

# SUPPORTING FACULTY

AN ACADEMIC LEADER PUBLICATION

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

# How to Prepare Faculty for AI in Higher Education

By Nancy Mann Jackson

Job functions related to artificial intelligence (AI) represent the biggest increase in time demands for faculty members, according to a recent Educause survey of more than 1,000 college and university teaching and learning professionals. As AI begins to transform most industries, including higher education, academic leaders are needed to evaluate the technologies and communicate with faculty about benefits, challenges, and appropriate uses in the college and university classroom.

“The vast majority of faculty are currently resisting AI or trying to understand what this technology means and how it can be used,” says Edward Watson, Ph.D., associate vice president, Curricular and Pedagogical Innovation and executive director for Open Educational Resources and Digital Innovation at the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and author of *Teaching with AI: A Practical Guide to a New Era of Human Learning* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2024). “The most important thing for academic leaders to know is that faculty are without rudders at the moment for how to respond to student

usage of AI and how to effectively use AI to perform their jobs more effectively and efficiently.”

Many respondents to the Educause survey identified digital literacy, especially AI literacy, as a necessary skill for teaching and learning professionals moving into the future, along with agility and adaptability. To successfully navigate the risks and rewards of AI technology, faculty members will need guidance and support from their leaders.

*We don't want to leave faculty on their own to figure this out.*

### Accommodating and Monitoring Student Use of AI

In the early days of generative AI, some faculty members and their institutions focused mainly on keeping students from using the tools inappropriately. However, without clear guidelines and procedures, many faculty members are on their own—and sometimes accusing innocent students of cheating.

For example, in March 2024, [national headlines](#) proclaimed the story of Marley Stephens, a junior at the University of North

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## FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

# Mentoring at Mid-Career: Developing Academic Leaders

By Laura Gail Lunsford and Vicki L. Baker

One of the most highly touted, high-impact resources for students, faculty, and staff in the academy is mentorship. The research is clear: mentoring matters. According to the literature, mentored faculty and staff report higher levels of work satisfaction, are more productive in scholarly and creative endeavors, and are more likely to take on leadership roles on their campuses (Lunsford et al., 2018). Our mentoring research and practice is grounded in the National Academies' definition of mentorship (Dahlberg & Byers-Winston, 2019):

*Mentorship: a professional, working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support.*

Decades of research find support for two functions of mentoring across contexts: psychosocial and career (Eby et al., 2008). Psychosocial support involves confidence building and being a role model. Career support involves behaviors such as providing career guidance, sponsorship, and recognition. Effective mentorship requires both types of support as part of an intentional practice to develop others.

While most mentoring initiatives tend to focus on early career faculty (Thomas et al., 2015), there is renewed interest in and realization about the need for mentoring at mid-career (Lunsford & Baker,

forthcoming). Mid-career is the longest phase of one's work and personal trajectories; it is also a time when work roles and responsibilities are enhanced and expectations to assume leadership roles are heightened. Described as "the bridge" in the academy, mid-career faculty are an invaluable resource to their institutions given their institutional knowledge, disciplinary expertise, and their remaining career runway (Baker & Manning, 2021). We argue there is a need for strategic investment in the professional development of mid-career faculty as current and future campus leaders. Such investment is essential to advancing institutional aims and strategic priorities and to fostering employee engagement (Baker et al., 2017).

Mid-career faculty members have varied avenues for leadership as they progress through their careers. One route is to be an expert in their discipline and engage in leadership activities through professional organizations or journals. Another route is to take on institutional leadership roles, such as department chair or assistant dean. In either case, there is a need to equip mid-career faculty members with the skills and knowledge they need to effectively pursue and engage in leadership roles and develop their early career scholars and team members along these leadership pathways. To aid mid-career faculty in their skill development, we offer 10 tips for supporting both psychosocial and career support via mentorship (Table 1).

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Table 1. Mentoring emerging leaders

Mentoring Functions	Strategies
<b>Psychosocial</b>	
Confidence Building	Show your confidence in others—for example, by asking a mid-career faculty member to take on a new role to represent the department. Have a preparatory conversation about how the meetings might go and what might be important to share.
Role Modeling	Demonstrate effective leadership by involving faculty in key decisions. For example, be transparent about budgets and seek faculty input on items like distribution of professional development funds. Explain why transparency is a hallmark of effective leadership.
Listening and Affirming	Engage a faculty member in a leadership conversation about their plans for future leadership roles. Listen for how you can support professional development to take on such roles. For example, you might encourage a faculty member to attend a conference on becoming a department chair.
Communicating Effectively	Create communication channels. Facilitating opportunities for colleagues to share successes, express concerns, and share their needs and wants is critical to establishing a culture of open communication. For example, Vicki starts department meetings by asking colleagues to share news about recent successes. Annual reviews could include a discussion about what support a person needs in the coming year.
Building Trust	Be perceived as approachable. An open door gives a signal of approachability. Consider walking around once per week and saying hello to faculty members. Provide informal opportunities for faculty members to register concerns and successes
<b>Career</b>	
Sponsorship	Provide sponsorship opportunities for faculty members to try out leadership roles on an interim or short-term basis. For example, when Laura took a scholarly leave for a Fulbright, she advocated for an associate professor to serve as acting chair.
Stretching Assignments	Encourage a faculty member to take on a challenging assignment that is slightly outside of their experience but provides visibility and opportunity to build collaboration skills. For example, Laura encouraged an associate professor to be part of a university-wide task force on student wellness.
Guidance	Guide thoughtfully. Mid-career faculty, especially women, may take on too many service activities. Encourage faculty members to be strategic in their service at mid-career. Ask them to consider committees or activities that provide a broader view of the institution or to take on leadership roles in their professional organizations.
Building Networks	Create connection by introducing mid-career faculty members to campus leaders on and off campus. Knowing campus leaders can help them to envision possible leadership roles and opportunities.
Goal Setting	Provide time and space for colleagues to craft professional goals (e.g., the SMART Goal Framework); engage in review and revisions of goals.

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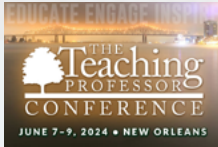
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## PREPARE FROM PAGE 1

Georgia, who used Grammarly, a popular writing plugin recommended by the university, to check spelling and grammar before turning in a paper, just as she'd done many times before. This time, her professor's AI detection software flagged the paper as using AI, so the professor gave her a zero, placing her on academic probation and threatening her scholarship.

"AI detection tools don't work all the time; they are about 90% effective," Watson says. "That means one out of 10 students are wrongly sent through the academic integrity process. It's the worst thing a student can go through. Students have no way to defend themselves. It's bad for student wellbeing and public trust in higher education."

Researchers at the American Association of Colleges and Universities have talked to multiple students across the country who say a professor "just had a feeling" that their work was AI-generated, Watson said. In many of those cases, when one AI detection software approved the work as human-written,

the faculty member would continue running it through other detectors until they found one that said the work was AI-written. One student said her workplace was closed over the weekend, when she would normally be working, so she had more time to work on her paper than usual. As a result, the paper was better than her previous work, but her professor insisted the student cheated and sent her through the academic integrity process.

Academic leaders need to have a sense of how faculty members are handling potential AI-written student work and consider implementing clear procedures. "Maybe have student focus groups," Watson says. "The students we talked with aren't concerned about getting caught cheating; they're concerned about being falsely accused."

### Implementing AI effectively into faculty work

Monitoring student use of generative AI is important, but it's hardly the only reason academic leaders should be tracking AI. The technology also offers valuable potential for assisting faculty

in both teaching and research. As record numbers of higher education faculty report burnout, the right AI tools may be able to help alleviate some of the stress.

"A lot of centers for teaching and learning are focused on AI course design, AI grading, and AI assignment design—how to leverage AI in your courses rather than outlawing it," Watson says. "Most professional organizations and workplaces are embracing AI, and it doesn't make sense for universities to outlaw it."

For example, some professors are using AI to generate actionable data in real time while teaching, says Derek Bruff, visiting associate director of the University of Mississippi's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and host of the "Intentional Teaching" podcast. In a blog post, Bruff described how he asked students a free-response question and then had an AI assistant read and summarize the students' responses. This allowed him to quickly categorize responses and see the most common ones, to help guide class discussion.

"This is the kind of thing that

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ChatGPT and similar tools are actually pretty good at, given their facility with natural languages,” Bruff says. “For example, I’ve used ChatGPT to summarize open-ended survey responses when I didn’t need a rigorous analysis of those responses, just an identification of key trends.”

For faculty members involved in research, AI may be useful in compiling sources for a literature review. This practice is being embraced and accepted at many universities, according to Watson. But academic leaders at each institution will need to make decisions about how their faculty can use AI in developing literature reviews or other projects.

AI can be useful in designing new courses or assessments and compiling sources for research, but academic leaders need to provide support in determining which tools are both helpful and ethical, and offer training and assistance for faculty members to implement the tools that will work for them. “We don’t want to leave faculty on their own to figure this out,” Watson says. “Their job is teaching and research, and they may not be tracking the movements, developments, and new tools available, and it’s such a dynamic marketplace. A lot of the tools start out with one focus and evolve into other uses.”

Watson recommends providing faculty members with access to the available reading groups, workshops, and conferences that are focused on AI in higher education. For example, Artificial Intelligence at Northwestern offers a number of training events, and many campus centers for teaching and learning have conferences and educational resources about AI available.

### Creating policies to govern the use of AI

To simplify the process of using valuable AI tools and rejecting any that are invaluable or present a threat to academic

ethics, colleges or individual academic departments must develop policies. The best policies will outline approved uses and establish guidelines for the appropriate use of AI by both students and faculty.


“Many institutions don’t really have an AI policy; they just added a line to their ethics policy to say AI is not allowed,” Watson says.

Such a blunt, unconsidered response to a world-changing technology is unlikely to be effective over the long term. Some institutions may want to wait to see what happens in the marketplace before they develop more robust AI policies, but the technology is unlikely to stop evolving anytime soon. For that reason, Watson recommends creating a committee that includes faculty, students, and academic leaders to develop a policy “based on what you know now,” he says. “You can announce that the policy will be updated in a year; it’s dynamic and you will see how it functions. The committee’s work is not done, but at least your faculty will have a policy to work from.”

By bringing the voices of students,

faculty, and academic leaders to the policy committee, institutions can ensure they are considering all the angles for using AI in the classroom and on campus. And with a policy grounded in the institution’s goals and stakeholders’ views, academic leaders can help faculty maximize the benefits of AI while overcoming its challenges.

When asked about the skills that will be important for faculty members moving forward, one respondent to the Educause survey said, “Adaptability will be key. Someone who isn’t flexible and isn’t [able] to face new challenges with a willingness to learn will not be able to compete at the same level as someone who can look at new technologies with a critical eye, accept the ones that are worthwhile, and reject the dead ends.”

Looking ahead, the most effective academic leaders may be those who can guide faculty members in their efforts to critically assess new technologies like AI and effectively weigh risks and rewards, incorporating it appropriately into their research and teaching. 

*“Good for specific ideas to implement and insights into today's students.”*

—Jami Huck, Instructor, Cameron University

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# Leadership Made Simple: Stay Grateful

By Rick Haas

Leadership is complex; the secret is utilizing strategies to simplify it. Successful leaders have the ability to streamline the numerous responsibilities and interacting dynamics that comprise leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Streamlining empowers influential leaders to produce the clarity needed to move people forward as a unified force.

The power of simplicity is a time-tested principle. In his 1973 collection of essays, *Small Is Beautiful*, E. F. Schumacher stated, “Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius—and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction” (p. 22). The touch of genius to which Schumacher refers is found in leaders who understand the power of gratitude and staying grateful for the opportunity to positively affect the people they lead and the world in which they live.

Sansone and Sansone (2010) describe gratitude as a general state of thankfulness and the appreciation of what is meaningful to oneself. It is essential, however, to understand that being grateful and *staying* grateful are not the same. The former is a feeling; the latter is a choice. Being grateful is easy; staying grateful is hard.

Brené Brown has spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, empathy, and gratitude. In her 2018 bestseller, *Dare to Lead*, she asserts that gratitude is one thing that all effective leaders have in common. In addition, she posits that influential leaders do not just have an attitude of gratitude; they also have a habit of practicing gratitude. Through this daily practice of gratitude, leaders create the mindset needed to stay grateful. Of the many ways to practice gratitude, Brown recommends taking time each day to observe the things we

are thankful for, using gratitude cues to trigger thoughts of gratitude, and expressing gratitude to those we lead.

Brown’s research inspired me to begin practicing gratitude in my daily life. This inspiration has resulted in three strategies that help me stay grateful for the opportunity to positively impact those I lead.

## Walks of gratitude

My gratitude practice begins with a ritual I engage in each day upon arriving on campus: my walk of gratitude. To explain my ritual, I have two options when walking from the parking lot to my office in our central administration building. Option one is shorter and quicker, while option two is longer and more time-consuming. Option one includes a small outdoor entrance, concrete stairs, and a dreary view of grey walls and old bulletin boards on the way to my office. Option two consists of a majestic outdoor entrance complete with a vast staircase, a beautifully decorated lobby, plush-carpeted stairs, and an impressive view of the central administrative suite at the top of the stairs.

A few years ago, I began to choose option two on my daily walk from the parking lot to my office. This choice was based on Brown’s recommendation to observe the things we are grateful for. Option two allows me to focus on and appreciate the beauty of our campus and central administration building, changing my perception of being at work to being on campus. The change in my perception increases my gratitude at the beginning of each day. My altered perception and increased gratitude are supported by Godwin and Hershelman’s (2021) study that showed changing someone’s perception enhances their gratitude-related perceptual lens, thereby

increasing their gratitude.

Simply said, my daily walk of gratitude instills a positive thought pattern in me at the start of each day. This positive thought pattern results in a grateful mindset that makes me a better leader throughout the day.

## Thoughts of gratitude

It has been said that if you want to change your life, you must change your thoughts. My walk of gratitude initiates a positive thought pattern that changes not only my life but also the lives of those I lead. The positive thought pattern also lays the foundation for a grateful mindset. This grateful mindset creates more positive thoughts, which, in turn, strengthen my mindset. The dynamic of a grateful mindset being strengthened by the very thoughts it produces empowers me to stay grateful throughout the day.

Best-selling author and leadership consultant Jon Gordon asserts, “We don’t burn out because of what we do; we burn out because we forget why we do what we do” (n.d.). Likewise, thoughts of gratitude help us remember why we do what we do, resulting in what Fehr et al. (2017) identify as *persistent gratitude*. As they define it, persistent gratitude is a strong tendency to choose gratefulness within a specific context. Moreover, we need cues to help establish the tendency of choosing gratefulness.

A gratitude board is a practical example of a cue that can help us remember why we do what we do. My gratitude board is on the wall directly to the left of my desk. I keep it filled with thank-you notes, personal messages, graduation announcements, and pictures students have given me over the years. So whenever frustration or impatience shows up

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during the day, a simple look to my left helps me to stay grateful by providing a powerful reminder of why I do what I do.

## Words of gratitude

Although some things may be better left unsaid, gratitude is not one of them. Words of gratitude allow us to be more specific and personal than we can be with nonverbal expressions of gratitude. One of the more powerful aspects of speaking words of gratitude is the ripple effect it creates. Once a leader shares words of gratitude with those they lead, those they lead often begin to do the same. This ripple effect results in a powerful dynamic of gratitude expressed throughout a group. Fehr et al. refer to this type of gratitude as *collective gratitude* and describe it as “enduring gratitude that is shared by the members of an organization” (p. 364).

While gratitude may be expressed publicly or in formal meetings, I have learned that words of gratitude spoken during informal conversations and casual encounters are often more impactful. Leaders must be intentional during these types of conversations and encounters. One practical example of this intentionality is to express gratitude for what others do and, more importantly, for who they are. For instance, my customary ending to a conversation is “I’m grateful for you.” Being grateful for who people are is more meaningful than just being grateful for what they do.

Leaders who practice gratitude stay grateful for the opportunities they have and for the people they lead. This gratefulness creates unity, resulting in stronger organizations that make a more significant impact on the world. Staying grateful is an individual and organizational mindset that should be practiced and enhanced throughout our careers.

Leadership is complex. Let gratitude be one of your strategies to simplify it.


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# Exploring Work-Work Balance and the Academic Department Chair

By Rebecca Pope-Ruark

One refrain I hear repeatedly from the faculty and leaders I work with via coaching, workshops, and virtual retreats is that there is simply too much work for one person to ever realistically complete. Junior professors struggle with how much time to give to teaching new classes and managing students for the first time and setting up research activities crucial to their promotion. Clinical educators juggle not only the traditional teaching, research, and service but also responsibilities to patients. Department chairs wonder how they will ever go up for full professor when their administrative and service duties take away any and all time for even thinking about research. Throw in a pandemic, and even more work arises under even more difficult conditions.

How do we as faculty, and especially as leaders such as department chairs, have time to think and focus on our most meaningful work, whatever that might be, in the face of so many competing yet simultaneous priorities? As I was exploring the literature in search of some answers, I came across a new-to-me idea that deserves more attention: that of *work-work* balance. We're all familiar with the debates around work-life balance, or integration, or fit, or whatever version is popular now, so I won't go into that here. But what exactly is work-work balance, and why should we be talking more about it? This article is a gentle exploration of the term.

In the initial article I found, [Gabrielle Griffin defines work-work balance](#) as “the ways in which workers in higher education seek to balance conflicting *concurrent* work demands made on them” (emphasis in original). In her

study of Nordic scholars in the digital humanities, she found that participants were splitting their time among home departments, interdisciplinary DH centers and projects, and the rest of their academic responsibilities in ways that, for the most part, left them all feeling some version of disappointed and disjointed; one participant described not being able to give enough time to each of their functional roles as “short-changing one [responsibility] in favor of another whilst feeling bad about the whole thing.” Griffin found that her participants' experiences consisted of constant juggling of demands, general overwork, and disheartening compromise. She argues that “those who experience work-work balance issues suffer from a variety of effects, including problems with time management in relation to the multiplicity of their concurrent demands; a lack of a sense of belonging as their distributed work-life fragments across time and space; issues with completing projects, tasks, and jobs which are left undone; and feelings of under-performance.”

It's not the most heartening of investigations, but many of us can likely empathize or relate to the participants and their overwhelm, especially those in similarly interdisciplinary fields or complex leadership roles.

Still interested in this idea of work-work balance, though, I did some more searching and found the term come up in two other academic contexts: as an article on one institution's IT blog and as a piece in a journal for clinical educators. Both look at the idea more positively and proactively than Griffin does. In [his post](#) on the Washington University of St. Louis IT website, Tim Brooks

defines and compares life-work and work-work balance, describing the latter as “making sure we have adequate time to get actual work done, and protecting our time for planning and ‘hands-on’ work. Work-work balance should also consider time for professional development, mentoring, coaching, and personal productivity.” He offers several tips to readers, including calendar blocking to make regular time for the important work that most easily goes by the wayside, such as personal projects and professional development, planning ahead for professional development commitments, and regularly discussing priorities with a supervisor.

Brooks wasn't writing to an audience of academic leaders or department chairs, but there are some takeaways: the idea of calendar blocking religiously and having a person (he names a supervisor, but it could be a colleague or a mentor) to routinely review your priorities with and help hold you accountable to your goals for all aspects of your work.

Calendar and scheduling are also major recommendations in the [other article](#) I found, in the *Canadian Medical Education Journal*. The authors report on a conference panel and roundtable discussion about work-work balance for clinical educators (CEs) whose responsibilities often exceed those of non-clinical faculty. The authors break the outcomes of the event into a 4P framework:

- Prioritize activities by having a clear understanding of personal mission and career trajectory, which is revised and updated regularly through reflection and mentoring, and being willing

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to say no to requests and opportunities that do not further those goals.

- Plan ahead by block-scheduling protected time for work that is crucial and meaningful—education work in the case of CEs—in a location where one will not be disturbed and where technology use can be limited.
- Persist with passions, which are determined through reflection and insight over time, which encourages perseverance on projects that one cares most deeply about and will make time for amid competing responsibilities.
- Partner with others, including assistants, mentors, and mentees, to move projects forward and stay in touch with priorities and professional goals.


The authors end by arguing that their framework can be used “to think about how [academics] maintain their functionality, productivity, and passion while they balance the facets of their professional lives.” And that is really the core of this discussion about work-work balance for academic leaders, I think:

maintaining functionality, productivity, and passion for the work while juggling everything else that gets thrown in the way—the bureaucracy, the paperwork, the conflict.

What might it look like for a department chair to use the 4P framework in working toward work-work balance? Perhaps regularly reviewing, updating, and referring to a purpose statement that covers the major aspects of their work, however their pie is divided, as a reminder of the reasons the work they do in all aspects of their career is meaningful and aligns with the third P, persisting with passions. We’ve already talked about scheduling, but making and protecting time on your calendar for the work that feeds your mind and for meeting with the people who share that work with you can be important as well. These are possibilities.

Other mentions of work-work balance came up in my searching, most in relation to work-life balance or encouraging freelancers to make time for not only the work that pays the bills but also the work that they aspire to—not bad advice for academics to consider either.

I share my exploration of the concept

of work-work balance not because there are easy answers to academic overwhelm, though it’s helpful to take in some of the advice shared by Brooks and the Canadian CE scholars. Instead, I share because it offers a way forward to have open conversations with deans and faculty about the realities of workload, control and autonomy, and administration writ both large and small. If we use Griffin’s definition of work-work balance as “the ways in which workers in higher education seek to balance conflicting concurrent work demands made on them,” we open a door for empirical research into how academics and department chairs manage their time, competing priorities, and personal goals. Armed with that knowledge, we can conduct impactful cultural analyses of our workplaces and develop strategies not just for individuals to manage their workloads but for institutional communities to take a hard look at how work is being done and redesign it for more humane approaches. 

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# Sharing Leadership and Moving to Culture Change to Save Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Values within Challenging State Policy Environments

By Adrianna Kezar

Today's environment for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) looks dramatically different than just a year ago. Several state legislatures are now asking colleges and universities to report on their DEI budgets as well as provide lists of the programs, trainings, services, and initiatives that focus on DEI so the state legislators can identify and cut such efforts. Legislation also targets DEI training, diversity statements in hiring and promotion, and using race or ethnicity in admissions and hiring. Florida has led the conservative backlash against DEI, but several other states—including North Carolina, North Dakota, Texas, and Tennessee—have also passed laws aimed at dismantling DEI efforts, with proposed bills in many other states across the country (“DEI Legislation Tracker,” 2023). The Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank, has developed model legislation that lawmakers in several states quickly promoted; it would abolish DEI offices and staff, eliminate the use of diversity statements in hiring, and bar training that educates staff and faculty on how to identify and fight systemic racism (Rufo et al., 2023).

Campus leaders have been unprepared for these assaults and in some cases reacted by dismantling DEI offices proactively. I want to offer another approach that can address the issue while also continuing to support DEI goals and objectives. One of the main reasons that DEI efforts are particularly vulnerable is that they have not become a norma-

tive practice ingrained within campus culture. Typically, DEI efforts are concentrated and siloed to a chief diversity officer (CDO) or DEI office that exists in parallel to the mainstream work of campus. DEI efforts are more vulnerable to attacks when they remain outside day-to-day campus operations. Separate DEI positions or offices are easy to identify and have become easy targets for political attacks from conservative politicians.

What I propose is moving toward shared equity leadership (SEL). In recent studies my colleagues and I have conducted at the University of Southern California's Pullias Center for Higher Education, we identified campuses that have made substantial progress on eliminating equity gaps and advancing their DEI agendas by using SEL (Kezar et al., 2021). Our study found that campuses that had made substantial progress on their DEI goals—despite their institutional type and contextual differences—shared a collaborative approach. Campuses that used SEL transformed in many ways that supported DEI goals. They became much more diverse in terms of hiring, promoting, and retaining of faculty and staff from diverse racial backgrounds. And the campus leaders dismantled problematic policies and practices that had stood in the way of equity.

In SEL, equity becomes everyone's work, not only that of a CDO or DEI office. This approach deeply entrenches DEI in day-to-day campus operations and

drives culture change. Embedded in faculty, administrative, and staff roles across campus, the work becomes less of a target for cuts. This approach also ensures the work has the critical mass of human resources necessary to transform institutions into equitable and inclusive spaces. We have now conducted a second phase of research that identifies in detail how SEL works by offering the organizational structures to broadly distribute work, builds capacity among campus employees about how to broadly execute, and provides the planning and accountability apparatus so that the work is sustained over time even as it is distributed among many more people.

Can SEL fully shield DEI from attacks? Not completely, as we see from bans on critical race theory, which suggest that DEI-related practices and ideas can be targeted, not just organizational structures (Zahneis & Supiano, 2023). Nonetheless, adopting SEL would certainly make it much more difficult for legislatures to locate and isolate the work for broad-scale cuts and bans. And if equity-oriented work is routinized more as a good practice, such as disaggregating data to look for equity gaps, it would be much harder to see the activity as problematic given that sound administrative practice doesn't grab headlines.

An earlier column in *Academic Leader* introduced SEL to leaders, so here we focus on how it is particularly

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attuned to this political moment. In short, though, the goal of SEL is to create culture change that embeds shared values around DEI into the core of campus operations. In SEL, leaders across campus collaborate to change organizational culture so that equity becomes everyone's work rather than siloed in a single office or within a single leader's purview. The SEL model entails three main elements: (1) *a personal journey toward critical consciousness* in which leaders solidify their commitment to equity; (2) a set of *values* that center equity and guide the work; and (3) a set of *practices* that leaders enact collectively to change inequitable structures (Kezar et al., 2021). There are nine values and 17 practices. But every individual does not have to execute every value and practice. Because it is a collaborative effort, these are aspirational characteristics that campus leaders work to adopt collectively.

It is critical to note that CDOs and central DEI offices were present at many of the SEL campuses we studied, first as catalytic agents and then as hubs to connect and coordinate the shared and distributed SEL work. But we also found that some campuses used the president's cabinet, a task force, or a council instead of a central DEI office to coordinate their culture-changing work. What is promising about SEL in today's environment is that it provides alternative models for continuing the goals of DEI when centralized DEI offices are made politically infeasible or even illegal. A campus can repurpose an existing structure or office to serve as a coordinating unit to keep culture change sustained and continue to work toward their equity goals, even in today's challenging political climate.

Our body of work on SEL provides a blueprint for campuses aspiring to transition from centralized DEI structure to a decentralized or matrix approach, with information about organizational structures, accountability, alteration of roles,


job descriptions, capacity building, and other key information. Yet it takes significant time to move from a centralized structure to a new one. It does not happen in days, weeks, or even months. Therefore, it is imperative to start now, not wait until your state or campus comes under attack.

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# Seven Things I Wish My Department Chair Would Say About Teaching

By Maryellen Weimer

Several years ago, I wrote a post for my blog that listed things department chairs could say about teaching that faculty would love to hear. Of course, to be meaningful, the comments should reflect actual policies and practices that would improve teaching and promote learning, plus make faculty happy.

A more supportive environment for teaching often involves big changes at the institutional level and new approaches that break with old traditions, which means angst for those who lead and reluctance among some who follow. However, some of what supports better teaching doesn't involve big changes and could be accomplished without a lot of brouhaha. There's some of both on this list.

To set the stage, let's imagine that this department head works at an institution where budgets are tight, everyone works hard at recruitment, and there's a commitment to retention and student success. Teaching is an important part of the institution's mission. We also must be realistic about what academic leaders at the departmental level can do, given the constraints and responsibilities of the position on most college campuses today. Like teaching, leadership is not an easy job either.

- “We need to be having **more substantive conversations about teaching and learning in our department meetings**. We talk about course content, schedules, and what we're offering next semester but rarely about our teaching and its impact on student learning. What do you think about circulating a short article, or a study with instructional implications, or even a pithy quote before some of

our meetings and then spending 30 minutes talking about it? Could you recommend some topics and/or materials for discussion?

- “I'm concerned about how we are **introducing new faculty to teaching** in this department. Do we have them teaching the courses they should be teaching? Could we improve the way we're mentoring them? How? What if we didn't put student ratings from their first year of teaching in

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*Some of what supports better teaching doesn't involve big changes and could be accomplished without a lot of brouhaha.*

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their dossier? I'm asking for recommendations and would love to hear your thoughts on the 'ideal' first-year teaching experience for a new faculty member.”

- “I've been trying to **think more creatively about teaching awards**. The big university-wide awards are few and far between, and I question the processes used to select the winners. Some of the best teachers in the department consistently focus on student learning, but they do so with

quiet, unassuming teaching styles that are not usually recognized. Then there's good work on big committee assignments like revising our curricula, always participating in those prospective student events, and advising above and beyond the call of duty. Shouldn't that work be recognized in a more public way? I'd like us to devise some sort of departmental award or recognition for different kinds of work that supports teaching and learning. Please share any thoughts or ideas you have. Is a monetary award the only option?”

- “I think we're doing **too much summative and not enough formative evaluation of teaching**. The research on student evaluations is clear. For midcareer faculty teaching the same courses, ratings do not vary all that much from one semester to the next (which says something about the power of summative assessments to improve instruction). I'd like to institute a semester-off policy. A tenured faculty member (one not up for promotion) will not be required to do the end-of-course ratings. In lieu of those, the faculty member will select and undertake a series of formative assessments. The person will not be expected to report results, only to document that the activities have been completed. Would there be support in the department for a policy like this?”
- “**I'm teaching a course this semester, and I'd welcome some feedback**. I haven't taught this course for a while and am trying some new

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approaches and different assignments. I've posted my syllabus on the course website and would appreciate your comments and suggestions. I was also wondering whether a couple of you who use in-class group work might be willing to come and observe when I try out some of the group activities I have planned."

- **"Teaching well is hard work, and I don't say thank you as often as I should.** Many of you have been teaching here for some time now, and you continue to work hard on behalf of the students. Good teaching demands focus, emotional energy,

and extraordinary time management skills. Teaching loads are not light in this department, and classes are larger than they used to be. You have reasons to complain, and you do, but you're still there for students, and for that I am deeply grateful. Please join me for lunch on Friday. We're providing a nice spread in the department office between noon and 2:00 p.m. I'd like to say thank you personally and hear more about your instructional concerns, challenges, and successes."

- "And, oh, one final thing: if you'd be willing to devote some time and energy to one or several of these areas, let's talk. I could see you being **excused from all other departmental**

**committee responsibilities** for the coming academic year in exchange for work on these projects." 

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