

Chapter 9

The College President Builds a Faculty: Approaches and Strategies for Success

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ABSTRACT

College presidents have a broad range of areas of responsibility and perhaps no single area is more important than those front-line faculty. Though presidents often spread authority across multiple administrators, they are ultimately responsible for the work of the faculty. This means that they must be prepared to strategically design a process of hiring the right faculty, provide them with the appropriate training and development, and work toward retaining those who the best fit for the institution. The chapter provides an examination of who faculty are and institutional issues related to them, such as qualifications, hiring, development, and retention. From this introduction, five key strategies are offered to presidents to assist with constructing a faculty composition that is best for the institution. These strategies include defining a role for faculty in the institution, creating appropriate policies for working with faculty, investing in faculty development, strategically using faculty for the institution's mission, and assessing the faculty plan.

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INTRODUCTION

The college presidency has been identified as one of the most challenging positions not only in higher education, but in society today. The role is fraught with demands to please a wide variety of constituents, and the behaviors of faculty, athletes, alumni and students all seem to result in impressions of how well the president performs (Bourgeois, 2016). Many of these behaviors are far beyond the control of the president, but yet, these behaviors define the acceptance and approval of the presidency.

Although there is much that the contemporary college president cannot control, there is much that the president can control (Martin, III, 2021). This span of control includes immediate hires and subordinates, but also includes the broader policies, protocols, and behaviors that influence the composition of the rest of the institution's employees. Importantly, this is highlighted by the hiring and development of faculty members.

A typical structure for a higher education institution includes a president hiring and employing a senior academic affairs administrator. In some institutions this role is identified as a dean of academics, a vice president of academic affairs, or even a provost, and these titles are often dependent upon the type of institution (Smith, 2006). A community college, for example, is more likely to have a dean of academics position and large research universities are more likely to entitle a provost. The individual is assigned the responsibilities of overseeing the entire academic enterprise of the institution, including the curriculum and quality of academic programs, but critically, the oversight for the faculty members who deliver curriculum, advise students, and conduct research and other projects is typically hired by and responsible to the president (Miller & Nelson, 2005). The vision of the president, then, is communicated to the senior academic affairs administrator and the vision statement has the power to shape or build what an institution's faculty looks like (Gearhart, Nadler, & Miller, 2020).

Faculty play a critical role in establishing the quality of an institution (Gupta, 2022). Although the primary role of faculty is related to teaching, conducting research, and working with students, they have the potential to develop relationships with external stakeholders, including employers and policy makers, and through those relationships, crafting an image for the institution's quality. Despite the importance of faculty to the institution, there is rarely an articulated plan for the types of faculty to be hired and how they are trained or developed once employed by a campus. This presents an opportunity for the college president to create a strategic approach to building a faculty, including both in hiring new faculty and in developing and training existing faculty members (Maddox & Johnson, 2018).

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