



**Missouri State**<sup>™</sup>  
U N I V E R S I T Y

**Academic Department Heads and  
School Directors Manual**

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## **Department Heads and School Directors**

The primary roles of Department Heads and School Directors are described in Section 1.5.1.5.6 of the *Faculty Handbook*. Primarily, Heads and Directors have administrative responsibility for their department/school. This section of the *Faculty Handbook* also states a School involves the same status, responsibilities, and benefits as an academic department.

Following the spirit of this section in the *Faculty Handbook*, this manual uses the term “Head” to represent both a Department Head and a School Director, and “department” to represent both a department and/or school.

It is essential Heads are familiar with Section 12 of the *Faculty Handbook*, which describes various policies effecting the Department Head/School Director position. Material in this manual reflects the principles contained in this section of the *Handbook*.

## **I. The Role of Department Heads and School Directors**

### **A. Department Leaders**

The Head must be both a manager and leader with vision. He or she is responsible for marshalling the energies of the entire department to achieve its stated goals and objectives. As both manager and leader, the Head serves as the liaison between the department and the College Dean, representing the needs and expectations of each to the other. The Head guides the department in planning for the future within parameters of the goals and objectives developed by their College, the Office of the Provost, and the University.

Heads must recognize the talent of the department faculty and be committed to working with them as colleagues. The Head motivates department faculty members to focus on undertakings that contribute to the department, college, and university long-range interests. The Head also insures the faculty support collective department and college goals, striving for congruence between these goals and the overall institutional mission and strategic plan. The Head must effectively represent the department to the university community, and bring the institutional priorities to the department faculty.

Heads have authority on department operations and work with faculty to prepare strategic plans, as well as annual reports describing faculty, program, and department activities/initiatives. The Head makes final decisions at the department level on such matters as operating budget allocations, individual faculty teaching assignments, course offerings, assignment of non-teaching responsibilities within the department, and candidate recommendations for faculty and staff positions, among other decisions. The Head also must deal effectively with personnel issues. For example, in the event a department member does not meet performance expectations or contribute in a positive and collegial manner to the work of the department, the Head must work with the Dean to determine and implement appropriate corrective action. These actions should be guided by relevant sections in the Missouri State University *Faculty Handbook* for issues involving faculty members, and the *Employee Handbook* for staff matters.

### **B. General Operations**

As manager, the Head is responsible for working on behalf of the department's best interests within the parameters of department, college, and university missions, goals, and strategies. The Head works with faculty and staff in an attempt to achieve consensus on decisions facing the department while respecting and representing the goals of the department, college, and university.

While specific expectations of Heads vary from department to department, many responsibilities are common and include:

- ✓ administering the department's academic program;
- ✓ recruiting and supervising faculty while aiding in their professional development;
- ✓ upholding standards of professional integrity and ethics;
- ✓ overseeing student recruitment, retention, and academic advisement;
- ✓ hiring and supervising support personnel;
- ✓ maintaining department facilities and equipment;
- ✓ planning and administering department budgets;
- ✓ participating in outreach activities;
- ✓ participating in administrative meetings;
- ✓ working with the Dean to advance the mission of the department, college, and university;
- ✓ performing other duties assigned by the Dean.

The Head may delegate many of these duties and responsibilities, but has ultimate accountability for implementation and outcomes.

### **C. Budgetary Responsibilities**

Heads are responsible for (1) planning the department budget, (2) leading and supporting efforts to acquire external funds, and (3) monitoring and assessing the budget.

#### **1. Planning the Departmental Budget**

As administrator of the department budget, the Head works closely with the Dean developing a comprehensive and coordinated budget plan. Effective budget planning requires:

- ✓ understanding all department accounts, including their history, current status, appropriate use, and relationship to other accounts;
- ✓ recognizing university and college budget priorities and supporting rationales;
- ✓ overseeing budget operations, meeting deadlines, and maintaining records;
- ✓ establishing and serving as a strong advocate for department budget priorities in collaboration with the Dean and in consultation with faculty and staff;
- ✓ organizing specific procedures for monitoring the department budget on a continuous basis;
- ✓ communicating plans, potential reallocations, progress, problems, needs, and related issues to the Dean and faculty/staff as appropriate;
- ✓ monitoring the program budgets in the department.

## **2. Acquiring External Funds**

Heads must be proactive leaders in acquiring necessary funds to execute the mission of the unit, namely serving student constituencies. Heads do not assume a reactive posture by relying entirely on the annual and supplementary funding allocations from the Dean. Working within the university funding structure and with appropriate administrators (i.e. College Director of Development) and faculty, Heads develop strategies to acquire external funds from alumni, external grants, as well as public and private foundations. Heads promote appropriate fund-raising activities in coordination with the Dean and the Director of Development. Heads are proactive in acquiring funds from the many support systems within the university, such as faculty development programs, international travel funds, mission enhancement monies, and other targeted resources from campus-based programs.

## **3. Monitoring and Assessing the Budget**

Heads insure a precise and timely record-keeping process at the department level. Budget categories should not be overspent. Secretaries and other staff dealing with budget transactions need to be thoroughly trained and carefully supervised by the Head. Contingency plans must be developed to maintain smooth operations during times when the primary budget person is away from the department. Heads should involve faculty, as appropriate, in the budgeting and monitoring process.

There are various additional budgetary factors for Heads to consider, such as how much of the department annual budget to hold in reserve, which monies can be reallocated and/or shifted to other accounts, along with university and college policies/procedures for carrying-over funds from one fiscal year to the next. Heads need to develop specific plans for the reallocation of funding in budgetary categories as department needs change from one fiscal year to the next.

Heads continuously assess the effectiveness and efficiency of their financial operations and use these assessments for improvement. Both bottom-line outcomes and operational procedures producing these outcomes need to be assessed. The ultimate objective for the Head is maximizing the effective use of all resources for serving students, supporting faculty, and enhancing programs.

### **D. Relation to Department Faculty and Staff**

The Head is expected to provide leadership and maintain appropriate involvement in all personnel actions in the department. In this process, Heads must follow appropriate policies in the *Faculty Handbook*, for faculty issues, or *Employee Handbook*, for staff matters. Faculty recruitment,

retention, tenure, evaluation, promotion, and termination should be backed by good record keeping and involve general department planning.

## **1. Role in the Hiring Process**

The Head actively is involved in all faculty recruitment activities and should be very familiar with Section 2 of the *Faculty Handbook*, and Section 3 of the *Employee Handbook*, along with all search and hiring procedures required by the Dean, Provost's Office, and the Office of Equity and Diversity, including participation in any prescribed training.

The first step involves requesting permission from the Dean for a position. This discussion includes department needs and developing a recruitment plan. The search committee chair and search committee typically are appointed by the Head in consultation with the Dean. Normally, the Head appoints a trained and experienced faculty member to chair the search committee. The Head and Chair of the search committee jointly are responsible for ensuring the search committee understands the process and the committee's charge. Searches must be completed in a timely fashion. Heads and search committee chairs should be aware of the affirmative action goals in effect for the department. Heads ultimately are responsible for the actions and decisions of the search committee. Heads provide regular updates to the Dean on the recruitment, search, and hiring process.

In circumstances where the Head and Dean are supportive, search committees may be chaired by Heads, Associate Deans, or faculty outside the department. If a Head serves as the search committee chair, the Dean then serves as the hiring administrator.

## **2. Personnel Management**

As part of the development of long-term plans, the Head provides leadership in constructing a department plan identifying disciplinary areas of relative strength and weakness. Based on this inventory, along with information about upcoming resignations and retirements, the plan includes justified needs for additional, or decreased, faculty and/or staff. This plan should be used for recruitment strategies and hiring decisions.

The Head provides leadership by developing clear and equitable standards for faculty assessment, retention, tenure, promotion, and annual compensation reviews. These written standards should use behavioral terms to describe expected faculty accomplishments in teaching, research, and service, must be approved by the department faculty, and need to be consistent with sections 3 and 4 of the *Faculty Handbook*. The Head is responsible for explaining these standards to candidates for faculty positions at the time of recruitment, providing all new faculty members with a written copy of department standards (as clearly



stated in Section 4.7.7 of the *Faculty Handbook*), and counseling/mentoring tenure-track and promotion-eligible faculty members.

All faculty evaluations should be written with clear reference to these approved guidelines, citing behavioral examples of each faculty member's success (or shortfall) in attaining the standards. Probationary faculty not making satisfactory progress need to be offered an appropriate workload in accordance with established policy and the *Faculty Handbook* with measurable goals for improvement. The assignments and progress of all tenure-track faculty should be discussed annually with the Dean.

The Head is expected to be an informal mentor for all faculty members in the department, though the level of the Head's mentoring involvement will vary according to the seniority and needs of individuals. The Head is responsible for implementing the department's formal mentoring process for each tenure-track faculty member.

The Head hires and supervises all support staff in the department and is responsible for annual personnel evaluations of staff members, seeking input from department faculty members as appropriate. The Head should also work with the department staff to identify and act on professional development opportunities appropriate for their responsibilities.

The Head also has primary responsibility for dealing with personnel problems in the department. If a faculty or staff member does not meet performance expectations or violates department/college/university policies or procedures, the Head will meet with the individual (and any other individuals involved, if appropriate) to discuss the situation. The Head should make a written record of that meeting. The Head may also initiate such a meeting following complaints from students, fellow faculty members, or department staff. Depending on the gravity of the situation, the Head may place a letter of counseling and reprimand in the faculty or staff member's personnel file or move to further corrective actions, in consultation with the Dean and using the Missouri State University *Faculty Handbook* (especially sections 4, 9, 11, and 13) or the *Employee Handbook* (especially sections 9 and 11) as a guide. The Provost's Website includes recent policy on the handling of formal warnings, letters of reprimand, and apologies.

#### **E. Teaching, Research, Professional Activities, and Service**

Typically, Heads negotiate the amount of time spent in teaching, research, and service activities with their Dean. However, most of the Head's time involves department administration.

Heads are encouraged to continue an active program of research, recognized professional activity, exemplary service, and/or grant activities. Heads normally use summers as concentrated times for these activities.

Since Heads primarily are administrators, they are not permitted to apply for either a semester or year-long sabbatical. However, Department Heads are eligible for occasional summer administrative leaves, based on Section 12.5 of the *Faculty Handbook*. In order for this leave to be approved, there must be someone willing to assume their administrative duties and the Dean must be willing to fund this replacement.

#### **F. Communication with Administration**

The Head's immediate supervisor is typically the College Dean. Heads and Deans must recognize their relationship is an essential partnership of shared responsibility and accountability for both effective leadership and efficient management.

The Dean and Head need to keep each other informed in advance of any important information on issues facing the department, college, or university. Also, Heads must inform the Dean if they desire to take any policy, budgetary, personnel, or other action/issue to the Office of the Provost, other high-level university administrators, or outside constituents.

## **II. The Position of Department Head or School Director**

### **A. Authorization and Selection Process**

The Dean, in consultation with the Provost, authorizes any search for a Head. Subject to the approval of the Provost, the Dean, in consultation with the department, determines the parameters of the search process. The Dean and Provost decide if the search is to be internal or external. A Head from another department in the college will participate in the search process, generally acting as search committee chair. Searches for Heads follow the established process outlined by the Provost's Office and Office of Equity and Diversity. Op 7.10

### **B. Credentials**

Typically, the Head holds the Professor rank with tenure. The Head will have a strong vita indicating administrative and faculty governance experience indicating a range of professional experiences and familiarity with faculty governance.

### **C. Appointment Letter and Term of Office**

The Dean, after consulting the department faculty and with approval of the Provost and Board of Governors, makes the final selection of the Head and establishes any parameters of the appointment, including elements both included and not included in this document (e.g. interim appointments). All specific conditions for the Head's term should be made clear in the appointment letter, along with the clear understanding that Heads serve at the will of their Dean, Provost and President.

The department head shall be appointed for a fixed term of years not to exceed five (5) years in length, and the terms should be included in the appointment letter. Appointments for Acting/Interim Heads may be for one or two years, pursuant to the Search Guidelines. Heads receive twelve-month assignments which generally begin on August 1 of a given year. It might be beneficial for Heads to begin their initial appointment earlier in the summer resulting in a period of overlap and transition with the previous administration. However, a term beginning prior to August 1 requires approval of the Dean and Provost.

Heads are subject to the standard "Recall of Administrators" process described in Section 12.2 of the *Faculty Handbook*, and the Academic Administrators Appointment and Compensation Policy. In the event of a conflict or ambiguity between this manual and either of the aforementioned policies, those policies shall control.

#### **D. Reappointment**

A Head may be reappointed for an additional term in accordance with Op 3.08-2, Academic Administrators Appointment and Compensation Policy (“Retreat Policy”).

#### **E. Return to Faculty**

It generally is expected that Head terms will end, by expiration or resignation, on or after August 1 of a given year, unless other arrangements are stated in the appointment letter. The appointment letter for all Heads will reflect the basis for determining the salary of the Head upon his or her return to the faculty at Missouri State University, consistent with the Retreat Policy.

If the Head is eligible for post-administrative instructional development, pursuant to the Retreat Policy, the out-going Head shall submit to their Dean an appropriate plan for activities during the leave. The Head is required to stay at Missouri State University for at least one year following completion of this administrative leave or reduced load. (This policy is consistent with various sections in the *Faculty Handbook* - 7.2.1 for sabbatical leaves, 7.2.2 for professional leaves, 7.2.4 for special leaves, 12.5 for administrative leaves, and 12.7 for special leave for administrators).

#### **F. Professional Development**

Heads are expected to engage in regular professional development activities for administrators and participation in these activities will be an aspect of the Head’s annual evaluation. Professional development includes both on and off campus opportunities. On-campus activities include regularly attending meetings of the Department Heads Council and Academic Administrator’s Assembly. Off-campus professional development involves attending regional or national conferences, such as those facilitated by the American Council on Education, the IDEA Center, or discipline-based conferences for Department Heads/Chairs.

College Deans are expected to fund Head’s travel for administrative professional development, assuming adequate funding is available in the college budget. The amount and purpose of funding must be approved by the Dean prior to travel.

Suggested professional development activities for Heads include those promoting:

- ✓ primary administrative skills;
- ✓ budget management;
- ✓ department governance and effective shared governance;
- ✓ conflict management and resolution;
- ✓ resource management;

- ✓ personnel management;
- ✓ understanding legal issues affecting department administration;
- ✓ broader contemporary issues in higher education;
- ✓ enrollment management.

## **G. Evaluation**

Section 12.1 of the *Faculty Handbook* states all academic administrators shall be evaluated annually and this evaluation will be conducted by the administrator's immediate supervisor. In the case of Heads, that supervisor is their Dean. This section also stipulates, "In all cases, reports from individuals who are supervised by the administrator being evaluated will be included in the review." Guided by this policy, the Dean uses the following data sources for constructing the Head's annual review; however, other requirements for the Head's annual review are determined by specific college policy:

- 1. Department Chair Feedback System.** Part of the Head's annual review employs the *Department Chair Feedback System* managed at Kansas State University's IDEA Center. This instrument is administered to all full-time faculty and, in addition, staff considered by Deans to be in a position to provide relevant feedback about the Head's job-related activities. The five parts of the assessment include: 1) Head responsibilities, 2) Head leadership capacities, 3) Head activities, 4) obstacles impeding the effectiveness of the Head, and 5) qualitative comments.
- 2. The Dean's Observations.** The Dean's observations of Head leadership are generated from a variety of sources including professional interactions with Heads, discussions with department staff, faculty and students, as well as communication with relevant community members. The Dean also may use other sources relevant to the professional activities of Heads.
- 3. Annual Department Report.** As part of the *Annual Department Report*, Heads submit additional evidence of professional accomplishments and leadership effectiveness. Evidence may differ by college or the unique duties of individual Heads, but can include recorded progress toward department goals, initiatives, or priorities, department productivity indicators, actions taken to strengthen department conditions, professional and leadership development experiences, evidence of personal scholarship, and teaching effectiveness. Heads also submit personal professional development goals and department priorities as part of the annual report.

The Head's annual review is conducted by their supervising Dean during the Spring Semester so that these evaluations are considered in any merit decisions determining the Head's compensation for the following fiscal year.

The Dean will meet with the Head to discuss the outcome of the annual review. This meeting should be a participative process culminating in the identification of priorities and goals for improving the department and/or the Head's professional development. The results of this meeting will be documented in an annual evaluation letter for the Head, and this letter should include both progress toward attaining goals/objectives from the previous year along with setting goals/objectives for the coming year. A copy of this letter is sent to the Head for signature. The letter, signed by both the Dean and Head, is placed in the Head's personnel file.

#### **H. Reappointment to a Subsequent Term**

Head appointments are renewable upon a favorable decision by the Dean and Provost. This decision results from a substantive review process. During the Fall Semester of the final year in the Head's term, assuming the Dean and Head wish to consider a subsequent term, a comprehensive review of the Head occurs.

When considering reappointment, the Dean will request the Head to assemble a self-study presenting a summary of the Head's activity and accomplishments during their term. This self-study must contain a cover letter describing leadership activities and initiatives, department accomplishments, along with the Head's vision for the department during a subsequent term. In addition, the self-study should include copies of annual review letters from the Dean, department annual reports, IDEA data, and evidence of the Head's professional activities during their term. The Dean also can request additional materials.

The Dean determines the review process for considering a Head's subsequent term. At a minimum, the Dean should solicit input from department faculty and staff regarding their assessments of the Head's term and prospects for the future. However, the Dean may use discretion to request input from appropriate external constituencies including alumni, professional groups, or community groups.

After reviewing all materials, the Dean will consult with the Provost before making a reappointment decision. After this determination occurs, the Dean will inform the Head and department faculty of the decision. A new appointment letter specifying conditions, including length of the subsequent term, will be offered to the Head. It is desirable to conclude the reappointment process no later than March 1 so adequate planning can occur, either for the Head's continuation or the appointment of an Interim/Acting Head to assume duties the following August 1.