

Administration of Academic Units

Original Implementation: March 7, 1978

Last Revision: January 31, 2017

The unit head is the chief executive of an academic department/division/school (hereafter referred to as “academic unit” or “unit”).

Responsibilities of the Unit Head

The primary responsibilities of the unit head are to establish and maintain a climate conducive to the pursuit of knowledge. The decisions of the unit head should be made and implemented in the context of collegiality and regular communication with the faculty. More specifically, the administrative responsibilities of a unit head include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide leadership in the establishment of a visionary direction and the maintenance of standards for the academic unit, consistent with college and university missions;
- Serve as the principal advocate for the unit and as an advocate for the college and university missions;
- Ensure quality through evaluation, modification, and development of academic programs;
- Respond to the needs of students, faculty, administration, the public, and others;
- Manage and allocate fiscal and physical resources of the unit;
- Establish, maintain, and communicate effective personnel procedures and processes; and
- Promote the academic unit externally.

Selection of the Academic Unit Head

1. A search and screening committee shall be used in each search for an academic unit head. The dean of the college shall meet with the faculty of the academic unit prior to the selection of the screening committee and will determine whether a search should be open or closed to outside candidates.
2. The committee shall be formed by the dean of the college in consultation with the faculty of the academic unit and with the approval of the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The committee shall have an odd number of members, with at least five members. The committee may be larger depending on the size and complexity of the unit’s programs.
3. Every committee shall have representation from outside the academic unit and at least one member with appropriate administrative experience. Outside representatives shall be appointed by the dean after considering recommendations by the faculty.
4. Once the size of the committee is established, the faculty shall elect its specified number of representatives to the committee. Faculty members eligible to vote shall hold faculty rank of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, professor, or librarian I-IV in the academic unit. When possible, all tenure-track ranks will be represented on the committee. In all cases, the faculty shall elect a majority of the committee.
5. The dean shall convene the committee for its organizational meeting at which time the committee shall elect its chair and other officers. The committee chair shall inform the faculty of the names of the committee members.

6. At least three candidates should be brought to campus for interviews. Each visit shall provide opportunity for the candidates to meet faculty, students, the dean of the college, the provost and vice president for academic affairs, and the committee.
7. Following the interviews, the committee shall invite comments from all faculty, staff, and students who were involved in the campus visits. The committee shall forward a recommendation to the dean along with a summary of comments. The dean, in turn, shall forward a recommendation to the provost and vice president for academic affairs that is accompanied by all previous recommendations and summaries.
8. The provost and vice president for academic affairs shall make the appointment for an indeterminate term, subject to approval by the president and the Board of Regents.

Evaluation of the Academic Unit Head

The evaluation of the academic unit heads is designed to promote academic excellence throughout the university. This process takes two forms: periodic reviews by the academic unit faculty and annual reviews by the dean. The annual review provides the basis upon which to award merit to unit heads.

1. The unit head shall be evaluated annually by the dean of the college and a recommendation for merit shall be forwarded to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. In making an evaluation, the dean shall consider the responsibilities of the unit head as stated above, while any additional criteria shall be communicated to the unit heads in advance of the evaluation period.
2. At least once every three years, the unit head's performance shall be evaluated by the faculty of the academic unit. A summation of the faculty's evaluations of the unit head shall be included as a component of the final evaluation report. Following the faculty's evaluation, the dean shall meet with the unit to discuss the unit head's performance.
3. The evaluation of a unit head may be initiated at any time by a majority of the faculty or at the call of the unit head, dean, provost and vice president of academic affairs, or president. Comments which may have been received relative to the unit head's performance and the advisability of retention should be carefully weighed for both the annual and triennial reviews.
4. The dean shall review with the unit head the results of each evaluation. A report of the evaluation and any recommendations shall be submitted to the provost and vice president for academic affairs.
5. The unit head shall have ten (10) working days from the date of the review to submit to the provost and vice president for academic affairs a written response to the dean's report.

Merit for Academic Unit Heads

Merit pay for unit heads should be based on performance in administration, teaching, creative/scholarly activity, and service. The dean shall submit a recommendation on each unit head in the college to the provost and vice president for academic affairs for merit consideration.

Teaching Load for Academic Unit Heads

The teaching load of academic unit heads is determined annually by the college dean in consultation with the academic unit head based on the changing needs and objectives of the unit. Factors such as number of faculty (full-time equivalent [FTE]), number of majors, and complexity of the unit are considered in determining the teaching load of the unit head for the full contract year (September 1 through August 31).

Cross Reference: Faculty Handbook, Faculty Merit Pay (7.6)

Responsible for Implementation: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Contact for Revision: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms: Department Chair Administrative Effectiveness Appraisal

Board Committee Assignment: Academic and Student Affairs