

FROM FACULTY TO ADMINISTRATION: ANOTHER (NOT NECESSARILY DARK) SIDE OF THE ACADEMY

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The purpose of this special session is to share personal perspectives on work in administration with MEA members who are interested in pursuing administrative service, or who find themselves pressed into an administrative role. The panelists are marketing professors and long-time MEA members who stepped from their faculty roles into administrative roles. They share their personal journeys, including their rationale around accepting an administrative role, how their initial reservations and anticipations compared with the realities of administrative life, the types of intrinsic rewards available and gleaned from administrative work, the challenges encountered in the transition from faculty member to administrator, and surprises along the way. Advice is offered for faculty members who aspire to administrative work or who are being pressed into service. The session is interactive and informal, with information and perspectives offered in response to audience questions.

Although many administrative posts in higher education are held by career administrators, particularly in divisions other than Academic Affairs, many others are filled from the faculty ranks. This stands to reason because faculty members are highly educated and intelligent people committed to the academic enterprise. Many have demonstrated leadership in their faculty roles. However, their training is typically in research within their discipline and their experience is generally in classroom teaching and faculty governance. Many faculty members have minimal if any training or prior experience in management and administration. Further, most pursued their degree programs and initial professorial careers with little or no administrative aspiration.

Within the span of a career, though, a significant number of faculty members discover or develop an interest in administration. Reasons for pursuing or agreeing to an administrative role may include:

- A desire to give back to an institution or unit about which the faculty member cares deeply. This might be expressed as, “my number came up to be department chair,” or “I care a lot about this place and want to do my share.”
- Responding to the encouragement or requests of colleagues. University administrators may identify an individual faculty member as having administrative potential. Faculty members may encourage a trusted colleague to pursue an opening in an effort to keep someone less trusted from taking the job.
- To grow in new dimensions. Some faculty members discover an enjoyment of administrative work through a service assignment. Others grow weary of teaching and seek a different type of work.
- To make a difference. Some faculty members see an opportunity to solve a problem, offer a different perspective, or otherwise effect positive change.

In this special session, the panelists share their perspectives on predictors of administrative success and satisfaction – what has worked for them, what they have observed to work for others, and lessons they have learned. The panelists suggest that an administrative hopeful will benefit from a realistic assessment of his or her temperament and skills. A faculty member considering administrative work may want to ask him/herself such questions as:

- Do I have a capacity to cope with large quantities of information and competing priorities without becoming overwhelmed?
- Am I an effective listener and an effective communicator?
- Am I able to deal well with complex and ambiguous situations and disgruntled people?
- Do I enjoy solving problems, even when very difficult to address.
- Do I gain satisfaction from enabling the teaching/learning process as much as from direct instructional delivery?
- Am I comfortable with a schedule involving more face time, less flexibility, and ready availability to a larger number of people?

The panelists further suggest a realistic assessment of one's goals in pursuing an administrative function. A faculty member considering an administrative role may want to ask him/herself such questions as:

- Do I feel I can make a positive difference through the role?
- Does the role use my natural abilities and do I feel the function will be handled well if I am the person responsible for it?
- Do I view the work as consequential and important?
- If I were offered the position with no change in my current salary, benefits, and perquisites, would I still be interested?

Readings on Such Issues and Questions

Buller, J. L. (2007). *The essential academic dean: A practical guide to college leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Buller, J. L. (2006). *The essential department chair: A practical guide to college administration*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company

Curchak, M. P. (2009). *Other duties as assigned: Presidential assistants in higher education*. Lanham, MD: American Council on Education and Rowman and Littlefield Education.

Gunsalus, C. K. (2006). *The college administrator's survival guide*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Numerous articles and columns in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* "Advice" section.

Panelists

Barbara L. Gross is from California State University, Northridge. She served in her university's central administration in the President's Office as Chief of Staff, from July 2006 through January 2014, and recently returned to the faculty. Additionally, she served as her university's Interim Director of Equity and Diversity in 2003. In addition to discussing reasons for taking administrative roles she will share reasons for returning to the faculty.

Clayton L. Daughtrey of Metropolitan State University of Denver has served as the School of Business Associate Dean since 2011. Prior to assuming this role, he served as the Marketing Department Chair for eight years.

Katrin R. Harich of California State University, Fullerton served as the Mihaylo College of Business and Economics Associate Dean for Administration from 1999 to 2004. In addition to discussing her administrative experience she will share her experiences in transitioning back to the faculty.

Gary L. Karns of Seattle Pacific University has served as Associate Dean of Graduate Programs, School of Business and Economics, since 1995. Prior to assuming this role, he served as department lead since 1979.

Kenneth R. Lord currently serves as Dean of the College of Business and Economics at California State University, Northridge. His prior administrative roles include Associate Dean of the Kania School of Management at The University of Scranton and Director of Graduate Programs at Mercer University.