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Interim to Permanent Chair: Leaders for Today

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Relevance of Session Chairpersons: This presentation represents the experiences of two interim chairs, who, after a national search, became the permanent chairs of their respective departments.

Presentation Focus: The work of a department chair is demanding and time consuming. Yet, it can also be rewarding. When stepping into the role of an interim basis, one is faced with the same responsibilities and challenges that a permanent chair endures. Instant decisions need to be made, and faculty, staff, and students need you to lead immediately. These responsibilities can become even more stressful if the interim chair also aspires to be the permanent chair within the same department. We first offer a discussion on lessons learned from being an interim chair and then provide tips for successfully transitioning from interim to permanent chair.

Recommendations:

1. Have a vision and set short-range goals: Are you a caretaker or visionary?
2. Gather stakeholder input: Although some decisions you make will inevitably be unpopular, having open communication about decisions creates buy-in and makes individuals feel as if they are part of the process.
3. Standing appointment with Dean: As you transition from interim to permanent chair, schedule standing appointments (e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly) with the dean.
4. Use time and resources wisely: When transitioning from interim to permanent chair, proactively schedule blocks of time in which to focus on priorities and action steps.
5. Discuss expectations: Meet with the dean to discuss the expectations around transitioning from interim to permanent chair.
6. Looking beyond the department: Take a future-oriented perspective, focusing on where the department ought to be and how to get there.
7. Build professional learning network: A culture of peer support in an environment where leaders live out the organization's mission is necessary for growth.
8. Delegating responsibilities and building community: As you transition from interim to permanent chair, it is important to recognize that you cannot single-handedly carry out all tasks.

Audience involvement

1. Ask questions of the audience
2. Ask audience to discuss concerns or topics with one another
3. Chairpersons will share stories to illustrate points
4. Practice or application opportunities
5. Interactive PowerPoint