University of Hawaii- Manoa

What Makes A Great Academic Leader?

an overview and guide to give you a hand

Academic Personnel

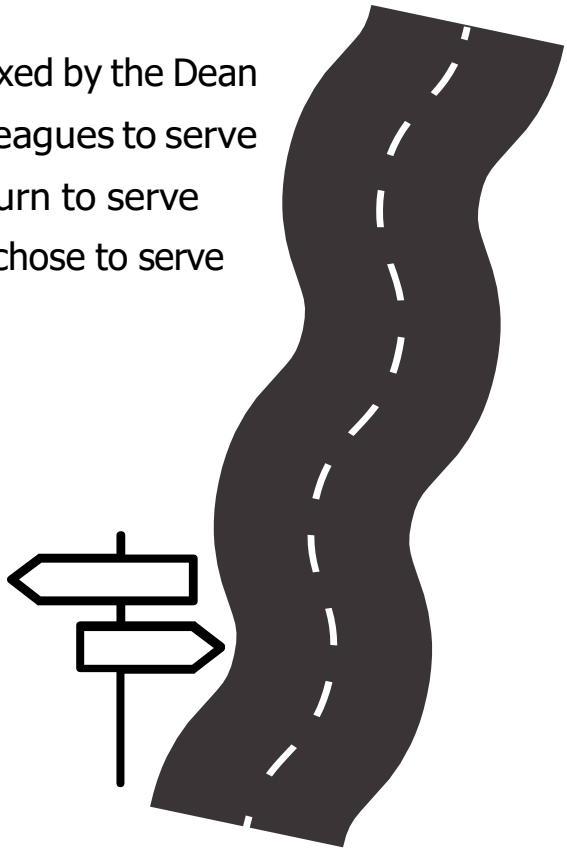
https://manoa.hawaii.edu/ovpae/academic-personnel/

"Anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential"

- Dr. Brene Brown
Dare to Lead

How did you get here?

- You were the only one in the department
- You were coaxed by the Dean and your colleagues to serve
- It was your turn to serve
- You willingly chose to serve



No matter how you got into the Academic Leader position - the University thanks you for the strength and dedication it takes to serve in this role.

This resource guide is a handy tool that provides some tips on how to be a Great Academic Leader. These tips have been collected from successful chairs, deans, and directors and serve as preliminary advice for new leaders.

"If you don't try to uncover what is unseen and understand its nature, you will be ill prepared to lead"

- Ed Catmull
Creativity, Inc.

Tip 1. Be open-minded

You may have been in the department for many years before serving in this role, but even with all the history and knowledge you have regarding the department – be open-minded when entering the role. If you've been serving in this role for a long time or have done it previously - keeping an open-mind will help you see things differently.

Take the time to get to know the landscape in your new capacity

- If possible, meet with each person and ask them questions (i.e. What are the biggest rewards of your job and what are the biggest challenges? What do you need from me in helping you reach your goals for your work?)
- By doing this, you'll be able to better understand your colleagues and their priorities.

1

Be flexible and open to feedback

- Encourage your team to explore different avenues of accomplishing the work that needs to be done
- Exercise emotional intelligence, learn to control and filter your own emotions in responding to others' thoughts and ideas

2

... Be open-minded continued

Don't create our own stories

- It is human nature to immediately think the worse – when it comes to situations, people, decision-making, etc. people tend to fill in the gaps with our own stories.

Example 1

Two faculty members run for department chair. The election is close, and one wins by a small majority. The one who loses is very upset, and the story she tells herself is that no one wants her to be a leader, and that she should never try again. She ignores the fact that she had a lot of support, and that there may be many opportunities for her to run again, or lead in new ways, in the future. If she accepts the story, she disengages, and everyone loses out. By challenging her story, she can continue to contribute and grow and become a more successful leader in the future.

Example 2

A faculty member had a very hard time working with the department secretary. The faculty member was convinced that the secretary hated her because the secretary never said hello, and always stared blankly at the faculty member when she spoke. The story he told himself was that the secretary thought he was uppity and did not like him. As a result, he avoided the secretary, did not communicate with her, and made the secretary feel left out. When they finally sat down to talk, the secretary was shocked to learn how the faculty felt, and started laughing. The secretary confessed to having RBF, and said she was always getting mistaken for being mean. But she actually liked the faculty member. Now they work together really well!

To avoid making our own stories, it is best to go through the following steps:

1. How much of my conclusion is based on assumptions and/or judgments?
2. What are the facts that led me to this conclusion?
3. What other information would I need to fill in the blanks?
4. Is it hard for me to identify the facts versus my beliefs?
5. Is there someone, who has no stake, I can talk this out with?

"The quieter you become the more you are able to hear"

- Rumi

Tip 2. Actively Listen

1

What does it meant to be an active listener?

- Be present. Listen to the speaker with no distractions
- Listen to understand, not to refute
- Develop an understanding of what the speaker is saying
- Pay attention to body language
- Be able to paraphrase the speaker's words to show that you have understood them

2

Be sure to set parameters so that your active listening doesn't become a way for employees to have a venting session with you.

- When one-on-one meetings are scheduled, be sure they are productive and efficient by making sure you are both clear on the purpose of the meeting and the time you have to speak
- When in a group setting, make sure an agenda is drafted and ground rules are set

"Responsiveness builds trust and respect, and if you embody that way of being, it's so much easier to find solutions and resolve conflicts"

- Chip Conley
Wisdom at Work: Making of a Modern Elder

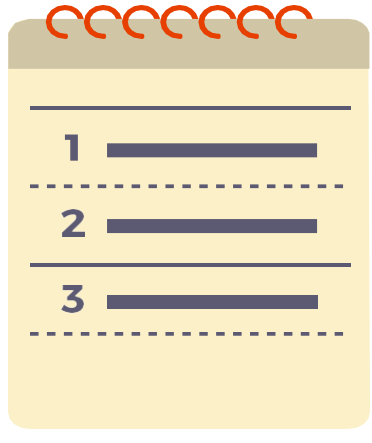
Tip 3. Demonstrate Commitment

Be sure to follow through

Say → Do

6 ***Do what you say*** - When you say "I will look into the matter," follow through by doing just that and report back any findings. This will help to build and maintain trust.

7 When various tasks are assigned to committees and/or subcommittees, be sure to keep ***track of progress*** and request updates.



Ask yourself

"What are the consequences for not doing this or following through?"

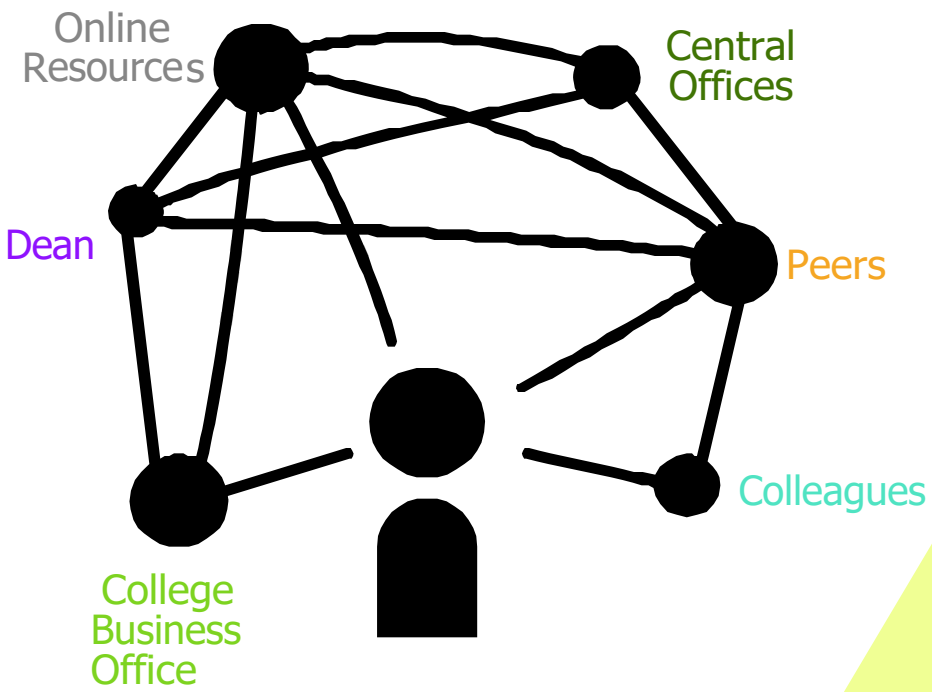
"Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird"

- Anne Lamott
Bird by Bird

Tip 4. Ask for Help

8

You are not expected to have all the answers or know exactly what to do in every situation. **Keep an open mind** and **leverage your network**. Seek out your peers or central offices (i.e., Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Excellence, Mānoa Office of Business & Finance, Office of the Vice Provost for Research & Scholarship, Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success) that can provide guidance.



"Life was teaching me that progress and change happen slowly. Not in two years, four years, or even a lifetime. We were planting seeds of change, the fruit of which we might never see. We had to be patient."

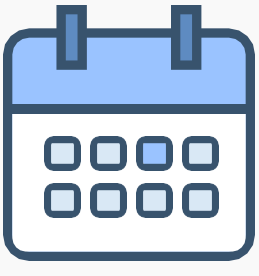
- Michelle Obama
Becoming

Tip 5. Embrace the time it will take to effect change 9

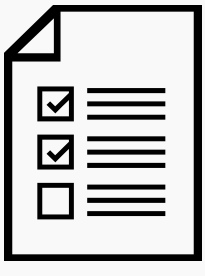
REMEMBER

Navigating through the higher education system and affecting change will take time. Do your best in managing your expectation of quick results, at times the change we are looking for takes months of planning and potentially years of setting the foundation and implementing the change.

It will take time



Plan it out



Strategically Implement

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Although each unit is unique in its own challenges, we can look to each other for strategies that have been successful in other units.

1. Paul Wessel, scheduled 90-minute meetings with 25 faculty when he was appointed as the Department Chair of Earth Sciences. This allowed him to better understand his colleagues and their needs and interest in the Department.

2. Andrew Nichols, Director for Student Health Services had to maintain neutrality on a controversial matter related to his faculty while balancing student and unit needs. He often exercised emotional intelligence to better understand the faculty members stance.

3. Laura Lyons, former Interim Dean of Language, Literature, and Linguistics often sat in meetings with her Dept. Chairs and faculty to listen to their concerns. She gives her undivided attention by not using her cell phone or electronic devices as they meet.

4. When scheduling meetings, former Chair of the History Department, Shana Brown will ask about topics to be discussed in meetings and how much time is needed to go over the desired topics.

5. Former Chair of Learning, Design, and Technology department develops an agenda using google docs two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting so that all attendees are aware of what will be discussed.

6. Dean Nathan Murata and former Associate Dean Amelia Jenkins reached out to EEO/AA and OVPAE to conduct workshops for all faculty and staff serving on search committees to ensure compliance of Federal, State, and UH policies/regulations related to recruitment. They identified the need, informed the faculty and staff, and followed through with the task.

7. Peter Arnade, Dean for CALL will seek guidance or assistance on matters related to faculty by contacting OVPAE- Academic Personnel Office

8. Campus Liaisons for the Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA) initiative, AVC Ron Cambra, Stephanie Kraft-Terry, and Jennifer Brown, coordinated a steering committee and nine subcommittees that worked together to complete this campus-wide self-study. To keep all stakeholders up-to-date on the status of work being completed and ensure subcommittees remained on-task, each subcommittee submitted agenda and minutes which were posted online for public viewing.

"Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny"

- Ghandi

FOR ALL YOU DO,

Thank you!

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