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Practical Strategies for Establishing Yourself as a Responsible Leader

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ACC 2023 Proposal Description
Dr. Butler Cain
University of North Alabama

This session invites discussion among department chairs and other campus leaders who are interested in establishing a reputation as a responsible leader. The discussion is expected to include the following topics:

A) Strategies for building a reputation for financial management. These include making funding requests for smaller projects and then gradually building toward larger ones; preparing a list of needs, justifications, and plans before asking for financial assistance; offering to cost share on projects that exceed program budget allocations; and maintaining open dialogue with faculty about department or program budget amounts and priorities.

B) Strategies for building a leadership reputation among faculty and staff. These include presenting faculty and staff requests or concerns to administrators; advocating for professional colleagues even when you know the answer is likely “no”; respectfully, but firmly, pushing back on administrative initiatives that may not be in the program’s best interests; being honest with faculty and staff when changes are inevitable and then leading your colleagues through them; and actively mentoring faculty at all experience levels.

C) Strategies for building a leadership reputation among administrators. These include understanding the university’s strategic plan and developing academic initiatives that are designed to help achieve those goals; showing administrators that you have an awareness of issues beyond your program and are willing to accept short-term setbacks for long-term gains; keeping administration informed about your initiatives without always asking permission to pursue them; promoting the narrative that your successes are also their successes; and building allies beyond your academic program by collaborating across departments, colleges, and disciplines.

D) Strategies for supporting future academic leaders. These include spending time deliberately building and nurturing a culture that values innovation and exploration; nominating colleagues for awards and other special recognitions; encouraging critiques and differences of opinion; supporting faculty and staff as they pursue career opportunities, even if those opportunities are outside of your department; and being a leader who is present, predictable, and approachable.