Overview of Department Operations and Relationships

As Chair, you are responsible for overseeing the administration of the department. In the task of administration and staff management, you will rely primarily on the lead staff member which in most instances will be an **Academic Department Administrator** (the ADA).

The ADA is the overall manager of all operations, fiscal and human resources activities for an academic department. The ADA plans and prepares projects for management of operations, and leads and develops recommendations and action plans in operational and financial matters. ADAs also provide research, procedural and logistical support in preparing, status reports and financial statements. They are also responsible for overall supervision of department staff and help with prioritizing work assignments and special projects. They hire, supervise and evaluate regular staff and student employees in addition to addressing any employee issues or concerns. ADAs may also conduct research and develop proposals for new programs and services, and projects and develops plans for addressing staff needs.

The ADA is assisted in department operations and daily tasks by a team of staff who are individually responsible for general administrative duties related to different academic and programmatic areas. These may include managing the graduate program, the undergraduate program, supervising work-study students, event planning, accounting, and financial management. Based on the needs of the department, and on the staff members' length of service, skill sets and duties, these staff members may hold different titles such as Administrative Assistant, Program Coordinator, Academic Degree Program Coordinator, Academic Services Coordinator, and so on.

Departments vary in the number and make-up of staff members that support all of these operations. In addition, departments have unique and varied work-cultures. For instance, the ADA and members of the staff in each department uniquely divide up the daily academic and programmatic responsibilities involved in the running of the departments. Similarly, Chairs also influence the culture of the department through their unique leadership styles. Chairs, staff and faculty members are all equally responsible for and contribute to the creation of a healthy, cohesive and mutually supportive work environment within the department/program.

Departmental Operations: An Overview

Academic departments have an annual cycle of programs, events, processes and deadlines. The ADA oversees the timeline of these activities and ensures that they occur in a smooth and timely fashion. This section will present a brief overview of this timeline.

A significant responsibility for advisement of the Chair on academic, fiscal and human resources matters rests with the ADA. This is particularly important given that the College has a system of rotating departmental chairs. In this context, ADAs provide much-needed continuity, history and knowledge of the department context in addition to knowledge of College policies and procedures.

At the beginning of the academic year, the ADA and department staff are responsible for verifying all faculty appointments, student enrollment, graduate student orientation and payment of graduate stipends, hiring of work-study students, as well as ensuring the completion of pertinent paperwork in all these areas. By this time, staff must have ensured the availability of office space, phones, computers and any other equipment for new faculty. Staff who manage undergraduate and graduate degree programs are responsible for liaising with the Registrar's Office, monitoring class enrollments and monitoring drop-add.

The beginning of the academic year coincides with the end of the fiscal year when all final reconciliations of accounts and budgets have to be completed under the supervision of the ADA. Any programmatic events such as talks, colloquia, and conferences that occur on an annual basis must be planned for in advance.

The schedule of classes for the Spring semester must also be prepared and approved during the Fall semester. The ADA oversees the department's liaison with the Registrar's Office, and is responsible, along with the Chair to ensure that all undergraduate and graduate core courses are offered for the year.

Staff also contribute to preparing files for any faculty coming up for Tenure and Promotion in the year. Last summery early fall is also the time to initiate faculty searches.

The Chair is responsible for presenting departmental information at the annual planning sessions. The ADA coordinates the preparation of materials including collection of data, processing of information and other reports that contribute to the planning session materials.

The ADA is responsible for ensuring that any financial requests, are made to the College Office beyond the department base budget. Similarly, the ADA must ensure that requests for any Temporary Faculty for the following year are made by March or April.

The Spring semester finds the staff, particularly members who manage the graduate program busy developing and implementing their timelines for graduate recruitment.

If the department is involved in a faculty search, the Spring semester is the time to schedule visits of search candidates.

April-May finds the ADAs busy working on annual staff performance evaluations and making recommendations for training and professional development as well as setting goals for the coming year. ADAs compile faculty evaluations completed by Chairs. At this time, Chairs must evaluate the work of ADAs and make any recommendations for further training or adjustments to job duties.

During the Summer, the ADAs are responsible for working with the Chair in compiling information for the Annual Reports of the College and the Graduate School.

Deadlines for making budget requests, discretionary requests, and personnel requests fall in the Spring and during the Summer.

In addition to these programmatic and academic duties, staff complete daily business operational tasks which involve communicating with Facilities Management, Network Communications, Human Resources, Accounts Payable, Payroll, College Finance, the College administration and the Graduate School.