OBTC

Teaching Conference for Management Educators

OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne
June 17th – 20th, 2015

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

1) Title of Proposal:

Tricks of the trade: Navigating the push and pull of being a chair (and teacher-scholar?)

2) Abstract:

Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words).If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

How do you like your role as department chair? Have you survived and thrived as a chair, while remaining an active teacher-scholar? Two rookie department chairs attempt to answer these questions, while addressing the challenges and opportunities of a position with great impact on students and colleagues alike. We hope to engage chairs of all kinds (prospective, rookie, and seasoned Jedi masters) in a roundtable discussion that will address the tactics and strategies of balancing the push and pull of competing priorities. We hope this discussion will establish a community of peers that will be a venue for ongoing support and resources.

3) Keywords:

Use three or four keywords to describe your session.
Department chair, academic leadership, role conflict, faculty development

4) Format
___ Activity or exercise
_X_ Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)
___ General discussion session

5) Time Requested:
___ 30 Minutes
_X_ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
___ 90 Minutes

6) Planning Details:
Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?

Optimally, we would have some kind of open space that would encourage the open exchange of ideas. This could be in a comfortable lounge setting or a regular round table. No other special materials are required.

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:
What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?

The purpose of this session is to afford chairs a space to learn peers' recommended best practices, tactics, and strategies to succeed while also balancing the demands as a teacher-scholar in a variety of institutional and departmental contexts.

After participating in this roundtable session, participants will be able to:
1. Connect their own experiences with those of peers.
2. Reflect on advice offered by peers.
3. Identify a network of peers for support and resources.

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

The challenges that come with the role of department chair have been documented and discussed for decades (Booth, 1982; Chu, 2012; Gmelch & Burns 1993; Lucas, 2000). From the moment a faculty member assumes the role of department chair (whether voluntarily or seemingly involuntarily through political pressure), he or she is likely to experience a major life change (Hecht, 1999). Many experience the uncertainty of navigating the role conflict inherent in being both a faculty member and an administrator. Unlike many other academic leadership roles, department chairs are often still responsible for maintaining their teaching effectiveness and scholarly productivity, areas which are likely core to their professional identities. Further, new chairs must also embark on an unfamiliar path that changes their relationships with colleagues and students and requires them to view and solve problems from an entirely different perspective.

While these changes offer the excitement and challenge of professional growth and opportunity for many who seek a path in academic leadership, there is a period of discomfort and acclimation to the role that creates short-term challenges. Many teacher-scholars who serve as department chairs are surprised by the unexpected sacrifices that are inherent in the job (Gmelch, 1991). Specifically, chairs attribute increased stress due to:

- The pressure of being simultaneously effective as both a faculty member and a leader. Chairs report having less time for teaching and research efforts, and less free time and family time as well (Hecht, 1999).
- Changing relationships with colleagues. Chairs report that moving from the role of peer to that of supervisor changes their relationships with other faculty. Although the role expands one's network to include faculty and chairs in other departments, many find that their peers no longer understand what they do, causing them to feel somewhat isolated (Hecht, 1999).
- Organizational and resource constraints. Many chairs find that they gain a more comprehensive perspective of the department, college, and university while in the role of chair, and that this is eye-opening and satisfying. But there are challenges as well, associated with resource distribution in the face of constraints (e.g. allocating travel resources, class schedules, and merit-based rewards).

Often, these challenges and stressors cause chairs to resent their role, which could lead to unfortunate consequences for all involved. Fortunately, however, much of the literature suggests that these challenges, while potentially harmful, can be overcome through careful recruitment and selection as well as training and development (Booth,

1982; Booth & Burns, 1993). To that effort, we aim to offer aspiring chairs, new chairs, and more seasoned academic leaders a venue to share war stories, best practices, and detailed advice about how to transition into this important role.

9) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.

A. **Opening** (5 min): the session leaders will introduce the session and its purpose
B. **Introductions** (10-15 min): each participant briefly tells his/her department chair story
C. **Topics for discussion** (40 min): the session leaders would invite participants to engage in discussion on each topic:
    a. Is the job of chair really as stressful and difficult as people say (or generically, what are the challenges you face)?
    b. The biggest surprise I've had since taking this job is…
    c. The best advice I was given (best advice I have to give) was/would be…
D. **Conclusion** (5 min): the session leaders will conclude by inviting attendees to join a private online community to share resources and communicate regularly after OBTC; further discussion around the possibility of continuing this session on a regular basis at future OBTCs will entertained.

10) For Activities and Exercises:

Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.

Not applicable. In the roundtable format, participants will be engaged in discussion of the topics described above.

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:

What is the contribution of your session?

Helping chairs become more reflective and offering access to a community of resources will inevitably help in their development. Chairs are still faculty members, so helping them gain insight into how to balance the competing demands of these roles, and find opportunities to capitalize on the intersection of teaching-research-leadership, would not only help in the professional development of these chairs, but it could also help them model the way for their faculty.

12) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?

In this roundtable discussion, we expect to engage a community of management educators at OBTC that, to our knowledge, has not had an explicit forum before: department chairs. We aim to create a network of teacher-scholar-leaders that will be the basis for ongoing discussions, support, and resources. While we envision holding this session on a regular basis at OBTC, attendees will now have a community from which to consult with one another as issues arise throughout the year.

13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

Based on our attendance at OBTC and our review of past proceedings, we do not believe this proposal has been presented at previous OBTCs.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

Booth, D. B. (1982). The department chair: Professional development and role conflict. *AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report* No. 10. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Gmelch, W. H. (1991). Paying the price for academic leadership: Department chair tradeoffs. Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association* (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).

Gmelch, W. H. & Burns, J. S. (1993). The cost of academic leadership: Department chair stress. *Innovative Higher Education*, 17(4): 259-270.

Greenberg, M. (2001). The not necessarily thankless job of department chair. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/article/The-Not-Necessarily-Thankless/45492/

Hecht, I. W. D. (1999). Transitions from faculty member to department chair. *The Department Chair*, 10(2): 5 ff.

Lucas, A. F. (2000). *Leading Academic Change: Essential Roles for Department Chairs.* CA: Jossey-Bass.