

## **Butler AAC Proposal for the Academic Chairpersons Conference**

Presentation Title: Finding Balance: Academic Leaders that Teach

Presenter Information-Primary Presenter CV/resume or biographical sketch

Tiffani Butler, Ph.D., is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Ivy Tech Community College. She previously served as Department Chair for English and Department Chair for the University & Transfer Division. In 2015, she participated in the National Council on Black American Affairs Leadership Development Institute (LDI) for African American Mid-Level Administrators. Her work as a chair lead to her dissertation titled *Leading from the middle: Understanding the leadership role of mid-level department chairs at a public statewide community college system.*

Presentation Title: Finding Balance: Academic Leaders that Teach

Disciplines: Leadership & Management; Teaching

Presentation Theme: Leadership and Management

Presentation Type: Best Practice Presentation (45 minutes)

Abstract: The presenter and participants will discuss multiple approaches to juggling the demands of leading and managing a department, while maintaining teaching responsibilities. We will explore best practices that support chairs as leaders that teach.

Keywords: Leader, Manager, Teacher, Academic Balance

Presentation Documents: Description of the Session (300-500 words)

In the fall of 2018, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) disseminated a revision of the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders. This latest version identified new levels of leadership not included in earlier versions, specifically the mid-level leader. At community colleges, a common role associated with mid-level leadership is the department chair. They serve a unique administrative position within the organization because they interact with nearly every unit: academics affairs, student affairs, senior administrators and students. They are also teachers.

My dissertation explored the lived experiences of community college department chairs as leaders in order to understand the nuances and complexities of this role. The focus was solely on five participant voices. Several themes emerged, but ultimately, all chairs considered themselves faculty (teachers) first. Based on these emergent themes, community college administrators and researchers need to appreciate department chairs as leaders that teach. As one participant put it, so often chairs feel “teaching is something you run down and do in between all your chair duties.” At a time when professional organizations are redefining what it means to lead from the middle, it is essential to look at the role of community college department chair as *leaders that teach*.

For this session, I invite participants to discuss strategies for balancing leading a department with teaching responsibilities. To frame this discussion, I will present results from my study as well as a comprehensive literature review. We will discuss the new leadership competency changes by AACC as well as the implications for community college department chairs in relation to their role as leaders that teachers. I identified ways in which department chairs can apply classroom strategies to department leadership and vice versa. We will also discuss ways in which teaching can reinvigorate administrative work. Following our discussion, I will share several scenarios that allow participants to consider real life implications. Participants will leave with strategies and best practices that support balancing the demands of leading a department and teaching.