

Notes from AAG Healthy Departments Workshop: 20-22 June 2004

Session I: Leaders Panel

Duane Nellis: Provost, Kansas State University; Past President, AAG

- Key is to position your department so that you can take advantage of opportunities and transformations
- With respect to university funding...
 - 46 states cut their higher education budgets last year
 - in West Virginia: state support has declined from 37% of the budget to 27%
 - universities are changing from “state supported” to “state assisted” to “state located”
 - universities need to become more entrepreneurial (e.g., with summer session budgets dependant on enrollments)
- More emphasis is being placed by universities on performance
 - Credit hour production, degrees awarded, grants & contracts, etc.
 - Assessment is important: for accreditation, redesigning curriculum
- Opportunities
 - In technology: GIS, personal response systems in the classroom
 - Alumni relations: annual letter with solicitations for gifts, bring alumni to campus for career fairs, reunions
 - Develop specializations in departments: tied to local place
 - Align yourself with other programs, general education programs
 - Have faculty participate in university governance: e.g., Faculty Senate
 - Exert strong leadership
 - Essential to promote atmosphere of collegiality
 - Don't waste time & effort whining about problems, exert a “can-do” attitude
 - Exert effort to recruit students
 - Communicate with the dean and provost
- Promote/nominate faculty and students for college and university level awards
- Post news of grants and external recognition

Risa Palm: executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, Louisiana State University

- Key is to align department goals with university goals
 - Difficult sometimes with frequent turn-over of university presidents, provosts, deans
 - Listen to your administrators; make friends with them
 - Research their history at their previous institutions
 - Administrators need to brag to higher levels (incl. regents): provide them with positive news about your department
- Familiarize yourself with expectations of donors
- Minimize jealousy among department faculty

Alec Murphy: Professor (former Dept. Chair), University of Oregon; AAG President

- Strategies for being a good department head
 - Facilitate as much communication as possible (“transparency”)
 - Need to explain why decisions were made
 - Encourage faculty to talk to each other about what they are doing

- Make faculty feel valued
- Schedule weekly seminars: begin each with announcements that highlight successes of students and faculty
- Criteria for tenure & promotion must be made clear
- Strategies for moving the department forward
 - Enlightened opportunism
 - Develop a larger vision for the department; don't become bogged-down in day-to-day tasks
 - Help administrators move the university forward
 - Position the department at the core of the university's strategy
 - Work with other departments to make your courses appealing (or required) for other degree programs
 - Develop "signature projects" (e.g., Atlas of Oregon)
- Role of the AAG
 - Can visit with deans BEFORE the department is in trouble

David Hodge: Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, University of Washington

- Department needs to be aware of (and then react to) community, state, regional, local issues
- Universities are moving to external evaluation
- Department chair needs to help faculty see their "place" on campus
- Deans and provosts are moving toward an "investment model"
 - Departments are no longer "entitled" to receive university resources
 - Departments need to explain what they are doing to deserve these resources
 - Need to demonstrate that department has a vision that is consistent with the university's vision
 - "Strategic Optimism;" create a "culture of possibility"
 - "Defending turf" will cause department to LOSE credibility
 - To request university resources, departments must...
 - Stick with their mission
 - Commit some of their own resources
 - Be persistent (may not get request the first time)
 - Be well-connected with the rest of the university, community, alumni
- Successful department
 - Communication: able to communicate WHY you are taking actions
 - Promotion: selective, focused; be able to explain how parts of department fit together to work in effective ways
 - Get another department chair to be your ally
 - Departments "at war" with each other or with dean will not get rewards
 - At times of budget cuts, departments act in different ways: must adopt attitude "no matter what, we will advance"
 - Expectations for reappointment, tenure and promotion need to be communicated
 - All faculty must promote the successes of others

Jennifer Zorn: Assoc. Provost for Academic Programs, Calif. State Univ. San Bernardino

- Recommend that new department chairs participate in 2-3 day long workshop for new chairs offered in July each year by Council of Colleges of Arts & Sciences: see their website at www.CCAS.net
- Effective department chairs
 - Able to separate short-term "fads" of university presidents from longer-term vision
 - Able to explain to faculty how they fit into university mission

- Look for ways to tap into university and college level pools of money (“pick the “low hanging fruit”)
- Encourage faculty to participate in university budget committees
- Able and willing to use the talents of faculty for fund-raising, department newsletters, K-12 links
- Provide dean, provost and president with material they can use for bragging about your department
- Give tours to new faculty (from all depts.) as a favor to the dean, provost, president
- Look-up alumni when visiting other cities and host a reception
 - Treat emeritus faculty well
- Nominate faculty, staff and students for awards
- Avoid a steady stream of complaints to dean by faculty, staff, students
- Don't drop admission standards too low: problems are created by admitting too many marginal students
- Link geography with other programs on campus: environmental studies, global/international studies, regional studies, etc.
- Look for opportunities for new faculty lines that can be housed in geography but linked with other programs

Session II: Development and Fund Raising

Risa Palm

- I was able to raise \$142 million in 6 years at the Univ. of North Carolina for A&S College
- If a capitol campaign is on-going at university or college level: need to figure-out how department goals fit in
- Must target top donors
 - Sell them on your “passion for geography” and link interests of alums to that
 - Don't rely on tear-off items at bottom of newsletter: only lead to small gifts
- Telethon: main purpose is to identify major donors (rather than to raise money right then and there)
- Cultivate a relationship with major donors: adopt the attitude that you are doing them a “favor” by allowing them to honor somebody

Dave Hodge

- Your biggest asset is your passion for geography
- Fundraising is part of academic planning
 - Academic goals do NOT drive fundraising effort
 - Need to identify priorities: be ready to state your top 5 priorities (at different levels of giving)
- Remembers that alums love their university and most identify with their department
- Ask for help from development people on campus and from colleagues to identify potential donors and develop a relationship with those potential donors: it may take 10-12 contacts before they are ready to write a check
- Using a newsletter with a tear-off will Not generate large donations, but will help generate a “buzz” about the program
- Identify and advertise the use of gifts of \$500, \$5000 and \$500,000
- Write a personal note to donors at the bottom of letters and newsletters
- “If you want money, ask alumni for advice; if you want advice, ask alumni for money”
- use alumni surveys to help identify funding priorities

Jenny Zorn

- Need to listen to donors about THEIR priorities
- Avoid too many contacts of same donor from different entities on campus
- Develop a plan for follow-up contacts
- Be wary of “strings” attached to gifts
- Stay in touch with alums
- Use department and university logos in your correspondence

Alec Murphy

- Building relationships with alumni is enjoyable
- University of Oregon Geography Dept. newsletter is provided to you
- Key really is imparting the passion for what you do
- Track your undergraduates after they leave: they comprise the greatest number of potential donors
 - Put a focus in the newsletter about the number of majors and what you are doing for them
 - Organize an undergraduate research symposium: invite alumni
 - Invite alumni to department social events, study abroad experiences, alumni banquet
- Create a culture among current undergraduate students that giving-back is normal
- Provide the media on/off campus with interesting articles

Suggestions from Workshop Participants for Future “Healthy Departments” Workshops

- Attracting and retaining majors and graduate students
- How to deal with difficult people in your department
- If geography is merged with another program: how to maintain identity of geography while sharing resources; how to evolve over time