

Why Become a Department Chair/Director?

“To survive and thrive in these difficult positions, it pays to know – really know – why you took on these responsibilities in the first place.”

Gunsalus, C. (2006). *The College Administrator’s Survival Guide*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (p. 12)

Extrinsic Motivation

- Your Dean or colleagues convinced you to take the job
- You felt forced to take it because no one else was willing to take on the responsibility or could do the job properly
- None of the people who were interested, in your opinion, were capable of being a good chair – you were scared of the alternative – X would have destroyed the department

Intrinsic Motivation

- You saw this as opportunity to help the department
- You wanted to build a strong academic department
- You wanted to make a difference
- You wanted to give something back
- You wanted to help other faculty members
- You needed a challenge
- The summer salary and stipend was a help
- You wanted to try something new
- You wanted to take a next step in the administrative ladder
- You wanted to have more control over the departmental environment

National Survey

Why Faculty Became Department Chairs/Directors

Reason for Serving (More than one response allowed)	National Survey
	# Chairs
For personal development (interesting challenge, new opportunities)	321
Drafted by the dean or my colleagues	251
Out of necessity (lack of alternative candidates)	196
To be more in control of my environment	161
Out of sense of duty, it was my turn	133
For financial gain	117
An opportunity to relocate at new institution	101

Source: Center for the Study of the Department Chair, Washington State University, 1992

Small Group Discussion: Why did YOU become department chair/director?

Moving from Professor to Department Chair/Director

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

-Will Rogers

“While it would be convenient to move immediately into your leadership role, the transformation from professor to chair takes time and dedication. Not all chairs make the complete transition to leadership. The nature of administrative work is varied, brief and fragmented, and therefore the administrator cannot devote long periods of uninterrupted time to single issues. The nature of professorial work demands long periods of time to concentrate on issues, to write and see a work through to publication, and to prepare to teach and evaluate classes. Therefore, you must let go of your previous professorial role, at least in part, in order to successfully make this transition. This underscores the importance of wanting to serve for the right reason. Intrinsic motivation may indeed be a prerequisite to accepting the leadership challenge.”

Gmelch, W. H., & Miskin, V. D. (1993). “Understanding the Challenges of Department Chairs.” *Leadership Skills for Department Chairs*. Bolton, MA: Anker. (pp. 3-18).

American Council on Education Department Chair Online Resource Center:
<http://www2.acenet.edu/resources/chairs/index.cfm>

Department Chair Role

Listed below are 24 typical duties of department chairs/directors. Please circle the number that best fits your answer to the question: How important to you is each chair/director duty listed? (1 = Low in importance; 5 = High in importance)

Chair Role: Leader

	<u>How Important to you?</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Coordinate departmental activities with constituents	1	2	3	4	5
Plan and evaluate curriculum development	1	2	3	4	5
Solicit ideas to improve the department	1	2	3	4	5
Represent the department at professional meetings	1	2	3	4	5
Provide informal faculty leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Develop & initiate long-range vision & department goals	1	2	3	4	5

Chair Role: Scholar

	<u>How Important to you?</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Obtain resources for personal research	1	2	3	4	5
Maintain research program and professional activities	1	2	3	4	5
Remain current within academic discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Obtain & manage external funds (grants/contracts)	1	2	3	4	5
Select and supervise graduate students	1	2	3	4	5
Teach and advise students	1	2	3	4	5

Chair Role: Faculty Developer

	<u>How Important to you?</u>				
	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage professional development of faculty	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage faculty research & publication	1	2	3	4	5
Recruit and select faculty	1	2	3	4	5
Maintain productive work climate; reduce conflicts	1	2	3	4	5

Evaluate faculty performance	1	2	3	4	5
Represent department to administration	1	2	3	4	5

Chair Role: Manager

	<u>How Important to you?</u>				
Prepare and propose budgets	1	2	3	4	5
Plan and conduct department meetings	1	2	3	4	5
Manage departmental resources	1	2	3	4	5
Assure maintenance of accurate dept. records	1	2	3	4	5
Manage non-academic staff	1	2	3	4	5
Assign teaching, research, other duties to faculty	1	2	3	4	5

Add your total score for each role. Plot your scores on the appropriate axes below then connect the points with straight lines to get a visual representation of your dominant and less dominant chair/director orientations.

