ABSTRACT
               This paper provides a review of the literature on the roles
and responsibilities of the academic departmental chair in colleges and
universities. Carroll and Gmelch (1992) found four orientations in a factor
analysis of department chair duties: leader chairs, scholar chairs, faculty
developer chairs, and manager chairs. Creswell and Brown (1992) found seven
distinct roles: two administrative (provider and enabler), one external
(advocate), and four interpersonal (mentor, encourager, collaborator, and
challenger), suggesting that different roles are appropriately used by chairs
in dealing with faculty in different stages of their careers. In "Chairs in
Transition" (1990), the Center of the Study of the Department Chair noted
that the transition from faculty member to department chair required a major
paradigm shift on the part of the individual. Gmelch and Burns (1993)
identified three particular areas of stress for departmental chairs, namely,
time pressures, confrontation with colleagues, and organizational
constraints. Suggestions for relieving stress include restructuring the
position, purging unnecessary "administrivia," protecting research interests,
and training for leadership. Suggestions for academic departmental chairs
themselves include time management, conflict resolution, enabling
constraints, and academic productivity. (Contains 12 references.) (MDM)

ED 430 458

Running head: DEPARTMENT CHAIR

The Department Chair:

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Vicki Wilson

Muskingum College

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

The role of the academic departmental chair is one of ambiguity and conflict (Bennett, 1983). Straddling the managerial role of academic administrator and the faculty role of teacher and researcher, the chair is often between the proverbial rock and a hard place. It is small wonder that the literature is full of references to two themes: (1) the multiplicity and complexity of the duties of an academic departmental chair and (2) the stress caused by these factors.

Researchers have looked at the roles of the academic departmental chair in several ways. McLaughlin, Montgomery, and Malpass (1975) defined three dominant roles: academic, administrative, and leadership. Among the academic duties are teaching, advising, encouraging research, and developing curriculum. Administrative roles include maintaining the budget, keeping records, managing the staff, and representing the department in other aspects of the university. Leadership activities include supporting, motivating, and developing the faculty. Using factor analysis of the same data, Smart and Elton (1976) identified four roles: a faculty role, an instructional role, a research role, and a coordinator role. Booth (1982) also identified four distinctive roles: faculty centered, externally focused, program oriented, and management centered.

Bragg (1981) typified four different orientations among chairs at a research university: faculty chairs who focus on recruitment, support, and development of faculty; external chairs, whose primary responsibility is the promotion of departmental image outside the department; program chairs who are primarily concerned with improvements in the curriculum; and management chairs who focus on coordinating the operations of the department. Carroll and Gmelch (1992) also found four orientations in a factor analysis of department chair duties. Their "manager chair" is similar to Bragg's "management orientation": "faculty developer" is similar

to "faculty orientation." Their "leader chair" encompasses Bragg's "external orientation" and "program orientation" and includes both internal and external responsibilities. Their "scholar chair" adds a dimension not mentioned by Bragg.

Specifically, the roles described by Carroll and Gmelch are as follows:

1. Leader chairs

    a. Solicit ideas to improve the department

    b. Plan and evaluate curriculum

    c. Conduct faculty meetings

    d. Keep the faculty informed of university and professional concerns

    e. Coordinate departmental activities with constituents

    f. Represent the department at professional meetings

    g. Participate on college and university committees.

2. Scholar chairs

    a. Obtain funds for personal research

    b. Maintain a productive research program

    c. Remain current in their own discipline

    d. Select and supervise graduate students.

3. Faculty developer chairs

    a. Obtain funding for faculty research

    b. Encourage professional development of faculty

    c. Encourage faculty research and publication

    d. Provide informal faculty leadership

    e. Develop long-range departmental goals

    f. Maintain a conducive work climate

    g. Effectively recruit and select faculty

    h. Evaluate faculty performance.

4. Manager chairs

    a. Prepare and propose budgets

    b. Manage departmental resources

    c. Maintain records

    d. Manage staff

    e. Assign faculty duties.

Creswell and Brown (1992) further delineate the role of academic departmental chairs in promoting research among their faculty. In a study of 33 chairs, they found seven distinct roles: two administrative, one external, and four interpersonal. The administrative roles are labeled "Provider" and "Enabler." The Provider garners financial and nonfinancial resources, such as laboratory equipment and student personnel, to support faculty research. The Enabler makes adjustments in faculty schedules and workloads to provide time and visibility for scholarly activities. The external role, "Advocate," is the product champion of faculty research, lobbying

upper administration for additional funding and facilities and soliciting foundations and industry for grants. The interpersonal roles include "Mentor," "Encourager," "Collaborator," and "Challenger." The Mentor is a role model, sharing expertise by reviewing and critiquing ideas and manuscripts. The Encourager gives general support, recognizing effort and accomplishment, but keeping a hands-off approach to the actual research. The Collaborator sets joint goals and works together with faculty to complete projects. The Challenger prods, inspires, evaluates, and monitors faculty research with strategies ranging from gentle reminders to formal annual review.

Creswell and Brown suggest that different roles are appropriately used by departmental chairs in dealing with faculty in different stages of their professional careers. New faculty need the administrative roles of Provider and Enabler to provide them with time and money for pursuing their research ideas. Pre-tenured faculty need the Mentor, the Advocate, and the Collaborator to help them produce research high in quality and sufficient in quantity. Post-tenured faculty need the Encourager, the Challenger, and the Advocate to refocus and revive their research agendas. Senior faculty members need the Enabler, the Advocate, and the Challenger to keep their productivity high and their departmental relationships productive.

What preparation does the average departmental chair have for accepting this multi-faceted position? Often, little or none. In "Chairs in Transition" (1990), the Center of the Study of the Department Chair states that the transition from faculty member to departmental chair is dramatic and difficult. It requires a paradigm shift, a veritable "metamorphosis" (p. 1).

1. From solitary to social: The faculty member works alone to plan lessons, grade assignments, and carry out research. The chair must work through others to accomplish departmental goals.

2. From focused to fragmented: The professor has long stretches of uninterrupted time in which to pursue personal and professional goals. The work of the departmental chair, like that of other administrative personnel, is characterized by "brevity, variety, and fragmentation" (p. 1).

3. From autonomous to accountable: Faculty are generally free to schedule office hours and activity. Departmental chairs are more often at the mercy of those lined up in front of their office doors: faculty, staff, students, and other administrators.

4. From private to public. Much of what takes place in the classroom and the faculty office takes place behind closed doors. The departmental chair, on the other hand, is expected to maintain an open-door policy.

5. From manuscript to memoranda: Researchers spend a great deal of time writing, editing, critiquing, and rewriting scholarly works for scholarly audiences. Departmental chairs quickly bang out memos on dozens of topics to a widely diverse population.

6. From professing to persuading: The professor is the acknowledged expert in his or her field. Departmental chairs deal often with those who have a great deal more expertise than they. The authority conferred by expertise is often weakened, requiring greater powers of personal persuasion.

7. From stability to mobility: The professor is firmly ensconced within the department. The chair must move throughout the university and the profession with more visibility and political savvy.

8. From client to custodian: The professor expects resources from the university. The chair must allocate those resources for the greatest good.

It is not surprising that the academic departmental chair thrust unprepared into a complex,

multi-dimensional role should experience a great deal of stress. In "Paying the Price for

Academic Leadership: Department Chair Tradeoffs" (1992), the Center for the Study of the

Department Chair says:

> ...chairs often see themselves as scholars who, out of a sense of duty, temporarily accept responsibility for the administrative tasks so other professors can continue with their teaching and scholarly pursuits. They may come to the position without leadership training, without prior administrative experience, without a clear under- standing of the ambiguity and complexity of their role; without recognition of the metamorphic changes that occur as one transforms from a professor to a chair; and without an awareness of the cost to their academic career and personal lives (p. 1).

In a study of 808 chairs, the Center for the Study of the Department Chair found that

accepting the position resulted in "tradeoffs"(p. 2). In exchange for the departmental chair

position, chairs lost time for professional activities, keeping current in their fields, teaching,

pursuits with families and friends, and leisure activities. They also lost "balance," trapped

between the conflicting roles of administrator and faculty.

Reporting on the same study, Gmelch and Burns (1993) identified the particular areas of

stress for departmental chairs. Three areas of stress emerged: time pressures, confrontation with

colleagues, and organizational constraints. Six of the top ten stressors related to dealing with

time pressures: too heavy a workload (reported by 59% of respondents), job interfering with

personal time (48%), excessively high self-expectations (45%), completing paperwork on time

(41%), meetings taking too much time (40%), and telephone and visitor interruptions (40.5%).

Three items referred to confrontations with colleagues: making decisions affecting their lives

(46%), resolving collegial differences (45%), and evaluating faculty performance (42%). Two

related to organizational constraints: obtaining program approval and financial support (54%)

and complying with institutional rules and regulations (48%).

In the face of such stress, why do academic departmental chairs put themselves in this position? Why do they seek to be "between a rock and a hard place"? According to the Center for the Study of the Department Chair ("Job Satisfaction," 1992), the motivations are personal, altruistic, and vicarious satisfaction. Some chairs get great personal satisfaction from exercising control and taking individual responsibility for the success of the department and its faculty and students. Recognition from faculty and students is particularly well received. Some chairs enjoy helping faculty and students through good hiring decisions, assisting young people in the pursuit of the careers, nominating promising candidates for jobs and awards, and providing the resources necessary for research and teaching. Others get vicarious pleasure from the accomplishments of faculty and students in their departments. When faculty gain promotion and accolades, when students get research recognized and are offered good jobs, the chair is rewarded.

Suggestions for relieving stress--and ensure that satisfactions outweigh dissatisfactions--are aimed at both the institution and the departmental chair. The institution can do the following (Gmelch & Burns, 1993):

1. Restructure the position. The position of academic departmental chair can be restructured so that is a half-time position with sufficient secretarial and research assistant support. The chair would retain a half-time faculty load.

2. Purge unnecessary "administrivia" (p. 265). The duties of the chair need to be analyzed so that only the most important are retained. Each request should be judged on its contribution to the university and the department.

3. Protect research interests. Chairs need to maintain their own research agendas through release time, maintenance of a research office, and use of a research assistant.

4. Train for leadership. Chairs need training in managerial skills and leadership perspectives.

Suggestions for the academic departmental chairs themselves include the following:

1. Manage time. Learn to spend the most time on high payoff activities. Eliminate those that have low payoffs.

2. Learn to resolve conflict productively. Basic tenets include (1) separating people from the problem, (2) focusing on interests not positions, (3) generating a variety of possible solutions, and (4) basing the resolution on objective standards.

3. Enabling constraints. Chairs should see rules and regulations as the boundaries within which they can work creatively.

4. Academic productivity. Chairs should protect their own academic interests by scheduling uninterrupted blocks of time for study and research, maintain another office at home or at the institution that is protected from "walk-ins," and establish a team of faculty and students to further the chair's research agenda.

Specific suggestions for improving relations with the faculty include the following ("Chairs as Faculty Developers," 1990):

1. Learn about your role and responsibilities in the department and the institution.

2. Create balance between your professional and personal life.

3. Prepare for your professional future.

4. Establish a collective department vision or focus.

5. Develop faculty ownership of the vision.

6. Initiate changes slowly.

7. Allocate resources of time, information, and assignments to encourage the vision.

8. Monitor progress toward achieving the vision.

9. Establish an open atmosphere to establish trust.

10. Listen to faculty needs and interests.

11. Collaboratively set goals.

12. Provide feedback to faculty.

13. Represent faculty to colleagues and senior administrators.

14. Serve as a role model and mentor.

15. Encourage and support faculty.

What happens to departmental academic chairs when they leave the position? According to the Department for the Study of the Department Chair ("Career Paths," 1990), career movement is in four directions: 43% return to the faculty, 19% retire, 28% move to another position in academe, and 9% move out of academe. Perhaps old departmental chairs, like old principals, never grow old--they just lose their faculties.

Summary and Conclusions

The academic departmental chair has multiple responsibilities: teaching and research, administration of the department, promoting faculty and staff development, and representing the department to other parts of the university and the world outside the university. This complex job often results in great stress due primarily to time pressures, confrontations with colleagues, and organizational constraints. The rewards are personal, altruistic, and vicarious.

The position of the academic departmental chair is not for the faint of heart and thin of skin. It requires a straddling of two distinct roles--faculty and administration--each of which is itself multi-faceted. It is imperative for the person approaching this position to reflect on what he or she expects to bring to the position, what goals will be pursued, which aspects will be emphasized and which will be minimalized, what training will be needed to accomplish personal and professional goals, and what direction his or her career will take following the position of department chair.

References

Bennett, J.B. (1983). <u>Managing the Academic Department: Cases and Notes</u>. New York: Macmillan.

Booth, D. B. (1982). <u>The Department Chair: Professional Development and Role Conflict</u>. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Career paths of department chairs. (1990). <u>CSDC (Center for the Study of the Department Chair Newsletter, 3,</u> 3.

Carroll, J.B., & Gmelch, W.H. (1992, October-November). <u>The relationship of department chair roles to importance of chair duties.</u> Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Minneapolis, MN.

Chairs in transition. (1990). <u>CSDC (Center for the Study of the Department Chair) Newsletter, 2,</u> 1-4.

Chairs as faculty developers. (1990). <u>CSDC (Center for the Study of the Department Chair) Newsletter, 1,</u> 1-2.

Creswell, J.W., & Brown, M.L. (1992). How chairpersons enhance faculty research: A grounded study. <u>Review of Higher Education, 16</u>(1), 41-62.

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

Grumbles, K., & Bregman, N.J. (1994, May-June). <u>The academic department head: Duties and compensation</u>. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Institutional Research, New Orleans, LA.

Job satisfaction for chairs. (1991). <u>CSDC (Center for the Study of the Department Chair)</u>

<u>Newsletter, 2,</u> 1-2.

Paying the price for academic leadership: Department chair tradeoffs. (1992). <u>CSDC</u>

<u>(Center for the Study of the Department Chair), 2,</u> 1-4.

Why chairs serve. (1990). <u>CSDC (Center for the Study of the Department Chair)</u>

<u>Newsletter, 3,</u> 1-2,4.

032 009

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC
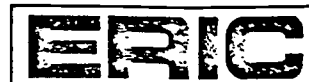
REPRODUCTION RELEASE
(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: *The Department Chair: Between a Rock and a Hard Place*

Author(s): *VICKI A. WILSON*

Corporate Source: *Muskingum College*	Publication Date: *1999*

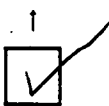## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

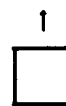| The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY *Sample* TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) **1**	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY *Sample* TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) **2A**	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY *Sample* TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) **2B**
Level 1 ↑ [✓]	Level 2A ↑ [ ]	Level 2B ↑ [ ]
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, please →

Signature: *Vicki Wilson*	Printed Name/Position/Title: *VICKI A. WILSON AS'T PROF*	
Organization/Address: *Muskingum College New Concord, OH 43762*	Telephone: *740-826-8038*	FAX: *740-826-8404*
	E-Mail Address: *wilson@ muskingum.edu*	Date: *4-29-99*

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:

Address:

Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:

Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
1129 SHRIVER LAB, CAMPUS DRIVE
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20742-5701
Attn: Acquisitions

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2nd Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

F-088 (Rev. 9/97)
PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE.