   e. Chairs should aim for clear results

2. **Aside from the technical aspects, what do Chairs need to remember when managing the Department's budget?**

   a. Different pots of money have differing restrictions on what the funds can be spent on. Work with your staff and the College MAR.

   b. Some pots of money can be rolled over to the next year, some can't. Consult with your College's MAR.

   c. There is a connection between FTES and budget. Maintain open communication with the Dean to understand the College's strategy.