

Kennesaw State University Department Chairs' Handbook

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PREFACE

The Kennesaw State University Department Chairs' Handbook was adapted from Cornell University's adaptation of the Knox College's Guide for Department Chairs (Galesburg, Illinois: Knox College 2006), which was a Mellon-funded Faculty Career Enhancement (FaCE) Project of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. In addition, supplemental information has been added by various support units at KSU.

We intend this guide as a resource, not as a prescriptive document.

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THE BIG PICTURE

As a department chair/school director, you are charged with looking at the big picture, viewing your department as a whole, as well as understanding your department's relationship to its home college and the university. Your administrative faculty role holds decision-making authority for all aspects of the operation of your areas at the department/school level and is responsible for providing administrative oversight and academic leadership. A chair's/director's administrative team typically consists of the full-time teaching faculty in the department and may include an assistant department chair who often shares administrative responsibilities as assigned by the chair/director.

Department chairs and school directors are central to many university functions:

- program development and oversight
- class scheduling
- student advisement and appeals
- faculty recruitment and staffing
- personnel performance review and salary recommendations
- tenure, promotion and retention recommendations
- departmental budget management

It is important for the chair to keep in mind the big picture—of the well-being of the department as a whole, of the department's place in the college, and of the needs of the students. In addition to performing many important functions, a chair provides departmental leadership by:

- establishing and maintaining a collegial environment, one in which each person feels valued and that they have a stake in the direction and success of the department
- making time for the department to consider what its goals are and if those goals are being met through an ongoing process of assessment
- facilitating positive relationships within the department
- sharing the load of service tasks within the department

DEPARTMENTAL CULTURES AND CHAIR STYLES

Each department has its own culture, and each of these cultures tends to proceed on the principle that the way things are done are the way things *should* be done. It's often only in conversation with someone from another department that one realizes a certain practice is not actually a rule, or even a norm. As a chair, there may be aspects of the departmental culture that you would like to change. Maintaining a healthy departmental culture requires cultivation.

Here are some factors that contribute to departmental culture:

- the size of the department
- the proportion of tenured to nontenured faculty
- what expectations people have about time commitments (e.g., time spent in one's office, attending departmentally sponsored events, socializing at departmental functions both on- and off-campus)
- incorporation of student input into departmental culture
- traditional hierarchies or egalitarianism
- the degree to which a chair delegates responsibility

An element of complexity is added when disciplinary divisions exist within one department (e.g., History and Philosophy, Technical Communication and Interactive Design). Such departments include faculty who may have significantly different backgrounds, making for a complicated departmental identity. The more you're aware of potential difficulties that may arise due to varying backgrounds, trainings, and priorities, the more effective you will be in heading them off or bringing them into the open for discussion.

As a department chair, your habits and inclinations will have a significant impact on the life of the department. Consider whether you fit in smoothly with old patterns, or if your style will necessitate some accommodation. Some of the factors that contribute to the style of a department chair:

- Do you prefer to have control over all aspects of the department, or do you tend to delegate responsibilities?
- Do you prefer face-to-face interaction or email?
- Do you prefer a hierarchical structure or an egalitarian one?
- Are you approachable for professional problems? For personal problems?
- Are you comfortable with numbers and statistics (e.g., budgets, enrollment data)?

FACULTY SEARCHES

Each person in a department affects its success, and new hires will invariably bring change. It's important to learn enough about candidates to anticipate what those changes might be, and to discover how enthusiastic the existing members of the department are about the contributions this person will bring. A search is about shaping the department, not just adding personnel. Even if you seek to directly replace the skillset of someone who is no longer with the department, each new person brings with them unique perspectives. Each search provides the opportunity for a department to rethink its mission and identity, to consider new ideas or approaches that might be brought in, and to fortify characteristics you would like to preserve.

KSU encourages departments to work diligently to recruit and retain the most qualified faculty by creating an inclusive environment that welcomes and celebrates diversity. Our policies and procedures reflect federal and state laws, and our employment process adheres to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action provisions.

Department Chairs and School Directors will oversee all faculty recruitment within their department. It is your responsibility to ensure all hiring guidelines are followed.

To ensure all faculty advertising and hiring guidelines are met, positions must be posted by the following dates:

- Fall hires – advertise by March 1; all hiring paperwork submitted by July 1
- Spring hires – advertise by October 1; all hiring paperwork submitted by December 1
- Summer hires – advertise by February 1; all hiring paperwork submitted by April 1

Some guidelines for discussions with the candidates

- Topics that are off-limits
 - Discussions with candidates should be wide-ranging; this is your chance to learn as much as possible about the candidate. But there are certain topics that cannot and should not be approached during the search. We may not ask about marital status, sexual orientation, race,

national or ethnic origin, age, whether the candidate has children or is planning on having children, religious affiliation, or disability. If a candidate brings up such information, you can continue the conversation, but do not use this as an opening to probe further. If a candidate asks about possible employment for a spouse/partner, talk about the college's willingness to help when it can, supplying an example or two, but explain that discussions about this are best held just after an offer is made. The point of this is that your goal is to identify the best candidate for the job on the basis of his or her professional capabilities, not on the basis of your preconceptions of what might complicate the hiring process and/or the likelihood of a person's ultimate happiness at KSU.

- Describing the job, discussing courses to be taught
 - When talking with candidates during the campus visit, two tasks are sometimes at odds with each other: assessing the strengths of the candidate and selling the strengths of the department and university. The stronger the candidate, the more one may feel a need to focus on the latter. Think carefully ahead of time what the teaching responsibilities for the position will be. This can range from very fixed to very flexible. To what extent will the candidate be teaching directly in his or her field or specialization? How much opportunity will there be for them to develop courses that would be entirely new to the university curriculum? Do not promise more flexibility than you can provide, as it can be very discouraging to a new faculty member to experience more constraint in teaching than they were led to believe would be the case.
- Exit interview
 - It is important for the chair to have a conversation with the candidates toward the end of the visit. Give the candidates a chance to ask any final questions they may have. Tell the candidate what you project to be the timetable for the search, and when to expect a phone call or letter from you. Be sure you have current contact information so that you can reach them easily and ask if there's anything that would affect their timetable if hired. Ask the candidates to let you know if they receive any other offers.

CARE AND ATTENTION TO UNTENURED FACULTY

As a chair, you are responsible for oversight of all members of the department. You should do all you can to be in touch with all departmental faculty, to know what they are working on, what issues they might have with regard to teaching and research, and to seek ways to help each person contribute to the department while advancing professionally. You should be accessible in times of trouble and ready to celebrate achievements.

Within this general area of care and concern, untenured faculty have a special place. Once you've completed a search, it's time to help your new colleague succeed. Attention to untenured faculty is of enormous importance to the chair's role. But unlike some of the more routine tasks (like course scheduling), there are no timely reminders that come to us. Here are some things to keep in mind with regard to our responsibility toward untenured faculty.

Remember that the first year is a crucial time of adjustment, and a new colleague will most likely need more of your attention now than at any other time. You'll want to strike a balance between protecting new faculty members from the onslaught of multiple demands and integrating them into the life of the department and the college.

Helping Untenured Faculty Develop Professionally

A key role of the department chair in the development of a colleague's teaching is the evaluation of their teaching. What makes the position of the chair in the evaluation process especially difficult is that you are expected to conduct both summative and formative evaluations. Summative evaluation is the sort that ends up with a summary judgment as to whether or not one's teaching is strong enough to merit a contract renewal. Formative evaluation, on the other hand, has as its sole intent to help a faculty member in their development as a teacher.

RELATIONSHIP TO TENURED FACULTY

Tenured faculty need your attention too! Perhaps not in as concentrated a way as untenured faculty, but they will also benefit from encouragement, support, and attentive listening. There are still annual evaluations to complete for tenured faculty, and the review for promotion to tenure, but even with these, there is a large shift in one's relationship to faculty after tenure because the role of evaluation is so diminished, given the job security of tenure.

The vitality of a department depends on the continued involvement of all faculty. Stay interested in the teaching and research/creative work of tenured faculty. Offer to look at work in progress. If the department has a colloquium, encourage them to present. Encourage them to apply for grants and to continue to attend conferences. If you see that there may be an issue with their keeping up in the field and/or with technological developments related to the field or to teaching, give encouragement; you might even offer to engage together in some aspect of new developments. Talk with them about their agenda for the future, and do all that you can to facilitate it. Be aware that life continues to have its ups and downs, even after tenure. Just when one thinks everything is settled, the ground can shift, whether in one's personal life or in professional interests. Be as supportive as you can during these times. It will be much appreciated. You can also consult with the Dean of your college about any concerns you have.

In whatever stage they are, tenured colleagues are a great resource. They may have been chair before you—ask for their counsel and help. They may be chair after you—involve them in decisions and tasks so that they not only are helping you but are learning valuable information and skills for the future.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND PROBLEMS CONCERNING FACULTY

The range of problems that can occur is wide. Here are some typical scenarios:

One or more students come to you to complain about a faculty member.

The most common sort of complaint students come with is related to a course. It may be a complaint of unfairness in grading, or that a course is seriously disorganized, or that the workload in a course is extraordinary in comparison to other courses, etc. Some things to do:

- Give the students a hearing and listen to the story. Assess the level of seriousness of the problem. For example, is this a relatively circumscribed problem of personality conflict, or is a student's education being seriously compromised? Determine whether or not you need further information.

- Ask if they have already tried to resolve the problem by talking with the professor directly. If not, this is often a good first step to take.
- Present some possible options for action, and ask them what they would consider most helpful. (This doesn't mean you necessarily will follow their preferences, but it's good to know what the students think would be helpful.)
- If they would like you to talk to the professor about the issue, and you think this is appropriate, determine what level of confidentiality they would like you to maintain regarding their conversation with you.
- Counsel the students, when appropriate, to make the best of the situation: to balance whatever strengths the course may have with its problems, and to get out of the course whatever they can. If appropriate, encourage the students to consider this a learning experience in how to work with people one doesn't like.
- Whether or not it's something the students suggest, you may want to visit the class involved. In the case of untenured faculty, chairs are supposed to visit from time to time in any case.
- If you decide to talk to the faculty member about issues raised by students, be sure to present your comments as "student perceptions." (And if you have heard the same complaint from multiple sources, you probably should talk to the faculty member.) The faculty member may have a very different perception of the same situation, and you'll want to hear that perception as well. If the faculty member thinks the student perceptions are flawed (e.g., the course really is well-organized), you can open a discussion about what might be changed to bring perceptions in line with reality. Keep in mind the difference in vulnerability between untenured and tenured faculty.
- If the situation is particularly troubling, and you're not sure what to do, seek counsel from others, perhaps another senior colleague in the department and/or the Dean.
- Certain student complaints are dealt with through a different channel. Most notably, sexual harassment is dealt with through the university's Grievance Policy.

One faculty member in the department complains about another.

Review the advice for dealing with complaints from students; some of the same advice will hold in this situation. But the situation is more serious, because the problem will not dissipate at the end of one term; long-term collegiality within the department is at stake. Assess the level of seriousness of the complaint, and take into account factors that may be contributing to conflict and/or misunderstanding (such as gender, seniority, cultural differences, personality differences).

A faculty member has an illness or personal situation that is interfering with their work.

The custom at KSU is to go a long way to help someone when their work is being affected by illness or some other personal difficulty. The illness might be of the faculty member themselves, or it might be of a family member. Consult with the Dean for anything that goes beyond a few days of difficulty.

Some possible accommodations include:

- Having one or more colleagues cover classes.
- Dropping a course entirely and absorbing the students elsewhere.
- Hiring an adjunct to teach the course.

THE DEPARTMENT CURRICULUM

Central to the identity of a department is its curriculum: the courses that are offered for both non-majors and majors, and the structure of the requirements for the majors, minors, and certificates in the department. This is an area where the big picture is very important, and where the big picture is easily lost. Some things to consider:

- What are the goals of the department's curriculum?
- Are these goals well-supported through the current offerings of the department?
- Is the program of study serving well those students who will not be going to graduate school in the discipline as well as those who are?
- How up-to-date is the collective knowledge of the department when it comes to preparing students for the job market, graduate school, and other pathways?

The more the department is in the habit of thinking about these issues, the stronger the sense of department identity will be. Talking about the curriculum can help build collegiality, can help newer members of the department feel invested in the mission of the department, and can help you articulate departmental goals and achievements. These issues are also central to the ongoing responsibility for assessment at the department level. Consider including students in some of these discussions; knowing their perspectives can helpfully inform consideration of central curricular issues, and students will certainly appreciate being included.

Individual New Courses

The initiative for a new course can come from a variety of sources:

- A faculty member wants to do something new
- Students have expressed interest in a new offering
- The department is looking to connect with college needs

Please note that if you are at all unsure about the permanency of a new course, you can first propose it as a Special Topics course to be taught up to three times before it must be proposed as an independent course.

Because the initiative most often comes from an individual faculty member, it's possible for the curriculum to develop in an unplanned manner through the addition of a number of individually originated proposals. When talking with a faculty member about a new course, make explicit the need to balance individual interests with departmental needs. In some departments all new courses are discussed by the department as a whole; in other departments, the conversation is more likely to be between the individual proposing the course and the chair. Wherever the conversation occurs, the goal is to balance the importance of having faculty teaching what they want to be teaching with the needs of the department and its students.

Curriculum Review Process

KSU uses an online software solution, Curriculog, for management of the curriculum development and review process. Curriculog provides automated routing for all curriculum proposals and provides a repository for curriculum changes. Once curriculum has been approved by the Provost or the Provost's designee, it is then imported into Acalog, KSU's online catalog and handbook system. Acalog serves as the university's official source for curriculum.

All department chairs are responsible for seeking Curriculog training. Curriculum support staff are available to assist with these trainings and with the curriculum development and review process. Curriculum support staff are knowledgeable of policies and procedures governing curriculum at KSU and within the University System of Georgia. Information regarding the steps in the curriculum process, tools, and resources for developing curriculum can be found at <http://curriculum.kennesaw.edu>.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment at KSU seeks to advance the university's continuous improvement initiative by promoting a culture of continuous improvement through Improve KSU, <https://oie.kennesaw.edu/assessment/improveksu/index.php>, the university-wide assessment model, and the assessment of both student learning outcomes and academic program performance. Each academic program at KSU must submit assessment plans and improvement reports through college and department assessment contacts. Details of this process, a list and schedule for the academic program cohorts, and assessment resources are published at <https://oie.kennesaw.edu/assessment/improveksu/index.ph>.

ACCREDITATION

The KSU SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison supports and promotes KSU's compliance with the standards, policies, and guidelines set by specialized accreditation for KSU's academic programs as well as by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

As a member institution of SACSCOC, KSU must justify and document the qualifications of its faculty members for each of its academic programs. SACSCOC Faculty Credentials Guidelines are available at <https://oie.kennesaw.edu/accreditation/index.php> along with a presentation on making a compelling case for faculty justifications. An additional resource found at this location is Ed's Dos and Don'ts. This resource describes specific instructions of what should be included and avoided in a justification.

Additionally, KSU is required to notify SACSCOC of any proposed substantive changes in accordance with SACSCOC policy and, when necessary, obtain approval prior to the initiation of the changes. The types of substantive changes and the procedures for addressing them can be found at <https://oie.kennesaw.edu/accreditation/substantivechange.php>. KSU's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison provides guidance and assistance and submits all substantive changes to SACSCOC on behalf of KSU.

COURSE SCHEDULING

With many duties and responsibilities, you may assume that course scheduling and enrollment management are tasks that you can relegate to someone else. But these tasks are tied to the essential function of your department and, as such, will require your oversight on matters of:

- Resources, both human and physical
- Faculty workloads
- Student retention, progression, and graduation
- Curriculum planning

Before you can build a schedule, assign a faculty member's workload, or entertain any new course proposals, you need to have a detailed, accurate understanding of your faculty's available teaching units. You should keep the following updated records:

- A list of all the courses offered in your department with a companion list of all the faculty qualified to teach each course
- A list (by faculty member) of how many available teaching units your department will have each semester, allowing you to plan in advance for any additional course coverage needs (e.g., part-time faculty).
- If your department and/or college works from pre-assigned classrooms, you should know how many available course slots you have each semester. Build your schedule within these rooms. By doing so, you will also be balancing your offerings across the available grid.

Publish your department's course rotation plan for the full year (fall, spring, and summer semesters), making it available for faculty and students.

- You should establish a planned rotation for when your department will offer all its courses, and you should follow the plan. These plans are meant to guide students as they prepare a path to graduation, and they are only useful if they are being followed.

Build your schedule to meet student demand first; fill in faculty assignments after the schedule is built.

- You should prepare the department's course schedule with the student in mind. For example, when you offer multiple sections of a required course, be sure to balance the offerings across both the MWF (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) and the TR (Tuesday, Thursday) blocks. Don't create unavoidable conflicts by stacking required courses in the same blocks.
- Remember to provide appropriate managerial responsibility for your faculty when making teaching assignments. For example, your new faculty members may be eager to teach courses in their area of expertise and so may ask/offer to teach three different preparations. Whenever possible, help your faculty manage course preparations by assigning no more than two different preparations each semester (this is particularly important if one of the courses is a new preparation).
- Establish a clear understanding that you will work to be fair in scheduling; however, you should also make it clear that full-time faculty are full-time employees who will be expected to teach as needed. You should expect faculty to share responsibility for times that may be perceived as less desirable; less desirable times should not be relegated only to non-tenure track or junior faculty.

Review available course management data before planning your schedule.

- If your department offers general education courses, you should regularly consult the analytics provided by Enrollment Services to assess historical demand. If other departments or colleges offer courses in your area, you will also need to track their offerings to understand the balance of seats needed.
- Review your data to identify courses with historical enrollment of 90-100%. Best practices in enrollment management suggest that the ideal enrollment percentage is 85%. Any of your courses at 90% or higher may suggest that you have unmet demand.
- Keep an updated record of how many majors and minors you have in your programs. Without this knowledge, you will not be able to appropriately plan for required courses—especially gateway or completion courses.

Remember that course scheduling and curriculum planning are intimately related. All of the records that you keep for course scheduling are essential pieces of information for planning course or program proposals. Be

sure to share this information with your faculty. Without it, they may not understand how these resource decisions are related.

Remain directly involved in academic scheduling and enrollment management—even if you have an Associate Chair or administrative staff to assist. Remember that academic scheduling and enrollment management are directly tied to the essential functions of your department.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Also referred to as civic engagement, community engagement is the collaboration among institutions of higher education and their larger local, regional, state, national, and global communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

As a department chair, you may engage with the community in numerous ways, including:

- Responding to community members questions related to KSU
- Participating in community programs or activities on behalf of the department, college, or university
- Connecting interested community members with appropriate individuals and/or areas of the university
- Presenting on areas of expertise at community programs or meetings
- Serving as a point of contact for community members who want to learn more about KSU
- Promoting and cultivating a culture in the department that supports, recognizes, and celebrates engagement with the community in all aspects of its work

Ambassador for the University

Department chairs serve as leaders for the university in numerous ways. Community members see the university as one entity and any employee of the university as often their expert on all things KSU.

Community members will often see you as leader with knowledge on all areas of the university. Your Dean will provide a clearer expectation for your role in this context, however there are a few general contact points that may assist you with common questions:

- Request for Student Volunteers: <https://leadserve.kennesaw.edu/volunteerism/vksu.php>
- Request for Interns: <https://careers.kennesaw.edu>
- Request for Scrappy: <https://ksuowls.com/sports/2019/1/3/spirit2019.aspx>
- Requests related to admissions: <https://admissions.kennesaw.edu>

For any other requests, or for requests that you may not be able to direct, you may contact the Office of Community Engagement at 470-578-2198.

Supporting and Promoting a Community of Engagement

Department chairs play a critical role in advocating, supporting, and recognizing community engaged work. Because chairs play a leading role in developing each faculty member's Faculty Performance Agreement (FPA) as well as conducting faculty annual reviews, department chairs have the ability to reinforce the university's commitment to this work by encouraging faculty to integrate community-based learning in the classroom or to integrate community-based scholarship. In addition, because the chair reviews the work of each faculty

member each year, you have the ability to recognize the community engaged work completed by the faculty in each department.

An Engaged University

Since its inception, KSU has maintained a strong connection with its community. In 1964, the citizens of Cobb County purchased and donated land to the Board of Regents to persuade them to build a new university in their community rather than the one in Bartow County. The BOR agreed and because of their donation, KSU has a campus in Kennesaw, Georgia. Since that time, the community has played an active role in the university's growth and development. Community members have served on advisory boards, partnered with faculty on community-based learning projects and/or assisted with the development of the University Strategic plan.

THE DAY-TO-DAY

DELEGATING TASKS

When dividing up tasks, play to the experience and strengths of individual faculty members. For example, if a previous chair has a strong relationship with a donor to the department, ask that person to continue stewardship. If one person has strong organizational skills, ask them to take on arrangements for guest speakers.

As chair, you still have the overall responsibility for seeing that all of these things get done, which may mean that you have to remember to remind someone else about what needs to be done. What if delegating a particular task isn't working, even with reminders and some discussion with the person you've asked to take charge? First, keep in perspective what counts as a good enough job, even if it's not being done the way you might do it yourself. If that doesn't solve the problem, then rotate the task to someone else, and ask the first person what they might prefer to do instead.

DEPARTMENT MEETINGS

Easy and ready communication within the department is an important sign of department health. Are people comfortable coming to you for help with individual issues? Are people comfortable talking together about issues common to the department? Are you able to have disagreements but still come to an acceptable resolution on difficult issues? Do what you can to build a culture that encourages communication within the department.

Why meet?

But even with much departmental business taken care of via email and/or individual conversations, it's good to meet occasionally as a department to keep communication open and to foster collegiality.

What do we discuss?

It's difficult to predict what the issues may be that need collective discussion; it could be most anything that is not susceptible to a quick yes or no answer. Here are some issues that tend to come up:

- Curriculum: everything from individual plans for a new course to changes in major requirements. This is an important topic to bring up in the fall, in case you need to get started on proposals, which may take some time to develop and clear all levels of review.
- Event planning for majors, speakers, information sessions, etc.
- Course scheduling and enrollment issues
- Budgetary concerns
- Admissions issues
- Searches: drafting job descriptions, discussing candidates, etc.