

Proposal for Academic Chairpersons Conference 2022

Title of Presentation

“I’m elected Chair? Now what?” Helpful Strategies for Newer Chairs

Description of the Session:

One of the chief difficulties for newer department chairs is that there is often little formal training for the job. As a result, many chairs spend their first few years learning by trial and error, which is often a sure recipe for chair burnout. Exacerbating the trial-and-error approach, newer chairs often find much of their time and energy gets consumed by small-scale, daily issues. When this happens, chairs are less able to become the forward-thinking academic leaders their departments need them to be.

We know from attending ACC for the past five years that many participants are looking for practical ideas for making their work more efficient, less mysterious, and ultimately more doable. The strategies discussed in this presentation aim to equip chairs with concrete, easily usable methods for operating their departments on a day-to-day basis. Our hope is to help chairs learn to spend less time and energy on the common problems we cover in this session so that they can devote time and energy to the larger, more complicated, more impactful issues of their home departments.

Presentation Focus

The presenters focus on strategies for managing some of the most common issues department chairs encounter. Topics include tips for handling email without letting it take over entire work days, approaches to handling complaints efficiently and professionally, strategies for keeping committee and department meetings on-task and productive, approaches to management that lead to more harmonious interactions with colleagues, and ideas for better managing the chair’s relationship with upper administration. The goal is to offer concrete, highly practical, easily implemented strategies that attendees can use regardless of the idiosyncrasies of their home departments. With a combined fourteen years of experience as department chairs, the presenters will also facilitate a discussion of strategies that any chair can use to be more effective and efficient with the small-scale matters that all department chairs encounter.

Audience Engagement

Attendees will have time for table discussion of their own approaches to navigating the day-to-day problems and issues in their home departments. The presenters will solicit ideas from the large group for ways to add to or improve upon the strategies covered in the presentation. In this way, we hope that all attendees leave with a rich store of ideas for addressing work that is common across all departments.