Academic Leadership in Ivy Tech State College: Academic Chairs’ Tasks and Job Challenges

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Ivy Tech State College

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Academic Chairs’ Tasks and Job Challenges

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Abstract

This study was conducted to establish baseline information about Ivy Tech State College academic chairs’ personal/background characteristics and to determine those chairs’ rating of the importance of their tasks and their perceptions of the job challenges they will face in the future. In addition, the study compared Ivy Tech chairs’ personal/background characteristics and perceptions of their tasks and job challenges with the findings of the 1992 International Community College Chair Survey. Although there were some statistically different ratings, in essence both samples of chairs highly rate the importance of their myriad tasks and they are in general agreement as to the severity of the challenges they face.

Research on Academic Chairs

Professional and research interest in the position of academic chairs has grown over the last three decades. Emmet (as cited in Bennett, 1983) reported that the first seminars and institutes which focused on the role of the department chair outside of disciplinary efforts took place between 1967 and 1971. The papers and presentations of these
activities (principally sponsored by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education and the American Council on Education) were published in 1972 in

The Department or Division Chairman: A Complex Role
(Brann & Emmet). In 1975 the Office of Leadership Development in Higher Education of the American Council on Education published

The Job of Academic Department Chairman
(Waltzer). In 1980 the American Council on Education formed the Departmental Leadership Institute which sponsored training and development activities for chairpersons in a number of state university systems as well as in several institutional consortia (Holtgrefe, 1996).

During the last two decades research literature has increasingly focused on the academic chair as academic leader (Creswell and England, 1994). A 1981 American Council on Education publication by Allan Tucker,

Chairing the Academic Department: Leadership Among Peers, is generally recognized as the first comprehensive text on the important issue of leading the academic department (Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, and Tucker, 1999). As evidence of his prominence in the field, Tucker’s work has been used as the core component of the American Council on Education’s Departmental Leadership Institute (Booth, 1982).

Tucker’s work has influenced practitioners and researchers alike. Journal articles, newsletters, monographs, doctoral dissertations, as well as general and research texts written throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reference Tucker’s important work while adding to the literature. In addition to the 54 varieties of tasks and duties cited in the 1992 edition of Allan Tucker’s

Chairing the Academic Department, other researchers have constructed lists specific to department chair tasks, duties, roles, and responsibilities ranging from the 97 activities discovered by a University of Nebraska research team (Creswell, Wheeler, Seagren, Egly, & Beyer, 1990) to the 40 functions cited in a study of Australian department chairs (Moses & Roe, 1990) to the 24 department chair duties categorized by Walter Gmelch and Val Miskin (1995).
But it was not only individual researchers who were interested in the importance of department chairs as academic leaders. Professional organizations and private foundations also became interested and involved as well. Kansas State University’s Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development has sponsored annual Academic Chairperson Conferences since 1983. In 1987 the Lilly Foundation and the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association and College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF) funded a project to seek better understanding of the faculty development practices of excellent chairs (Creswell, Wheeler, Seagren, Egly, & Beyer, 1990). In 1989 the Danforth Foundation and the University Council on Educational Administration funded the Center for the Study of the Department Chair at Washington State University (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993). And, in 1991 Maricopa Community College (Phoenix, AZ) established the National Chair Academy for two-year college chairs (Filan, 1999).

The Problem

Research regarding administration and academic chairs in four-year colleges and universities is well established; however, similar research regarding community colleges is scant. In her early study on leadership at the departmental level, French (1980) found that research was almost nonexistent within two-year colleges and technical schools. Dymmel (1996) found only the research of French (1980) and Winner (1989) focusing solely on the community college chair prior to the study by Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, and VanHorn-Grassmeyer (1994). Indeed, Cohen, Brawer, & Associates (1994) report that from 1982 to 1993 only 0.6 of 1 percent of the ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges literature pertained to department chairs and institutional leadership.

Although a national study of community college administrators was conducted in 1984 (Moore, Twombly, & Matorana, 1985), it was not until 1992 that the first comprehensive study of academic chairs in community colleges was conducted (Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, & VanHorn-Grassmeyer, 1994).

Statement of Purpose
The purpose of this study is to gather information about Ivy Tech State College academic chairs’ personal/background characteristics and to determine those chairs’ ratings of importance of their tasks and their perceptions of the job challenges they will face in the future. Specifically, the study will address five objectives:

- to describe academic chairs’ personal/background characteristics,
- to determine chairs’ ratings of importance of their tasks,
- to determine chairs’ perceptions of the job challenges they will face in the future,
- to determine if there are differences in chairs’ perceptions of their tasks and job challenges based on personal/background characteristics, and
- to compare Ivy Tech State College chairs’ personal/background characteristics and perceptions of their tasks and job challenges with the findings of the International Community College Chair Survey.

Research Design

The study was based on survey research methods and was exploratory in nature (Creswell, 1994). The study replicated in part the International Community College Chair study to gather information about Ivy Tech State College academic chairs. The Ivy Tech State College academic chair population was judged to be similar in professional status and institutional type to the population targeted by the International Community College Chair Survey; therefore, sections of the International Community College Chair Survey instrument were appropriate and valid for use in this study.

Population

The population for this study were the 199 full-time faculty members who were identified in the spring semester 2000 Ivy Tech State College online directory as having the word “chair” in their title. Within Ivy Tech inconsistencies exist in academic chair titles; therefore, for this study academic chairs were those full-time faculty who were responsible for the leadership and operation of all academic units, including individual programs, academic departments, and academic divisions. Fifty-eight percent (116) of the targeted participants responded to the study.
Research Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a survey questionnaire based on the International Community College Chair Survey. The International Community College Chair Survey was designed by the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln based largely on the research of McLaughlin, Montgomery, & Malpass (1975); Smart & Elton (1976); Norton (1980); Tucker (1984); Creswell, Wheeler, Seagren, Egly, & Beyer (1990); and Aldeman (1992). The National Community College Chair Academy sent 9,000 surveys to academic chairs in 1,200 two-year colleges in the United States and Canada in late 1992.

The researcher received permission from the developers of the International Community College Survey to use sections of the instrument, to modify items to make them appropriate for the Ivy Tech State College context, and to convert the survey instrument to HTML format.

The Ivy Tech State College Academic Chairs Survey consisted of 81 items in three parts. Part 1, Personal/Background Information, included 13 items selected from the first three sections of the International Community College Chair Survey. The response format for Part 1 items was a single-choice nominal scale.

Part 2, Academic Chairs' Tasks, included all 32 items in section 6 of the International Community College Chair Survey. The response format for Part 2 items was a 5-point Likert scale where 1=very important, 2=important, 3=undecided, 4=not very important, and 5=not important.

Part 3, Academic Chairs' Job Challenges, included all 36 items in section 8 of the International Community College Chair Survey. The response format for Part 3 items was a 5-point Likert scale where 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree.

Collection of Data

As a statewide system, Ivy Tech State College personnel in general and academic chairs in particular regularly use e-mail and the Internet/World Wide Web to communicate with each other. The researcher used these technologies to solicit participation, disseminate the
instrument, and collect survey data for this study.

The Ivy Tech State College Academic Chairs Survey was converted to HTML format. The survey form was constructed in such a way as to ensure that all items had to be answered before the form could be submitted, thus eliminating the possibility of missing data. Further, the survey was pilot-tested with non-participants to determine its ease of use and to ensure that mechanisms used to protect respondents' confidentiality functioned effectively.

The researcher contacted Ivy Tech State College academic chairs by e-mail and asked for their participation in the study. The e-mail provided instructions for accessing and completing the hyper-linked Web version of the Ivy Tech State College Academic Chairs Survey. The e-mail communication was constructed in such a way that each individual was an “undisclosed recipient” and the names and e-mail addresses of other participants were not available to each individual. Participants were assured that their individual responses would be kept confidential and that results of the study would be presented only in the aggregate. To protect the confidentiality of participants, names and electronic mail addresses on the submitted Ivy Tech State College Academic Chairs Surveys were masked from the researcher’s view.

Electronic mail also was used to encourage chairs to participate in this study and to increase their rate of participation. An electronic reminder was sent to participants one week after the initial request for participation. A second reminder was sent one week later to achieve an acceptable response rate.

Respondents' completed Web survey forms were automatically returned via e-mail to the researcher. The survey data was copied from e-mail into a Microsoft Word document, parsed, converted to a table, and then transferred into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet data were then transferred to a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database.

Findings

The population for this study was full-time faculty identified in the spring semester 2000 Ivy Tech State College online directory as having the word “chair” in their title. Within Ivy Tech inconsistencies exist
in academic chair titles; therefore, for this study academic chairs were those full-time faculty members who were responsible for the leadership and operation of all academic units, including individual programs, academic departments, and academic divisions. Fifty-eight percent (116) of the targeted participants (199) responded to this study. Respondents represented all Ivy Tech State College regions. However, responses from regions were uneven; that is, some regions were better represented than others were.

Program chairs accounted for 66% of the responses, department chairs accounted for 14% of the responses, division chairs accounted for 19% of the responses, and 1% was “other.” The Business Division accounted for 28% of the responses, the General Education and Support Services Division accounted for 16% of the responses, the Health and Human Services accounted for 34% of the responses, the Technology Division accounted for 19% of the responses, and the Visual Technologies Division accounted for 3% of the responses.

Personal/Background Characteristics of Ivy Tech State College Academic Chairs

Ivy Tech academic chairs are relatively young with 75% being under age 55. One percent of the respondents indicated their age as under 30 years, 28% indicated 30-44 years, 46% indicated 45-54 years, 24% indicated 55-64 years, and another one percent indicated 65 years and over. Respondents were 57% female (66) and 43% male (50). The vast majority of respondents identified their race as White (97%) with minimal representations of Native Americans (2%) or Black/African Americans (1%). The majority of respondents has at least a Master’s degree; fewer than one in five has only a Bachelor’s degree.

In general, the age, race, number of years as an academic chair, number of years in other administrative positions, experience working in K-12 schools, and experience working in four-year colleges of Ivy Tech State College academic chairs compare well with the respondents of the 1992 International Community College Chair Survey (Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, & VanHorn-Grassmeyer, 1994) and other community college faculty (Huber, 1999).

However, four aspects of comparison are strikingly different. There are differences in the
percentages of gender responses (Ivy Tech female 57%, male 43%; ICCCS female 41%, male 59%) and the number of doctorate degree responses (Ivy Tech 7%, ICCCS 24%). Also, perhaps a factor of the institutional mission, a higher percentage of Ivy Tech chairs (79%) indicated they have experience working in business/industry than did ICCCS respondents (65%). And, there are differences between the chair groups in the number of years as a faculty member in a two-year college. One way to see the difference is by looking at the years distribution as a less-than-ten-years and more-than-ten years split. In the ICCCS study, 32% of chairs had less than ten years and 68% of chairs had more than ten years as a faculty member in a two-year college. Among Ivy Tech chairs, 49% have less than ten years and 51% of chairs have more than ten years as a faculty member in a two-year college. The difference in years as a faculty member in a two-year college is interesting in that both groups have similar numbers of years experience working in a two-year college as an academic chair. Perhaps proportionately more Ivy Tech chairs are initially hired into those positions rather than being promoted into them than their ICCCS counterparts.

Importance of the Tasks Involved in the Academic Chair Role

In general, Ivy Tech chairs rated most of the 32 tasks as important; the means ranged from 1.15 to 3.17 on a 5-point scale. However, closer examination of the data suggests that certain types of tasks are viewed as more important than are others.

Ninety percent or more of Ivy Tech chairs rated 15 tasks as “very important” or “important”: creating a positive work environment, recruiting and selecting faculty, updating curriculum and courses, scheduling classes, communicating needs to upper-level administrators, providing feedback to faculty, communicating information from administration to unit faculty, assigning faculty responsibilities, advising and counseling students, developing long-range unit plans, setting personal and professional goals, preparing for accreditation, evaluating faculty performance, processing paperwork and answering correspondence, and encouraging the professional development of each faculty member.

Four administration-related tasks were rated as least important by Ivy Tech chairs: maintaining unit data bases, creating unit committees,
preparing enrollment projections, and seeking external funding.

Academic chairs highly value involvement with faculty and students (Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Griffith & Connor, 1994; Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, & VanHorn-Grasmeyer, 1994; and Gmelch & Miskin, 1995). Particularly, Ivy Tech chairs highly rate the importance of creating a positive work environment, recruiting and selecting faculty, serving as a communication link between faculty and administration, and encouraging faculty professional development. Also, they highly rate student-related tasks such as updating curriculum and courses, scheduling classes, and advising and counseling students. And, although administration-related tasks are generally not rated as high, Ivy Tech chairs do rate as important tasks that deal with developing long-range unit plans and preparing for accreditation.

Job Challenges Expected in the Next Five Years

Ivy Tech chairs rated the 36 job challenges as ones they are likely to encounter in the future; the means ranged from 1.18 to 3.24 on a 5-point scale. Examination of the data suggests that certain types of job challenges were more likely to be encountered than are others.

Ninety percent or more of Ivy Tech chairs “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are likely to encounter the following eight job challenges in the next five years: maintaining a high quality faculty, increasing the use of computers in the classroom, changing the curriculum in response to technological development, maintaining program quality, strengthening the curriculum, employing new teaching techniques, securing and maintaining state-of-the-art technical equipment, and responding to the needs of a wider range of students.

Ivy Tech chairs believe they are least likely to encounter the following six job challenges: using quality management techniques (e.g., TQM), increasing teaching programs sponsored by specific companies, internationalizing the curriculum, increasing general education requirements, increasing involvement of the U.S. government in establishing work conditions in colleges, and decreasing growth in transfer programs.

Consistent with the literature (Baker, Roueche, & Gillet-Karam, 1990; Angelo & Cross, 1993; Guskin, 1994; O’Banion &
job challenges involving teaching and learning are the ones that Ivy Tech chairs believe they are most likely to encounter in the next five years. However, although they expect to encounter challenges involving high quality faculty and maintaining program quality, Ivy Tech chairs believe they are not as likely to use quality management techniques such as TQM.

Two other aspects of Ivy Tech chairs’ expectations of job challenges appear to be dichotomous. Given Ivy Tech’s key role in workforce development, it is perhaps surprising that Ivy Tech chairs believe there is less likelihood of their involvement with teaching programs sponsored by specific companies. It is similarly surprising that although Ivy Tech chairs believe in the likelihood of the increasing growth in transfer programs, they do not believe in the likelihood of increasing general education requirements.

Differences in Task Ratings by Academic Division, Gender, and the Number of Years Working in a Two-Year College as an Academic Chair

Ivy Tech academic chairs across all academic divisions are generally in agreement in their ratings of task importance. However, some important differences do exist. For instance, the General Education and Support Services Division rated the Curriculum and Students Tasks factor and the External Tasks factor statistically lower than did the other academic divisions. The Health and Human Services Division rated the Planning Tasks factor significantly higher than did the other academic divisions.

Furthermore, significant differences exist in the way men and women view the tasks. Females rated three tasks factors higher than did males: the Professional Development and Communication Tasks factor, the Curriculum and Students Tasks factor, and the Planning Tasks factor. The finding that Ivy Tech female chairs rated some tasks significantly higher than their male counterparts is consistent with the findings of the 1992 International Community College Chair study in which females were more likely than males to rate tasks as important (Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, & VanHorn-Grassmeyer, 1994, p. 102).
However, no significant difference was found in the task ratings of Ivy Tech chairs based on the number of years they have worked in two-year colleges as an academic chair. It may have been anticipated that ratings given by chairs with fewer years experience would be different from the ratings of their peers with more years of experience. However, that was not evidenced.

Differences in Job Challenges Ratings by Academic Division, Gender, and the Number of Years Working in a Two-Year College as an Academic Chair

As with their task ratings, Ivy Tech academic chairs across all academic divisions are generally in agreement in their ratings of job challenges they are likely to encounter in the next five years. However, the Health and Human Services Division did rate the Faculty Challenges factor significantly higher than did the other academic divisions.

Also, significant differences exist in the responses of women and men. Females rate the Faculty Challenges factor and the Student Challenges factor higher than do males. Again, consistent with the 1992 International Community College Chair study, females are more likely than males to agree regarding the job challenges they are likely to encounter (Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, & VanHorn-Grasmeyer, 1994, p. 120).

As with their rating of tasks, there were no significant differences in the job challenges ratings of Ivy Tech chairs based on the number of years they have worked in two-year colleges as an academic chair. Again, it may have been anticipated that ratings given by chairs with fewer years experience would be different from the ratings of their peers with more years of experience.

Comparison of Ivy Tech Chairs’ and ICCCS Chairs’ Perceptions of Tasks and Job Challenges

Both Ivy Tech chairs and the academic chairs of the 1992 International Community Chair study highly rate the importance of their myriad tasks and they are in general agreement as to the challenges they are likely to encounter. However, Ivy Tech chairs tended to rate tasks and job challenges higher than did chairs in the International Community Chair study.
Ivy Tech academic chairs rated the following 13 tasks higher at a statistical level of difference than did the respondents of the 1992 International Community Chair study.

- Creating a positive work environment
- Recruiting and selecting faculty
- Providing feedback to faculty
- Terminating faculty
- Evaluating faculty performance
- Updating curriculum and courses
- Scheduling classes
- Advising and counseling students
- Helping students register
- Recruiting students
- Preparing for accreditation
- Developing relationships with business and community groups
- Managing facilities and equipment

Ivy Tech chairs rated four tasks statistically less important than did the respondents of the 1992 study: monitoring unit budgets, preparing unit budgets, conducting unit meetings, and creating unit committees.

The reasons that Ivy Tech academic chairs rated these tasks so differently from the chairs who participated in the 1992 study are open to speculation. The higher ratings may suggest that Ivy Tech chairs feel that they have more expertise and are more empowered to exert leadership in areas related to bringing about high quality programs and services and strengthening teaching and curriculum development. Ivy Tech chairs may also perceive that they have a greater role in and more responsibility for activities that directly impact student success and community relations than did the participants of the earlier study. Furthermore, the lower ratings for items related to budget may reflect chairs’ perceptions that Ivy Tech’s budget process is highly centralized.
Whatever statistically significant differences in task ratings exist between the two groups of academic chairs studied, perhaps a practical way to view their comparison of task importance is by priority ranking. Table 1 shows the priority comparison of the tasks as ranked (mean scores) by Ivy Tech academic chairs and the participants of the International Community College Chair study (ICCCS). Although differences exist, the priority ranking of task importance by both samples of academic chairs is similar.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Ivy Tech Ranking</th>
<th>ICCCS Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Create a positive work environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Recruit and select faculty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Update curriculum and courses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Provide feedback to faculty</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Schedule classes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>Communicate needs to upper-level administrators</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Advise and counsel students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Prepare for accreditation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>Set personal and professional goals</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Develop long-range unit plans</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Communicate information from administration to unit faculty</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>Encourage the professional development of each faculty member</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Evaluate faculty performance</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Assign faculty responsibilities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>Integrate unit plans with institutional plans</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Develop relationships with business and community groups</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>Process paperwork and answer correspondence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>Help students register</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Recruit students</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>Allocate resources to priority activities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>Manage facilities and equipment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>Monitor unit budgets</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Conduct unit meetings</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>Prepare unit budgets</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>Promote affirmative action</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Terminate faculty</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>Develop clerical/technical staff</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>Supervise clerical/technical staff</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Maintain unit data bases</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ivy Tech State College academic chairs rated the following 19 job challenges higher at a statistical level of difference than did the respondents of the 1992 International Community Chair study.

- Maintaining a high quality faculty
- Employing new teaching techniques
- Providing leadership training for faculty and chairs
- Identifying unit leadership potential from among the faculty
- Adapting to employees who utilize electronic communication systems and who work at home
- Addressing issues of training for senior faculty
- Changing the curriculum in response to technological development
- Increasing the use of computers in the classroom
- Attracting new student populations
- Developing efficient advisory and registration systems and procedures
- Offering courses through distance education
- Increasing emphasis on the transfer program
- Encouraging more technical preparation in high schools
- Securing and maintaining state-of-the-art technical equipment
- Increasing influence and impact of accrediting bodies
- Increasing influence and impact of state coordinating bodies
- Increasing the use of business and industry advisory committees
- Keeping pace with the increasing cost of technology
- Increasing involvement of the U.S. government in establishing work conditions in colleges

Increasing general education requirements was the single item Ivy Tech chairs believe they
are less likely to encounter (at a significance level of p=.001).

It is interesting to speculate why Ivy Tech chairs rated these job challenges so likely to be encountered in the next five years. The College's current situation could be a significant factor in chairs’ perceptions about challenges. As a result of the recently mandated partnership of Ivy Tech State College and Vincennes University to form Indiana’s first community college system, chairs may perceive that the College is being challenged to fulfill an expanded mission. Ivy Tech chairs may also feel inspired and challenged by the convergence of critical forces that are moving the College to the threshold of transformational change and, by extension, is changing their role and function as academic chairs. From among the multitude of challenges, chairs may perceive the following challenges as more influential in the transformation of Ivy Tech State College: the increasing professionalism in the faculty ranks, the increasing emphasis on statewide institutional and regional program accreditation, and the increasing emphasis on articulation and transfer programs with senior institutions.

Again, whatever statistically significant differences exist in perception of job challenges between the two groups, perhaps a practical way to view their comparison is by priority ranking. Table 2 shows the priority comparison of the job challenges as ranked (mean scores) by Ivy Tech academic chairs and the participants of the 1992 International Community College Chair study (ICCCS). Again, although differences exist, the priority ranking of job challenges by both samples of academic chairs is similar.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Ivy Tech ranking</th>
<th>ICCCS ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.25</th>
<th>Maintaining a high quality faculty</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>Maintaining program quality</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Changing the curriculum in response to technological development</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>Strengthening the curriculum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>Increasing the use of computers in the classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Securing and maintaining state-of-the-art technical equipment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>Employing new teaching techniques</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Responding to the needs of a wider range of students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Keeping pace with the increasing cost of technology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>Attracting new student populations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>Developing efficient advisory and registration systems and procedures</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>Providing leadership training for faculty and chairs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>Identifying unit leadership potential from among the faculty</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Offering courses through distance education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>Obtaining financial resources</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>Addressing accountability issues</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>Increasing emphasis on the transfer program</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>Utilizing more faculty development techniques such as classroom assessment, peer coaching, etc.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>Increasing influence and impact of accrediting bodies</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Increasing influence and impact of state coordinating bodies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>Serving at-risk students</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Accommodating cultural diversity</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Reallocating monies to programs because of financial constraints</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>Addressing issues of training for senior faculty</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Encouraging more technical preparation in high schools</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Increasing the use of business and industry advisory committees</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Adapting to employees who utilize electronic communication systems and who work at home</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Promoting gender equity</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>Maintaining the physical plant</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Increasing human relations training</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>Using quality management techniques (e.g., TQM)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>Increasing teaching programs sponsored by specific companies</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Internationalizing the curriculum</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Increasing general education requirements</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>Increasing involvement of the U.S. government in</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
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</table>
3.10 Decreasing growth in transfer programs

- Implications for Practice

Personal/Background Information of Ivy Tech State College Academic Chairs

Two aspects of the demographics of Ivy Tech chairs have implications for the future. One issue is the stability of academic chair leadership within Ivy Tech. Although Ivy Tech chairs are relatively young with 75% being under age 55, approximately one-fourth of Ivy Tech chairs are between 55 and 64 years old which indicates that not only should some number of retirements be anticipated but that some number of replacements due to career change should be anticipated as well. The second issue of demographics is that 97% of Ivy Tech chairs are White; that is, the racial/ethnic make up of Ivy Tech chairs does not mirror the racial/ethnic diversity of the state. The 2000 census is expect to report greater racial/ethnic diversity than the 1990 census that reported the racial/ethnic distribution of Indiana as American Indian (0.2%), Asian (0.9%), Black (8.2%), White (90.6%), and Hispanic of any race (2.3%). Future recruitment and hiring/appointing of Black and Hispanic chairs should be given particular consideration. This hiring consideration applies not only to academic chairs, of course, but also must be extended to other faculty and staff as well along with the attendant professional development and mentoring support required for their success.

Ivy Tech Academic Chairs’ Ratings of Importance of Their Tasks

Ivy Tech chairs highly rate the importance of the majority of their myriad tasks—particularly the tasks that directly relate to creating a positive teaching-learning environment. Chairs highly value tasks involving working directly with faculty and students, communicating with faculty and administration, encouraging the professional development of faculty, updating curriculum and courses, scheduling classes, and helping to ensure student success through advising and counseling.

Developing long-range unit plans and preparing for accreditation are
also highly rated by Ivy Tech chairs. It is important that chairs remain involved in planning, accreditation, and institutional effectiveness activities. Chair involvement is important not only because Ivy Tech State College is now accredited as a statewide institution by the North Central Association, but also because there is an increasing trend for accreditation at the program level in addition to institutional accreditation by such organizations as the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, the National League for Nursing, and the National Association of Industrial Technology.

The tasks that Ivy Tech chairs give the lowest ratings of importance are administration-related tasks, particularly budgeting and seeking external funding. Because administration-related tasks are given such prominence in the literature (Creswell, Wheeler, Seagren, Egly & Beyer, 1990; Kable, 1992; Tucker, 1992; Seagren, Creswell & Wheeler, 1993; Gmelch & Miskin, 1995; Leaming, 1998; Miller, Benton & Vacik, 1998; Hect, Higgerson, Gmelch & Tucker, 1999; Lucas & Associates, 2000), an opportunity exists for the College to more actively involve chairs in budgeting and external funding activities.

Ivy Tech Academic Chairs’ Perceptions of the Job Challenges They Will Face in the Next Five Years

Ivy Tech chairs are in strong agreement that the challenges they are most likely to face involve teaching and learning: maintaining a high quality faculty, maintaining program quality, strengthening the curriculum and changing the curriculum in response to technological development, securing and maintaining state-of-the-art technical equipment, increasing the use of computers in the classroom, employing new teaching techniques, and responding to the needs of a wider range of students.

Nonetheless, particular consideration should be given to two seemingly opposing perceptions. Ivy Tech chairs give a relatively high rating to increasing emphasis on the transfer program and a relatively low rating to increasing general education requirements. These seemingly opposing ratings may have ambiguous implications for the impending implementation of a community college system for Indiana. Transfer programs (A.S. degrees) typically require more general education courses than do programs that are not specifically designed to transfer to four-year colleges and universities.
Professional Development for Academic Chairs

A common and overriding issue identified in the research literature on academic chairs is that ongoing professional development is needed for academic chairs to efficiently handle their essential tasks and to effectively deal with the critical challenges they face (Scott, 1990; Tucker, 1981; Goldenberg, 1990; Hickson and Stacks, 1992; Hirshberg, 1992; Palmer & Vaughan, 1992; Seagren, Creswell, & Wheeler, 1993; Lucas, 1994, Gmelch and Miskin, 1995; Roueche, Roueche & Milliron, 1995; Bayer & Braxton, 1998; Leaming, 1998; Filan, 1999; Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, & Tucker, 1999; and Lucas & Associates, 2000).

In response to this need for the professional development of academic chairs, Ivy Tech has an opportunity to establish an Academy for Academic Chairs fashioned in much the same way as the already existing Leadership Academy and Instructional Excellence Academy. Topics that might form the content for an envisioned Academy for Academic Chairs might follow the structure of the 1992 International Community College Chair study: educational beliefs and values, roles, tasks, skills, job challenges, and strategies for success. Ideas for content and structure may also be gleaned from the American Council on Education and the National Community College Chair Academy.

Recommendations for Future Study

Based on the findings of this study and the implications for practice presented above, the following recommendations for future studies are made.

- Other aspects of the International Community College Chair Survey may be used to further compare Ivy Tech State College academic chairs with the participants of that study: educational beliefs and values, roles, skills, and strategies.

- A study could be developed within Ivy Tech State College to compare by regional campus the perceptions of academic chairs regarding the importance of their tasks and the job challenges they face.

- A study could be developed that investigated the criteria, processes, and procedures Ivy Tech deans of academic affairs use to recruit and select their academic chairs.

- A qualitative study could be developed regarding how well academic chairs fulfill their roles and responsibilities as perceived by their academic deans.
• A study of the perceptions of Ivy Tech faculty regarding how well academic chairs fulfill their roles could be developed.

• An assessment of the professional development needs of Ivy Tech chairs could be developed as a study.

• A qualitative study that examines how Ivy Tech chairs accommodate change to effectively meet their critical job challenges could be pursued.

As a closing note, researchers are agreed that academic chairs occupy a vital and critical leadership position within their institutions. As community colleges face change, the department (or division), chair position has taken on an increasingly important role. The chair has daily contact with faculty, students, and administrators, and is subsequently seen as the individual most responsible for assuring academic quality. (Seagren, Wheeler, Creswell, Miller, &VanHorn-Grassmeyer, 1994, p. 10)

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