

3. *Is there a readily discernable climate of expectation that applies to the performances of both students and staff?*

As a general rule, people in groups adopt the work standards of those about them. Where standards of expected performances are high, but are accepted as a matter of course by those who respect the objectives of the institution, high morale and high productivity follow. Where rationalization of inadequate preparation or poor performance is accepted, the program suffers.

4. *Does the institution show concern for the instructional setting?*

Where demands bear upon limited dollar resources, the needs of instruction must be forcefully presented. Are members of the faculty as aggressive in seeking instructional equipment as in requesting research support? Is the college successful in getting recognition of and response to its instructional needs from the university administration? Are members of the teaching faculty familiar with new instructional concepts and technology? Do college rules, regulations, and administrative arrangements serve the student well? Are they subject to periodic review, with assistance of student representation, in order that unnecessary or outdated regulations, limitations, or restrictions may be eliminated?

5. *Is "teaching potential" a major criterion for new staff appointments?*

Do candidates for staff positions sense administrative concern for the teaching program? Is there opportunity to observe the skill in instruction of teaching assistants and non-tenured members of the faculty who later may be

considered for permanent staff positions? Do department heads make hard decisions on individuals who have observable shortcomings in instructional technique or ability?

6. *How vital is the faculty in-service training program?*

The art of instruction is complex; its subtleties are many. Does the teaching faculty measure results in terms of stated objectives? Is it "professional" in its teaching?

7. *Are the characteristics of the student body known to the faculty?*

Changing high school curriculums, varied admissions thresholds, the origin of students—these and other factors make each student body differ from the next. Does the new staff member receive descriptive material and is the veteran instructor reminded on occasion of student body make-up? And is there an active program of institutional research relating to student mortality, morale, and breadth of student experience?

8. *Does the college have a system of priorities to guide departments and individuals in making choices from among many conflicting claims on time and resources?*

Administration is subjective. The impact of the college administrator is mingled with the inputs of the two primary groups in instruction—the teachers and the students. Yet if he is not to be lost in unceasing rounds of committee sessions, dinner meetings, budgets, and miscellaneous promotions, the administrator must have some criteria upon which to gauge his accomplishment. The questions above are not all-inclusive, but they highlight elements in the instructional program most susceptible to administrative influence. These are areas he must not neglect.

The Departmental Administrator – The Man In The Middle

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Professors and deans are frequently the target of good natured jokes. In the case of the former the punch line usually relates to absentmindedness; in the latter it is seldom complimentary and may concern any of a variety of idiosyncracies. No one ever tells a joke about departmental administrators collectively. This can be interpreted in one of two ways. Either they play such an unimportant role in the academic community that they deserve to be snubbed, or they are so variable as a class that no story could be applicable to the majority. As a department head, myself, I prefer to reject the first option leaving me no alternative but to accept the second.

It is true that department chairmen and heads do come in all sizes and forms, with all types of personalities and, unfortunately, the full spectrum of abilities. They range from the meek paper-shuffling clerk to the pompous dictator, from the efficient administrator to the iron-fisted tyrant. Although we can recognize a diversity of types in any institution, the administrative structure of the college does have a pronounced influence on the nature and effectiveness of the departmental administrator. It is usually the college or university that determines the means of election or selection and the tenure of the office. In hopes of simplifying terminology for this paper I shall define the chairman as one who is elected in a more or less democratic fashion by his peers to serve for a defined, but relatively limited, number of years. The department head, in contrast, is appointed, with or without faculty involvement and serves until either he resigns or the dean removes him.

Head vs Chairman. It's heresy to be against either motherhood or democracy and yet I must maintain that an entirely democratic college department is seldom a

progressive one, but then neither is one subjected to the whims of a dogmatic tyrant. There are a few instances in which the chairmanship system may work well. One of these is the case of the excellent department full of dedicated and creative individuals who are ready to accept new ideas and to experiment with progressive concepts. Another is the inconsequential department in an institution which has no desire to excel and a resolute goal to maintain the *status quo*. Unfortunately, in the first case, and fortunately, in the second, neither of these situations is common. Usually the higher administration is anxious that the department should be strengthened and should strive to excel within a framework defined by the nature of the institution. Whenever it is desired by the administration to alter the goals of or the speed of the attainment of their expectations for the department, they should have a major say in the selection of its administrator. The planning and development of long-term programs whether it be curriculum reform or research activities, demand that the term of office of the administrator and the authority which he has must be great enough to allow tangible results. By now, it should be obvious that I favor the system of department heads rather than of chairmen.

Tenure. It is probably true in all disciplines, but is definitely the case in science, that it is a full-time job for a person to "profess" his specialty. Administering a department, regardless of its size, can not help but diminish the competence of a man in his field. The time and efforts of a department head are directed toward other matters, and while, hopefully, he grows wiser and more experienced in his new responsibilities, he probably becomes less and less qualified to return to the classroom or his laboratory.

It is a crime to take one with a truly creative mind from a promising career in science and attempt to convert him into a business man.

This deterioration of ability is sometimes used by the proponents of rotating chairmanships as an argument in favor of their system. No one man is removed from active endeavor long enough for "dry rot" to become established. Weighed against the lack of sustained purpose by a temporary administrator, I believe this argument falls short.

The activity of a department accompanying administrative change follows a sigmoid curve similar to that for growth. Few tangible results are evident at first as the man feels his way along but there is a gradual speeding up of activity followed by a logarithmic phase of great activity. In most cases there is an ultimate slowing down and gradual asymptotic approach to a static condition. In some cases this entire cycle occurs in six months; in others it covers a period of decades. If the former case occurs, the Dean did a poor job of selection; and he had better act quickly to terminate the appointment before it becomes the ingrained modus operandi of the entire faculty. There are many men who have served effectively as head of a department for most of their professional careers and have remained progressive throughout. I would suggest that the average man loses his drive after from six to ten years in a position; new ideas are less challenging; change becomes less exciting. When a person feels this coming on, or when the Dean senses it, one or the other should act. A change of jobs is in order. If the man has been able to keep up effectively in his field he may return to teaching and research after a sabbatical leave for "retreading" and inspiration. If the man is an able administrator, a shift to another position of equal or greater responsibility would be highly desirable; but in many cases it is appropriate to promote him "downstairs" to a position with a fancy title but little responsibility.

The Man in the Middle. The biblical quotation that no man can serve two masters was not given with the department head in mind. He serves his faculty by expounding their wishes and aspirations to the administration, by expediting their needs, and hopefully by releasing their time for more creative endeavors. He serves the Dean by interpreting the guidelines and policies that have been established for the college and university to his faculty. He must also include as his bosses, the University, his profession, and above all, the students.

The department head who fights for his department is to be admired, but too often this is the excuse given for "empire building" and self-aggrandizement. In all too many cases the good of the institution and the students is forgotten in the interdepartmental jealousies that crowd out the true spirit of cooperative endeavor. The boundaries between departments and colleges are too wide as it is without additional barriers caused by sniping and distrust on the part of the faculty members and department heads.

Responsibilities. A profusion of lists of duties and responsibilities of departmental administrators has been prepared. There is no need to detail such here. The maintenance of morale and the expediting of the needs of his faculty rank high on all such compilations, but probably the most important single job of the department head is the recruitment of new faculty members. He must get the best men possible, men who will not be satisfied with the *status quo*, persons who will be a constant thorn in his side, pushing and wheedling for funds for course improvement or research. Hiring a man who "fits in" is sometimes just a mask for not upsetting the apple cart. Too many times we hire a person of mediocre ability just to hide our own inadequacies as an administrator.

Modus Operandi. The department head who keeps his faculty happy at all times is either a "man in a million" or one who has recruited a second-rate faculty. It is impossible to be progressive without stepping on the toes of the more conservative or less ambitious staff member. One can not hire a new man of outstanding ability without

generating discontent among some of the "dead wood" in his department. He can not appoint a committee or assign a responsibility without incurring the wrath of some self-designated "logical choice". It is impossible to please all the people all of the time, but one can be honest. The quickest way to lose respect of your peers is to tell one person one thing and another the opposite. By being fair, one can go a long way toward retaining the confidence of his faculty.

Some highly effective department heads run a "tight ship"; others are highly democratic. In any case, it is important that the faculty be kept apprised of the issues and that their advice be sought. Regardless of the final decision, the average faculty member will accept it if he feels that his viewpoints were considered. One effective method of handling major issues, particularly in large departments in which all topics can not be effectively reviewed in open faculty meetings, is the use of advisory committees. These groups can study the issues in detail, discuss it with the entire faculty, and make a *concrete recommendation* to the department head. The head must obviously retain power to make the ultimate decision, but he will be surprised to learn how sound most such recommendations will be. Of course, one little secret lies in the selection of the committee members.

Many decisions must be made quickly or for other reasons do not warrant committee action. These must be made on the basis of the department head's best judgment and put into effect. He should advise his faculty of the decision and of his rationale. Obviously, if the decision is bad, he should be among the first to recognize it as such and change or modify it; but he should not yield to the griping of a few malcontents.

Why Would Anyone Want the Job? It's a lonely job. You can't be too "buddy-buddy" with your faculty and still fulfill your responsibility as the middle-man between it and the higher administration. It doesn't give much glory either professionally or academically. When things go wrong, you take the blame; when things go right, you see to it that your faculty gets the credit. It's a pressure job; and the more active and progressive the department is, the higher is the pressure.

On the other hand there is no other job that is so gratifying. To see a mediocre department grow in stature, to see an individual faculty member find himself, and to realize some day that your group has attained professional stature both locally and nationally is reward enough.

Who'd want to be a department head? I would.

PLANT SCIENCE WORKSHOP

John A. Wright, Reporter

A large number of enthusiastic delegates attended the plant science workshop and were very positive in answering the questions, under discussion.

The resolution was passed that the executive committee of NACTA organize a committee to plan and set up a regional based summer institute to work on improving the excellence of college agriculture teaching.

A further resolution was passed to ask each regional director to set up a symposium or institute during the summer to cover audio-vidio-tutorial aids, to promote exchange by individuals of personal teaching materials, and to demonstrate field-trip techniques.

The plant science section voted to commend the program chairman for including the subject matter sessions and recommends that next year's program committee be encouraged to include similar sessions.

The motion was passed that those in attendance be urged to write and present articles to the *NACTA Journal* during the year.