



Department Head's Roles and Responsibilities College of Liberal Arts – Texas A&M University

Definitions of leadership frequently revolve around the ability to mobilize others to share a common vision while eliciting the best qualities of the people involved. Current discussions often describe leadership as process-oriented, collaborative, contextual, and lateral rather than hierarchical.

Steven B. Sample in *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership* (2002) offers this excellent advice for creative leadership: "think gray, see double, never completely trust an expert, read what your competition doesn't read, never make a decision yourself that can reasonably be delegated to a subordinate, ignore sunk costs, work for those who work for you, know which hill you're willing to die on, shoot your own horse, sometimes allow the led to lead the leader, and know the difference between being leader and doing leader." The following outlines expectations for leadership from department heads in the College of Liberal Arts.

Leadership

- **Envision**—*lead in shaping a vision, mission, and measurable goals; make changes when necessary to support the vision; build collaborations internally and externally; align strategic goals with those of the college and university; practice continuous assessment of progress*
- **Delegate**—*build shared responsibility by delegating assignments to others when appropriate; ask others for guidance and assistance; work with associate deans on issues in their portfolios*
- **Communicate**—*communicate the department's effectiveness among its members and to those outside the department and university; serve as bilateral interpreter, helping faculty and staff understand broader contexts and educating those outside the department*
- **Support Teaching**—*actively encourage innovative and inclusive curricula; collaborate when appropriate without territorialism; reward transformative teaching; assess your efforts and revise when needed*
- **Support Research**—*actively encourage faculty to aim high; ensure the highest levels of quality, integrity, and ethics in research; reward faculty excellence in research; value interdisciplinary approaches*
- **Model Academic Professionalism**—*be ethical, reasonable, respectful, fair, and even-tempered, even when others are not doing the same; shape departmental climate and culture by setting the tone for all interactions; build trust*

Interpersonal

- **Counsel**—*be an active listener; be accessible; take the time to establish cordial professional relationships; be willing to hear all concerns without prejudice; apply operating principles consistently and fairly*
- **Coach**—*motivate, mentor, and inspire others to reach their goals and be successful; assign similar roles to others so that mentoring is part of your departmental culture*
- **Mediate**—*on an individual or small-group basis, step in when conflicts arise; resolve issues fairly and transparently; be even-handed and equitable; seek advice*
- **Regulate Climate**—*create systems and processes that ensure a supportive departmental climate for faculty, staff, and students; establish a culture of fairness and clear expectations and design processes to maintain it*

Administrative

- **Respond**—*answer all email and other messages promptly, even if just to acknowledge them; use your out-of-office automatic replies; keep your department and college informed about your schedule; have reliable back-up for when you are away from your office*
- **Steward Resources**—*know and manage the department's budget for strategic aims; set criteria and approve all expenditures; maintain ultimate financial oversight; ensure compliance*
- **Oversee Scheduling**—*assure course assignments according to the department's (more than individual) needs and priorities; guarantee staff coverage; monitor faculty leaves; be strategic in appointing and using committees and committee time; be mindful of others when scheduling major events (avoid conflicts when possible)*
- **Report**—*familiarize yourself with data resources from TAMU; respond on time to requests and assure that faculty and staff do so; be clear, succinct, and factual in responding to questions; lead Academic Program Review (APR) and other similar processes*
- **Supervise Staff**—*create an atmosphere of respect and professional support for staff; recognize staff accomplishments; take office conflicts seriously and address them*

Developmental

- **Recruit**—*play a primary role in recruiting new faculty, students, and staff; assemble and guide search committees with strategic goals in mind; implement inclusive hiring processes; be the face and voice of the department you want someone to join*
- **Mentor**—*create a culture of support that changes with time, circumstances, and individuals; hold mentors accountable for providing accurate, continuous, and meaningful advice and active support; ensure consistency in messages*
- **Evaluate**—*follow relevant TAMU guidelines; practice responsible evaluation processes; provide timely feedback; be honest while being supportive; do not refer departmental decisions to the dean or beyond; be willing to reject proposals as well as to support others; treat tenure and promotion processes with the seriousness they require*
- **Provide Resources**—*identify and provide resources for faculty, student, and staff success*
- **Raise Funds**—*assist the development team in fundraising for the college and be good stewards of endowed accounts and other gifts*

Some Useful Resources

TAMU

- [TAMU Rules and SAPs](#)
- [Department Head Guide](#) and [Department Head Quick Reference Guide](#) (Dean of Faculties)
- TAMU [Accountability](#) Website
- [Data and Research Services](#) (DARS)
- [Institutional Effectiveness and Evaluation](#)
- [Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness](#)

Other

- [Association of American Colleges & Universities](#) (AAC&U)
- [Education Advisory Board](#) (EAB)
- [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES)
- Your professional organizations