Audience: All department chairs

Objective: Chairs at other campuses would get ideas about how to create their own professional development groups and borrow ideas on how, why and when we set up our group. They will see the professional benefits of developing such a group.

Description: In this presentation, we discuss an example of developing a leadership network on a small regional campus. Campuses nationwide develop programs to mentor and support chairs at various stages of their service (e. g., Gratto & Hess, 2015). The network is a group consisting of chairs and similar level administrators who meet on a regular basis to provide professional development and peer support. We argue that when a campus has limited leadership capital, a peer group can serve as powerful professional development platform for new and upcoming chairs.

The speakers represent three generations of chairs: one in her first year of service, one in her second year, and one who has been a Chair for several years. When each of us accepted the role of Chair, we had little prior training or professional development. During the initial period of the service, each of us had the opportunity to attend ACC and some of us were provided with books (or purchased our own) to assist us. In agreement with existing publications (e.g., Gmelch & Buller, 2015), there was no formal mentoring or meetings to help us as we learned the role and had questions. After struggling to learn the role independently and discussion with new and incoming Chairs, we decided to seize the opportunity to create our own networking group and invite all other Chairs and similar level administrators to join us. The benefits of the group include a space for peer mentoring with a leadership focus and developing more purposeful and informed leadership practices based on shared experiences.

The presentation will include 3 parts. First, we describe the situation that prompted creating the group. Second, we provide the chronological development of the network. Last, we identify the learning outcomes that the group has achieved. To reflect on the experience of peer mentoring, we rely on feminist theory. Specifically, we argue that the learning community of peers creates a space of belonging and empowerment and provides intellectual and political resources to understand and strategize one's presence and function on campus (Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, & Bannister, 2009).

Presenters will provide recommendations on how to organize meetings, which books or publications to discuss and how, and which issues to focus the conversations in the group. The audience will share their own professional development and support experiences from their campuses and discuss the benefits of such groups for new and intermediate chairs.

The session is relevant to all chairs. New chairs will find encouragement to network with their colleagues on campus, and experienced administrators will get inspiration to organize and mentor leadership networks.

References:
Driscoll, L. G., Parkes, K. A., Tilley-Lubbs, G. A., Brill, J. M., & Bannister V. R. P. (2009). Navigating the lonely sea: Peer mentoring and collaboration among aspiring women scholars. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 17(1)*, 5-21.

Grato, S. D., & Hess, J. A. (2015). Developing Department Chairs Through Mentorship at the University of Dayton. *Department Chair, 25(4),* 25-27.

Gmelch, W., & Buller, J. (2015). *Building Academic Leadership Capacity: A Guide to Best Practices*. Jossey-Bass.