multiple, often conflicting demands, the following are some strategies chairs have negotiated:

• Making administrative goals and accomplishments a part of their promotion portfolios.

• Designating time for their scholarship (a day each week to conduct research and other scholarly work).

• Having a manager to coordinate and oversee a lab.

These arrangements are best negotiated before taking the position, but you can work at achieving them over time, particularly if you expect to be in the position for a while. Remember that you must work this through with both your dean and your faculty. Your stance should be that your success requires this kind of departmental and institutional commitment.

Academics often succeed through individual work. Being a chair places a premium on facilitating the work of the department and its members, which requires interpersonal skills to work with many different faculty and staff groupings. Chairing involves interactions with and support from higher administrators. To be successful, chairs must find people with whom they can be brutally honest (about hopes, concerns, and fears) and who can help them make good decisions. This support network may include former chairs, more experienced chairs in other departments, and deans or their assistants. Otherwise, the chair may ignore some crucial aspects of the job that may result in poor decisions. Moreover, approaching the role in a solitary manner will find the chair in a lonely position. The following additional strategies will help facilitate your success.

Identify an administrative mentor. Just as you have had academic mentors (major advisor, valued colleague), identify someone who can provide administrative mentoring. Although your dean can be a mentor, often it is better to have others not directly involved in your supervision and evaluation. A more experienced chair or someone beyond your dean may be better. Whomever you choose, you want someone you admire, someone with institutional

perspective, and someone who can keep conversations confidential.

Be a part of or start a chair group on your campus. Many campuses have a chair group that meets at least monthly to discuss important issues. Well-developed groups go beyond gripe sessions to identify and use both on- and off-campus resources to increase knowledge, skills, and practice.

Take advantage of growth opportunities beyond daily on-the-job experiences. Some campuses provide leadership development through identification of administrators who want to learn about the institution and hear from various leaders on how to address the context. Some conferences, such as the Big Ten, have a long-standing leadership development body (e.g., Committee on Institutional Cooperation) in which each institution

selects administrators to participate in a yearlong program. Given the demands on chairs, we should see more of these on- and off-campus opportunities for success. ▲

Daniel W. Wheeler is professor emeritus of leadership studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and author of *Servant Leadership for Higher Education* (Jossey-Bass 2012). Email: dwheeler1@unl.edu

References

Creswell, John, W., Daniel W. Wheeler, Alan T. Seagren, Nancy J. Egly, and Kirk D. Beyer. 1990. *The Academic Chairperson's Handbook*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Wheeler, Daniel W., Alan T. Seagren, Linda Wysong Becker, Edward R. Kinley, Dara D. Mlinek, and Kenneth J. Robson. 2008. *The Academic Chair's Handbook*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Skill Development for Academic Leaders

WALTER H. GMELCH AND JEFFREY L. BULLER

Most college administrators need instruction, experience, nurturing, and time to develop the skills they need. But those opportunities are not always available. Deans, chairs, and other administrators quickly realize that the expertise and behaviors they need in order to be successful leaders must be acquired—for the most part—piecemeal, while they are on the job. Moreover, the skills they learned in their former positions are not always applicable to their new responsibilities. What makes someone an effective chair does not always translate well when that person becomes an associate dean. And what makes a person succeed as an associate dean is not always the same skill set required when that person becomes a dean. It seems ironic that so many of the people who colleges and universities rely on for leadership are essentially self-taught. Their skills develop gradually

and often haphazardly, the result of arbitrary training, inadequate feedback, and random mentoring. There has to be a solution to this problem, and an institutionally based leadership development initiative can often be a key component of this solution.

At the heart of any leadership development initiative is the question: What does it take to be an academic leader? The relatively high turnover rates of deans and department chairs suggest that institutions of higher education do not groom their leaders in ways that promote longevity, success, and effectiveness. For this reason alone, your institution cannot afford to overlook the value of preparing, advancing, and transitioning department chairs and deans.

Strategies for Skill Development

At the personal level, people can improve their leadership skills through formal

assessments and inventories, feedback from colleagues and mentors, advice from trusted confidants, books and journals devoted to various aspects of academic leadership, and reflection on what has worked and not worked in their own experience. They can benefit from engaging in networking, seeking out opportunities to be mentored or coached (and, later, seeking opportunities to mentor or coach others), practicing reflective writing, and building an active library of books, journals, and other resources related to academic leadership.

An effective personal development plan often starts with an assessment of the types of skills a person brings to his or her position and the specific needs of the institution. All too often, academic leaders have been expected to develop their skills on their own with little or no formalized training. As a result, many administrators who are starting out rely on books written about general approaches to management or leadership, often for contexts very different from that of higher education, or what they can glean from colleagues in similar positions. Even with these resources, the tasks that veteran campus leaders take for granted often stymie inexperienced leaders. Lacking well-developed skills, they may resort to problem solving through trial and error, an approach that can frustrate faculty members in their area who want their leaders to be decisive and have ready solutions.

Certainly there is no shortage of commercial purveyors of management seminars, instruments that measure current performance, and advice on how to manage conflict or build efficient teams. Not so abundant are skill development programs tailor-made for academic leaders and the types of issues they will actually face. It is here that a well conceived leadership development initiative can be of great help. Mentors can work one-on-one with new chairs, deans, and other administrators to design a personal development plan that puts them in contact with resources tailored to helping those working in the setting of higher education, choosing the appropriate conferences and workshops that can provide the most benefit, and offering the

services of a mentor or coach who provides advice based on the person's individual needs.

In-house mentorships are particularly valuable in terms of what they can contribute to skill development. New administrators benefit greatly from having access to someone who can listen to their concerns and help with decisions. Unfortunately, experienced vice presidents, deans, and chairs who could best mentor novice leaders are often the very people who are too

> # In-house mentorships are particularly valuable in terms of what they can contribute to skill development.

busy to do so. Even when they are available, new administrators may be reluctant to ask their more experienced colleagues for help. They may worry that admitting they do not know how to do things will be perceived as a weakness. To counter this common occurrence, leadership initiatives can assume the task of pairing seasoned leaders with those who are new to their positions in a safe and supportive environment. More formally, internships, shadowing experiences, and partnerships with colleagues at other institutions can help shorten the new administrator's learning curve and speed his or her acquisition of important skills.

At the institutional level, colleges and universities can create their own structured approaches for selecting, orienting, socializing, and developing their academic leaders. They can provide current and prospective

leaders with opportunities for continual professional development through in-house retreats, personalized professional development plans, and periodic reviews and renewals (such as administrative sabbaticals or study leaves). They can also create their own academic leadership center or program, with a structure, staffing, and style that best suits their individual needs.

At the professional level, organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AACSU), the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS), the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the American Conference of Academic Deans (ACAD), the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), and many other disciplinary organizations can supplement campus leadership programs through forums, conferences, and literature that expose academic leaders to strategic issues in higher education. These groups give academic leaders a national perspective, an advantage that even the best campus-based centers cannot provide by themselves.

If institutions lack their own center for academic leadership and professional development, they can provide workshops and training opportunities through the provost's office or division of human resources. Even highly developed campus programs have limits, however. It is simply not possible for a single academic leadership development initiative to cover every aspect of administrative work. Most programs are designed for chairs and deans. They primarily address issues of policy and procedure, such as personnel practices, legal matters, and budget development. It is the very rare program that deals with such concerns as ethical dilemmas and preparing for executive-level positions. The philosophy is that leadership development programs exist to prepare someone to do his or her current job, not to prepare for a possible future job, particularly if that would take the person away from the institution. As

a result, administrative skills typically are ignored in leadership training. It can thus be a very innovative approach to combine typical training workshops with sessions that probe complex challenges of ethics and integrity, executive internships or exchanges across units, and opportunities to shadow a senior administrator for an extended period of time.

On the professional level, programs devoted largely to skill development are uncommon. Developing skills requires sustained effort and guidance, but few professional programs provide any kind of ongoing evaluation or systematic follow up. Part of this gap may be filled by ongoing webinar series and multipart training programs, such as Magna Publication's 20-Minute Mentors (www.magnapubs .com/online/mentor). Another part can be filled by attending annual meetings of higher education associations or accrediting bodies, keeping abreast of publications like *Change* magazine, *Academe*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and building professional networks, from which many administrators pick up the language and discover current thinking in higher education (Green and McDade 1994). In general, however, administrators who maintain active memberships in broad-based professional organizations concerned with higher education reap the benefit of learning more generalized approaches to academic leadership than they probably receive from their specialized discipline-centered professional organizations (Wolverton and Gmelch 2002). A valuable resource that leadership development programs can provide is funding for administrators to attend meetings and subscribe to webinar series, so that skill development activities have as much continuity as possible.

The Importance of Developing a Broad Base of Skills

Because many leaders at colleges and universities have received extensive training only in their academic disciplines, they rarely know more than the fundamentals about management and leadership when they enter their administrative positions (Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, and Tucker 1999; Wolverton and Gmelch 2002). But, somewhat surprisingly, there is a parallel phenomenon in corporate cultures as well. Many businesses recruit people and then, for as long as those people are employed, reward them for doing a specific and often narrowly defined job. When a managerial post opens up, they look around in frustration and ask, "Where are all the statesmen?" As John Gardner (1987) points out, no one consciously intended to restrict those employees from taking a broader view of the industry, but the rewards system of their organizational culture produced that result all the same. We create the same situation in higher education, socializing and rewarding our new PhDs to become internationally renowned experts in rather narrow fields, and then complain that no one is willing or has the skills to serve in any leadership capacity that requires the ability to see the big picture.

Where the similarity between the academic and corporate worlds breaks down is that, in business, those targeted for leadership roles typically begin amassing supervisory experience early in their careers. That experience is then compounded with ongoing, formal support and feedback designed to assist them in developing as managers (Advisory Board 2011). To compound the problem in higher education, even where administrative training programs do exist, too many remain focused on administrivia, imparting information about policies and procedures rather than developing the core leadership skills academic leaders need to succeed. Typical chair training devotes about 95 percent of its time to policies and procedures and only 5 percent of its time to skill development (Advisory Board 2011). The likelihood that academic administrators are going to improve their skills any faster than if the training opportunities did not exist at all is remote. In addition, there is very little chance that participants in these programs will develop the increasingly larger perspective that, for instance, the chair of the department of chemistry needs when he or she becomes the dean of the college of science, then provost, and then president.

Skill development can be made far more relevant by engaging participants in case studies and simulations that directly relate to university policies, as well as the trajectory set by the school's strategic plan and vision for the future.

It is often useful to conduct a local survey of what current chairs regard as the most important skills for their success and the most important skills in which they feel inadequately prepared. That type of inventory will tell you far more than will the list of duties outlined in the university policy manual or faculty handbook. While all campuses are different, what you are likely to discover from this survey is how ill equipped most chairs feel about responsibilities that they are expected to undertake nearly every day. ▲

Walter H. Gmelch is professor of leadership studies and former dean at the University of San Francisco. **Jeffrey L. Buller** is dean of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University and senior partner in ATLAS consulting; his latest book is *The Essential Academic Dean or Provost* (Jossey-Bass 2015). Email: whgmelch@usfca.edu, jbuller@fau.edu

References

Advisory Board. 2011. *Developing Academic Leaders: Cultivating the Skills of Chairs, Deans, and Other Faculty Administrators.* Washington, DC: Advisory Board.

Gardner, John W. 1987. *Leadership Development.* Washington, DC: Independent Sector.

Green, Madeleine F., and Sharon A. McDade. 1994. *Investing in Higher Education: A Handbook of Leadership Development.* Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

Hecht, Irene W. D., Mary Lou Higgerson, Walter H. Gmelch, and Alan Tucker. 1999. *The Department Chair as Academic Leader.* Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

Wolverton, Mimi, and Walter H. Gmelch. 2002. *College Deans: Leading from Within.* Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.