

Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Rewards for Department Chairs

A Report to the Academic Senate, California State University

from the

Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities of Chairs

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary..... | 1 |
| Introduction..... | 4 |
| Department Chairs in the CSU: Many Roles and Many Stakeholders..... | 4 |
| Electing and Appointing Chairs..... | 5 |
| How Do Faculty Members Become Chairs?..... | 5 |
| The Percent of Appointment and Length of Appointment as Chair Varies Remarkably Among Campuses..... | 6 |
| Academic Year Chairs Work Days Without Pay..... | 10 |
| Many Chairs Have Little or No Formal Orientation Before Assuming the Duties of Chair..... | 11 |
| Responsibilities and Roles..... | 12 |
| Job Descriptions and Expectations..... | 12 |
| Performance Evaluation | 12 |
| Chairs’ Perceptions of Time Spent on Tasks..... | 13 |
| Most Chair-Respondents Indicated That Their Workloads Have Increased During Their Terms..... | 15 |
| Resources..... | 15 |
| Most Chairs Have Little Control Over Their Budgets..... | 16 |
| Chairs Are Frequently Outside of the Information Loop..... | 17 |
| Many Chairs Believe Their Level of Authority Does Not Match Their Degree of Responsibility..... | 17 |
| Rewards and Reasons to Serve Additional Terms..... | 19 |
| Rewards and Reasons Other Than Monetary..... | 19 |
| Monetary Rewards and Reasons..... | 20 |
| Reasons For Not Wanting To Serve Additional Terms..... | 21 |
| Variability Among Campuses..... | 21 |
| CSU Chairs’ Recommendations for Best Practices for Leading an Academic Department..... | 21 |
| Task Force Recommendations for Best Practices for Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Rewards for Department Chairs..... | 22 |
| List of References..... | 25 |
| Appendix: The CSU Department Chair Survey Report..... | 26 |

Report of the Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities of Department Chairs

Executive Summary

The objective of this report is to make recommendations that will “enhance roles, rewards and resources” for Department Chairs. The goal is to improve training, recruitment, and retention of chairs with the end of making them more enduring and effective leaders of their departments. The data and observations that form the basis for the recommendations that follow come in large part from the California State University Department Chair Survey. The report also draws from job descriptions and practices of individual campuses, the contract between the CSU and the CFA, personal observations, and the academic literature.

The Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities of Chairs recommends that:

- 1) each campus establish a committee on the “status of chairs” to develop an action plan to address the findings of the CSU Chair Survey and home campus surveys and the recommendations of the Task Force. The Task Force recommends that this committee report annually on its progress to the campus senate and representatives designated by the Statewide Senate.
- 2) the Academic Senate CSU, chancellor’s office, campus presidents, and academic vice presidents discuss and address the findings of the CSU Department Chair Survey and home campus surveys and the recommendations of the Task Force.

Further, the Task Force makes the following additional observations and recommendations:

Campuses need to give chairs the resources they require to be effective leaders.

- **Campuses should give chairs more authority/control over financial and other departmental resources.** Chairs should have dollar-based budgets, should be able to roll funds forward from year to year, and should be able to use saved dollars to best benefit their departments.
- **Campuses and the CSU should provide chairs with more training prior to and after they assume the role of chair.** Campuses should also provide chairs with more opportunities, resources, and time to attend campus, CSU-supported, and other professional development workshops.
- **Campuses should give chairs more access to the information required to effectively run their departments, including FTES targets and budgetary information.** The university administration should keep chairs in the same information loop as the deans.

Campuses and the CSU should treat chairs equitably regarding their conditions of appointment.

- **Campuses should give all chairs the option of 12-month appointments or establish a mechanism for compensating chairs for unpaid days worked.^b**
- **Campuses should establish an advisory committee to review the means used to determine the percent of administrative appointment and the length of the chair's contract to:**
 - ✓ Establish a formula or procedure that best represents the current workload of chairs
 - ✓ Achieve equity among chairs on a single campus and ultimately promote equity across the CSU^b

At a minimum the formula should take into account total FTEF (including part-time faculty and teaching associates), FTES, number of majors, and number of staff.
- **Campuses should provide chairs with job descriptions and other details of their duties so they are fully informed of what is expected of them before they assume their roles.**
- **Campuses should have reasonable expectations of chairs given the amount of time and resources available to them.**
- **Campuses should review the tasks that chairs are expected to perform to assure that they are appropriate and manageable within the constraints of the chair's administrative appointment.**
- **Campuses should evaluate and reward chairs based on their job descriptions.**

Campuses should evaluate chairs annually based on clear performance objectives and reward chairs based on their job descriptions, not on the traditional criteria for performance evaluation of faculty.

The compensation for chairs should match the demands of the position.

- **The CSU and CFA should review the appropriateness of current levels of compensation for 12-month and academic year chairs and bargain compensation that rewards chairs according to their true administrative workload.^b**

Too much of the chair's time is squandered on routine administrative functions (the "bureaucratic grind"). Campuses should provide chairs with time to undertake creative management or other significant creative activities.

- **A campus committee should analyze the workload of chairs and make recommendations to reduce or redistribute it to allow chairs more time for creative activity.** Recommendations should be shared among campuses within the CSU.^b
- **Campuses should reroute or reduce the bureaucratic paperwork.**

- **Campuses and the CSU should provide chairs with assigned time to allow chairs to undertake creative management or other creative activities that would benefit their departments.**
- **Campuses should consider diverting some of the routine workload of chairs to clerical personnel.**

Communication among chairs should be facilitated.

- **Local campus chairs across colleges should meet at least semi-annually.**
- **CSU chairs within disciplines should meet at least annually.**
- **The CSU should sponsor an annual conference for chairs.**
Through this conference, the CSU can provide a forum for chairs to communicate with one another about what they do and how they do it. Time can be provided for meetings among chairs within disciplines and for sessions that deal with issues that chairs would like to address.
- **CSU department chairs should consider establishing a list-serve of all CSU chairs or CSU chairs within disciplines**

Other recommendations

- **The Academic Senate CSU, or the office of the chancellor of the CSU, should conduct a survey of CSU deans, similar to the Chair Survey, which includes questions about how deans manage chairs and what deans think are best practices for chairs.**
- **Campuses should educate faculty about the roles and responsibilities of contemporary chairs, both to recruit qualified faculty into the position and to enhance understanding of what chairs do.**

Introduction

“There has been a long standing concern in the CSU about the roles and responsibilities of department and program chairs. At many campuses there is a rapid turn-over of chairs and many chairs feel overworked and under-rewarded.”
“The CSU Academic Senate believes this is an important issue to address as we look at the various challenges for the CSU in the future.”

Charge of the Academic Senate, California State University Task Force on the Roles and Responsibilities of Chairs, Jackie Kegley, Senate Chair, July 2001.

I. Department Chairs in the CSU: Many Roles and Many Stakeholders

Department chairs play a key role in the California State University. They lead the departments in curriculum planning and assessment; manage the hiring, performance evaluation, and professional development of faculty and staff; implement and have significant input into retention, tenure and promotion; manage, to a greater or lesser extent, departmental resources including the budget, facilities, and space; schedule and staff classes; resolve student complaints and personnel issues; seek external resources for their departments; and fill a variety of other roles. On top of all their duties, most chairs continue to participate in one or more of the traditional faculty activities (i.e., teaching, scholarship, and service).^{1, 2}

The chair also serves multiple constituencies, constituencies that do not always have the same goals for the department or the same methods of achieving goals. Foremost, the chair must serve the students and ensure that the department meets their needs while at the same time maintaining high standards for their performance. The chair must provide faculty and staff with the time and resources they need to fulfill the departmental mission and continue their own professional development. The chair must implement directives from the administration, must present the public face and position of the department to outside entities---the dean, other administrators, off-campus stakeholders, and the general public--- and must translate the needs and demands of those entities for the faculty.^{1, 2}

The department chair, depending on leadership style and departmental culture, can have a significant positive or negative impact on faculty and staff motivation, morale, and success. Some who study academic leadership suggest that department chairs are central to the "core academic success" of the university.³ The chair, in collaboration with the faculty, can help set the tone for the department, define or support the departmental culture, and create a vision for the present and future. The chair can help the faculty maintain or enhance the effectiveness of the department's educational programs or, in some cases, bring progress to a standstill. The chair's decisions regarding human and material resources can enhance or disable a program and can have an impact that far outlasts the chair's term.

The objective of this report is to make recommendations that will “enhance roles, rewards and resources” for Department Chairs. The goal is to improve training, recruitment, and retention of chairs with the end of making them more enduring and effective leaders of their departments. The data and observations that form the basis for the recommendations come in large part from the California State University Department Chair Survey (CSUDCS).¹ *Verbatim* excerpts from the CSUDCS Report are enclosed in quotation marks and cited (citation one). The task force report also draws from job descriptions and practices of individual campuses,^{2,4} the contract between the CSU and the CFA,⁵ personal observations, and the academic literature.

II. Electing and Appointing Chairs

A. How Do Faculty Members Become Chairs?

The contract between the California Faculty Association (CFA) and the CSU states that “the department chair shall normally be selected from the list of tenured or probationary faculty employees recommended by the department for the assignment.” “Such department chairs shall be appointed by the president and serve at the pleasure of the president.”⁵ The details of the process are left to the policies of individual campuses. The tradition in the CSU is consistent with the contract in that the majority of chairs come from the faculty of the department they chair. Only a small percent of chairs are recruited from off-campus.¹

The manner of creating the list of candidates to present to the president varies substantially from campus to campus, ranging from an election in which all faculty (tenured, probationary, and temporary) vote for a chair-candidate to an election allowing only tenured faculty members to vote to a rotational system in which faculty members take turns serving as chair (Table 1).¹ This latter method has been adopted because often no one in a department aspires for the position of chair; thus, the faculty have created an egalitarian process whereby everyone does their duty to serve when it is their turn.¹

**Table 1. Percent of chairs elected by various mechanisms.
“How are chairs elected/appointed in your department?”**

| Means By Which Chairs Are Appointed/Elected | % Respondents |
|--|----------------------|
| “Elected by tenured, tenure-track, and part-time faculty; the winner of the election is then formally appointed by the president (or AVP/provost) on the recommendation of the dean” | 22.8 |
| “Elected by tenured and tenure-track faculty only; the winner of each election is then formally appointed by the president (or AVP/provost) on the recommendation of the dean” | 60.3 |
| “Elected by tenured faculty only; the winner of the election is then formally appointed by the president (or AVP/provost) on the recommendation of the dean” | 5 |
| “No election; Appointed by the president or AVP/Provost on the recommendation of the dean” | 7.7 |
| Other | 4.1 |

Once chairs are appointed, they assume administrative duties as a fraction of their workload. They remain, however, in the faculty bargaining unit and are formally considered faculty and not administrators.⁵ In recent times the place of chairs in the hierarchy of the CSU has been the subject of debate, some believing that chairs should remain as faculty, more or less chosen by faculty, and others suggesting that they would be more effective and have more authority if they were appointed as administrators. Although it was not the intent of the CSU Chair Survey to address this issue, data from the survey may feed this debate; some chairs advocated that they be appointed as administrators and others suggested that they were more effective as faculty members.¹

B. The Percent of Appointment and Length of Appointment as Chair Varies Remarkably Among Campuses

As stated above, chairs are not considered administrators; rather they are reassigned for a fraction of their faculty appointment to manage the department (Figure 1). How are the percent and length of appointment determined and how consistent are these parameters from campus to campus? Results from the CSU Department Chair Survey indicate that there is a huge variance across the CSU in the percent of appointment of chairs with similar size departments. This is true using any of the traditional indicators of size, full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF), full-time equivalent students (FTES), or number of majors (Figures 2 to 4). As an example, the range for percent of appointment is 20% to 100% among chairs managing departments with 5 or fewer FTEF, 11 to 15 FTEF, and 16 to 20 FTEF.¹ This translates to some chairs having less than half the “administrative” assigned time to manage the same number of faculty members as other chairs.

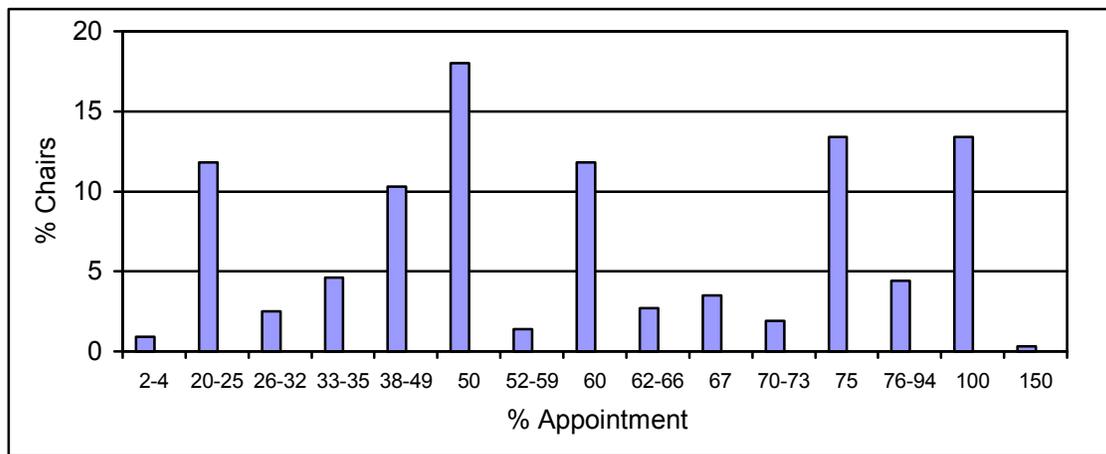


Figure 1. Percent of chairs with various appointments. The question that the chairs answered was, “Please indicate the percentage that you are officially appointed as chair.”

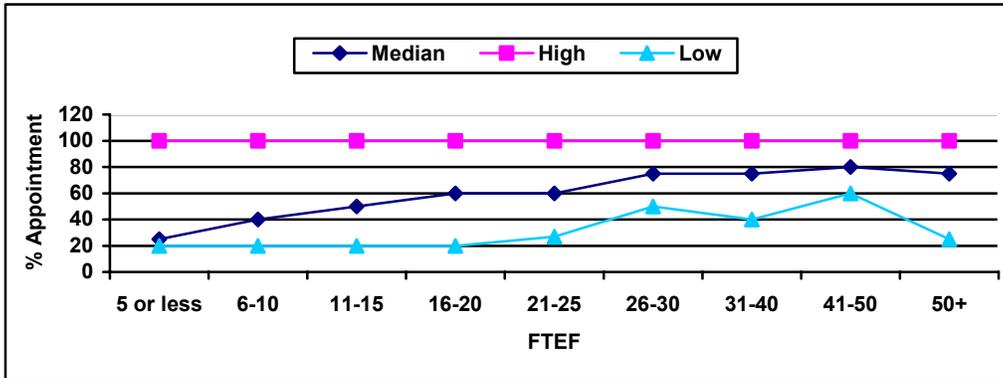


Figure 2. Relationship between percent of administrative appointment and FTEF. The figure shows the median, highest, and lowest percent of appointment for each FTEF range on the x-axis.

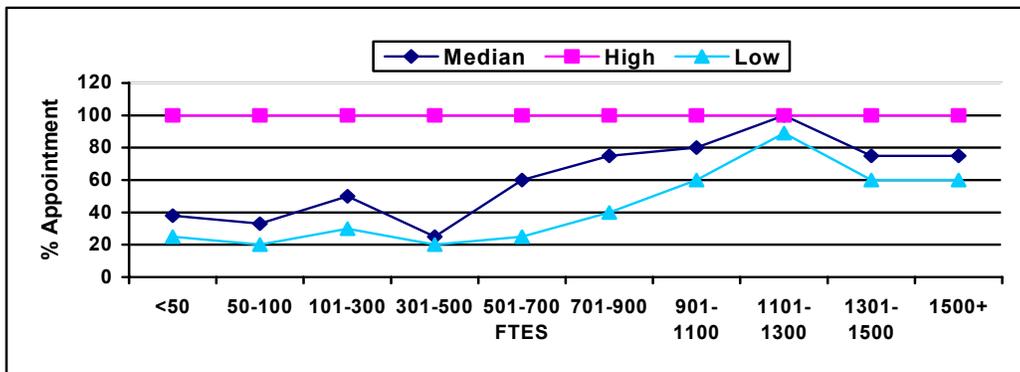


Figure 3. Relationship between percent of administrative appointment and FTES. The figure shows the median, highest, and lowest percent of appointment for each FTES range on the x-axis.

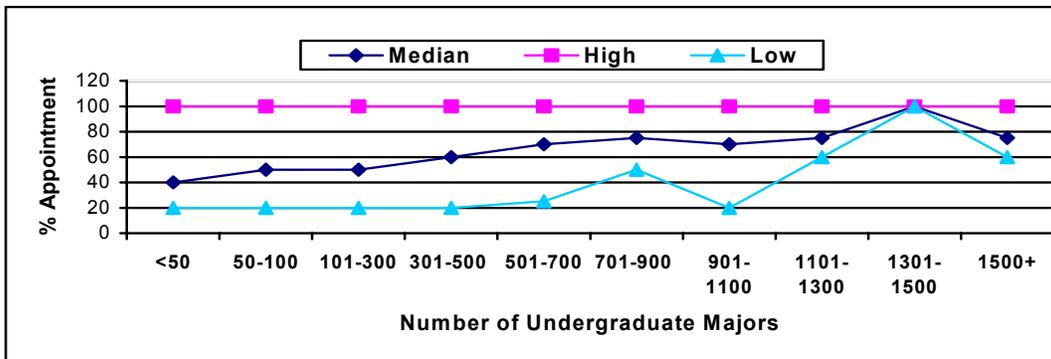


Figure 4. Relationship between the percent of administrative appointment and number of undergraduate majors. The figure shows the median, highest, and lowest percent of appointment for each majors' range on the x-axis.

The same kind of variance was seen with the length of appointment. For example, 50% of chair-respondents with 6 to 10 FTEF were on 9- or 10-month contracts and 50% were on 11- or 12-month contracts; 80% of chairs with 26 to 30 FTEF were on 11- or 12-month contracts and 20% were on 9- or 10-month contracts (Figure 5). Thus, some

chairs must manage the same number of FTEF in 9 or 10 months as chairs who have 11- or 12-month appointments. Note that these data compare chairs *across the CSU* -- not within any one campus.

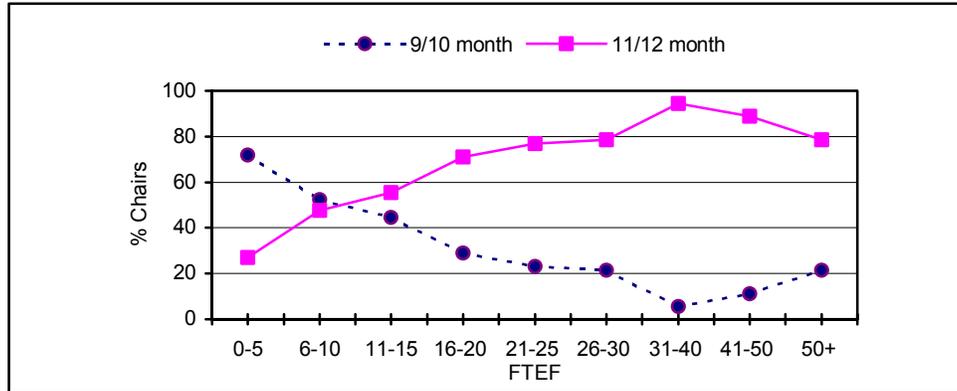


Figure 5. Relationship between FTEF and length of contract

Many chairs are not certain about which parameters, or who, determines their percent of appointment and number of months of appointment.

Chairs reported four methods by which their percent of appointment was determined: FTEF, FTES, number of majors, and ‘other.’ The findings for the length of appointment were similar with the exception that number of majors was not indicated as a parameter used to determine length of appointment. Sixty-two percent of chair-respondents indicated that they were not certain what determined their percent of appointment and 64% were not certain what determined their length of appointment (Table 2).¹ In other words, nearly two-thirds of chairs believe they do not know how the details of their appointments are ascertained. The closest correlation between department size and percent of appointment was observed using FTEF as the measure of size, suggesting that this is the parameter that most campuses/colleges use.¹ The chairs who marked “Other” indicated a wide variety of additional methods for determining percent of appointment ranging from using “a combination FTEF, FTES, and number of programs” to “negotiation with the dean.”¹

Table 2. Responses to the questions “What basis or formula is used to determine your percent of appointment as chair?” and “What basis or formula is used to determine the number of months you are appointed as chair?”

| What basis or formula is used to determine your percent of appointment and number of months appointed as chair? | Percent of Appointment % Respondents | Number of Months Appointed as Chair % Respondents |
|---|---|--|
| Number of FTEF | 18 | 9.8 |
| Number of FTES | 7 | 5 |
| Number of Majors | 0.2 | 0 |
| Not Certain | 62.3 | 64.3 |
| Other | 12.5 | 21 |

Which parameter or combination of parameters best reflects the workload of present-day chairs? A look at the correlation between FTEF, the parameter that seems to be most commonly used to determine percent of administrative appointment, and FTES provides insights (Figure 6).^{1,6} There is a correlation in a stepwise fashion between FTEF and the median FTES. However, there is great variability, as indicated by the range of FTEF (high and low), associated with any one FTES value. Further, in terms of student load, FTES is only one of the workload parameters that impacts chairs. The number of majors that contribute to the FTES and thus the number of students that require majors' advising and draw on other chair and departmental resources not normally impacted by non-majors also influences workload. The number of undergraduate majors does not necessarily correlate with FTES (Figure 7).¹ Departments with large numbers of FTES can have a relatively small number of majors and *vice versa*. Thus, the workload associated with serving majors is not necessarily factored into the number of FTEF or the percent or length of administrative appointment. Finally, there are also differences, depending on the size and complexity of departments, in the number of staff that chairs must supervise, another parameter that influences the workload of the chair.¹

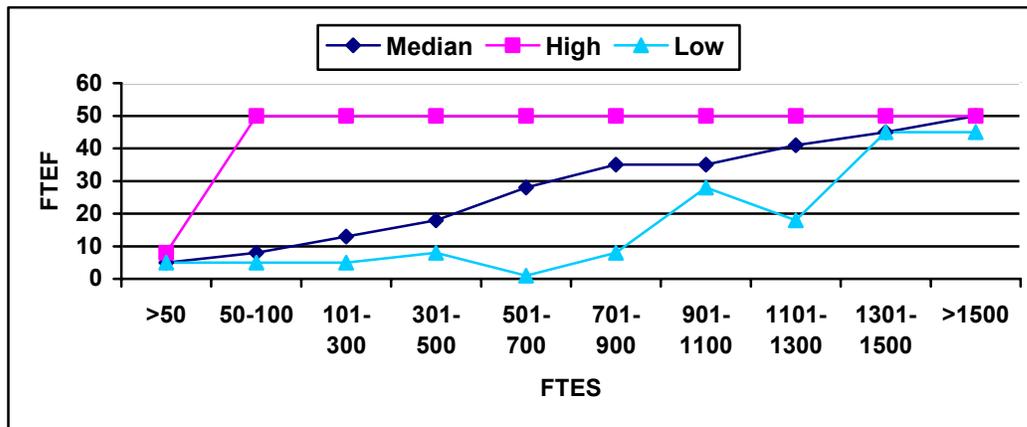


Figure 6. Relationship between FTES and FTEF. Numbers on the x-axis represent the midpoint of a range that was an option on the Chair Survey. The maximum choice for FTEF on the survey was “over 50,” therefore the maximum FTEF on the y-axis was 50 with no alternative above that value.

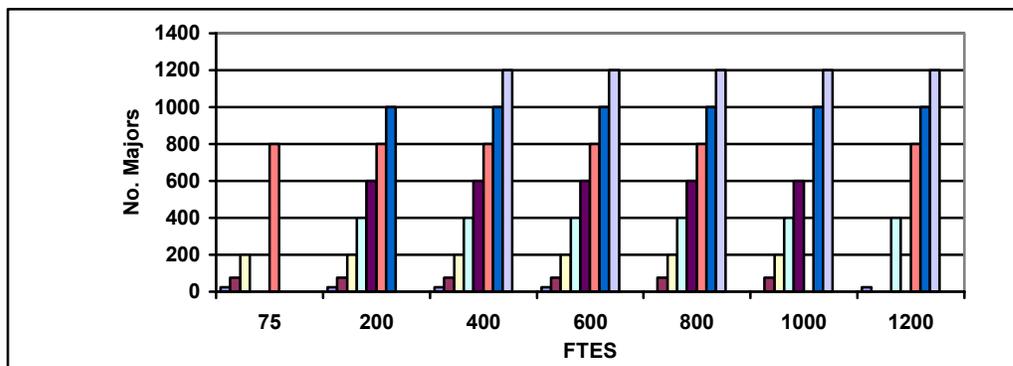


Figure 7. Bar graphs showing the variability in number of majors among departments with similar FTES. Departmental FTES is shown on the x-axis. The y-axis indicates number of majors. The bars indicate that at least one department had the specified number of majors.

Do chairs know who or what determines the parameters of their appointment? “A little over a fifth of the chairs did not know who or what determined the length and percent of appointment (Table 3).”¹ Most chair-respondents indicated that the dean determined the percent and length of their appointments. Others indicated that the provost or university policy determined these parameters. A small number (1% or less) indicated that the parameters of their appointment were determined by CSU policy or the CFA contract, neither of which is accurate.¹

Table 3. Responses to the questions “Who or what determines your percent of appointment as chair?” and “Who or what determines the number of months you are appointed as chair?”

| “Who or what determines your percent of appointment or the number of months you are appointed?” | Percent of Appointment % Respondents | Number of Months of Appointment % Respondents |
|---|---|--|
| Dean | 54.9 | 41.9 |
| Provost | 8.3 | 11 |
| University Policy | 12 | 19.1 |
| CSU Policy | 1.2 | 1.0 |
| CFA Contract | 0.2 | 0.7 |
| Not Certain | 22.1 | 22.5 |
| Other | 1.2 | 3.9 |

C. Academic Year Chairs Work Days Without Pay

The responses to the CSU Chair Survey indicate that, under current conditions, it is not possible for most chairs with less than 12-month appointments to manage their departments without working outside the time they are appointed. Ninety-six percent of the chair-respondents with less than 12-month appointments indicated that they worked five or more days unpaid. Thirty-seven percent worked more than a month unpaid, and 25% percent worked more than 2 months unpaid (Figure 8).¹

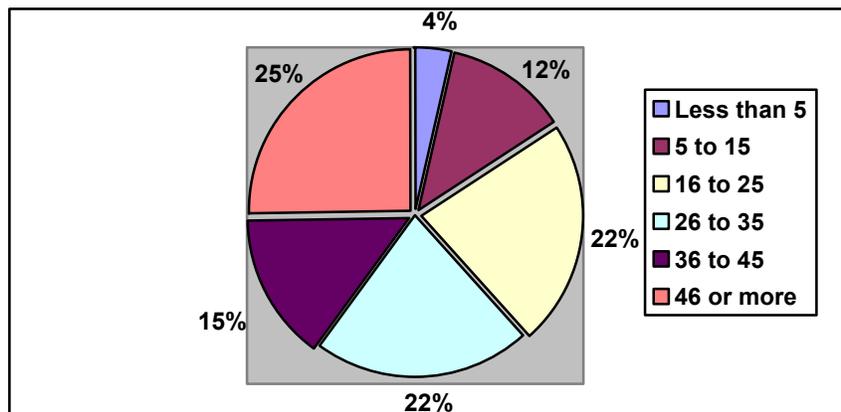


Figure 8. Percent of chairs with less than 12-month appointments who worked unpaid days. (Numbers in the legend are number of days worked unpaid). “If you are NOT paid to work 12 months or 4 quarters, approximately how many days a year do you work during periods when you are supposed to be off duty?”

III. Many Chairs Have Little or No Formal Orientation Before Assuming the Duties of Chair

For many chairs, the only preparation they had prior to taking on this new role was the experience they gained as faculty members on their campuses and what they might have learned by observing and working with the previous chair/s. Sixty-six percent of chair-respondents reported that their campus administrations provided them with no formal orientation prior to their assuming the duties of chair. The range was from 36% of respondents on one campus to 100% of respondents on another who reported no formal preparation prior to becoming chair (Table 4).¹

Table 4. Hours of orientation before assuming the role of chair

| “Before you assumed the duties of chair, about how many total hours of formal orientation were provided by your campus administration to prepare you for your job as chair?” | % Respondents |
|---|----------------------|
| 0 hours | 66.4 |
| 1-5 hours | 20.9 |
| 6-10 hours | 9.4 |
| 11-15 hours | 2.2 |
| 16-20 hours | 0.7 |
| More than 20 hours | 0.5 |

Fifty-eight percent of chairs indicated that they attended some form of chair workshop either prior to or during their tenures as chair. The workshops most attended were campus-based (28% of respondents), followed by the CSU-sponsored chair workshops (27%), “other” workshops (6%), the American Council on Education Workshops (ACE) (5%), the American Council of Academic Deans Chair Workshops (1.6%), and the Harvard Management Development Program (0.2%).¹ Some chairs complained that the chair workshops sponsored by their campuses focused mainly on sexual harassment and discrimination and little on topics like managing the department budget or personnel management techniques.¹

Most department chairs, the CSU, higher education leadership organizations, and at least some campuses believe that chair workshops and professional development can contribute to the success of chairs. It is unclear why more chairs do not participate in these workshops or in campus-sponsored workshops. Prohibitive costs may explain why more chairs do not participate in “commercial” workshops (e.g., ACE, Harvard Management Development Program), and lack of availability may explain why they do not participate in workshops on their home campuses. The CSU sponsors system-wide chair workshops and recently has instituted web-based training for managers. It will be interesting to see whether or how much chairs are encouraged to take advantage of this new mode of training. The modules that are currently available are general and mainly focus on human resources. This method of training will become even more valuable to chairs when it addresses topics specific to the chair’s position, like budget.

IV. Responsibilities and Roles

A. Job Descriptions and Expectations

Some campuses have job descriptions for chairs, while others do not.

Do chairs know what is expected of them before assuming the position? Many campuses have generic job descriptions for chairs while others do not. Some campuses reported that, although there is no generic job description for chairs on their campus, the duties of the chair are outlined in an appointment letter that the chair receives from the dean or other administrator prior to assuming the position.⁴ Included among the duties assigned to chairs via these job descriptions are responsibilities related to: 1) general administration (staffing classes, administering the budget, overseeing staff, day-to-day operations of the department), 2) university and community relations (representing the department to entities within and outside the university), 3) curriculum (program planning, curriculum revision or development), 4) faculty (hiring, RTP, faculty development), and 5) students (advising, retention, conflict resolution). The often lengthy list of tasks and responsibilities and the variety of duties assigned to the chairs in the CSU can be quite remarkable, especially considering that most chairs continue to teach.^{1,2}

Few chairs were given clear, written expectations for their performance by their deans prior to assumption of the position of chair.

Many of the chairs who responded to the survey had a different view of how much they knew about the position before they assumed it. Only 16% of respondents reported that their deans gave them clear written expectations for their performance. Twenty-five percent indicated that their deans gave them clear expectations orally, and 57% reported that their deans gave them no performance expectations. Whether or not this means that they were not given a written job description or they were not given clear expectations of how they were to fulfill the duties and responsibilities outlined in a job description cannot be discerned. In either case, the responses on the surveys suggested that many chairs felt that they were “flying blind” in terms of what was expected of them.¹

B. Performance Evaluation

Only twenty-five percent of chair-respondents indicated that they were evaluated annually.

When and how are chairs evaluated? Many chairs indicated that they were either never evaluated (16.5% of respondents), unsure of when they are evaluated, or evaluated no more frequently than once every three years. Only a quarter of chairs who responded to the survey reported that they were evaluated annually, the norm for respondents being once every three years.¹

Few deans give chairs formal, written, evaluations based on clear performance expectations.

Only 20% of chair-respondents indicated that the performance review by their dean was formal, written, and based on clear expectations. As stated above, the majority of chair-respondents indicated that they were generally given vague, unwritten performance objectives by their deans (Table 5).¹

Table 5. Nature of chair review by dean

| "If the chair is reviewed by the dean, please indicate which of the following best characterizes the dean's review in your college?" | % Respondents |
|---|----------------------|
| "chairs are not reviewed by the dean" | 16.5 |
| "review is formal, written, and conducted relative to clear chair performance expectations" | 19.9 |
| "review is formal, written, and conducted relative to vague chair performance expectations" | 17.3 |
| "review is informal, not written, and not conducted relative to clear chair performance expectations" | 15.4 |
| "not certain" | 27.2 |
| "other" | 3.7 |

C. Chairs' Perceptions of Time Spent on Tasks

Chairs indicated that they spend the largest part of their time responding to requests from other offices.

One of the questions on the CSU Chair Survey asked chairs to rank common duties and responsibilities in terms of how much time they consumed. "The table below (excerpted from the CSU Chairs' Survey) lists, in descending order, those tasks identified by chairs as taking up the most time. Percentages reflect the number of chairs choosing "Great Deal" of their time or "Little Time" doing the following."¹

Table 6. Percent of chairs that spend a "great deal" or "little time" on common tasks.

| Tasks | Percent of Chairs who Say: Takes up "Great Deal of their Time" | "Little Time" |
|---|---|----------------------|
| 1. Responding to memos from other offices | 55% | 5% |
| 2. Writing reports | 50% | 10% |
| 3. Reading administratively relevant material | 38% | 11% |
| 3. Staffing classes | 38% | 19% |
| 4. Room and class scheduling | 37% | 21% |
| 4. Recruiting faculty and staff | 37% | 18% |
| 5. Budget management and planning | 34% | 19% |
| 6. Managing faculty and staff | 33% | 21% |
| 6. Advising students/student complaints | 33% | 9% |
| 6. Curriculum development | 33% | 14% |
| 7. Representing department at college/campus meetings | 32% | 16% |
| 8. Leading department meetings | 30% | 11% |

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| 9. Program assessment | 26% | 21% |
| 9. Teaching | 26% | 19% |
| 10. Retention, Tenure and Promotion | 23% | 12% |
| 11. Course/program assessment planning | 21% | 38% |
| 12. Faculty/staff evaluations | 18% | 24% |
| 12. Dealing with faculty/staff personnel problems | 18% | 38% |
| 13. Scholarly activity | 13% | 45% |
| 14. Creating partnerships off-campus | 12% | 51% |
| 15. Public relations | 11% | 43% |
| 16. Faculty/staff development | 9% | 50% |
| 17. Fund-raising | 8% | 68% |
| 18. Facility management/managing space | 7% | 52% |
| 19. Building/room repairs | 6% | 71% |
| 20. Large equipment management | 5% | 71% |
| 21. Facility planning/remodeling | 4% | 73% |
| 21. Writing grants | 4% | 69% |

“While a list of this sort should be viewed with caution due to methodological limitations, and while fine differentiations should not be made between tasks in close proximity in their rankings, it is perhaps safe to make the following generalizations from these data.”¹

“Clearly, the most time consuming tasks for respondent-chairs might be characterized as the bureaucratic grind.”¹ These tasks involve the reading, data gathering, analyses, and writing required to respond to requests for information from other offices. Chairs must respond daily to emails, letters, memos, and phone calls. Writing reports was a close second in percent of time consumed, followed by reading administratively relevant material.¹ “Reading background material, policy documents and technical interpretations takes a great deal of time for chairs who typically do not have the administrative support staff that management personnel have to do the trench-work. This bureaucracy assumes a particular salience to professors who have mastered their own disciplines, but are very unfamiliar with these sorts of tasks (#1 to #3).”¹ Chairs have also alluded to the drudgery of the endless paperwork in their open-ended comments. One chair states, “It is way too much work, and it is mostly tedious and uninteresting.”¹

“The next set of tasks (#3 to #6) may be referred to as “the household routine”, that is, keeping the household operating.”¹ This includes tasks like staffing classes, scheduling rooms and classes, and managing the personnel needed to keep the department operational.¹

“Activities that seem to have little dedicated time are “boundary-spanning’ functions that require the chair to go outside of the department and build relationships with constituent groups of potential benefit to the department, college and/or university.”¹ Grant writing and scholarly activity are also low on the list of activities that consume the chairs’ time. “It is surprising that faculty development also falls in this category.”¹

D. Most Chair-Respondents Indicated That Their Workloads Have Increased During Their Terms

When chairs were asked if their workloads had increased, decreased, or stayed the same during their terms, seventy-nine percent of chairs indicated that their workloads had increased, and 50% of chairs indicated that there was no time to undertake creative activities or projects after the routine work was done (Table 7). Notable was the fact that 43% of chairs indicated that they spent two hours per day responding to “mail” (email, voice mail, traditional mail), and 29% and 12% indicated that they spent 3 hours and 4 hours per day, respectively, responding to “mail” (Table 8). Common themes in open-ended comments regarding workload were “more paperwork,” “more reports,” and “more assessment.”¹ The full list (3 pages) of open-ended comments is included in the CSU Chair Survey.¹

Table 7. Chairs’ perceptions of changes in workload

| “Your workload as chair has:” | % Respondents |
|---|----------------------|
| Decreased during your term/terms | 1.4 |
| Increased during your term/terms | 78.9 |
| Stayed about the same | 19.6 |

Table 8. Hours chairs spend responding to all types of mail

| “How many hours per day do you spend responding to email, voice mail, and traditional mail?” | % Respondents |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 hour or less | 9.2 |
| 2 hours | 42.6 |
| 3 hours | 29.1 |
| 4 hours | 12.5 |
| 5 hours | 3.5 |
| 6 hours | 1.2 |
| 7 hours | 0 |
| 8 or more hours | 1.9 |

As noted above, chairs also reported that scholarly activity did not take up a great deal of their time. Whether this is attributable to too little time available to engage in complex research and writing is unknown. Open-ended comments from the CSU Chair Survey indicate that at least some chairs would like to do more scholarly activity but cannot find the time.¹

V. Resources

What resources do chairs have to do their jobs? Do they have enough control over funding to implement departmental, college, and university goals and mandates? Do they have the authority “run” the department?

A. Most Chairs Have Little Control Over Their Budgets

“In the study of organizations, control of resources is very significant. The ability to acquire, allocate and conserve resources is a primary source of power.⁷ In the California State University, resources have been historically driven by FTES and the “Orange Book,” a set of formulas used for the allocation of money and other resources (such as the level of clerical help and justifiable facility square-footage) generated by enrollments, types of courses, and other similar measures of university output. With the budget constrictions of the early nineties, however, the CSU went off of this strictly formula-driven approach. And while the size of the overall “check” each campus received from the Office of the Chancellor may have diminished somewhat, the expenditure requirements were loosened to give campus administrators room to spend resources where they deemed necessary. With this decentralization from the central CSU to the campus central administration, however, the question remains as to whether decentralization of authority has reached the level of the department? How much control over monetary resources do chairs have?”¹

Dollar-Based Budgeting Responsibility? “In the CSU there have been two approaches to the management of resources----“dollar-based budgeting” and “position-based budgeting.” In position-based budgeting, departments are allocated this most valuable of all academic resources, faculty positions, as numbers of positions. The chair does not manage money in “position-based budgeting” and has little flexibility to redistribute resources to the department’s advantage. In dollar-based budgeting, chairs receive money for their department personnel needs. In this system, chairs typically may have more flexibility with their budgets since faculty status changes with unpaid leaves, research grant buy-outs of faculty time, and other buy-outs or reassignments. If a faculty member receives a research fellowship and takes an unpaid leave, the chair with authority to manage the personnel budget, may have \$50,000 or more to hire replacements for instruction, fund professional travel and development, fund research assistants, purchase much needed equipment, and for other productive uses.”¹

How many chairs are on dollar-based budgeting? “Only 39% of chairs who responded to the survey indicated that they were on dollar-based budgeting. Interestingly, 7% of department chairs were “Not Certain” as to the budgeting system used for their department.”¹ Only 25% of chairs indicated that they could reallocate dollars saved in faculty salaries for perceived departmental purposes, and only 19% of chairs indicated that they could reallocate dollars saved from the staff personnel budget. Only 30% of chairs indicated that they could roll-over money from year to year; fourteen percent of chairs said that they do not save faculty or staff dollars because they do not come back to the department (Table 9).¹

Table 9. Ability of chairs to use saved faculty and staff personnel dollars for other purposes.

“If you can save dollars from your faculty/staff personnel budget, are you permitted by your dean to reallocate dollars to fund professional development, travel, equipment, supplies, or other activities within the department?”

| Can you reallocate saved dollars? | From faculty personnel budget? | From staff personnel budget? |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Yes | 24.9 | 19.2 |
| No | 48.5 | 52.7 |
| Not certain | 12.3 | 14.4 |
| Not encouraged to save since money does not return to the department | 14.4 | 13.7 |

Travel Funds? “Looking at who allocates travel funds provides another perspective on the control chairs have over fiscal matters. Forty-two percent of chairs said that they allocate this money, while 39% reported that their dean does so, and 13% indicated that a faculty committee allocates travel funds. Thus, relative to this very important question of the support of faculty professional development, one-third of deans hold onto this authority and do not permit travel allocations to be done at the department level.”¹

“Based upon the information above, it is clear that relative to budget control, the decentralization of authority that was initiated in the nineties with respect to the individual campuses has not reached the level of the department for the majority in the CSU. This lack of authority over monetary resources is a sore point with chairs as evidenced by their written comments at the end of the Chair Survey.”¹

B. Chairs Are Frequently Outside of the Information Loop

“In order to effectively plan and manage their departments, chairs need timely information. One of every five respondents to the Chair Survey indicated that they were not provided with the most essential and basic information about their FTES targets to plan classes, numbers of sections and personnel hires.” One of the chair-respondents suggested that it is often the case that the chairs are the last to be informed and the first to be required to implement change. Another chair summed up the information flow to chairs as follows:

“The chair has the hardest job in the university. You get all the information from below (students, staff, and faculty), but only half (at best) the information from above.”¹

C. Many Chairs Believe Their Level of Authority Does Not Match Their Degree of Responsibility

Much of a chair’s role is to perform personnel functions. Chairs manage and evaluate staff and faculty. They help resolve personnel problems, and they participate in recruiting staff and faculty. Chairs also play a role in the retention, tenure, and promotion

of faculty. The open-ended comments below provided by respondents indicate that some chairs wish to have more authority over personnel as well as budget (Table 10).¹

Table 10: Comments by department chairs about their authority. Numbers at the end of comments represent campuses

| <i>Open-Ended Comments by Department Chairs about their Authority</i> |
|---|
| • I am adamantly opposed to making the position a strictly administrative one. I believe the system of qualified interested faculty, serving as chair, is excellent. 1 |
| • Chairs of large departments need to be removed from the faculty and designated as management in order to function effectively. 1 |
| • It seems like there is more “top down” micromanagement and less real authority over faculty members. Chairs should be appointed rather than elected. 2 |
| • All chairs in the CSU system should be given authority equivalent to responsibility. 3 |
| • Chairs have the responsibility to manage the department, but they have no real authority over other faculty members. Chairs should be appointed rather than elected. 3 |
| • As long as chairs are part of the bargaining unit, the job will be political and unrewarding. 4 |
| • Chairs need to have the status of administrator. 4 |
| • Department chairs are powerless. 5 |
| • A lot of responsibility and no authority summarize the situation for chairs at our University. 6 |
| • This is a powerless position. 6 |
| • There should be more access to the Provost to counter and/or open a different point of view than that given by the Dean. 5 |
| • Three-year rotating “citizen soldiers” chair terms in which everyone takes a turn is an insane idea. Not everyone is cut out to be an effective chair, and existing in an administrative/faculty appointment limbo undermines chair authority and confidence. 7 |
| • Too little authority. The department chair should not be a rotating member of the faculty. 8 |
| • The department chair has no authority at all to run his/her department. 9 |
| • The chair’s position is a liminal one, not quite faculty and not quite administrative. We chairs have to practice “influencing without authority.” 10 |
| • It is a thankless job of total responsibility without the power to implement. I guess that’s how administration keeps chairs under control. We are a great buffer for blame. 11 |
| • Chairs in my experience shuffle a great deal of paper, have very little real authority, and are the first in line when criticism or abuse seeks an outlet. 12 |
| • I find it a thankless, frustrating role because we cannot do very much given both the lack of resources and administrative indifference. 12 |
| • At our university, chairs have no real authority. 13 |
| • The CSU has no intention in true faculty input or governance; therefore they give chairs no respect or authority. They want chairs to be very weak junior administrators. 14 |

Plainly, many chairs feel that they lack the authority to effectively run their departments. Lucas proposes that “there are three kinds of power [or authority] through which chairs can motivate faculty: position power [authority], personal power, and expert power.” “Position authority” comes automatically with a defined leadership position⁸ and is a function of the respect that the position carries and the resources and authority associated with the position. The responses of many of the CSU chair-respondents indicate that they feel they have little “position authority.” Few resources come with the chair's position, and they have little authority over faculty members and little control over the resources they have. “Control over resources enhances position authority; the more resources a chair can manage, the more the chair can support productive faculty members

and guide the direction of faculty activity towards one that supports the departmental mission---the more the chair can give the faculty members what they need to do a good job.”¹

Lucas suggests that "personal power [authority] comes from several different sources," including charisma, respect from those outside the department, the ability to influence the dean, dealing equitably with faculty, and being respected in one's academic discipline.⁸ She also suggests that both the chair and the university can enhance the chair's personal authority. The dean and the university administration can increase a chair's personal authority by publicly valuing chairs and acknowledging their contribution to the university.⁸ University administrators can also enhance the personal authority of chairs by keeping them in the information loop. Having access to information adds to the chair's ability to keep the faculty informed and to plan ahead; it also gives the chair more credibility with the faculty.

VI. Rewards and Reasons to Serve Additional Terms

For most chairs, the reasons for serving and rewards derived from the job were not monetary.

Responses to the Chair Survey suggest that about 40% of recent past chairs served only one term and only 30% served more than two terms. What motivates chairs to serve at all and to serve multiple terms? What do they see as their rewards?

A. Rewards and Reasons Other Than Monetary

For most chairs, the reasons for serving their first terms, and the rewards they derived from the job, were not monetary. The most prevalent reason that individuals chose for deciding to serve as chair was “I wanted to help lead my department.” Seventy-one percent of respondents selected this reason as very relevant. The next closest choice, “No one else was willing to do it” was deemed very relevant by 35% of chairs.

To assess rewards, chairs were asked for reasons that would be important in a decision to serve additional terms. The three top choices (indicated as “somewhat to very important”) were:

- I want to help lead my department (86% of respondents),
- I feel valued and respected by my department (79% of respondents), and
- My department asked me to continue as chair (75% of respondents).¹

Distinctly, feeling valued and having the ability to lead are significant rewards for chairs and should be taken into consideration in any attempt to increase their rewards or motivate them to serve longer. As noted previously, many chairs commented that their ability to lead was hampered by their lack of control over resources and their lack of authority.¹

Chairs also provided insights about non-monetary rewards in their open-ended comments, some indicating that there were no rewards for serving as chair, and others indicating that the only reward was the personal satisfaction of making a difference. Selected comments about rewards follow.¹

- Rewards are the students "walking" each Spring and seeing faculty succeed
- What I enjoy most is getting to work on "big picture" projects
- You have to be intrinsically motivated
- The level of expectations is out of control, and the rewards are minimal. At this point, I do it only for my faculty.
- The greatest satisfaction comes from helping colleagues reach their goals and aspirations, and helping junior faculty through RTP.

B. Monetary Reasons and Rewards

Pay becomes a more significant factor in the willingness of chairs to serve additional terms.

For the majority of chairs who responded to the survey, the extra chair's pay was not relevant to their initial willingness to serve as chair. However, when asked what would motivate them to serve additional terms, additional pay became a more significant factor. When asked how much additional pay would motivate them to serve additional terms, 38% of chairs indicated \$500 per month on top of their normal faculty salary, 26% indicated \$1000 per month above their normal salary, and 20% indicated that no additional amount would motivate them to serve additional terms. Only 5% of chairs indicated that the current, approximately \$100 per month extra pay would motivate them to serve additional terms.¹

In the open-ended comments at the end of the survey, many chairs expressed disappointment and anger about the recent salary increase that only applied to administrative time and that was given only to academic year chairs. Further, many stated that the additional chair's pay, including the recent increase, was insufficient and did not "come close" to matching the increased demands of the position.¹

VII. Reasons for Not Wanting to Serve Additional Terms

When chairs were asked about reasons for not wanting to continue as chair, the top five reasons, ranked by percentage of chairs who chose them as "important or somewhat important" were:

- The workload is too heavy
- I miss teaching and or scholarly activity
- I have too little authority and too much responsibility
- After the basic tasks are done, there is no time to advance new programs or engage in creative management
- The extra pay is not commensurate with the extra responsibility

VIII. Variability Among Campuses

The results of the Chair Survey highlight significant variability among CSU campuses in parameters of appointment and other conditions of service. This variability has been mentioned throughout this report, but is worthy of further comment. Most notable is the length of the chair's contract, which ranges from 100% of chairs having 12-month contracts on one campus to 0% of chairs with 12-month contracts on other campuses. Similar variability exists in percent of appointment, amount of professional development before assuming the role of chair, turn-over rate of chairs, perceived support from deans, how frequently chairs are reviewed, how much chairs know about appointment policies, and decentralization of the budget, as well as other parameters.

IX. CSU Chairs' Recommendations for Best Practices for Leading an Academic Department

At the end of the Chair Survey, chairs were asked to share best practices for leading an academic department. A few of their recommendations follow (Table 11). An extensive list can be found in the CSU Chair Survey.¹

Table 11. CSU chairs' recommendations for best practices of department chairs

| <i>Comments</i> |
|--|
| 1. Faculty must have ownership of the department. Decisions made without the faculty led to failures. |
| 2. Lead the faculty, rather than police them. |
| 3. Consult with the department faculty in everything. |
| 4. Praise often and criticize rarely. |
| 5. Open up the budget process and decision making to all interested faculty. |
| 6. Continually consult with the faculty in the department. Act only on their certification and try to get unanimity. |
| 7. Regularly share university, college, and department information with faculty. |
| 8. Have a department retreat at the beginning of each year. |
| 9. Establish concise, detailed responsibilities and authority before you accept the position. Insure your appointment letter states to whom you report and when. |
| 10. Share decision making with department faculty. |
| 11. Be honest and open about resources, issues, and biases; many problems can be solved if there are open discussions. |
| 12. Have the chair election one year before the incumbent leaves office so the new chair can have a yearlong orientation. |
| 13. An email list to all majors has been a great improvement in communication with students. |
| 14. Walk around and chat with faculty informally, talk to students in the hall. |
| 15. Ask experienced chairs about difficult problems. |
| 16. Listen more than you talk. |
| 17. Create a departmental e-news letter in which you can highlight faculty achievements. |
| 18. Be organized and make expectations clear. |
| 19. Be honest with everyone. Never give an answer until everyone understands the question. |
| 20. Ability to roll forward salary dollars allows use of salary savings for departmental development. |
| 21. Empower office staff to initiate projects they can complete. Learn to delegate. |
| 22. Provide faculty with opportunities to share teaching techniques. |
| 23. Once a faculty member's RTP review is written, the committee meets with the faculty member. |
| 24. Meet with individual faculty members and ask them what their goals are for the department and what their personal professional goals are. |

Recommendations for Best Practices for Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Rewards for Department Chairs.

The Task Force on Roles and Responsibilities of Chairs recommends that:

- 1) each campus establish a committee on the “status of chairs” to develop an action plan to address the findings of the CSU Chair Survey and home campus surveys and the recommendations of the Task Force. The Task Force recommends that this committee report annually on its progress to the campus senate and representatives designated by the Statewide Senate.
- 2) the Academic Senate, CSU, the office of the chancellor, campus presidents, and academic vice presidents discuss and address the findings of the CSU Department Chair Survey and home campus surveys and the recommendations of the Task Force.

Further, the Task Force makes the following additional observations and recommendations:

Campuses need to give chairs the resources they require to be effective leaders.

- **Campuses should give chairs more authority/control over financial and other departmental resources.** Chairs should have dollar-based budgets, should be able to roll funds forward from year to year, and should be able to use saved dollars to best benefit their departments.
- **Campuses and the CSU should provide chairs with more training prior to and after they assume the role of chair.** Campuses should provide chairs with more opportunities, resources, and time to attend campus, CSU-supported, and other professional development workshops.
- **Campuses should give chairs more access to the information required to effectively run their departments, including FTES targets and budgetary information.** The university administration should keep chairs in the same information loop as the deans.

Campuses and the CSU should treat chairs equitably regarding their conditions of appointment.

- **Campuses should give all chairs the option of 12-month appointments or establish a mechanism for compensating chairs for unpaid days worked.^b**
- **Campuses should establish an advisory committee to review the means used to determine the percent of administrative appointment and the length of the chair’s contract to:**
 - ✓ Establish a formula or procedure that best represents the current workload of chairs
 - ✓ Achieve equity among chairs on a single campus and ultimately promote equity across the CSU^b

At a minimum the formula should take into account total FTEF (including part-time faculty and teaching associates), FTES, number of majors, and number of staff.

- **Campuses should provide chairs with job descriptions and other details of their appointments so they are fully informed of what is expected of them before they assume their roles.**
- **Campuses should have reasonable expectations of chairs given the amount of time and resources they have available to them.**
- **Campuses should review the tasks that chairs are expected to perform to assure that they are appropriate and manageable within the constraints of the chair's administrative appointment.**
- **Campuses should evaluate and reward chairs based on their job descriptions.** Campuses should evaluate chairs annually based on clear performance objectives and reward chairs based on their job descriptions, not on the traditional parameters used to evaluate faculty.

The compensation for chairs should match the demands of the position.

- **The CSU and CFA should review the appropriateness of current levels of compensation for 12-month and academic year chairs and bargain compensation that rewards chairs according to their true administrative workload.^b**

Too much of the chair's time is squandered on routine administrative functions (the "bureaucratic grind"). Campuses should provide chairs with time to undertake creative management or other significant creative activities.

- **A campus committee should analyze the workload of chairs and make recommendations to reduce or redistribute it to allow chairs more time for creative activity.** Recommendations should be shared among campuses within the CSU.^b
- **Campuses should reroute or reduce the bureaucratic paperwork.**
- **Campuses and the CSU should provide chairs with assigned time to allow chairs to undertake creative management or other creative activities that would benefit their departments.**
- **Campuses should consider diverting some of the routine workload of chairs to clerical personnel.**

Communication among chairs should be facilitated.

- **Local campus chairs across colleges should meet at least semi-annually.**
- **CSU chairs within disciplines should meet at least annually.**
- **The CSU should sponsor an annual conference for chairs.**
Through this conference, the CSU can provide a forum for chairs to communicate with one another about what they do and how they do it. Time

can be provided for meetings among chairs within disciplines and for sessions that deal with issues that chairs would like to address.

- **CSU department chairs should consider establishing a list-serve of all CSU chairs or CSU chairs within disciplines**

Other recommendations

- **The Senate or CSU should conduct a survey of CSU deans, similar to the Chair Survey, which includes questions about how deans manage chairs and what deans think are best practices for chairs.**
- **Campuses should educate faculty about the roles and responsibilities of contemporary chairs, both to recruit qualified faculty into the position and to enhance understanding of what chairs do.**

Superscript: b. May be subject to collective bargaining

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