

Executive Summary : Luoma Leadership Academy 2007-2008 Group 2 – Recruiting Academic Deans at 2 Year Colleges

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Executive Sponsors: Linda Skallman, Mike McGee, Jim Lee

Team Action Items from Original Charge

- 1) Identify existing disincentives and incentives for recruiting academic deans at MnSCU 2-year colleges, both internally and externally.
- 2) Review disincentives and make recommendations for improvements
- 3) Review incentives and disincentives and recommend a marketing plan to publicize advantages of becoming an academic dean

Team Action Plan

The group met with Executive Sponsors on September 18 via ITV and quickly focused on a two-pronged approach to determine existing incentives and disincentives for serving as an academic dean at 2-year colleges within MnSCU: interviews with current deans or interim deans to provide an overview of their perspectives on the position, and a survey of 2-year faculty about their feeling toward academic deans and incentives and disincentives for serving in that role. The group met via ITV, conference calls, and face-to-face at the Luoma Annual Gathering in February 2008. Regular contact was maintained by email at all times during the year.

Final Outcomes of the Project

Interviews with Deans and Interim Deans

Members of the team surveyed Academic Deans currently serving in the MNSCU system. The complete questions and outcomes for process are attached with details via spreadsheet.

- Spread sheet #1: Interview questions and answers.
- Spread sheet #2: General outcomes and commonalities from spread sheet #1.

The team met in February and discussed initial reactions to the interviews. The following statements represent common highlights from this process.

- Clarify the roles and priorities of the Academic Dean position / MNSCU job description.
- The Academic Dean's workload appears to be excessive and ways may need to be found to eliminate tasks that could be completed by clerical staff or by creation of full or part-time positions for associate deans.
- Academic Deans should be allowed the option to continue to teach classes.
- Carefully reexamine salary scales so that compensation is commensurate with responsibilities of the position.
- Perceived MNSCU levels of bureaucracy and amount of paperwork required of academic deans appear to be a disincentive for applying for the position.

Zoomerang™ Survey for Faculty at 2-year Colleges

The survey questions were reviewed and finalized by the group at the Luoma Mid-Year Gathering in February. The finalized questions were designed to reflect the common themes gleaned from the completed interviews of Deans. The survey was sent by email to faculty at two year colleges in the MNSCU system during the month of May. The survey netted a completion rate of 9%. Responses to the survey questions have been divided into the three general sections. The sections were divided as follows:

Interest in serving in the position of dean. About 15% of the overall sample indicated an interest in applying for a position of a dean at their own or another MnSCU institution. More women appear to be interested than men and two distinct spikes of interest related to years of service appeared (those with 4-6 and those with 16 or more years of service). When offered an opportunity to consider an associate deans position, the percentage of interested faculty increased to 26%. This percentage increased to 44% when the associate position was combined with a flexible arrangement that would allow the faculty member to stay in the position or return to the faculty without loss of tenure.

Recommendations:

- Market the role of a dean to female faculty within the system.
- Faculty with 4-6 years and 16 or more years of service within MnSCU appear more highly interested in applying for the position of dean. These groups could be specifically targeted for recruitment.

- A flexible arrangement with service in an administrative position for a specified period of time and an eventual return to the faculty without loss of tenure appeared to be an attractive option. These positions may also serve to identify faculty with leadership potential and alleviate some of the perceived issues of the dean's workload (as expressed in survey comments).

Incentives and disincentives. The survey touched on the issues of respect, workload, job responsibilities, and resources. It is important to note the high proportion of faculty agreement with the statement about being satisfied with their current position as a disincentive to serving in the role of a dean. Though our group was generally instructed to focus on incentives other than economic incentives for being a dean, we did include one question that addressed that issue.

Recommendations

- Information about deans positions should highlight as an incentive the heightened respect for the position from other members of the campus community.
- Position descriptions should clearly detail specific job requirements and the varied scope of the position.
- Policies regarding the individuals return to faculty status should be clearly defined.
- Economic incentives for deans should be commensurate with the time and responsibilities involved.

Other related issues. Respondents appeared to be split when questioned about recruiting and retaining deans. A similar split was seen when asked about their understanding of what the dean actually does. There was a strong feeling that deans should be recruited internally first before performing a national search. A higher proportion of faculty indicated they were not aware of vacancies on other MnSCU campuses than those who reported knowing about them.

Recommendations

- Create and maintain opportunities for interested MnSCU faculty to move into leadership positions within the system.
- Prominently post advertised vacancies system-wide so that more faculty are aware of positions on other campuses.

Leadership Lessons from the Action Learning Project

Individual Group Member Comments

- "Buy-in" and commitment from all members to working together to find solutions to issues was essential for the success of the group.
- The varied background of group members provided greater strength to the group effort and allowed for consideration of different perspectives on the problem.
- The action learning concept can bog down a project when there are different personalities and geographical constraints. This type of project did not work well for some with dominant (D) work styles and it proved to be a source of frustration for some members of the group. The project might be revised with a simpler topic. Consider removing the action learning project from the academy and have the participants concentrate on their individual leadership goals.
- Use of the Action Learning format made group communication difficult at times and may have stifled some sharing of important ideas.
- Face-to-face meetings proved to be the most effective in moving the project forward. The Luoma Leadership Academy may wish to organize teams by geographic area or provide a modest travel stipend for group efforts.

Final Group Consensus Statement

It was a fascinating experience, working with colleagues, to accomplish a goal as specified by the leaders of the Luoma Academy. The DiSC model proved to be integral to understanding the working style of each member of the team. We made meaningful progress on our project and everyone had a valued role and contributed to the effort and final products.

The process provided us an opportunity to use the tools we worked with at Luoma during the training sessions. We encountered everyday obstacles to completing the project just as we would within our current employment positions. Many of us referred to and talked about the strategies and how to better understand this group work as a learning study. We were the subjects and analyzing the data gave us all a chance to view our own areas of strengths and weaknesses. These insights gained in a "safe" environment will allow us to strengthen individual working relationships and to become more effective leaders at our own institutions.