

## How COVID-19 clarified my role as chair

As we all recognize and are experiencing first-hand, COVID-19 continues to impact the landscape of higher education; both domestically and globally<sup>i</sup>. This is being expressed by the ongoing conversations on how COVID-19 has significantly influenced or even transformed key areas such as (1) the teaching and learning process<sup>ii</sup> (2) student support / the student experience<sup>iii</sup>,<sup>iv</sup> and (3) enrollment management<sup>v</sup>, all rightfully so. Moreover, this dialogue is centered on the immediate and more long-term effects<sup>i-v</sup>. While the role of chair can affect, and is affected, by each of the above, they are not exclusive to the chair role. What is less apparent in these conversations is how COVID-19 has impacted or is impacting the role of chair, exclusively.

The scope of work for academic chairs can vary, but as evidenced by the themes of the Academic Chairs Conference (ACC) typically range from (1) management, evaluation, and assessment (2) acknowledging trends (3) being a servant leader (4) operating the department and (5) fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion. The quick pivot to remote learning due to COVID-19 that led to the changes noted earlier has been insightful, yet what remains to be seen are what long-standing changes will truly be or what will be temporary differences. Similarly, the abrupt pivot to remote learning due to COVID-19 affected the role of chair. What were once constants or traditions of the role were upended, either temporarily or permanently from the scope of work expected of an academic chair. How each chair responded to or altered their prior practices due to COVID-19 will be unique to their circumstances, experience, and leadership style. As such, this presentation will afford academic chairs a space to ponder, articulate, and engage with their peers on how COVID-19 clarified their role as chair.

To foster conversation and align with the five ACC themes, the presenter will share his experiences and identify five transformative shifts in his leadership practices due directly to COVID-19. Then, participants will be invited to reflect on how the last 24+ months has changed their priorities, perspectives, or capacities to lead a department. Following this, both table discussions and a session wide discussion on the collective reflections from the participants will be guided to identify some common lessons that have helped each of us understand and demonstrate the role of chair more clearly.

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<sup>i</sup>Nugroho, I., Paramita, N., Mengistie, B. T., & Krupskyi, O. P. (2021). Higher education leadership and uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Socioeconomics and Development*, 4(1), 1-7.

<sup>ii</sup>Blankenberger, B., & Williams, A. M. (2020). COVID and the impact on higher education: The essential role of integrity and accountability. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 42(3), 404-423.

<sup>iii</sup>Khan, M. A. (2021). COVID-19's impact on higher education: a rapid review of early reactive literature. *Education Sciences*, 11(8), 421.

<sup>iv</sup>Marinoni, G., Van't Land, H., & Jensen, T. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on higher education around the world. *IAU global survey report*, 23.

<sup>v</sup>Benito, A., Yenisey, K. D., Khanna, K., Masis, M. F., Monge, R. M., Tugtan, M. A., Araya, L. D. V., Vig, R. (2021). Changes that should remain in higher education post COVID-19: A mixed-methods analysis of the experiences at three universities. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 11, 51–75. <https://doi.org/10.5590/10.18870/hlrc.v11i0.1195>