



## Best Practices for New Department Chairs

Through the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs held an orientation for new department chairs on September 13, 2012. The purpose of the event was to provide advice and suggestions from successful veteran department chairs to ensure a smoother transition of chairs into their new role. A panel of four experienced chairs, moderated by an academic dean, shared their advice and best practices on issues related to leadership and to management and administration. The topics covered were efficacy in a complex system, handling personnel issues, and managing multiple roles. Some highlights are listed below.

### **Leadership:**

- Remember that you are the academic/scholar representative of your field on campus
- Learn your program well
- Be proactive in moving your department forward
- Develop an effective support team, and then... delegate
- Don't be afraid to make tough decisions
- Establish and enforce behavioral norms for your department
- Don't try to be all things to all people
- Make the effort to work with your dean, but have the discretion and judgment to know when to take a strong, but diplomatic, stance on important issues

### **Management and Administration:**

- Confidentiality is important – use it and respect it
- Don't ignore human resources policies and laws (the university and YOU are liable)
- Ask the question, "Urgent to whom?"
- Never sign anything while standing
- Create and conscientiously use a "priority" folder for emails
- Be mindful of the guidelines provided by the Office of the General Counsel on email communications
- Answer emails quickly... but, wait 24 hours before sending an emotional email
- Determine when the telephone or a face-to-face meeting would produce better results than an email
- Apply money strategically
- Recognize the importance of and role for faculty meetings

### **And, finally:**

- Find a mentor(s)
- Get help early and often

*Thanks to Professor Dan Carlin whose meeting notes were helpful in drafting this document.*