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“Managing a Department, Working with the School Dean and Staying Research Active.”

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Dean Fenwick Huss and Chair Valerie Watnick, Baruch College, Zicklin School of Business

July 17, 2015 -- Proposal

This presentation will include a literature review on chair/dean management in college and business school setting, followed by interactive workshop involving fictitious scenarios, and brainstorming for best practices.

1. Objective(s) of the presentation: The audience should feel energized and leave the session with some practical tips for keeping research active while managing an academic department and working closely with the school dean.
2. Description of the session (300-500 words): (Include the relevance of the session to chairpersons, presentation focus, recommendations that will be made for chairpersons, and how the audience will be involved.)

Managing an academic department, working closely with the school dean, and staying research active can be difficult to do simultaneously. Administrative tasks may at times seem unending, and research shows that administrative work can be incompatible with the deep, thoughtful process of producing quality, academic research. This session will consider the literature in this area, best management practices, goals for working with the business (or other) school dean, and help the participants flesh out strategies that allow time for both a well-managed department, a close working relationship with the Dean, and quality research by the chair. In this way, the chairperson can lead by example, encouraging faculty to be research active, while producing his or her own high quality work.

This session will involve multiple hypothetical scenarios and will ask the session participants to consider best responses. Alongside these hypothetical case workshop discussions, the presenters will discuss the literature on the subject of managing a business school department or school, and brainstorm with participants to develop a list of best practices for managing an academic department. The presentation will be lead by a department chair and dean.

Fictitious Scenarios to form framework for discussion:

- A. Teaching: Faculty evaluations come in and you have four distinct problems:
 - 1) A long-time adjunct faculty member consistently gets low teaching rankings but wants to keep teaching. Your sense is that he “lives for this job.”
 - 2) A faculty member will come up for tenure in two years and while his research is excellent and he has received very good external reviews, his teaching evaluations are considerably lower than others in the department.
 - 3) One of your adjuncts, who has received past good (not great) teaching evaluations, receives lower than

average evaluations. 4) A final adjunct professor has again (three years running) received very poor teaching evaluations.

Assume, you are a new chair this year for purposes of the above facts. How do you manage these situations? Do you involve the dean in any of these decisions and if so, how?

- B. Handling Conflicts: Two of your senior faculty on the “T and P” (or “P and B”) write each other inflammatory notes and one has threatened to take his grievances to the Dean. The grievances include: calling committee meetings on too short notice and not following department procedure. Both faculty members threaten to go to the Dean. How do you manage and do you go to the Dean yourself?
- C. Supporting “Senior” Faculty: One of your senior faculty members, who is a full professor, has become research inactive. What do you do (hoping to get this smart, valuable person researching and writing about important subjects) going again? How do you manage?
- D. Administrative Tasks: Annual reviews of your 15 faculty members are due in a month. How do you manage? Similarly, you have three new faculty members that must be observed in the classroom this semester. How do you handle? You also have 18 adjuncts that must be observed in the classroom. How do you manage to get all of these done?
- E. Tenure/P and B action: You have a tenure application case coming up before the School P and B next fall (three months away) and you have known about this for one year and anticipated it for two years. The application is not a “slam dunk.” While three out of the five required external reviews of the scholarship are excellent, two of them are not good. The faculty member has very good teaching evaluations, and is always willing to work for the department, handling information sessions, writing exams, and reviewing text books for departmental selection. What do you do, assuming you support this person? Do you ask the Dean’s advice or otherwise get him/her involved?
- F. You are trying to work on your current paper, but with your door open, people are always stopping in to say hello. Every time you sit down to really work, there are additional administrative tasks showing up on your email and in your office. How do you manage?