TO: College Deans and Unit Committees Responsible for Evaluating Selected UIUC Administrators (Deans, Directors, Heads, Chairpersons)

FROM: John C. Ory
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RE: Suggestions and Guidelines for Planning and Conducting a Periodic Evaluation of a UIUC Administrator

For several years we have worked with committees on the evaluation of department heads /chairpersons, directors, and academic deans. Based on this experience, we are listing some questions about evaluation of administrators that we think are worth asking when an evaluation of an administrator is undertaken. In evaluating an administrator, you need to take into account both the University of Illinois Statutes (www.uillinois.edu/about/statutes.html#sec33) and intent of the evaluation. The statutes vary in the wording about evaluation of deans, directors, and department heads and chairpersons. For the evaluation of deans of colleges, the University of Illinois Statutes state (Article III, Section 3) that "the performance of the dean shall be evaluated at least once every five years in a manner to be determined by the college faculty." For the evaluation of deans or directors of a school or similar campus unit (Article III, Section 5), of department chairpersons (Article IV, Section 2), of department heads (Article IV, Section 3), "the performance of [the administrator] shall be evaluated at least once every five years. As one component of this evaluation, views should be solicited for the entire faculty of the appropriate unit [school or department]." Initial evaluations are conducted during the fifth year of appointment. Subsequent evaluations are conducted following five additional years of service (e.g., the second evaluation would be done in the eleventh year). We also recommend that you review the Urbana-Champaign's Senate approved guidelines for the conduct of dean evaluations. (A copy is enclosed for your use.)

Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor Delia advocates two major uses of these evaluations. One is to deliver a useful and trustworthy evaluation to the administrator to whom the person being evaluated reports. This purpose can best be served if a high degree of confidentiality about the contents of the evaluation is preserved. Thus, the distribution of the evaluation should be carefully considered. Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor Delia has endorsed the principle that only those with a need to know should have access to the report. (Specific guidelines about the distribution of an evaluation report are presented on Page 5 of this memo.)

The second use is to provide information to the administrators with the intent of helping them better understand their competencies as a leader and promoting a more productive working relationship between the unit faculty and staff and the administrator being evaluated. Questions to consider in planning an evaluation include:

1. ***What are your current college policies on administrator evaluation***? Each college has on file in the Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor a policy about the evaluation of deans, directors of schools or similar units within a college and departmental administrators. These policies should be reviewed in light of the above comments. If revisions are made, they should be submitted to the college executive committee (or college faculty, depending on current procedures and/or college

Bylaws) and to the Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for review and approval.

2. ***Have you included a section on the administrator's performance in the areas of equal opportunity and affirmative action***? Beginning in 1988-89 all administrator evaluations must include an assessment of an administrator's performance in the areas of equal opportunity and affirmative action, i.e., in the recruitment, appointment, and promotion of the designated/protected classes.

3. ***What are the responsibilities of an evaluation committee***? The following list of activities is suggestive; not all committees will decide to engage in all activities. The committees may perform these tasks in somewhat temporal order:

(a) meet with the administrator being evaluated to receive information about the administrator's perspective of the position, goals for the unit, most important successes as administrator of unit, most critical failures and reasons for these failures, and own administrative style;

(b) develop an evaluation plan including sources and records, identify persons who will provide evaluative information about the administrator, and how the information will be collected, summarized, interpreted, and communicated to the various constituencies;

(c) inform the faculty of the unit of the evaluation plan;

(d) select or design instruments for collecting evaluative information;

(e) protect the confidentiality of the identity of individuals providing evaluative information;

(f) interpret the evaluative information collected from the sources;

(g) meet with administrator to whom the person being evaluated reports to discuss contents of evaluation report; and

(h) work with the administrator to whom the person being evaluated reports on a plan to communicate to the unit faculty the procedures used in the evaluation and a summary of the evaluation findings.

The planning of the evaluation is critical. The credibility and fairness of the evaluation, as perceived by the faculty and the person being evaluated, are essential in this type of evaluation. At a minimum, the evaluation plan should be made public as early as possible and discussed at a faculty meeting if considered appropriate and feasible. The political climate of the unit may influence the amount of negotiation and consultation needed with the faculty and the administrator being evaluated.

4. ***What dimensions of administrator performance should be included in the evaluation***? We suggest two ways to think of administrator effectiveness. First, effectiveness is the extent to which the administrator performs assigned and expected responsibilities and tasks, including commitment to affirmative action. For example, how well does the head/chair recruit new faculty, handle the promotion process, communicate faculty needs to the dean, facilitate curricular changes and promote faculty scholarship? Appendix A includes the University of Illinois Administrator Evaluation Catalog. Twelve core items are listed since these items cover the range of responsibilities of most department heads/chairs. The remainder of the Catalog includes items classified by different functional areas. You can select items from the Catalog that reflect responsibilities of the

administrator you are evaluating. Judging effectiveness is not to be solely based on opinions of the faculty or other groups. Information about changes in departmental successes in receiving grants, hiring new faculty, and in the relative standing of the unit (department, college) with its peers on a national level can be very helpful in assessing the contributions of the administrator as the administrative leader of the unit. The intent should not be to evaluate the unit since this is the function of COPE. However, information from the Campus Profile and other records can be used to provide a context for the evaluation of the person in the administrative position.

A second way to assess effectiveness is by rating administrator style; i.e., how does an administrator behave in carrying out his/her responsibilities; what qualities, characteristics, skills does the administrator have? Since questions of style invoke questions of personality traits, there is no agreed upon set of qualities that emerge as those of a model administrator.

If you ask questions about style, you should have a reason for doing so. It is important not to equate a certain style of behaving with effectiveness, since one style is not universally effective. The needs of the department and the context should be taken into account in assessing the effectiveness of an administrator. Thus if style questions are used, they should primarily be used for discussion of how the administrator can improve. Diagnosis of problems rather than a summative judgment of effectiveness should be the primary reason for including them.

5. ***From whom should evaluative information be obtained***? Six major sources are listed that can be used. A general guideline is to collect information from as many sources as feasible. Each of the five groups of persons listed has a different perspective. The sources are:

(a) Faculty of the unit. The Statutes require this source be used if deans or directors of schools or units, department heads and chairpersons are evaluated. The University of Illinois Statutes, Article III, Section 5 and Article IV, Sections 2 and 3 state as "one component of this evaluation, views will be solicited from the entire department/unit faculty."

(b) Academic professionals and staff. One or both of these groups have often been used if the number in the unit is sufficiently large (over fifteen) and if the administrator works closely with these groups.

(c) Students. Students, particularly graduate students and teaching assistants, can provide useful information. However, these groups should only be asked if they have had sufficient experience in departmental activities and personally interacted to some extent with the head.

(d) Administrator being evaluated. Self evaluation has been used, but a person's judgment about his/her own accomplishments should be used judiciously. However, a meeting between the administrator and the evaluation committee can be very beneficial for both the committee and administrator. The administrator can present his/her views about goals for the unit, most important successes as administrator of unit, most critical failures, and reasons and obstacles for these failures, and own administrative style.

(e) Colleagues from other units. Other department chairpersons and deans have been included as sources, but information from colleagues from other units has not been very satisfactory. They may be reluctant to comment, and their assessments are limited in focus because of their infrequent contact with the person being evaluated.

(f) External advisory committees. If the administrator works closely with an external advisory committee, the members can sometimes provide a different perspective. However if such advice is sought, caution is needed in designing the evaluation questions so that those evaluating can evaluate from knowledge rather than hearsay or from only a general impression gained from an annual meeting or an infrequent social event.

(g) Records. Information such as that included in the COPE Evaluations and Campus Profile can be used to obtain an understanding of the unit and an indication of the possible impact on the person's leadership on the unit.

Some general guidelines are useful in selecting sources. First, those asked to evaluate must have direct knowledge of the situation and the administrator so they have a basis for judging. If the knowledge appears secondhand, very little can be gained. Second, the groups need to be large enough to protect the confidentiality of a member of that particular group. For example, if only three members are on an advisory committee, the identity of the members may be possible by an examination of the nature of the comments given. The same guidelines should be used if faculty are asked to provide biographical information on the survey (e.g., tenure status, professorial rank). As a rule, the subgroup should have at least ten members.

6. ***What methods can be used to collect the evaluative information***? Four major methods have been employed to collect the evaluative information. They are:

(a) Written survey or questionnaire. A list of twenty to thirty items with fixed alternatives are often included on a form and the raters indicate on some numerical scale their rating of each item. These items can include a wide range of responsibilities and administrative styles as described in question 3.

(b) Open-ended questions. Faculty are given one to four questions and are asked to judge the effectiveness of the administrator. Generally the questions are very open-ended, such as "please comment on your administrator." "Comment on the major strengths and weaknesses," and "In what areas should the administrator concentrate as a department head/chair (dean, director) in the next two or three years? One or two questions are recommended. Asking only a few open-ended questions has worked rather successfully. These questions may be included in a letter sent to all faculty by the evaluation committee, and the faculty asked to respond in letter form as well.

(c) Interviews. Those evaluating are selected or invited to be interviewed by one or two members of the evaluation committee for their views of the administrator of the unit. Questions asked are generally semi-structured and may include items about the effectiveness of the administrator to carrying out responsibilities as well as administrative style. If more than one person does the interviewing, a written interview schedule should be used so that the same questions are asked of all interviewees. Faculty interviewing is very labor intensive, but it can be the best method to collect information considered sensitive. If interviews are made, a tape recording does not seem necessary; rather the interviewers upon the completion of the interview should be encouraged to write a brief one or two page summary. If verbatim quotes are included, they should be used with discretion so that the confidentiality of the person making the comments is protected.

(d) Open meetings. The committee may arrange for an open meeting in which constituencies are invited to attend if they wish to discuss the evaluation of the head/chairperson (dean, director). The representativeness of the opinions must be taken into consideration since those with extreme positions are more likely to attend and voice their opinions.

7. ***How can evaluative information be summarized and interpreted***? Summarizing and interpreting all the information collected can be very difficult. Perhaps the best guideline for insuring fairness in interpreting the results is to have the entire committee review all of the raw data, meet to

discuss the data, assign writers to draft a report, and discuss the drafts before the report is distributed to the audiences.

Statistical summaries of the faculty responses to each of the survey items can be done by using the services of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). If the surveys are sent to CTE, they can provide a frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation for the responses of each item. To protect the confidentiality of the individual respondents, CTE recommends that summary statistics be requested by subgroup (i.e., tenure status) only if the number in each subgroup is sufficiently large (ten or more).

The analysis of the written comments will require considerable professional judgment. All members should read through all the written comments. (Written comments to each open-ended question are typed by CTE without attribution. I strongly recommend that the comments be typed by someone so there is no possibility that handwriting can be used to identify particular respondents.) An informal analysis of the comments can be made by reading through the responses, looking for major themes, and counting the number of times these themes do appear in the written comments. Undue weight to an interesting comment should be avoided. Information collected in open meetings and from interviews is often best treated like written comments. Themes and patterns of responses should be emphasized rather than highly individualistic opinions.

8. ***What information should be distributed to whom and how***? Given the intent of this evaluation, the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs should be involved in determining the distribution of the evaluation report of deans and directors of units reporting to VCAA. For the evaluation of a dean, the VCAA should receive a copy of the report from the evaluation committee. The committee is encouraged to share and discuss the report with the administrator being evaluated if this is considered appropriate. For all other administrators being evaluated, the administrator to whom the administrator being evaluated reports should determine the distribution of the final evaluation report. For the evaluation of a department head/chairperson, the dean (and school head, where appropriate) and the person being evaluated would most likely receive a copy of the report.

For the evaluation of administrators within a college, deans do not need to forward the complete evaluation report to the VCAA. The dean must, however, inform the VCAA that he/she received the evaluation, approved of the procedures used in this evaluation, and indicate the general nature of the evaluation and the action taken based on the evaluation.

Decisions about content of the report and the distribution of the report should be determined during the planning of the evaluation and before any information is collected from members of the unit. Everyone should be informed about the distribution so any problems and conflicts can be aired and discussed without any reference to the nature, tone, and content of the evaluation information. Appendix B contains a sample letter that describes the distribution plan as part of the directions to faculty for their completing a mail survey.

The written report may include the following sections:

(a) Purpose of the evaluation and those who will receive the report.

(b) Plan and methodology employed in the evaluation. Number of respondents, techniques and methods used in collecting the information, and a general description of how the information was analyzed and summarized should be included.

(c) Description of evaluative information. This section may include the frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of the scaled items, typed faculty responses to the open-ended questions (or summaries, themes), and summaries of interviews.

(d) Interpretation of the evaluative information. This section may include the committee's judgment of the extent to which the administrator has accomplished his/her goals, the appropriateness of the goals for the unit, the effectiveness in carrying out his/her responsibilities, and of his/her administrative style.

(e) Recommendations for future action.

If you are interested in receiving a prototype evaluation report, please contact the Center for Teaching Excellence.

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