

Department/Program Chair Supplemental Guide

Note: This guide¹ focuses on some of the key department/program chair responsibilities and tasks. It is not intended to replace official policy information found in the *Faculty Handbook*, *Student Handbook*, or *Course Catalog*.

¹ The material in this guide comes from earlier versions compiled by Ed Kain, and later revised by Tim O'Neill and Kelly Lessard in 2014. This version was last updated by the Office of the DOF on 7/03/2019.

Contents

Your Role as Department/Program Chair	3
Department/Program Chair Calendar	4
PART I: Responsibilities for the Academic Year	5
PART II: Responsibilities for the Academic Year (with no assigned timeframe)	13
Appendix	5
Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty, Guidance for Deans, Department Chairs, and Other Academic Leaders	14
Other “unofficial” advice from various SU faculty members who have served as department/program chair	14

Your Role as Department/Program Chair

As Department or Program Chair, you are charged with providing leadership, vision, and coherence in relation to the department faculty, department staff, department programs, and students who major or otherwise take courses in the department. As stated in the *Faculty Handbook*, the chair is “the administrative officer of the department, the assessment officer of the department and the focus of leadership within the department.”

The *Faculty Handbook* describes the duties of the Department Chair. In doing so, it breaks the duties down into several categories, including: general administration and supervision of departmental matters (course scheduling, budgeting, advising, developing library collections, collecting syllabi, approving transfer credits); annual reports (developing annual statements of departmental direction, activity and growth, identifying needs and problems through annual assessments of the major, reporting on teaching, research, and service for departmental members, setting and assessing goals, and developing an action plan for the upcoming year); providing departmental leadership (departmental planning, conducting regular departmental meetings, encouraging and actively conducting scholarly and professional activity, personnel changes, selection of new faculty members, and mentoring new faculty members).

Useful Links:

Office of the Dean of the Faculty: <http://www.southwestern.edu/offices/dean/>

The Webpage for the Dean of the Faculty contains important information and links to additional resources such as the *Faculty Handbook*; the Committee Book; Department/Program Budget Guidelines, and faculty development funding opportunities, etc.

Academic Assessment: <https://www.southwestern.edu/faculty-dean/academic-assessment/>

Forms, guidelines, and deadlines for annual departmental/programmatic assessment and major seven-year department/program reviews.

Registrar <https://www.southwestern.edu/academics/records-registrar/policies-for-faculty-staff/>

Academic calendars, policies, *Course Catalog*, classroom info, transfer credit info.

Business Office: <http://www.southwestern.edu/offices/business/>

Contains links for the current final dates for purchase requisitions, petty cash vouchers, reimbursement requests, and delivery of goods and services deadlines, etc.

Calendars: <http://www.southwestern.edu/calendar/>

Landing page has a schedule of current events occurring across campus, and links to the Academic Calendar, Facilities Calendar, Fine Arts Calendar, etc.

Department/Program Chair Calendar

As a department/program chair you will find that throughout the year you have a continuous and steady stream of responsibilities and duties. The tables below are designed to help you anticipate some of the many requests that will be coming your way as department or program chair. In addition, there will be many additional department/program responsibilities, which vary from department to department and program to program. (*This is not an official policy document. Dates and requests often change.*)

Responsibilities for the Academic Year (regular/on-going)

SOURCE	TASK
Department Colleagues	Mentoring of colleagues – this is particularly important in the case of new faculty.
Department Colleagues	Department planning – This includes thinking about curriculum structure and reform, departmental assessment, honors in the department, senior oral exams (if applicable), the capstone requirement, introductory courses, FYS, Paideia courses, and internships. It is wise to schedule at least monthly meetings and to set specific dates for them at the beginning of the academic year.
Department Colleagues	Oversee (better yet, delegate to a colleague) departmental lecture series.
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Comprehensive department reviews occur every seven to eight years. Engage with the Office of the Dean of the Faculty in year before comprehensive review to set up assessment.
Departmental Colleagues, Registrar, & Students	Review your own timetable for honors theses – thinking about questions like <i>When and how does the department invite students?, What is the timetable for thesis defenses so that appropriate designations can be made on the graduation program?, etc.</i>
Students	Approve the time entries for student workers in the department, if any. (In some departments, this is delegated to another colleague.)
Students	Sign “substitution cards.” It is advisable for the department to set policies about what courses or departmental requirements can be met through substituting alternative courses or experiences. This will help you be consistent in dealing with the steady stream of transfer and regular students who will approach you with substitution cards. Policies will also help to prevent disagreements within

	the department over whether you are being too lenient or harsh in your decisions. However, all members of your department need to acknowledge that the chair must exercise her/his own discretion in ambiguous situations.
University Events	University Events will notify you of events to which faculty are invited.
Business Office & Financial Aid Office	Review your budget. Please note that the Business Office typically has a month lag between expenditures and their posting on WebAdvisor. Keep a separate record of department/program spending so that you aren't surprised by late postings of spending you may have forgotten about. If relevant, review the statement of your student worker budget and how much remains.
Registrar	You have access to unofficial transcripts of all your majors and minors on WebAdvisor. Periodic review of them may help the department plan who gets into what semester's capstone, whom to invite for honors, and other activities.
Students & Departmental Colleagues	Keep records on alums from the department.
Students & the outside world	Answer calls about internships - from students, internship sites, Center for Career and Professional Development, etc.
Students & Registrar	Pre-approving transfer forms for summer classes – this is particularly heavy in April and May.
Students	As with all faculty, you'll be asked to write letters of recommendation for graduate school, employment, etc.
Dean of the Faculty	Monthly Department Chairs meetings and monthly Program Chairs meetings

Responsibilities for the Academic Year (sequential)

SOURCE	TIMING	TASK
Departmental Colleagues, Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Early August	Help new faculty get settled in (some of this may happen earlier—it depends on the timing of your hires). This will include: 1) making certain their office situation is appropriate and adequate, including things as mundane as the arrival and installation of nameplates; 2) helping them learn how to purchase supplies, etc. in the bookstore (the use of their Pirate cards, etc.); 3) familiarizing them with copying procedures; 4) seeing if they have any lingering logistical issues that weren't cleared up at the orientation for new faculty; and 5) continuing conversations about the department and University curricula and how their courses fit within both of these. Faculty Administrative Assistants are also available to help new faculty get settled in.
Department Colleagues	Early August	Appoint a department colleague to oversee the department's Website.
Office of the President, Dean of the Faculty, Faculty Status & Review Committee	Early August	Department Chairs will need to submit a letter of recommendation for each departmental faculty member who is undergoing review for either tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor, or promotion from the rank of Associate Professor to the rank of Professor. This letter must reflect the views of both the chair and all tenured members of the department. This letter needs to be completed and signed by the tenured department members before the chair meets with Faculty Status & Review Committee. (The actual due date is set in collaboration with the chair of Faculty Status.)
Registrar	August	Normally, the Registrar will email you a list of students who have registered for courses in your major who do not meet the courses' prerequisites. Since many departments have the "with the consent of the instructor" proviso, it is best to check with the appropriate instructor to see if there is such consent before asking the Registrar to withdraw the student from the course (or allow the instructor to address this).
Registrar	August	Review schedule for the spring semester and, if necessary, make (minor) adjustments. (The Registrar will make a call for multi-semester schedules each spring.)

Office of the Dean of the Faculty	First Faculty Meeting	Normally, you are expected to introduce the new faculty members in your department, including visiting, part-time, and tenure-track.
1) Director of Advising & Retention, 2) Registrar	Orientation Week	1) Any faculty with assigned advisees who are on sabbatical or leave need to be reassigned to other faculty in the department. Lists should be maintained, and communication generated (e-mail is fine) notifying the students of who will advise them that semester. 2) Expect to work on assessing the appropriate credit or level for students presenting transfer courses or AP credit.
Department Colleagues and Students	Varies by Department	Some departments organize interest sessions just before fall and spring pre-registration in order to help majors and other students learn more about the classes being offered than is found on WebAdvisor or the <i>Catalog</i> .
Departmental Colleagues	First week of Fall semester	Remind your colleagues that you need a copy of each course syllabus for your files. This is a SACS requirement.
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	First week of Fall semester	Remind your colleagues about any departmental assessment items related to their courses for that semester.
Registrar & Students	First week of Fall semester	You'll be asked to sign forms for any students doing independent studies, independent research, internships, and honors theses. You will need to be prepared to sign drop/add cards for students who are unable to find or reach their instructor–this will be especially important in the case of part-time faculty.
Departmental Colleagues	First week of Fall semester	Check in (particularly with new faculty) and see if there are any questions/issues about settling into the semester–remind all faculty to post office hours.
Departmental Colleagues	First week of Fall semester	Finalize a schedule for department meetings. (At or before first dept. meeting, ask for volunteers to oversee departmental tasks such as department Webpage maintenance, student club/org. advisors, student workers/tutors, etc.)
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the	First week of Fall semester	Continue collecting information (reading professional files, course evaluations, and talking with colleagues) related to your meetings with the Faculty Status & Review Committee

Dean of the Faculty		about any colleagues who are being reviewed for tenure or promotion to full professor.
Department Colleagues & Students	As early as possible	Complete and submit the department student hiring paperwork. Orient and train student workers, if any – make certain they get a copy of a regular work schedule to all department members (this may be delegated). Forms are available on the Business Office webpage (see link above).
Admission Office	Shortly after returning for fall Semester	Request for representatives for Admissions events (e.g., November Overnight, February Overnight, Top Scholar Weekend, Admitted Student Day, Junior Visit Day, SPROG days)
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	September	If you are doing a tenure-track search in your department regular meetings will commence almost as soon as the semester begins. Early meetings will help you plan your calendar accordingly. That will obviously vary by department.
Departmental Colleagues	September	Requests for sabbatical leaves for the following year are due in October. A letter examining the department impact from the chair is needed, so you will need to meet with any faculty who plan to apply for sabbaticals, and develop a statement about said impact. (If you as chair are applying for a sabbatical, the previous chair should serve as the evaluator of your proposal. If this person is unavailable, please consult with the Dean of the Faculty in order to identify a member of your department or program to serve in this capacity.) You will also need to start planning faculty replacements, if any, that may result from the sabbatical.
Registrar	Mid-September	Review the spring schedule on WebAdvisor in order to detect inaccuracies. Make sure that your colleagues have checked that their courses are accurately listed.
Departmental Colleagues	October (odd numbered years)	<i>Catalog</i> changes: Begin discussing with your colleagues what, if any, catalog changes your department or program will submit for the next two-year <i>Catalog</i> . (Note: We are now on a two-year cycle for <i>Catalog</i> updates. 2019-2021, 2021-2023, etc.) The call for new <i>Catalog</i> copy will go out in January (even-numbered years) with a due date in March.

Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	October	London Semester faculty applications are due in mid-to late October. If you have any faculty in your department who are applying, you will need to write a departmental impact statement. These applications are NOT for the next year, but the year after that. Thus, you will not need to begin dealing with staffing issues right away. You should talk about the impact upon the department at a department meeting.
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Mid-October	Junior sabbaticals occur in the 4 th year of service at Southwestern. Since this may require a departmental impact statement from the chair, you'll want to meet with anyone who is applying. Note that such leaves require a successful second-year review, are applied for during the third year, and are granted in a tenure-track member's fourth year.
Registrar	October	Pre-registration for spring is usually in October. This will yield pre-registration figures for courses in your department/program. You may need to make modifications if courses do not fill or if there is extreme demand for courses, which cannot be met with current staffing. If you have faculty who are advising for the first time, they will find your guidance useful.
Departmental Colleagues	October	Remind your colleagues about any departmental assessment items/data related to their courses or final exams for that semester.
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Early November	Requests for tenure-track lines and visiting positions are due. Results are normally announced in mid-December.
Registrar	Early November	During the early part of the month, worksheets for course schedules for department/program offerings for the next academic year will be distributed. These schedules will be due in mid-December. (Note: When planning the course schedule for the following academic year, please be sure not to schedule any course that will be taught by the person serving as department chair during the time-slot reserved for Department Chair meetings. Please check with the Office of the Dean of the Faculty to obtain the Department Chair Meeting time-slot scheduled for the following academic year.)

Academic Affairs	November	You should receive a memo requesting the names of any students who will be receiving department honors during the Honors Convocation. This information will be due in mid-December. For the purchase of awards/gifts associated with department/program achievement awards and honors, please submit a completed copy of the Student Award/Gift form (linked here) to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (jeanb@southwestern.edu). These purchases should be funded through the Student Award/Gift Account and should not be in the form of cash or cash equivalents, such as gift cards. The tangible property awarded should be valued at no more than \$75.00 per awardee. (Note: Awards funded through an account dedicated for a specific achievement award should follow the M.O.U./guidelines set forth when the fund was established.)
Academic Affairs	November	Department Chair letters of support for FYS/AES proposals are typically due before the holiday break.
University Relations	December	Fall Graduate's Recognition is held in December. The entire campus community is invited.
Registrar	Mid-December	Course schedules for the next academic year will be due.
Registrar	Winter	The Registrar will email a list of students who have registered for courses in your major who do not meet the courses' prerequisites (see August section above).
Registrar & Students	January	Be available for advising of new students, transfers, readmits, etc.
Departmental Colleagues	January	If you are doing tenure-track searches, the flurry of activity will intensify. The bulk of activity related to campus visits and final decisions falls during the spring semester. Some departments seek to do this during the fall semester.
Departmental Colleagues	Early January	Faculty Status & Review Committee conducts reviews for second-year and fourth-year tenure-track faculty during the spring semester. Thus, you (and the tenured members of your department) will need to start evaluating materials for colleagues in your department who are being reviewed. Professional files for second- and fourth-year reviews are due in January. Department Chairs need to submit a letter of recommendation for each faculty member in the department who is undergoing a comprehensive review. (This letter needs

		to be completed and signed by the tenured department members before the chair meets with the Faculty Status & Review Committee.)
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	First week of Spring semester	Remind your colleagues about any departmental assessment items related to their courses for that semester.
	First week of Spring semester	See items included in First Week of Classes for the fall (above)
Dean of the Faculty	January	Submit requests for part-time faculty hires for the following academic year.
Registrar	January (even-numbered years)	We are now on a two-year cycle for <i>Catalog</i> updates. 2019-2021, 2021-2023, etc.) The call for new <i>Catalog</i> copy will go out in January (even-numbered years) with a due date in March.
Registrar	February	Departments will be asked to review the schedule on WebAdvisor in order to detect inaccuracies.
University Relations	February	Honors Convocation (held in conjunction with Spring Family Day). For the purchase of awards/gifts associated with department/program achievement awards and honors, please submit a completed copy of the Student Award/Gift Form (linked here) to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (jeanb@southwestern.edu). These purchases should be funded through the Student Award/Gift Account and should not be in the form of cash or cash equivalents, such as gift cards. The tangible property awarded should be valued at no more than \$75.00 per awardee. (Note: Awards funded through an account dedicated for a specific achievement award should follow the M.O.U./guidelines set forth when the fund was established.)
Dean of the Faculty	Late February	You will need to develop your departmental timetable for approved part-time hiring.
Registrar	After web-registration	As in the fall, you may need to make modifications to the course schedule based upon course pre-enrollments. Web-registration is in late March/early April for the Summer and

		fall semesters. As with the fall, you will need to provide guidance for new academic advisors in your department.
Registrar	Mid-March (even-numbered years)	New <i>Catalog</i> copy will be due. (Note: We are now on a two-year cycle for catalog updates. 2019-2021, 2021-2023, etc.)
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Mid-March	Faculty brief annual reports (BAR) (including your own) are due on April 15. New colleagues may need some guidance on this process.
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Mid-March	Remind your colleagues about any departmental assessment items/data related to their courses or final exams for that semester.
Departmental Colleagues	Late March	The Department Chair will be asked to submit a list of 3 potential external reviewers for each faculty member who will be reviewed for tenure and/or promotion during the following year. (This list should not be shared with the candidate.) Also, chairs may want to check in with any colleagues who are up for tenure to see if they have questions about their personal statements, etc. Encourage them to meet with the Dean of the Faculty to discuss the process and expectations for tenure from the administrative perspective.
Business Office	Early in April	Reminder of the deadlines for budget items in the fiscal year will be sent out.
Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Second Tuesday in April	Research and Creative Works Symposium. Classes are suspended for this date. You should contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty early in the semester if you plan to use this date for your Capstone presentations.
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	Mid-May	Department Chair assessment of each individual departmental faculty member is due. All faculty should have submitted their BARs in mid-April. This is Part 1 of 3 of the Annual Department/Program Report. (Submit to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Please refer to the annual call from DOF for exact due date.)

Financial Aid	End of Semester	Student worker information request, including request for updated information on the jobs in your department/program if you have department student workers.
Southwestern University Community	End of Semester	Watch with pride as your graduating seniors walk across the stage at Commencement.
Business Office	End of May	Review the current final dates for purchase requisitions, petty cash vouchers, reimbursement requests, and delivery of goods and services deadlines. (see link to Business Office above)
Departmental Colleagues & Office of the Dean of the Faculty	End of May	Academic Assessment Report based on Student Learning Outcomes is due. (Submit to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Please refer to the annual call from DOF for exact due date.) This is Part 2 of 3 of the Annual Department/Program Report.
Departmental Colleagues	July	Concentrate on planning curriculum and issues that are important in the upcoming academic year. (e.g., if you are doing a comprehensive department review, this may be a time to start lining up potential external reviewers, etc.)
Department & Dean of the Faculty	End of June	Department/Program Annual Report is due. (Submit to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Please refer to the annual call from DOF for exact due date.) This is Part 3 of 3 of the Annual Department/Program Report. This portion should summarize the departmental/program activity during the previous academic year and departmental/program aspirations for the coming year.

Appendix

Principles of Good Practice: Supporting Early-Career Faculty, Guidance for Deans, Department Chairs, and Other Academic Leaders

<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED450634>

Other “unofficial” advice from various SU faculty members who have served as department/program chair.

Dealing with Workload

- Stay organized - there are so many things you have to do as chair, that if you lose your organization things can slip through the cracks.
- Prioritize - develop a sense of which of the many demands and requests you receive are in the best interests of your department.
- Keep calendar - there are so many requests, and many of them were things you never knew about. Having a calendar to plan them would be helpful.
- Get a schedule of deadlines - things tend to sneak up on you, and this will help you plan a bit in advance.
- The chair needs to be actively pursuing ways to reduce the workload of the chair and of her/his colleagues in the department.
- The chair is ultimately responsible for things (including paperwork, final decisions, etc.) but look for a reasonable way to divide up many of the tasks which face each department.
- The first year of being chair was the most difficult. There are a lot of responsibilities, and until you've done the full cycle of one year, you can't usually anticipate them. Related to this, I found it very helpful to have an electronic file for all of my chair documents. Many of them can simply be updated from the year before - thus, the first time I went in to FSRC to talk about a colleague, it demanded lots of prep time to read her/his folder, course evaluations, etc. The second time (for the same person), I could skim the previous material, and update.
- Set aside a certain time each week to do the tasks you must do as chair.
- Try to anticipate certain things and plan in advance. In particular, think about course scheduling and staffing issues well before you need to have the classes and the staff in place.
- You need to stay on top of the stuff which is constantly coming in. It is so easy to get behind, and if you do, you can never quite catch up.
- Know the names of the people to call if you have problems or questions.
- Involve your fellow department members as much as possible. It will make your job easier and help them to be better chairs when their time comes.

Importance of Communication

- Provide as much information for department faculty as you can.
- The hardest thing to do is to find time to communicate with members of the department. Don't forget to do this. Using e-mail is very useful in this regard.
- Talk to your colleagues. The opportunity for misunderstanding can be high in small institutions like ours. Thus, try to have a sense of how your department members feel about issues as they arise.
- Communicate as much as possible with members of your department or program. You need to keep everyone feeling involved and working as a team. This increases everyone's sense of investment in the department/program.

Tips related to Department Meetings

- You need to have a reasonable number of department meetings. They must have an agenda-ask department members to help generate the agenda. (If you have a tenure-track search going on this is often taken care of because you already have regular meetings.)
- There are so many daily decisions to be made that you need to figure out which ones you must simply make, and which ones require a department meeting for discussion.

Importance of Knowing your Department and University Colleagues

- Do everything possible to meet as many of the staff, colleagues, etc. on campus. There may be people with whom you talk on the phone for various things -learn a face to associate with that voice. Perhaps make a list and meet people for lunch, coffee, etc. Reach out to other people on campus.
- Get to know the people in your department really well.

Importance on the Role of the Chair and your Relationship with Colleagues.

- If you are moving from regular department faculty member to becoming chair, it is important to make sure you don't stay in the chair role all of the time. Allow yourself to be the colleague and friend you were before. Figure out when and how to wear the hat of department chair.
- Remember that department chair positions are collegial. You will be dealing with peers, fellow faculty members, colleagues - all of whom are professionals. Don't be heavy-handed; you are consensus builders.
- Remember that being department chair is just a service to your colleagues.
- Mentoring new faculty is one of the most important things you do.
- People need constant praise.

Being Proactive and Dealing with Some of the Strains of the Job

- Have a clearly articulated and comfortable working relationship with the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. What that means will vary from person to person.

- Come up with three top priorities of things you'd like to see accomplished during your time as chair. Try to see these through. There will be a lot of diversions, so remind yourself of these priorities along the way.
- Try not to compare yourself to other department/program chairs and how they do things. Different people have different styles.
- Try, as best you can, not to take it personally. Constantly remind yourself of this.
- Keep in mind the three F's. Flexibility, Facilitation, and Fun. Department chairs need to be flexible and realize that there are numerous solutions to problems. Department chairs also have to realize that the single most important thing they do is facilitate. They have to allow faculty members to reach their full potential as teacher/scholars and they have to develop programs that enable students to do the same. Fun is the most difficult to achieve. Still, you should enjoy the job and the opportunity to provide guidance to a program.
- On most issues, you will inevitably have at least one person who disagrees. That person will usually be annoyed with the chair when things don't go the way that he/she wants them to. Don't take it personally.
- Your temporary faculty will want to be permanent faculty. No matter how clear you are about this, they will be angry with you.
- Whenever possible, try to facilitate the process of finding consensus within the department.
- **Don't take yourself too seriously.**