

Kansas State University Libraries

New Prairie Press

Academic Chairpersons Conference
Proceedings

37th Academic Chairpersons Conference,
Savannah, GA

Whew, I made it! : The ABC's of the first year as Chair – Transitions, Experiences and Strategies

Carolyn J. Lee

University of Toledo, carolyn.lee@utoledo.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/accp>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Nursing Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Lee, Carolyn (Carrie) J. (2020). " Whew, I made it! : The ABC's of the first year as Chair – Transitions, Experiences and Strategies". Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Chairpersons Conference Proceedings by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Assuming the role of Chair presents a significant and interesting career shift. While a faculty member holds some insights into the role, it is not until you assume this status that you really understand this unique leadership position. Little time passes until the realities of new expectations, shifts in relationships with colleagues and time demands present themselves.

As a faculty member advances through the faculty ranks, they develop strategies and partnerships to fuel success. Capability in teaching, expertise as a scholar and accomplishments in service are built over time with strategic decisions, established partnerships and focus. An adept faculty member has learned how to work tirelessly, but purposefully, toward the achievement of personal and professional goals. Satisfaction comes from special relationships with students, mentor-mentee partnerships and individual progress in meeting institutional expectations and academic career mileposts.

And then, comes the decision or opportunity to assume the position of department chairperson! This may be a sought-after move, part of a strategic career planning process or occur unexpectedly by need within a university department. Irrespective of experience, discipline or locale, a faculty member is bound to undergo a time of transition from being a faculty member to assuming an academic leadership position, in this instance to the work of Chair. Although expert in their discipline and as faculty members, the role of chair is unique and is best accomplished with mentoring, information and support at the institutional and college level.

The literature describes many roles and tasks of the Chair – leader, scholar, counselor, faculty developer, and personnel manager with expectations to build a cohesive unit while also respecting the needs and diversity of individual members. A chair is challenged to answer to the department member needs and preferences while also responding to expectations of higher administrators, walking the tightrope of wanting to understand and effectively respond to others. A chairperson has to hold the big picture, being aware of policies, procedures, priorities and liabilities at the institutional and college level while also appreciating and being responsive to the nuanced details of particular situations at the departmental level. A chair is also faced with managing to maintain a professional reputation, aspirations and quality in their faculty work.

This presentation focuses on the everyday life of a new department chairperson who is adjusting to these new realities, negotiating the role with both satisfaction and frustration, with success and some failures while figuring out strategies. The presentation highlights key findings from literature and research on the chair role with an emphasis on the lived experience of a new chairperson using the “ABC’s” and case examples to identify key role aspects, issues and useful strategies. Audience members will be invited to reflect on which “ABC’s” in the alphabet soup that is their daily work as chair are areas of reward or challenge. Audience members will actively engage with each other to discuss ideas, approaches that work and identify a personal goal for a challenge area moving forward.