

Expectations for Arts and Sciences Chairs and Program Coordinators/Directors M. Wood, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, August 2009

This list, first created by Don Christian, summarizes what I would ask of department chairs in their approaches to our shared work. To Don's expectations I have added steps I promise to take in turn to help this all happen as well as possible.

1. Help me establish communication, collaboration, and cooperation as the dominant approach in our working relationships. I hope that interactions between the Dean and Chairs can set a positive standard for collegiality that others will model.

My pledge: You come first in my communication priorities. If pressed for time, I will read and answer your emails sooner than any others. I will also alert you to significant issues brought to me from members of your department if I sense that you're being bypassed.

2. Help me understand how you and your faculty do the work of your department, and the needs, challenges, and opportunities in your programs. I continue to make every effort to learn as much as possible about your disciplines and departments, but I need to rely heavily on you, on an ongoing basis, to educate me about the specifics of your department's situation.

My pledge: I will offer you as much insight as I can into the operations of this college office and of upper administration in general.

3. Keep me informed of accomplishments of faculty, staff, and students in your department. To be most effective at leading the college and advocating for your department and the discipline(s) it represents, I need to know about these "bragging points." Faculty members are sometimes reluctant to let administrators know of major achievements, so I'm relying on you to help keep me in the loop.

My pledge: I will pass on to any good news I hear about you and your colleagues from whatever source – alumni, other colleges, UW System, and so on. If I send congratulatory notes to individual members of your department, I will cc you.

4. Invite me to events and activities where I can meet and get to know your students and faculty and learn more about what they do. Obviously, I cannot attend every event but will participate to the extent possible. I am happy to say a few words at such events and can do so impromptu if need be, but would prefer advance notice; I also am happy just to attend and speak with people individually and informally.

My pledge: I will be on the lookout for opportunities to build camaraderie through public or semipublic events and social gatherings. And, while I will meet with individual faculty members at their request, I will always try to find ways to support and underscore your authority as chairs.

5. Be a leader — in your department or program, the College, and the University — in helping UW-Eau Claire become the diverse and inclusive institution that we seek to be, as framed in the values statement in the University's Centennial Plan. Recognize that this must be one of our greatest priorities now and in the future.

My pledge: I feel a deep personal commitment to and engagement in issues of equity, diversity, and inclusivity, broadly and narrowly construed. We cannot do enough to ensure that new and different voices are not simply welcomed but are fundamentally present in our ongoing conversations.

6. Help faculty and staff in your department/program sustain high standards and expectations for

departmental, student, and faculty achievement. I am very proud of the caliber of our academic programs and the tremendous dedication and work of faculty, chairs, and staff. But no matter how good we are, an ongoing push for increasing quality and standards is essential to sustaining the vitality of our academic programs, and this effort needs to originate with the faculty.

My pledge: I will pursue a broad, balanced, healthy understanding of what constitutes high achievement.

7. Evaluate probationary faculty frankly and honestly, providing specific examples when discussing both strengths and weaknesses. Identify and document deficiencies in performance and suggest remedies. Encourage your DPC to do the same. As we all know, a core principle of fair treatment of pre-tenure faculty, like all employees, is that they receive honest feedback and have an opportunity to rectify problems. In the unfortunate and rare instance where the response of a faculty member to such feedback proves inadequate, it is essential that performance issues have been documented clearly. I am confident that I share your goals of advancing our university by building the best faculty possible, while assuring that we treat individuals fairly. I cannot advance these goals if significant concerns about faculty performance are camouflaged at the departmental level.

My pledge: I will not play “gotcha.” I will view early- and mid-probation performance reviews as formative. I will also welcome direct, constructive criticism from any of you regarding any aspect of the performance of the Dean’s office.

8. Recognize that, while not every problem needs to be addressed by you or me, some small problems become big ones if not addressed. I am glad to consult with you informally to offer perspective or suggestions on such issues, to plot strategy, or to intervene if that is helpful.

My pledge: I will respond to serious issues (particularly in personnel or collegiality matters) with more energy and resources when I know of them sooner rather than later.

9. Advocate strongly with me for your program and its needs. At the same time, please recognize that a) resource limitations will mean that I cannot say “yes” to everything you ask for, and b) you and your program are part of a larger collegiate effort with many important parts, all of which I share responsibility for advancing.

My pledge: I will be candid and direct with you about which initiatives I can support, and to what extent, in the context of competing needs. I will try to respond sooner rather than later so that you can plan with confidence.

10. Be fiscally responsible. The Dean’s office certainly is willing to partner with departments to address budgetary issues and problems as much as possible, and if necessary to lead in efforts to secure funding from other quarters. Obviously, I prefer to plan rather than respond in mid-crisis.

My pledge: As long as I have specific and accurate understanding of the plans you hope to undertake, I will support the efforts for which I promise support, or let you know in advance if exigencies threaten to compromise what I’ve promised.

11. Recognize constraints in collegiate and institutional budgets. Help me dispel the common faculty myth that deans always have a hidden pot of money somewhere. My job is not to hoard money but to spend it in ways that best advance our programs, while assuring that we remain solvent.

My pledge: Now that, relatively speaking, our budget is worse than ever, I will try my best to secure more resources for the College and its departments and programs. Meanwhile, good or bad, I will give you all the information I have about what we can count on in the days ahead.

12. Help me establish an agenda for the college by bringing forth your and your faculty/staff's ideas for change. I have absolutely no proprietary sense about the origin of good ideas that we decide to pursue.

My pledge: This office commits to embracing and implementing new ideas.

13. Serve as a key communication link between the Dean's office and your departmental faculty and staff. While I am sure that you will exercise discretion in which of my communications you forward to departmental members, recognize that I rely on you to keep them informed of key elements of our discussions in Chairs Council, policy changes and updates, and other matters.

My pledge: I will leave most communication decisions in your hands, trusting that transparency works best when it works in both directions.

14. Be a model for adhering to established procedures and policies. Continue to let me know when these impede goals and progress so that we can seek legitimate alternatives.

My pledge: I will not let others cut corners at your expense.

15. Be a colleague to other chairs. Your collective knowledge, understanding, and insight are tremendous resources that should be shared with each other, especially new chairs.

My pledge: I will assist in this process – just let me know.

16. Be attentive to the common goals and shared values that (should) unite us as a College of Arts and Sciences. I am committed to working with each of you to advance your separate departments and disciplines. At the same time I continue working to increase the cohesiveness of the College of Arts and Sciences as an identifiable academic unit within the University.

My pledge: I promise to work to make us stronger collectively, which makes us stronger individually too.

17. Recognize and appreciate that the different departments and programs within the college have different goals, issues, needs, and models of operating, because of differences in disciplines, the nature of opportunities, and other factors. A "one-size-fits-all" approach will not work for a diverse arts and sciences college.

My pledge: If I know of your specific contextual needs I will honor them.

18. Express concerns or criticisms about my actions or performance to me rather than to others. The most helpful feedback includes suggestions for how I might improve or do things differently.

My pledge: You have my permission – and encouragement – to speak freely when we speak confidentially.

19. Review on a regular basis the position description for Department Chairs to remind yourself of the leadership roles and expectations and management responsibilities it outlines.

My pledge: I will do everything I can to foster your development as a colleague and a leader.