The Educational Administrators Impacts on the Tenure and Promotion Process

Ali Kashef, Mark Rajai
University of Northern Iowa/The University of Memphis

Abstract

One of the major responsibilities of a departmental head is to evaluate faculty that at times can be difficult and controversial. Therefore, it is very important for a department head to demonstrate how they can recruit a new faculty member and grant them tenure and promotion.
The intent of this paper is to discuss some of the important issues associated with the educational leadership as a head/chair and how a good leader can make a difference in assisting new faculty to obtain tenure and promotion.

Introduction

Important aspects of departmental leadership have been identified as dealing with politics of academe, encouraging teamwork, faculty recruitment/retention, faculty professional development, and motivating senior faculty to maintain their research activities. The other important issues for department heads/chairs are: providing new faculty with start-up money to facilitate initiation of their research, summer funding opportunities for research, travel money for presentations, assigning a graduate assistant, assigning a senior faculty as a mentor, released time, summer teaching, involving a faculty with committees at the University and national level, starting salary, salary adjustment, grant/proposal writing for external funding, and legal issues.
In reality, the department head/chair needs to act as a leader to make a difference. He/she needs to demonstrate a leadership skill to support a faculty in the areas of teaching, research, and service.

The objective of this paper is to discuss some of the important issues associated with the educational leadership as a head/chair and how a good leader can make a difference in assisting new faculty to obtain tenure and promotion.

Developing Leadership Skills

A department head should discover what it takes to motivate the faculty and staff to over-achieve at work. There is good chance in some universities the department head is good and they have a dependable and trustworthy faculty and staff. But, the fact is that they can do much more for students and the profession. First of all, it is a good idea for a department head/chair to understand his/ her personal leadership style [1]. It can be autocratic, directive, positional power, democratic, personal power, motivational, controlling, visionary, etc. Then, it is important to apply different leadership styles for different situations. In most cases at the university level, it

appears that the department head must use something other than autocratic, directive, and controlling types of leadership[3]. The personal power or persuasive power might be more effective. A good department head should have a passion to help the faculty and staff to become successful in the profession, and they need to do whatever it takes to give the faculty and staff the opportunity. As we know, one of the most essential parts of a good communication is the listing skill. Faculty can be loyal, energetic, and dynamic employees that a department head has dreamed about if he/she would just take the time and listen to them. Barier[2] indicated that the most important areas of leadership skills that employees respect are communication, accountability, and trust. Being a department head can't qualify them as good leaders.

Communication

The ability to communicate effectively is the most important skill to possess whether it is in workplace, or in everyday life. It includes speaking and listening. The first step for developing this skill is to write a mission statement, which lays out a department's goals and how they will achieve those goals. Another aspect of communication is to continue to tell the faculty why they should work hard and emphasizing the goals of the departments. It is important to keep the faculty informed in all aspects of the department progress and problems with honesty and accessibility to all. Informal lines of communication with faculty members would also help to resolve many of the difficult interpersonal issues during a coffee break, lunch, sit in the relax environment, or walking around the building.

Accountability

The department head should communicate effectively about the goals of the department to the faculty then he/she needs to hold the faculty accountable for their actions including himself/herself as well. Of course, it is good to focus more on the positives about a faculty, not just the negatives.

Trust

The faculty can forgive and forget any poor judgment that the department head might make. However, the department head should earn the faculty's trust by his/her fair leadership such as: keeping promises, communicating for what it is significant, and being devoted to his/her words. The precision of communications of all types is a key component of creating a sense of trust and creditability. Accuracy in communication with faculty following through with actions pledged and delivering on resources and information promised are essential to creating an environment of trust. Overdoing, failing to follow through, not doing so in a timely manner, or not delivering on promised will ease the trustworthiness of the chair to the point where all future relations will be subject to distrust or doubt. Once the department has communicated the goals, the head should leave it to faculty and trust them in their decision-making. Trust can also strengthen the department if a crisis would ever occur. After all, in most instances, faculty can learn from their mistakes. Empowering the faculty through positive attitude, trust, and respect shows the strength of the department head and would insure the stability of that department.

Tenure Process

According to the American Association of University Professor (AAUP), the objectives of academic tenure are to warranty the "freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities and economic security to make the profession attractive to qualified candidates."[4] Homkes[5] said that the tenure and promotion practices guarantee the institution that the best interests of the institution are being met. The decision to grant tenure or promotion is often based in part on the department head's evaluation and recommendation.

The current tenure and promotion process may produce unnecessary anxiety on the part of the faculty member who is being evaluated. This process may also create a negative relationship between some individual faculty and administration. In some cases, it is also important to find out that the faculty's evaluation is based on their research, teaching, and service rather than the faculty's behavior, attitude, recommendations of other faculty and relationships with the students. Therefore, it is very essential to discover the insight of different levels of evaluators (peer evaluations, chairperson, dean, and vice president of academia) to set some criteria regarding the tenure and promotion process for faculty. The importance and relative weight of these criteria depend on the university. Evidently, there is also some criticism that some institutions do not want to keep a higher number of tenured faculties because of the high cost[4]. The lack of good incentives for experienced faculty also creates a tenure system not accepted among scholars[4]. So, it is critical to get familiar to what the department expects at the beginning of their career. Nevertheless, the current system does not help build upon the unique strength of individual faculty, contribute to department cohesiveness, or fit current needs as evaluation strategy.

The main elements for the evaluation process can be research, teaching, and service. In research institutions the emphasis is placed more on research than teaching. But, it is very important to do a good job in teaching even in primarily research-focused institutions. In another word, it is critical to find out what the chair expects from the faculty in these three areas. For research, national presentations, proceedings, refereed and non-refereed journal articles, and grant funds, etc. can be used. In regard to service, items such as: club advisor, software donations, committee duties (national, state, university, departmental), undergraduate and graduate academic advising responsibilities, outreach programs and consulting can be classified. In teaching, the number of courses, labs, independent studies, supervised students' projects, teaching evaluations by students, fellow faculty, alumni, and department head, developing new courses, etc. can be used. So, it is important to communicate effectively what the department goals, objectives and vision of the department are and what is expected from the faculty going for tenure or promotion. This should be consistent at all levels. Therefore, the tenure process will foster a positive growth and result. If the department head isn't committed to the goals, no one else will be. It is also very vital for a department to be fair in this process. Some faculty can get discouraged if the department head promotes everyone the same way regardless of their performance in the three areas (teaching, research, and service). Other discouragements could be a late feedback on a job well done, using threats, breaking promises, etc.

The best practices for faculty support/development

In some cases, a good faculty member resigns because management can't meet the faculty's needs. In some other cases, some high-quality faculty can't leave the department because they might be too old to move, family members do not want to move, or he/she doesn't want to go through the tenure process again. Therefore, they are stuck and they get angry at the system and their productivities go down.

It is very critical for the department head/chair to act as a leader to support and make a difference in a faculty's professional and personal life in many different ways such as, having a clear expectation of what is required from a faculty to get tenure and promotion or how and what the fellow faculty should expect in the process. This kind of communication will bring trust and accountability to the process and encouraging teamwork.

As a leader, a department head should bring the faculty to work as a team to develop a mission statement and set goals for the department based on the faculty and university's interests with this in mind that the educational system may have limited resources. Long-term policies and procedures should be established based on the department's mission and goals with limited resources, which would reduce the politics of the academe. Priority should be given to purchase of shared equipments, the usage of the equipment among faculty and students, interdisciplinary research and collaboration, publication in well-ranked journals, and funding travel for presentations at major national conferences. Limited resources also may bring up the issue of limiting the number of tenured faculty. Of course, this could be a disadvantage for the department in long term, because less number of faculty could also mean less team members to reach higher goals. In general, the department head can support the faculty professional development with following initiatives:

- providing new faculty with start-up money to facilitate initiation of their research
- summer funding
- opportunities for research, travel money for presentations at major national conferences and curriculum development
- assigning a graduate assistant to help in grading, labs, etc.
- assigning a senior faculty as a mentor/coach to share their wisdom, knowledge and experiences in the tenure process
- released time for research and publications, and support for grant/proposal writing for external funding
- involving a faculty with professional committees at the university and national level

All of these may create a sense of interaction, personal involvement & competency that spreads throughout the department. Therefore, it can help in recruitment and retention of good faculty and reduce legal issues, absentees, and sickness. At the same time, a good leader can motivate senior faculty to maintain their research activities with support of graduate assistants, travel money for scholarly activities and curriculum development, and summer teaching. Senior (full professor) faculty members could also be motivated by a post-professor evaluation with merit pay or some sort of financial support. It is significant for a department head to know about

faculty's personal life to some degree. They may need help in both professional and personal life. Making salary adjustment is critical to keep the good faculty in the department. If the department can take care of a faculty in a positive growing environment, then the faculty will take care of the department head when he/she needs them the most.

Conclusion

The chairperson's position carries the duality of representing administration and faculty. It is critical for the department head to act as a leader to support the tenure of faculty in their teaching, research, and service by providing them the basic needs. It's necessary to foster them a positive growth, to praise faculty on time for a job well done and to keep promises. It is essential to be fair in the process and to promote everyone based on his or her scholarly activities not upon favoritism. This can kill motivation for hard working faculty.

In this paper we discussed some of the important issues associated with the educational leadership as a head/chair and how a good leader can make a difference in assisting new faculty to obtain tenure and promotion.

Bibliography
1. Joyner, J. (June, 2000). Developing leadership skills. Computing Canada, 26(12) pp. 39
2. Barrier, M. (January, 1999). Leadership skills employees' respect. (communication, accountability, and trust are what employers need from executives). Nation's Business
3. Ezell, E. B. Jr. (Summer/Fall, 1990). Effective leadership can support faculty in the research and publication activities needed for promotion and tenure, The Journal of Epsilon Pi Tau V. XVI N. 2.
4. Savoie, M. J., & Sawyerr, O.O. (May/June, 1991). Faculty Promotion and tenure decisions: A proposed model. Journal of Education for Business, 66:278-282.
5. Homkes, R. (1994). Promotion through publications and politics. 1994 ASEE Annual Conference Proceedings.

Ali E. Kashef
Ali E. Kashef is a Professor of Industrial Technology at the University of Northern Iowa. He also serves as a coordinator for the cooperative program. He is on the review board for the Journal of Industrial Technology. He received his B.S. in building Engineering and Design from Lincoln University, Missouri in 1980, M.S. in Industrial Management from Central Missouri State University, Missouri in 1981, and Ph.D. in Vocational Studies from the Southern Illinois University, Illinois in 1990. Ali teaches in the area of manufacturing management and design.

Mark Rajai
Dr. Rajai is currently a faculty and researcher in college of engineering at University of Memphis. He also serves as editor-in-chief of an international journal and is member of editorial board of several national and international journals. Rajai has eighteen years of experience in higher education and in industry. He has published several book and more than thirty articles and is recipient of several major grants and contracts. He is a nationally recognized researcher and major TV networks-including CNN, ABC, and BBC – and numerous newspapers and radio stations

have interviewed him.