Strategies for Navigating Organizations, Departments, and Committees

Fall Quarter Pre-Tenure Workshop

December 7, 2022

W ADVANCE CENTER FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

W

Speakers

> Anne McCoy, Natt-Lingafelter Professor of Chemistry

> Sean Munson, Associate Professor of Human Centered Design & Engineering

Anne McCoy

Natt-Lingafelter Professor of Chemistry

ADVANCE CENTER FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

My background

- Taught HS chemistry for one year between undergrad and graduate school – learned a lot about faculty meetings/faculty culture during that year

- Took a faculty position at Ohio State, where I was for 21 years – Worked with 5 chairs – some were better than others

- Moved to UW in 2015 – been very impressed by the institutional culture at all levels!

Navigating a (new) department

- Faculty are like families
  - Conversations/go on for decades. Good to start by listening and observing
  - People can say and do things that are not sensitive – try to let go of these slights even if it can be hard
  - Easy to get into the mindset of the adult who feels like they are still being treated like a child by their parents
- Find allies/mentors who can help you navigate
- The chair/leadership often cannot share all the details of decisions – it's important to trust leadership/have leadership you can trust
- Learn to work with people who have different work styles

Working with Staff / Navigating Institutional Structures:

- The staff at UW are generally spectacular! But good staff are often as thinly stretched as faculty

- Understanding/empathy go a long way (and much further than frustration) [if you do get frustrated - acknowledge it]

- If your needs are not being met by staff – reach out to the chair/department manager

- Constructive comments go further than complaints!

- Often a short in person conversation is more effective and satisfying than a string of email messages.

Setting your own boundaries (easier to do with time and seniority)

- Working with leaders who set moving targets on committee work

- Expectations to respond to work email after hours

- Finding others outside your unit to talk to and strategize with/communities to interact with learn from each other

- When home unit becomes poor working environment for you, seeking opportunities to focus energy outside the unit can be a good option

- CAUTION: Make sure these activities will enhance your overall career trajectory rather than derail

Sean Munson

Associate Professor of Human Centered Design & Engineering

ADVANCE CENTER FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

HCDE

The College

UW

- Overall approach: ask. Be sensitive that it may not be someone's job, but maybe they can tell me whose it is.

- Common thought process: am I trying to get an issue to the right committee or person, or do I just need to get something done? Am I looking for a quick fix or a structural, enduring change?

- If I can't get something done in your department, can I leverage adjunct status in another, or get a collaborator to run something through theirs?

HCDE ●   The College ●   UW ●

- Still learning! I've met people through ADVANCE and various service and noticed who genuinely wants to help, and remembered them.

- The college website can be a resource.

- I ask in my department (especially chair, people who have been on college committees) a lot to try to navigate the college.

HCDE   The College   UW

●   ●   ●

- Lots of offices. Some seem very committed to understanding our shared mission and working together (HSD)

- … others seem not to be. I don't have great advice here, other than trying to understand their incentive structures and constraints.

- Some rules don't seem to be rules. I wish I pushed back on that more.

- Regular happy hour with faculty field tour friends has been vital.

HCDE   The College   UW

- Remember we're at a public university.

- Remember power differentials, especially when making requests of people with less power or job security.

- Even when the right thing to do in a certain situation seems obvious, there may be advantages to slowing down to think about the principles by which it is being decided, as it sets precedent and expectations.

- MOAs and MOUs seem to have very little force. Individual relationships seem much more durable, build and nurture them.

- If you are having trouble with an organization, others probably are too. How can you channel that into constructive change?

Questions?

ADVANCE CENTER FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON