Introduction from the Provost

Department chairs occupy one of the most important leadership roles at Arkansas State University. You are faculty members and academic leaders, but you are also mentors, advocates, problem-solvers, managers, and, on some days, the person everyone calls when they do not know who else to call. The work is broad, consequential, and not always easily captured in a job description.

I know that work firsthand. Having served as a department chair, I understand both the opportunities and the challenges that come with the position. Chairs are often where university policy meets the daily reality of academic life. You help recruit and develop faculty, manage programs and resources, address difficult personnel and student issues, support teaching and scholarship, build departmental culture, and make countless decisions that affect the people you lead and the students we serve.

The Department Chair Resource Guide exists to help you do that work well.

The guide brings together information, resources, and guidance that chairs need throughout the academic year. It will continue to evolve as the work of chairs evolves, and I hope it becomes a resource you return to when questions arise, when circumstances change, or when you simply need to know where to start.

Leadership requires judgment, relationships, knowledge of one's discipline and faculty, an understanding of institutional context, a broad knowledge of standard academic practices, and sometimes the willingness to make a difficult decision when no policy can make it for you. The intention of this guide is to give you ready access to information, processes, and resources so that your judgment is informed and your time is spent leading rather than searching for answers.

More importantly, I hope this guide reflects how Academic Affairs and Research views the relationship between the Provost's Office and our department chairs. We are partners in the academic work of this university. Chairs are closer than most administrators to the daily work of our faculty and students, and that perspective matters. I want you to ask questions and identify processes that are not working. I also expect us to move beyond identifying problems. We should bring forward ideas, help develop solutions, and be willing to reconsider familiar ways of doing things when there is a better way. That responsibility belongs to all of us, including the Provost's Office.

Our expectations for our departments and programs should be high because our expectations for Arkansas State should be high. Excellent teaching, consequential scholarship, strong academic programs, meaningful faculty development, and exceptional student outcomes are not ambitions reserved for institutions somewhere else. Achieving them requires talented faculty and staff, good leadership, sound judgment, appropriate resources, and a willingness to continually improve how we do our work.

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of departmental leadership and for the service you provide to your faculty, staff, students, college, and university. The work is not always easy, but it matters enormously. My office and I look forward to doing it alongside you.

William P. McLean
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
Professor of Government, Law, & Policy
Arkansas State University

About This Guide

The Department Chair Resource Guide is a living resource and is updated as university policies, procedures, forms, and practices change. Whenever possible, the guide links directly to the authoritative university policy, procedure, form, or other source document. In the event of a discrepancy, the authoritative source document governs.

To report outdated information, broken links, or other needed corrections and to suggest resources or topics that would make the guide more useful, email Provost@AState.edu.

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