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Am I too [FILL IN THE BLANK] to be heard?

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Proposal for Academic Chairpersons Conference

TITLE: Am I too [FILL IN THE BLANK] to be heard?

PRESENTER INFORMATION: Dr. Ling Jeng (LJeng@twu.edu)

DISCIPLINES: Educational leadership, Higher education administration

PRESENTATION THEME: Working with Faculty and Administration

PRESENTATION TYPE: Best Practice Presentation (45 Min. presentation about a specific best practice)

ABSTRACT:

It takes time for a department chair to earn their credential to fit into the campus and departmental culture. Beyond experience or seniority, we will explore the diverse factors that determine whether and when a department chair becomes accepted into the dominant group in order to speak up and to be heard, as well as strategies for proactively making it a continuous self-growth process.

KEYWORDS: diversity, self-growth, self-advocacy, authenticity, vulnerability.

DESCRIPTION (300-500 words)

(the relevance of the session to chairpersons, presentation focus, recommendations that will be made for chairpersons, and how the audience will be involved. You may also upload more developed presentation materials: a proceedings paper, a PowerPoint Presentation, and/or workshop handouts if you have them now.)

I was recruited to my current position as a department chair 15 years ago. It was my first administrative position, my first time to the campus and, being an Asian American (short) female immigrant, the first “foreigner” to a group of faculty firmly entrenched in their notion of excellence based on “traditional academic culture.”

In addition to learning the new administrative role and responsibilities, my personal attributes such as gender, race, language, and physical appearance, continued to be unspoken but significant factors in how frequently and how much I would/could speak up and be heard.

Over the years, I learned the need to not be afraid of my own vulnerability, to focus on individual authenticity, and to see the mistakes made as the tuition for all to do better. Equally important is to recognize my capacity as a department chair to proactively support my deans and other administrators, and to contribute to the collective impacts of the larger academic setting on our students and our programs.

In this presentation, I will use my own experience over the decade and a half, to discuss diversity and cultural humanities department chairs need at work, as well as strategies I have used to address the sense of loneliness in department chair positions, to advocate for ourselves, to continue setting new goals, and to make working the same job over time into a true lifelong learning process.

I will use my own case as the Launchpad to engage the audience in sharing their experience and their learning. My role in the information sharing is to facilitate and maintain constructive and respectful conversations.