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New Chairs Boot Camp

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New Chairs Boot Camp

Margaret Thomas-Evans, Chera LaForge, Katie Chaney

Short Description:

A 2016 study conducted by the University Council of Educational Administration found the average tenure of a department chairperson was four years.¹ Whether because of term limits, resignations, promotions, or sabbaticals, each year many universities must train new chairs to begin this vital administrative responsibility. However, for many, training is sparse or non-existent, which can lead to dissatisfaction for chairs and the faculty they lead. In this best practices presentation, we will guide participants to reflect on the current training offered at their university and explore how developing a boot camp for new chairs may be a valuable tool to ensure they feel confident in their role.

Based upon the experience of a long-serving cohort of department chairs, we found two issues caused the most frustration for new department chairs—strategic enrollment management and department administration. In our presentation, we will highlight the training new chairs received on the challenges of strategic enrollment management, including developing course rotation plans, building a schedule, responding to low and high enrolled courses, and working with the advisors to ensure students are placed correctly in courses and making progress towards graduation.

We will also briefly discuss the training provided on selected aspects of department administration, such as writing annual supervisor reviews, observing faculty teach, hiring and onboarding new faculty, handling daily operations, running effective meetings, addressing complaints, making budgetary decisions, and working with other administrators. For each topic, we will highlight the importance of providing practice scenarios based upon departmental events and time for debriefing with more experienced chairs.

The presentation will conclude with a reflection from a new chair on the benefits of an onboarding process tailored to the specific duties and needs of a department, conducted by experienced chairpersons and staff. Attendees will leave the session with a draft agenda of a new chairs' boot camp, selected presentation materials from our training, and a list of potential topics to include that is unique to their own institution.

Relevance for chairpersons:

All chairpersons are new at some point. If you are a new chair, you will learn some strategies for acclimating yourself to your new role. If you are a seasoned chair, you will gather some ideas to assist new chairs at your own institution and potentially be inspired to develop your own new chairs training.

Recommendations:

This session will provide strategies to train new chairs at a new chairs training workshop. It will provide ideas to take to your Dean to solicit support for such a workshop. It will also demonstrate the benefits and value of such a workshop.

Audience Involvement:

Presenters will engage the audience with a discussion on the types of training (or lack thereof) at their own campuses, its value to new chairs, how the training might adapt our approach, and suggest

¹ Flaherty, Colleen. 2016. "Forgotten Chairs." *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/12/01/new-study-suggests-training-department-chairs-woefully-inadequate-most-institutions>

ways that other institutions might develop a new chairs training program. Scenarios of possible situations new chairs may face will also be included.