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The Academic Leadership Framework

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Proposal by Stefan Niewiesk and E. Gates Garrity-Rokous

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Presentation Documents: Description of the Session

The position of department chair is increasingly complex and challenging, and institutions depend on its success to advance their missions. To support chairs in their administrative work, we have adapted the academic leadership framework (see below) for the chair position and developed an associated tool kit of resources (see link below) consisting of executive notes, questionnaires for self-evaluation, and references. These are meant to be a simple, time-efficient tools for chairs to self-assess and evaluate their administrative work, without the prerequisite of lengthy leadership training). The academic leadership framework with its domains of competence (values and behaviors, developing people, decision making, goal-setting, organizing the unit and providing oversight) is a construct similar to that used to discuss faculty work (research, teaching, service). It provides a framework to organize and improve administrative leadership work. Notably, the framework is neutral to many aspects of the leadership discussion: it does not prescribe what leadership theory to follow, what management style to use, or how to balance management and leadership. Instead, the framework provides a practical and easy-to-implement common language for academic administration, and can be adapted according to unit-specific needs and circumstances. Using a common framework for faculty work has been helpful for the development of the university, and the academic leadership framework promises to be a similarly useful tool on the administrative side.

The Academic Leadership Framework is a competency framework based on the general management and academic leadership literature. The framework defines and treats separately the broadly distinguishable “**domains**” of leadership competence from the individual “**competencies**” that collectively compose each domain. In other words, a “competency” is an observable ability of an administrative professional related to a specific activity that integrates knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. When integrated, these competencies coalesce into broad distinguishable “domains” of competence. Taken together, these domains of competencies aggregate into a general descriptive framework for academic leadership. These domains can be defined as follows:

1. **Values and behaviors** - the foundation of the leadership framework lies in the institution’s promotion of ethical values and professional attitude as well as personal and skills development by its administrators.

2. **People** - the systematic development of people focusses on the recruitment and development of highly performing faculty and staff.
3. **Decision making** - the knowledge of decision-making models and processes as well as the participation of faculty and staff is essential for the ability to reach well-reasoned comprehensive decisions.
4. **Goal-setting** - strategic planning, change and crisis management appropriate for every administrative level and function serve to guide administrative work including resource allocation.
5. **Organization** - reviewing and revising the organizational structure of the units and their processes results in an agile and adaptable university.
6. **Oversight** - providing oversight for people is crucial to ensure performance in terms of productivity and professional behavior.

References:

1. The Academic Leadership Framework: a Guide for Systematic Assessment and Improvement of Academic Administrative Work (2021) Stefan Niewiesk and Gates Garrity-Rokous
Global Business and Organizational Excellence, Volume40, Issue4, May/June 2021, Pages 50-63, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/joe.22083>
2. Toolkit for Chairs based on the Academic Leadership Framework (2021) Stefan Niewiesk and Gates Garrity-Rokous
(<https://vet.osu.edu/niewiesk-stefan/academic-leadership-framework>)