“The Challenges of Being Chair in 2015:
A 28 year Perspective

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My History

- At Sacred Heart University 39 years
  - 5 years adjunct instructor of mathematics
  - 3 years FT instructor of mathematics
  - 31 years in Computer Science Dept
  - Chairperson of Computer Science for 28 years
So *WHO can* be chair?

- **REMEMBER THAT** being a chair is truly a 24/7 JOB...you must accept this

- you must be a faculty member...teaching is in my opinion an integral part of the job

- you need to be a GOOD manager..especially of TIME!

- you should be an administrator ....a chair needs to see things from many perspectives...

- you need to have excellent social skills
THREE ESSENTIAL QUALITIES:

- Be versed in CONFLICT MANAGEMENT and RESOLUTION
- TIME MANAGE very well
- Be ENTREPRENEURIAL
- Know the administration and get involved in university matters reaching Beyond your department and college
Be willing to LISTEN to the faculty member
Avoid the use of the word “you” and try to use “we” instead
Make certain that the faculty member understands the “department’s” position and that you understand their position on the issue
Help resolve the issue..compromise may be needed
Be firm and strong if you need to be without showing anger
How to Successfully Time Manage

- Make task lists and update them regularly
- Try to pepper in tasks that are easily done with the more challenging ones
- Erase or cross off tasks when completed…
  (this feels SO good!)

- Prioritize…a lot!
- Do LUNCH…get AWAY from your desk
- Be willing to spend a day in the office when very little is going on in your area
- Check emails OFTEN!!!
- DELEGATE!!!!
- Take vacations away from home if possible
Be Entrepreneurial

- Know your resources or potential resources
- Discuss potential new programs or additions to your current one with your SENIOR faculty and dean BEFORE doing a lot of planning
- Once decided to pursue a new program get admissions, recruiting and the senior management acclimated to the idea
- Pitch it to EXISTING students ….and of course do a market analysis
- Commit to it and go forward..but remember it may not necessarily be a success
Some noteworthy observations

- There is NO training to be chair because every dept in every university is unique and has a different set of issues to deal with
- However getting advice from a previous chair or a chair with longevity can be helpful
- The ability to delegate well is essential to your success (and I admit something I still need to work on after 28 years)
- Be human, admit your flaws and ask for help
- *Maintain your presence in the classroom and keep up relationships with students*
- *Don’t let the faculty part of your job fade away*
You have two senior faculty members who are both excellent teachers and researchers and have contributed much to the department over time. A situation arises however where there becomes a very personal conflict between them because of a strong difference of opinion on where the dept is going...the chair clearly “favors” one path over the other but wants to resolve the conflict and remain neutral...how does s(he) do this?
Discussion: Scenario 2

- We are presented with 2 strong candidates for chair from within a department of 20 faculty. The department is very dynamic, entrepreneurial, noted for excellence in teaching, service to the university and scholarship. The department consists of 20 FT faculty of whom 8 are tenured, 6 are on tenure track and 6 are on term contracts. Both candidates are well respected and qualified but the department is split on who to select. Thus the dean and provost must decide......
A look at the candidates

**Candidate 1**

- 14 year member of department
- Very good teacher, creative and well respected
- Good interpersonal skills BUT somewhat reserved
- Extremely well liked and respected by faculty and administration…but can be easily swayed…NOT political
- Moderately active in service and committee work
- **Entrepreneurial** when needs to be
- Delegates well and thus appears to **manage time** well
- Scholarship is truly outstanding
- Has a great deal of **outside conflicts and obligations** (family illness, long commute, works from home 1–2 days a week)
A look at the candidates

Candidate 2

- 22 year member of department
- Excellent teacher (has won many awards)
- Great interpersonal skills..noted for managing conflict well
- Respected by faculty and administration but can sometimes appear self-centered and IS political when needed to be
- Extremely active in service and committee work
- Entrepreneurial almost to a fault….perhaps TOO much
- Great Time Manager
- Scholarship is good but not outstanding
- Seems to live on campus..can be there days, nights, early mornings, weekends..does this person have a life off campus?
So who would YOU select as chair?
I would select.......
I would select CANDIDATE 2

In my opinion the experience and dedication of candidate 2 would outweigh the less “self-centered” personality and better scholarship of candidate 1.....a good chair really needs to put “himself/herself” out there so a little ego might be a good thing!
Some other scenarios that the audience faces or will face

- Don’t be shy!!!
“Be true to your self, enjoy the ride and never lose sight of the ultimate goal in higher education: making a difference in people’s lives”

Domenick Pinto, February 5 2015