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Faculty Reopening Committee: A Study of Chair and Faculty Collaboration

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Faculty Reopening Committee: A Study of Chair and Faculty Collaboration

For many academic leaders, including department heads, the summer of 2020 was largely spent planning how to reopen the university for face-to-face or hybrid instruction for the arrival of students in the fall. The presenter, who is a department head for a large performing arts unit in a Research 1, public university, will share his experiences with a self-selected group of volunteer faculty to form an Ad Hoc Reopening Committee. The presenter will examine:

- the origin and makeup of the faculty committee;
- the changing roles of committee members as more was learned about the pandemic and the university's responses;
- the committee's relationship with college and central university administration;
- the evolving relationship of the presenter as the department head within the committee; and
- the challenges that the committee faced as the landscape changed with each new research study.

While some of these details may be specific to performing arts disciplines and their appropriate responses to the pandemic, the presenter will offer generalizations and conclusions not only about the committee's work but also about how it more broadly illustrates principles of faculty governance and collegial relationships among faculty and between the faculty and the department head. The presenter will share the value of the committee in terms of division of labor, hearing from a wide variety of perspectives, and raising the morale of the faculty and the department head himself.

The presenter will further demonstrate the opportunities and challenges of a department head as a "middle manager" between faculty on the one hand, and college and central university administration on the other. This role of "middle manager" was particularly challenging in responding to a global that has the potential for lasting effect on the physical, mental, and emotional health of members of the university community, the balance of faculty and staff between work and professional lives, and pedagogical and financial implications for the university as a whole.