What’s next? Preparing for the Next Leadership Position

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Markus Pomper and Margaret Thomas Evans

Description of Session

The presenters will structure this interactive session into three major themes:

1. Preparing for the move to a higher rank
   Presenters and audience will discuss considerations in selecting prospective higher administrative ranks. Because these career transitions likely include applying at a different institution, a prospective candidate should narrow his or her focus on the desired geographic area, the desired scope of responsibilities, and the desired type of institution. Through discussion with the audience, the presenters will hone into the point that a career move requires significant preparation well before applying for a position. We would like to emphasize that a department chair who aspires to become a dean should select and document activities that show the chair’s ability to work with disciplines outside of their own. The presenters will suggest venues for professional development that may help aspiring department chairs anticipate and prepare for the challenges of a higher administrative position.

2. Getting a foot in the door: Applying for the position.
   The presenters will highlight the expectations for a cover letter and a CV for an administrative position. We will emphasize that these documents are not intended to demonstrate scholarly prowess in teaching and research, but should instead demonstrate the applicant’s ability to lead a multi-disciplinary academic unit. The audience will work in small groups to review and critique sample CVs and cover letter for fictitious dean positions.

3. Finding the right fit: The interview process.
   Presenters and audience will discuss strategies for preparing for and performing well through various stages of interviews. Our overarching theme here is candidates must sell themselves to the institution, but also use the interview process to determine whether their own values are compatible with those of the prospective new employer.

Key Takeaways:

- Department chairs who would like to advance to in administrative ranks should carefully prepare through deliberate professional development and familiarization with disciplines other than their own.
- A cover letter and a CV for an administrative position need to focus on leadership skills, personnel management, budget management and strategic thinking.
- Applying for a leadership position above the department chair requires the candidate to customize the cover letter to each institution.
- Once invited for a phone interview or an on-campus interview, candidates should research the institution at which they are applying, and come prepared with informed questions.
While candidates obviously need to convince the committee and future supervisor of their own abilities, candidates also should examine whether the hiring institution and the future supervisor are a match for them.