Best Practices in Department Administration

During the Summer of 2006, the College Office created a committee comprised of ADAs from a cross-section of departments that included the humanities, sciences and social sciences to discuss core responsibilities of department staff. The focus of discussions soon shifted from defining responsibilities to evaluating best practices in department operations. The following list has been developed based on the recommendations of the committee as practices that can help create an open, efficient and supportive work environment within department/program offices.

1. *Providing a Clear Sense of Expectations*: Each staff member is responsible for their areas of work as well as the general administration of the department. Chairs may facilitate the smooth functioning of the department by clarifying their expectations of staff from time to time.

   Specific job duties should be reviewed annually.

   In departments with new Chairs, a change in leadership is as much a transition for the department and its staff as it is for the faculty member taking on this role. The Chair can smooth this transition by communicating his or her needs, style of functioning, and expectations at the outset and as they continue to evolve.

2. *Practicing Good Communication*: It is important to maintain good rapport with the staff and to create open channels of communication through such practices as convening weekly, biweekly or monthly staff meetings where the staff members are invited to provide updates on their areas while the Chair shares information on new projects, strategic priorities, deadlines, and allocate responsibilities.

3. *Building a True Partnership with the ADA*: Chairs invariably rely heavily on ADAs to provide business knowledge, knowledge about College policies and operations, a combination of financial, human resources and strategic skills, and continuity in the administration of the department. It is important that Chairs establish practices that reflect this by involving ADA in departmental faculty meetings, planning meetings, and so on.

4. *Developing Department-level Policies and Helpful Resource Guides for Faculty and Students*: Staff in a number of departments have developed helpful resource guides to orient new (and existing) faculty to the department and departmental procedures. The best-run offices have also developed policies around managing time and resources in areas such as course atlas preparation, class permissions, photocopying, p-card use, requests from students and faculty for services, and so on.

5. *Supporting staff in balancing Administrative Duties with Academic Duties*: Staff perform a number of day-to-day operations in their areas to ensure the smooth running of the department, meet student needs, as well as provide the appropriate level of individual support faculty require. Chairs must support staff in their efforts to balance these multiple roles and responsibilities by communicating reasonable expectations of staff to the faculty.

6. *Recognizing and Appreciating Staff on a Regular Basis*: It is important to create an atmosphere that fosters recognition for the hard work and talent staff bring to the department. Chairs may put in place formal and informal practices that allow staff to feel appreciated such as written and verbal expressions of gratitude, observance of hire date anniversaries, a letter that will go into the staff file for having met a particularly challenging assignment, taking staff out to lunch upon the completion of a project or graduate orientation, holiday gifts, and so on. For information about Emory's policy

on employee gifts and celebratory events, please refer to policy number 506.00 "Employee Gifts and Celebrations Policy" at http://policies.emory.edu/policy/index_pdf.php?policy_number=2.5

In addition, Chairs may also recommend staff for College and University awards. For more information, see the "Professional Development and Award Opportunities for Staff" section of this document.

7. *Encouraging staff training and professional development*: Performance evaluations are opportunities for Chairs to provide staff with the support for personal and professional development. Emory offers a number of classes that staff can utilize to help fulfill their roles and responsibilities as well as to enhance their careers and pursue upward mobility. At this time, Chairs can recommend staff for training using the University Learning Services area of Human Resources.