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Department Chair as University Change Agent: A Practitioner- Researcher Leadership Model

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The literature notes the position of Department Chair as one of the most important, challenging, and misunderstood appointments in higher education (Crowder, 2010; Morris & Miller, 2008). However, results from surveys indicate that seldom is formal training in management or leadership provided prior to assuming this position (Whitsett, 2007); and, that the position is too often perceived as a burden assumed by senior faculty by "default" without any prior mentoring. This symposium describes the entry, process, empirical study, evidence based strategic intervention, and outcomes resulting from the leadership of a Department Chair trained as a Counseling Psychologists and licensed as a counselor. Unique issues related to points of diversity (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, disability) will be infused throughout the presentation. Methodology that provides the basis for the empirical examination of students' perceptions of the unit's training environment (i.e., student-student focus, faculty-student focus, faculty-faculty focus), the relationship between students' self-reported experiences and grade point averages, identification of variables that influence faculty peer-evaluation, meaning of course evaluations). Professional background of the Department Chair; a description of departmental demographics and history; the identification of clearly defined goals and points of intervention; intervention strategies based on principles associated with the researcher-practitioner model and behavior-based theory, and outcomes (i.e., increased compliance with the university's strategic plans and policies, increased faculty productivity in scholarship, increased enrollment, enhanced positive reputation at the institutional level, increased student professional engagement, increased diversity in student and faculty representation, and expanded institutional and program visibility). Unanticipated consequences and implications will be discussed.