

Advancing to Academic Leadership Positions Panel
Friday September 16, 2011, Reimers Room, Alumni Center, NDSU
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Key preparation steps in preparing for academic leadership positions

- Attend one national leadership workshop outside of your institution.
 - WELI: Legal issues, negotiation, working with faculty, learn how to not be emotional when under stress.
 - Internal workshop at the College of Engineering at Penn State: Department heads ran workshop for those interested into moving into chair or head positions. Dealt with logistics such as time management and budgeting.
- Seek out people who are successful leaders such as department chairs. Ask them questions like: “What do you like about your job? What don’t you like? How do you become the boss of your colleagues who may also be your friends?”
- Let administrators (chairs, deans) know you are interested in administration/leadership so they can nominate you, and send you to workshops.
- Network.
- Keep options open, explore, don’t commit until you are sure. After you finish a task/project, articulate what worked, what didn’t, and why. It’s easier to learn if you reflect on the experience. “Ask For It,” is a recommended book about negotiating.
- Don’t jump into administration until you get your career where you want it to be. Test the waters to see what you might like, without burning your bridges.

Common Pitfalls

- People often have inadequate time budgeting skills.
- People often have inadequate delegation skills. Sometimes you don’t need something done well, but need something done adequately. That means sometimes you should delegate to someone who will do a task adequately, even if you can do it better.
- Beware of hiding your light under a bushel basket. If you do something well, people should know you did it and know you did it well. You should acknowledge it to yourself.
- Beware of agreeing to do many things that are invisible to others just because it is something you care about or it is important to you. If it is that important, find a way to make it visible.
- Don’t try to deal with all possible upcoming contingencies, and worry how you would manage those, as you consider leadership roles. When the situation arises you will figure it out.
- Beware of being an ageist (or sexist, etc.) You’ll miss out on collaboration, mentoring, input, or other opportunities.
- Avoid becoming embittered after a disappointment; instead, direct energy toward working to create a better situation.
- Avoid taking things personally – this is easier said than done. Find a way to let troublesome issues not be your personal problem. For example, use positive self-talk – “the problem is the issue, the problem is not me.” Or wait to react until you think things through with greater perspective. Observe/talk to peers in similar positions to learn how they handle issues.
- Do not allow yourself to become isolated. Create a network/support system, a safe set of individuals as sounding boards and stress absorbers.
- Don’t avoid serving on search committees. You’ll get to know the search process, which can be very useful when you might be an applicant.

- Don't burn your bridges, even with people you have come to dislike. Always act professionally and keep long-term interactions in mind.
- Try not to take bad days home with you to your family. Learn ways to compartmentalize the negative aspects the day and leave it at the workplace. For example, imagine yourself in a Teflon raincoat; the day's troubles slide off, you leave the raincoat in hung in the office, and go home without all the troubles.

Guidance on Interacting with Leadership Position Gatekeepers and Peers

- You're probably considering leadership. You've probably decided you have something positive to contribute. This advice is from that perspective/assumption:
 - Start finding ways to think about yourself as a leader. You can start by watching peers in leadership positions. Develop your narrative: what are your skills, what do you bring?
 - You cannot burn bridges, campus- or nation-wide. Let things go. Deal with issues openly and honestly, but let them go.
 - There is often a difference in how women and men are assessed (e.g. let's wait until she does xyz versus he's ready.)
 - Let people know you are interested in leadership. It may feel like boasting, but it will allow people to help you move into positions. Be strategic. Rewrite your CV from teaching to leadership.
 - Do things outside of your comfort zone. Interact with people in other disciplines.
 - Keep an eye out for who is a gatekeeper. If you are a gatekeeper, keep your eye out for emerging leaders.
 - Let people know you are interested. It's amazing what opportunities will open up when people know you are interested.
 - It is hard to ask people to nominate you, but it is important. If they do not want to support you, they will find a way to get out of it.
 - Explore potential leadership positions.
 - Don't assume those around you understand your position; tell people what you do and how you spend your workday.

Subtleties of having a proactive agenda.

- People often ask themselves: How humble should I be? How much should I self-promote?
- If you're not going to promote yourself, who will?
 - Pitfalls of "backlash avoidance behavior"
 - underestimation of your abilities
 - female modesty effect results in underestimation
 - men have more success/are more active in negotiating for salary
 - women are not as good at requesting advancement and promotion
 - women often wait for someone to tell them they are ready
 - Insist on fair compensation on a job well-done
 - women need to work uphill against some gender stereotypes
 - Need to engage in SSP: shameless self-promotion. Talk about what you've done well.
 - Get the job done well, but also get the recognition.
- Let people know what you've been up to; it helps them know you are leading and trying things to make things better.
- Don't wait until your dossier is perfect to go up for promotion.
- In addition to gender variations regarding modesty, there are also regional and cultural variations.