

# Leading Well and Working Together

Pocket Guide for Leadership Skills



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## **What is Faculty Leadership?**

Leadership in academia may take a wide variety of forms: dean, department chair, center director, chair of a committee, or principal investigator of a large grant. Overall, faculty leaders at Carolina are dedicated to furthering the core academic values and purposes that make public research universities so important to our society. These values include commitment to teaching and learning, academic excellence and integrity, public service, and shared governance and collegiality. Faculty leaders are most effective when their commitment to these values is clear to those around them and expressed in their actions.

In the collegial setting of the university, working together both in and across groups is an essential part of leadership. This guide addresses significant aspects of both task and group leadership.

This guide focuses on the most important recurring roles of faculty leaders including deans, associate deans, chairs, associate chairs, and leaders of faculty committees, and cross-department groups and task forces.

The following pages showcase ideas from some of the most respected researchers and writers on management and leadership, adapting them to be relevant and appropriate for the daily tasks of faculty leaders at Carolina.

### To lead well, faculty leaders must demonstrate competence in the following tasks:

- Setting goals
- Planning actions
- Defining problems
- Making decisions
- Supervising and being accountable
- Evaluating progress and learning from experience

### To work effectively, faculty members must involve others by:

- Leading meetings and committees
- Delegating jobs
- Recognizing, motivating, and supporting
- Managing and negotiating differences

### To help determine goals, faculty leaders can:

- Review relevant documents that show current performance and future expectations.
- Identify key stakeholders and their expectations and needs.
- Identify the current level of performance in specific terms.
- Identify the level of resources available. Have they recently changed in some way?
- Reconsider the methods used to produce results. Can you do more or better with the same or fewer resources?
- Consult others and then set a SMART goal: **S**pecific, **M**otivational, **A**ppropriate, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-framed.
- Inform the relevant people, know the new goal, and make a plan to achieve the goal.



Photo courtesy of Dan Sears,  
University Photographer.

## Planning Actions

To achieve a goal, consider the following strategies:

1. State the goal to be achieved, the time frame for achievement, and measures for success.
2. List assets and opportunities.
3. List barriers and constraints.
4. For each major asset listed, identify a positive action.
5. For each major barrier listed, identify a corrective action.
6. Select the most important actions and order them in a timely sequence.
7. For each action, identify who will complete it and specify a date.
8. Have an alternative plan in mind if there is a significant risk at any step.

*Photo courtesy of School of Information and Library Science*



## Defining Problems

When goals are not being achieved, there is a problem that needs to be understood. Faculty leaders can follow these sequences of questions in defining problems:

### Assess the facts:

- What are the observable signs of the problem?
- Where are these signs located?
- When did they begin? When were they first noticed?
- Is the level of the problem increasing, decreasing, or staying the same?
- What is the magnitude of the problem in specific terms?
- What if the problem continues?

### Assess the people:

- Who is reacting to the problem?
- What are they feeling?
- What is the basis of concern?
- What changes in behavior are we seeing?
- What if the problem continues?

### Assess the causes:

- Has something changed that could have caused the problem?
- Is this unit different in some way from other units in which no problem exists?

### Test the explanation against the facts:

- Does it explain why other similar units or groups are not having this problem?
- Does it explain the sequence of events?
- Does it take into account any changes that may have affected events?

## Making Decisions

Whether purchasing new equipment, hiring a faculty member, or implementing a strategy, faculty leaders might start the decision-making process by completing these steps:

1. State the decision needed in the format of “What is the best option for...”
2. List the goals this decision is intended to achieve. Be as specific as possible and consider the views of key stakeholders.
3. Identify the characteristics that a choice must have. Identify the desirable, but not absolutely necessary, benefits of the choice.
4. List the possible alternatives.
5. Eliminate alternatives that do not meet the “must” criteria.
6. Compare, and if possible rank, the remaining alternatives as to their likelihood of producing the desired results.
7. Identify the two or three top rated choices and ask yourself, “Is one of these choices inherently more risky than the other?” Choose the alternative that produces the best value with an acceptable risk level.

*Steps 1, 2, and 3 must **always** precede step 4. If the alternatives are on the table before the goals and criteria are discussed, the conversation can become locked into premature choices.*

## Supervising and Being Accountable

Supervising is a process of being a good guide and helper to someone you have asked to take on an important task.

Accountability is the other side of supervision. Being accountable means working as a partner to complete the task to which you have committed.

**When assigning a task, consider following these steps:**

1. Discuss the position or job; identify the duties.
2. Agree on the standards and priorities: how performance will be measured, why the job is important, and who the key stakeholders are.
3. Set aside a time to discuss how things are going.
4. Provide regular feedback and guidance.
5. Acknowledge the other person’s contributions early and often.
6. Evaluate results and discuss ways to improve.

*When relationships and tasks are new, it's important to communicate often. Once comfort and trust are established, there is less of a need to check-in.*



Photo courtesy of Dan Sears, University Photographer.

## Evaluating Progress and Learning from Experience

In some ways, evaluating progress and suggesting ways to improve performance are the most important activities in completing a task because this is when the opportunity for change and improvement is most promising.

Consider using the following sequence to help the group learn from experience:

- Assemble an evaluation group.
- State the purpose, e.g., to learn from experience or improve performance but not find fault.
- Review the goal and the plan.
- Were the steps in the plan carried out? Why or why not?
- For those steps that were carried out, what worked well and what did not go so well and why?
- What results did we obtain?
- How do we feel about things overall, and why do we feel that way?
- What are we learning that will be useful in the future?
- Are there any action steps we want to take right away?

*Leaders may need to communicate in advance with members of the group to emphasize that this is not a fault-finding session. If there is a lot of conflict within the group, it may be best to handle the evaluation one-on-one or in smaller groups.*

## Leading Meetings and Committees

The purpose of committees is to involve others in making decisions or solving problems on important academic matters. During committee meetings, a leader's style and effectiveness are on public display.

Possible steps to follow when leading a meeting:

- Consider who needs to attend.
- Provide reasonable advance notice of the meeting, ask for RSVPs, and have a defined start and end time.
- If appropriate, have members briefly introduce themselves.
- Request that participants be brief, to the point, and cognizant of the time.
- Have an agenda and keep to the time allotted for each item.
- Ask for comments on each agenda item; ask those who are silent for their views.
- Before leaving an agenda item, summarize what was decided or what will be done.
- Move things along, restate main points, and pose the next question.
- Ask someone to write down the main conclusions, decisions, and action steps.
- State how decisions will be made. Depending on the type of group or decision, you may seek consensus, take a formal vote, or reserve the final decision after getting group advice.
- State what was accomplished and thank all for their participation. End on time.
- Send notes from the meeting both to those who attended and to those who could not come.

## Delegating Jobs

Delegation is a critical survival skill for leaders. Look for opportunities to delegate tasks to those who have the ability and the willingness to help.

### When asking for someone to take on a task, you might:

- Explain what you need to have done and when it needs to be completed.
- Explain how this task fits into the bigger picture of the work and why it is important.
- Explain how individuals who contribute can benefit.
- Give guidance about how you want the job to be done.
- Ask what help might be needed.
- Make yourself available to answer questions.
- Agree on a time frame for checking on how the work is progressing.
- Give positive feedback, but be clear when you need something to be done differently or to a higher standard.
- Maintain a positive tone during interactions.
- Give public credit to the individual.
- Discuss how the delegation went and how it could have been improved.



## Recognizing, Motivating, and Supporting

Faculty leaders play a critical role in demonstrating high standards, recognizing the contributions of others, motivating good performance, and supporting effort at every level.

### Leaders motivate others when they:

- Lead by example.
- Recognize and give credit to others for their contributions.
- Enforce the rules in a fair and consistent manner.
- Identify and remove any barriers to good performance.
- Help faculty, staff, and students self-assess and set their own motivational goals.
- Keep track of and report the accomplishments of the group on a regular basis.
- Encourage and advocate for colleagues, and recommend them for rewards and opportunities that will help their careers.
- Provide opportunities for the group to self-evaluate and acknowledge accomplishments.

Differences, even conflicts, are inevitable in any work setting. Successful resolution of a conflict can lead to higher creativity in problem solving and an improved relationship among the parties.

**When an apparent difference arises that needs resolution, it is helpful to:**

- Clarify what the other party meant before taking offense or responding too quickly.
- State a desire to resolve the issue to the benefit of both parties.
- Seek to understand the other's feelings, current needs, and future concerns.
- Show you understand her or his point of view.
- State your basic concerns, and ask if he or she can see it from your point of view.
- Agree to brainstorm about how differences can be bridged.
- List ideas, without evaluating them at the time.
- Step back and assess whether there are some ideas that can be combined into a workable solution.
- Agree on an approach and an implementation plan.
- Put a plan in writing.
- Agree to check back later and see how everything went.
- Maintain a tone of respectful candor throughout and affirm the benefit of having a win-win outcome.

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*The information provided in this guide was influenced by, and draws on the ideas of, the listed references.*

