During this panel discussion, a dean, associate dean, and two department chairs will discuss how to "create a positive environment in your academic division." Based on their collective experience of over 100 years in management and leadership, the panel members will share proven best practices when (1) building relationships; (2) using backward planning; (3) mentoring new faculty members; and (4) communicating effectively.

For building relationships, participants will learn how to create an appropriate educational, business and social work environment so that most of those in that environment are comfortable. Discussion will include strategies for chairs to build positive relationships that help their faculty and staff be productive, grow professionally, communicate well, respect others, and work collectively.

Backward planning is loosely based on Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe and their *Understanding by Design* method of unit planning. Figure out where you want to be, and then do planning that gets you there. For systemic change to occur, backward planning is a process that must take place. An example which will be discussed is how department chairs organize for a change in a degree program. Another example is hiring new faculty members. Where are the greatest teaching needs? Based on the needs, a chair and search committee define the skill set that will best fill in the missing talent and this will help define the advertisement for the position. This backwards approach to planning can be used for many chair related activities which will be discussed.

When hiring a new assistant professor in a tenure-track line, chairs are investing in one of the most valuable resources, faculty lines. If the department doesn't nurture the new faculty member, there is a great probability of not having a successful return on the investment. However, if time and effort is spent in the mentoring process, the payoff is likely going to be a valued colleague for many years. There are a number of relatively simple things a department chair can do to facilitate the mentoring process and increase the chances of success for the new faculty member:

To communicate effectively, participants will learn the various forms of communication and when and how to use each of the forms effectively. Communicating verbally via telephone is occurring less as electronic communication becomes almost overwhelming. Chairs should develop a culture for effective email communication and not use email so much that colleagues begin to dread them. Discussion will include how to develop a culture of meaningful and effective communication when new faculty and staff members are hired and during their tenure.

Throughout the session, panel members will provide specific examples and at the end of the panel discussion, answer questions concerning building positive relationships, backward planning, mentoring new faculty members and successful communication.