

Evaluation of service as department chair
Guidelines for departmental letter

The Committee on Academic Personnel is concerned that some accomplishments of department chairs may go unnoticed during the merit and promotion process. Currently, detailed information on the performance of chairs is sparse and uneven, especially in the letter from the chair's department.

As the department evaluation must be written by someone who customarily does not write such letters, CAP has tried to identify the types of accomplishments that might be most useful in a department's letter. Departments might comment on three broad areas which may not be covered elsewhere in the file: administration; academic vision; and collegiality. Since the duties and responsibilities of chairs vary widely across the campus, the following suggestions are provided only to stimulate thought and discussion, and not to serve as an exhaustive list. Innovative service as chair might be indicated by:

1. Chairs who have made substantial improvements in administrative procedures, courses and curriculum, support for teaching and research, or other aspects of department life.
2. Chairs who have identified ways that their department can improve its teaching, research and/or service mission, and who have led their faculty in implementing the changes required to improve the quality of the department.
3. Chairs who have gained the respect and the admiration of their faculty, because, for example, they take the time and effort to make fair and even-handed decisions, rather than handling problems using the most expedient method.
4. Chairs who anticipate and solve administrative problems before they affect the staff, faculty, or students in their unit.
5. Chairs who have guided their departments through difficult transitions (reorganization, fission, downsizing, etc.), and who have been able to minimize the damage and maximize the opportunities that occur during such periods.
6. Chairs who adroitly manage the financial, physical, and spatial resources provided to their department, and who allocate resources fairly among the individuals in their unit.
7. Chairs who are capable of remaining up to date in their research fields during their administrations.
8. Chairs who support individual faculty members in their teaching and research, helping them, for example, to establish intellectual networks throughout the campus and to seek out research funds in traditional and innovative places.
9. Chairs who have successfully attracted and recruited high caliber faculty to their units and to campus.
10. Chairs who have improved the diversity of the faculty and staff in their department. (Diversity in graduate admissions is the responsibility of the Graduate Group chair)
11. Chairs who, through marshaling the hidden resources of the faculty, are able to build on a department's strengths. This might include reconceptualizing disciplines, so as to create new units or subspecialties from among faculty already on campus.
12. Chairs who foster the development and success of their faculty: for example, by mentoring junior and new senior faculty; by writing thoughtful, insightful, and detailed letters for merits and promotions; and by fairly and accurately representing their faculty in the event of disagreements about merits and promotions.

13. Chairs who have some sense of the "big picture" and therefore show consistency in their departmental decisions rather than treating each problem as independent of every other. One mark of such breadth might be an understanding of disciplines outside one's immediate interests, and a sense of where the profession is going intellectually at any given moment.
14. Chairs who can negotiate between the differing opinions within the department, seeking rapprochement when it is possible, and peaceful coexistence when it is not.
15. Chairs who receive the strong support of department staff, especially those able to improve relations among staff members and between faculty and staff.
16. Chairs who have particularly strong records in the retention of faculty, able both to dissuade individuals from leaving and to win successfully from the administration the bonuses that convince people to stay.

Academic units vary in size and some departments may find it difficult to obtain detailed information about a chair's performance. We wish, however, to encourage departments to seek ways of collecting such material. The procedure for gathering information from faculty members, staff members, and students should insure a response from all individuals in the unit. In contrast an open call might produce a polarized sample of comments, from individuals who either strongly approve or strongly disapprove of the chair's performance. Another issue to consider is confidentiality, since the chairs are in positions of power with respect to the faculty, staff, and students in their unit.

CAP hopes that these suggestions may help departments to understand the kinds of information about a chair's administrative skills, academic vision, and collegiality that should be considered when chairs are evaluated for merits or promotions. We encourage additional suggestions from the faculty about the materials that could be most usefully supplied by the department. Finally CAP wishes to emphasize that it does not expect any chair to excel in all of the categories listed above. This memo is not meant to serve as a "check list" for evaluating a chair's performance, but rather as a means to support and acknowledge faculty members whose service as chair should be recognized and rewarded.

Committee on Academic Personnel, 12/13/95, revised (item 10 added) 3/6/96.

<http://provost.ucdavis.edu/cap/FAQS/chair1.htm>