

A Dozen Questions for Department Chair Conversation and Reflection

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1. What is your vision ten years out for the college and university as a higher education organization? To what extent does your vision for the institution diverge from the institution's vision of itself? Are there things that you and your department should do to bring these differing aspirations into greater harmony with one another?
2. What are the characteristics of an ideal academic community at the department, college, and university levels? What are the obstacles to realizing those ideals in your department and at your institution? Are there things that you and your department can do, or that you can assist others in doing that would advance toward this ideal?
3. How many people are in your department? How many faculty members are in your department? As Chair of the whole department, what are your responsibilities toward those who are not faculty? How do those responsibilities differ, if at all, from your responsibilities to the faculty?
4. What the broad and most fundamental educational goals of undergraduate education at your university and college. How do the general education (general studies, core) requirements support those goals? How do the various academic major programs support those goals? What are your department's specific responsibilities relative to accomplishing those goals?
5. In the final analysis, which group(s) should (do) have the responsibility for the academic goals of the institution and for the articulation of course requirements and academic standards?
6. If you were employed as a member of your departmental staff or faculty, fulltime or part time, how would you want the others in the department to treat you? How would you wish to be evaluated? To what extent does the experience of persons working in your department diverge, if at all, from the expectations you would have if you were they? Are corrections in the culture of the department as a workplace called for? If so, how will you bring them about/
7. Does your department provide educational services for other departments or groups of people? What are those services? What level of involvement do responsible members of those groups have a right to expect in the design and delivery of those services? Given the expertise of your department, what elements of those services should be primarily within the control of your department?
8. Is your department a "client department" for services provided by any other academic or non-academic departments or programs of the college or university? What involvement should members of your department have in the design and delivery of those services? Given the expertise of those other units, what elements of those services should be primarily within their control?
9. As a person in an excellent position to understand and appreciate the education students are receiving, the scholarship of the faculty, and the services the institution can provide, what are your responsibilities in terms of generating revenues and institution and the department?
10. What incentives would you put in place to motivate yourself and other department Chairs to manage resources more advantageously relative to the educational mission of your department?
11. Who are your three most important benefactors and, to borrow the language of the Development Office, how do you cultivate those persons?
12. What elements of these different models and metaphors work best to assist in understanding academic department Chairs and their responsibilities: Manager? Parent? Leader? Teacher? Janitor? Buffer? Negotiator? Cop? Strategist? Tactician? Prisoner? Executive? Guru? Motivator? Judge? Supervisor? Administrator? Pastor? Accountant? Legislator? Dentist? Personal Trainer? Firefighter? Friend? Coach, Shepard? Mediator? Marketer? Martyr?

How would the responses change if "dean" or "vice-president" were substituted for "Chair"?