You’re a new department chair: 

Now what?

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Our afternoon

Introduction (5 minutes)

Introduce yourselves (20 minutes)

Basic training (15 minutes)

Short break

Breakout groups addressing typical situations (30 minutes)

Reporting back recommendations and discussion (30 minutes)

Conclusions (15 minutes)
Expect to feel like a new assistant professor
Is this familiar?

Senior professor Major drops by at 6pm on your first day as new chair. He congratulates you on your new position, commiserates with you, and announces “This is a great opportunity for us to get a few things straight, so that you can be a successful chair.”

He then gives you a list of personal demands...
Or this?

The faculty search committee reports that, despite their best efforts, they couldn’t find any qualified women to interview. The Dean calls you to complain that your department is the most unfriendly to women in the school.
Why did you take the job?

What’s one thing you hope to learn today?
Introductions
Basic advice

1. Set priorities by making 5-year plans (departmental and personal)
2. Reach out to everyone (faculty, staff, postdocs, student leaders); listen. Keep listening.
3. Delegate.
4. Groom your successor.
5. Reserve at least ½-day weekly for uninterrupted time for reflection and research.
6. Take care of your health and relationships.
Break (5 minutes)
Scenario 1

You have a few heroic faculty members who are excellent teachers and mentors and dedicated in service. A few others make only minimal effort, in order to avoid being asked again.

Who do you assign to the graduate exam committee? To a tenure committee? To teach a service course?
What is the assignment process? Is it equitable?
Scenario 2

The university plans a new physics building. They invite you to meet with architects and to create a timeline for moving. Several faculty members come to you requesting the corner office. How do you organize and plan the building?
Scenario 3

You are a new chair and the youngest tenured faculty member in the department. You’re now the boss of the chair who hired you. How should you interact with her? How does your relationship with students change? Are there cultural changes beyond your control?
Scenario 4

You have never managed a budget aside from that in your NSF grant. Now you have $2M for faculty and staff salaries, the physics colloquium series, student activities, etc. The previous chair left you a budget deficit.

A newly tenured faculty member comes to you with a great idea for curricular reform. Will you pay for it?
Scenario 5

A faculty member tells you that a student in her lab has complained privately about sexual harassment, and has requested confidentiality. What should you do?
Scenario 6

A staff member begins missing deadlines, comes repeatedly late to work, and looks haggard.

What is happening and how should you respond?

Does it matter who the staff member is?
Scenario 7

You would like to hire a new condensed matter experimentalist but don’t have adequate lab space. The chemistry department, located in your building, seems to have underutilized space. Two chemistry faculty members have recently left, closing down big labs.

How do you negotiate?
Scenario 8

Your department has never had an effective annual review for faculty members. The Dean asks you to implement one. How will you assess performance, give feedback and recommend merit increases?
Scenario 9

A star faculty member asks to teach a class of her own choice instead of the one you think is needed. What do you do?
Scenario 10

A faculty member teaching freshman mechanics illustrates projectile motion by showing a video clip of bikini-clad women playing beach volleyball. Male students giggle and so does the professor. Women students demand that the professor be fired. When you speak with him, the professor insists he has academic freedom.

How will you respond?
Scenario 11

Your senior faculty members strongly advocate tenure for a junior faculty member whom you think won’t meet the Dean’s standards. What do you do?
Scenario 12

An alum of the department asks to meet with you saying “I’m interested in helping the department.” How do you prepare for the meeting, what do you expect to happen, and how will you handle it?
Scenario 13

A faculty member calls you to say that a student in academic trouble in his class has sent him an email saying she is thinking of suicide.
Ed’s slogans

1. You get to set the agenda.
2. Show respect.
3. People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care (T. Roosevelt).
4. It’s easier to ask forgiveness than it is to get permission (G. Hopper).
5. Leadership implies creative tension.
6. Cultivate loyal dissent.
7. The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place (G. B. Shaw).
8. Remember to smile and say thank you.
Advice from Talat Rahman

1. Know your environment: who are the key players, who will get the job done.
2. Ask why you are there? What brought you to this position?
3. How will you accomplish your goals?
4. Lay down some guiding principles that will help you attain these goals. Discuss these with your colleagues and get their input. If they are on board, you are in good shape. If they are not on board, discuss what they see as obstacles. Get a consensus on what you want to achieve in the long run.
5. You are a friend to all and at the same time to none: you have to be neutral and not let your personal relationship get in the way of any decision that you make. If you are fair, they will respect you.
6. If someone is adversarial to you, it is probably because of your position and not you as a person.
6. Evaluate departmental climate by taking a look from all angles and input from broad quarters. The ones most affected by a negative environment are the least likely to open up.

7. A nurturing environment is good for all. Find some common themes that help unite all: education, for example.

8. Get staff on board to create a better environment for everyone. They are usually the ones most sensitive to student and diversity issues. Empower your staff and your students.

9. Treat your staff as colleagues: this is catchy as pretty soon everyone becomes a colleague.

10. Work directly with students and have an open-door policy for their concerns. Do not betray their trust. Faculty-student issues can usually be resolved if handled with care and if you take a neutral position. The student needs to graduate and move on. Even though his/her difficulties are temporary, they can have a lifelong impact. So best to show them a way to resolve conflicts which they can use as they move onwards in life.
Managing up

To create an ally, don’t go to the Dean with only problems. Bring solutions. Identify and solve your Dean’s problems.
John Kotter: Leading Change

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create a guiding coalition
3. Develop a vision and strategy
4. Communicate the change vision
5. Empower employees for action
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change
8. Anchor new approaches in the culture
Essential Reading (handouts available)

4. The Chair’s Role in Facilitating a Collegial Department, R. E. Cipriano (book chapter)
5. *Improving the Status of Women in Physics (and Astronomy) Departments*, E. Bertschinger (AAS Newsletter)
6. UMichigan ADVANCE website, [http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance/home](http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance/home)
Next steps

Join a peer network:

Midwest Physics Chairs listserv and annual meeting
http://list.msu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=MIDWESTCHAIRS&A=1
http://www.physics.purdue.edu/midwestchairs/2012/

Departmental policies to adapt, improve:

http://web.mit.edu/physics/policies/

Add to your bookshelf:

Getting Things Done by David Allen
The College Administrator’s Survival Guide by C. K. Gunsalus
Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher and William Ury
Crucial Conversations by Kerry Patterson et al.
The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey
How do you now answer this greeting:

*Congratulations – or should it be condolences?*