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Departments in Crisis: What to do when the Department is Threatened

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Title: Departments in Crisis: What to do when the Department is Threatened

Abstract: Falling enrollments coupled with scarce resources have forced many institutions to urgently cut costs. While reducing discretionary spending may solve short-term financial shortfalls, institutions are more frequently considering academic reorganization or program elimination. Managing these situations as chairperson is not only challenging, but extremely stressful. This session will provide participants with practical, research-based advice for dealing with several exigent department-level situations. Crisis leadership, enrollment management, recruitment, program development, and discovering new revenue streams will be discussed.

Keywords: Crisis Leadership, Management, Academic Reorganization

Presentation Topic Theme: Leadership and Management

Target Audience: All Department Chairs

Type of Presentation: Interactive Workshop

Objectives: Attendees of this session will:

- Review recent research related to crisis leadership for chairpersons
- Discuss the role of the chair in responding to threats to the department
- Develop practical strategies for dealing with falling enrollments
- Determine appropriate responses to academic reorganization
- Consider methods for reducing stress while remaining effective

Session Description:

As institutions continue to deal with waning financial support, ballooning budget deficits, and increased competition for students, institutions are seeking new ways to reduce costs and streamline operations. Department chairs are often on the front line of these actions, requiring effective and strategic leadership. This session will provide current and prospective chairpersons with relevant research and pragmatic suggestions for responding to such threats. Specifically, the session will be divided into the following sections:

Part 1 (20 minutes): The session will begin with a review of the research regarding effective crisis leadership for department chairpersons. Participants will learn how crisis leadership differs from leading in times of stability, and will have an opportunity to discuss personal experiences with the entire group.

Part 2 (30 minutes): The session will focus on practical methods for dealing with department-level crises, including:

- Predicting threats to the department
- Analyzing data effectively
- Communicating effectively with your dean and administration
- Determining the best course of action for a department in trouble
- Advice for increasing enrollments quickly
- Dealing with reorganization

Networking Break (5-7 minutes)

Part 3 (35 minutes): The session will continue by dividing participants into several small groups. Each group will be given a unique scenario outlining a specific situation in which a chairperson is in need of crisis leadership advice. Each group will be tasked with reviewing and assessing the scenario and collaboratively developing a list of suggestions. Finally, each group will present the scenario and their recommendations to the entire group. Focused discussion will be encouraged.

Question and Answer (15 minutes): Participants will have the opportunity to inquire of the presenter or of any of their colleagues regarding session topics.

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