Faculty Concern on Hiring Internal Chairs

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In recent years, it has become increasingly common for chairs and deans to be appointed without a search process. The Faculty Senate passed a resolution dated November 11, 2014 calling for external searches for these (and other) administrative positions. Nothing ever came of that. <http://uca.edu/facultysenate/files/2012/08/Appendix-B.pdf>

It has become increasingly clear that it will be a rare occurrence for an external search to be conducted for a chair position. The administration has cited various reasons for this, mostly concern at the costs of conducting a search and adding another tenure-track member to a department, particularly when the former chair returns to faculty rather than retiring or otherwise leaving UCA. The process of hiring an internal chair is not uniform across campus, perhaps because there are no guidelines for internal hires, and each college is free to decide how an internal chair position is to be filled. In essence, the dean of the college is solely responsible for deciding what process will be followed in hiring an internal chair, and ultimately, with the Provost’s approval, of naming the chair.

Of all administrative positions, the chair of a department has the most impact on a faculty member’s working life. The chair

* directly evaluates faculty teaching
* has a single vote in the evaluation of a faculty member’s advancement, promotion and tenure
* is the first step in a faculty grievance and therefore is involved in every grievance originating from his or her faculty
* assigns faculty workload in teaching
* determines if faculty may teach summer or an overload
* assigns much of departmental service
* has the power to support or not faculty endeavors such as
  + approving travel money requests
  + approving grant applications
  + approving Institutional Research applications
  + approving proposals concerning curriculum in majors, minors and Core courses
  + approving research and administrative reassigned time applications
  + approving sabbatical leave applications
  + etc.

So much of how we do our jobs on a daily basis depends upon a chair more so than any other position. Below is the description of the chair from the *Faculty Handbook* (IV.A.2, page 7) which reiterates the above:

Department Chairs

The department chair is responsible for effective, efficient use of all departmental resources toward the achievement of departmental goals and objectives. This assignment includes the review, evaluation, and development of curricular and academic program matters, the assignment of faculty time, the development of an effective academic advising program, the accommodation of instructional support services, the identification of departmental needs, the administration of the departmental budget, the administration of university policies, and the initiation of personnel evaluation procedures and practices. The chair may organize faculty committees to address departmental issues.

Department chairs will submit an annual report to the college dean. This report will be used by the college dean in formulating a similar report for the college.

The college reports provide the bases for the provost’s reports to the president. These reports focus on concerns and recommendations that will strengthen the effectiveness of the university.

To this end, faculty should have primary voice in who their chair is. Shared governance, as defined in the *Faculty Handbook*, gives faculty primary responsibility in offering advice and recommendations in curriculum, research, appointments, promotions and the granting of tenure, but that does not mean that administrators have to do any more than seek our advice; they have no obligation to take our advice into consideration on any issue. Faculty must have a stronger role when it comes to the hiring of an internal chair as this position greatly affects how we do our jobs. It should also be noted that deans have the power to remove chairs without citing a cause even when the faculty disagree with such a decision. In fact, the dean has no obligation to consult faculty in a decision to remove a chair, and if a dean did consult the faculty, the dean has no obligation to act upon their recommendation.

Therefore, we need to establish a procedure for hiring an internal chair position that is uniform and applies to all departments and colleges, and gives the faculty the right to choose their own chair.