**Selected Department Chair Best Practices**

(by Don Chu, from the Nov. 2003 issue of Academic Leader); best practices are from CSUs.

* When appropriate (and possible), **delegate responsibility to draft documents** to program coordinators, committee chairs, and/or office staff for review by the chair. This practice helps build department consensus and reduces the workload on chairs. (Bakersfield)
* **After listening, wait 3 seconds before responding.** The pause lets others know that they are important enough to hear and to thoughtfully consider what they have to say. (San Diego)
* **Invite the dean to department retreats and meetings** so you’ll better understand each other’s perspectives. (Fullerton)
* Have department committees **publish minutes and disseminate** them on the department listserv. (SFSU)
* **Take a walk each day** **to talk to faculty, administrators or staff** and chat w/ them in their workspace. (SLO) NOTE: this is sometimes known as “administration by walking around” and it has some dangers.
* Prepare a **calendar year timeline** with due dates for important documents and events. (San Marcos)
* **Build community** by setting aside 5 minutes at regular faculty meetings, in which faculty can let colleagues know about their current work. (Bakersfield)
* Form a **budget committee** so the budget process will be transparent. (San Diego)
* **Schedule monthly coffee hours** where faculty, students and staff sit w/ the chair to ask questions or discuss issues of concern. (San Jose)

From the January 2004 issue of Academic Leader (Don Chu, CSU Chico)

* **Learn the difference between the “budget” and “expenditures”.** The end of fiscal year accounting is always a better reflection of where the money really goes than the budget, which is just a projection.
* If we remember that **“psychic rewards” are why most of us are in higher education**, little signs that the faculty and staff are appreciated can go a long way. For example, provide a nice cup of coffee at early morning department meetings. If faculty are going to make the effort to show up earlier than normal, the chair can let them know that they are respected and appreciated.
* Learn about the dean and the dean’s job so that you can **see issues through the dean’s eyes**. You may do better in negotiations on behalf of your department. More importantly you’ll let someone else who is in the middle of the cross-fire know that you understand.
* Develop an **annual summary of department achievements** by compiling electronic listings of individual faculty publications, grants, teaching innovations, and community service. This annual summary is invaluable both for internal and external communications.
* Develop an **annual work plan before the beginning of each new academic year**. First conduct an “environmental scan”. Next, develop a list of department objectives based upon the strategic plan for your department and what is realistically possible. Thirdly, communicate this list to your dean and to the department prior to necessary adjustments. Last and most importantly, keep a list of these objectives prominently displayed on your desk, and **make daily decisions based upon your objectives**.
* There is a great deal to be gained through magnanimity. When possible **give a bit more than you must** **when working with colleagues from other departments**. By “giving” in curricular or resources issues, good will is engendered, and respect is gained. You will be seen as having an “over-the-horizon perspective” rather than a narrow parochial interest.
* **Maintain a list of medium- and large-ticket items that you department needs**. When money becomes available that has to be spent on short notice, you will be ready to fill out the purchase request and justify the expenditure without having to scramble.
* **Collegial respect is hard won and easily lost**.