

## **CALS DEPARTMENT CHAIR POSITION DUTIES**

**5-28-08**

The position of department chair is critical to support and develop the department's academic program. In addition, the chair has fiscal and personnel responsibilities to support the academic mission of the department. The chair should be an advocate to the college on behalf of department needs, but also an informed voice from the college to encourage department understanding of college mission and adherence to college and university policy.

A successful chair will have many attributes. The person must be: a) a respected faculty member; b) able to consider the common good of the department; c) able to interact successfully with all members of the department (faculty, students, staff); d) able to build consensus, but also able to make difficult decisions; e) fair in dealing with people; f) able to communicate important issues between the department and external audiences (other departments, external stakeholders); g) able to work productively with the college leadership; and h) of high integrity and honesty.

Department Chairs provide leadership in many areas, including Academic Program and Climate, Fiscal and Operations/Facilities Management, Personnel, and External Relations. Duties in each of these areas are summarized below. Although specific priorities within each category will change over time and will vary among departments, high priorities almost always include responsibilities related to fostering excellence in research, teaching, and extension/outreach – in other words, functions critical to meeting the missions of the department, college, and university.

### **Academic Program and Climate Responsibilities**

- Foster a collegial and supportive climate within the department. Promote fellowship among faculty, staff, and students.
- Promote an environment in which scholarly activity flourishes. Encourage department excellence in research, teaching, and extension/outreach responsibilities of faculty and staff.
- Lead faculty governance, promote transparency in decision-making processes, and facilitate effective faculty meetings.
- Lead strategic planning within the department. Implement the department's current strategic plan as appropriate, recognize circumstances that require revision of the strategic plan, and facilitate revision of the plan.
- Mentor junior faculty, and ensure appropriate mentoring committees are in place and operating effectively.
- Strategically plan and oversee faculty hiring. Ensure faculty search requests are included with justification in strategic plan and annual report. Ensure appropriate search committee(s) are appointed and are aware of college guidelines for searches. Secure appropriate college approvals at various steps in the process, according to college guidelines.
- Oversee faculty promotions, tenure reviews, reappointments, and faculty recruitment processes. Ensure college and university procedures are followed.

- Communicate with the appropriate Field Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS) to ensure DGS is/are providing appropriate oversight for the graduate program(s) relevant to the department.
- Assign teaching responsibilities to faculty and provide overall supervision for the teaching program of the unit.
- Provide oversight for the department's undergraduate program(s), curriculum development and implementation, advising, and student recruitment activities, including oversight for cross-department majors for which your department is providing leadership.
- Appoint appropriate Department Extension Leader and keep informed regarding department extension activities. Ensure that faculty continue to uphold the department's collective extension responsibilities.
- Represent the department at CALS chairs meetings.
- Foster professional growth by encouraging faculty and staff participation in CALS Leadership Development Programs and other professional development activities.
- Be familiar with and utilize Cornell resources (e.g., Organizational Development Services) that offer assistance with personnel and organizational issues.
- Prepare the annual report to the College, engaging others as needed.
- Oversee external program reviews required by university or for accreditation purposes.
- Serve as an advocate for the department, the college, and the university.
- Ensure the department proposes faculty, staff, and students for appropriate awards.
- Identify and develop faculty capable of serving in future department and college leadership positions.

### **Fiscal and Management Responsibilities**

- Oversee daily operations of the department, addressing administrative and academic issues as they arise.
- Provide fiscal oversight for the department, working with the Department Manager to ensure that accounts are not overspent and university policies are followed. Distribute discretionary funds to support appropriate department mission-oriented activities.
- Oversee allocations of graduate teaching assistantships.
- Oversee department space and facilities planning and allocation. Establish open and productive communications with CALS facilities staff when CALS is involved in major maintenance and renovation projects.
- When involved with major renovations or construction, interface with CALS and University facilities staff, project manager, and architects as needed.

### **Personnel Responsibilities**

- With the Department Manager, ensure that faculty, staff, and students follow appropriate safety and emergency procedures and receive the proper training.

- Provide oversight of department personnel, including ensuring with the Department Business Manager that appropriate HR policies are followed, including annual performance dialogues by supervisors.
- Conduct annual faculty performance reviews according to college and university practices and policies.
- Recommend faculty requests for sabbatical leaves to the Senior Associate Dean. Work with faculty requesting a leave to identify appropriate department coverage of responsibilities.
- Recommend annual salary increases (SIP) for department faculty.
- Engage the services of Cornell's organizational development experts when needed to help address department culture, leadership, strategic planning, and other issues.

### **External Relations**

- If appropriate, work with CALS Alumni Affairs, Development, and Communication office to establish and nurture an external advisory council for department programs.
- Clear all development efforts through Associate Dean before implementing.
- Promote effective marketing efforts that support student recruiting, faculty recruiting, alumni development and stewardship.
- Encourage faculty to engage with appropriate stakeholders in the development of their research, teaching, and extension/outreach programs.
- Foster positive relationships with donors/supporters for department programs. Encourage faculty holding named professorships, and assist when necessary, to foster positive relationships with the donor.
- Work with faculty to host visitors from industry, government agencies, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders, taking the lead as host when necessary and appropriate.
- Represent department (and college when appropriate) in pertinent scientific, professional, and administrative meetings (e.g., discipline-based scientific society, national chairs group).