

Transition Tips for New Department Chairs

The tips below are designed to save you time as you transition. Initiating these actions will help lay the groundwork for success. We have provided numerous links to additional resources for your reference. We recommend that in addition to the tips below, you explore [recommendations](#), [tips](#) and [suggestions](#) from others and learn what you can from colleagues who have made this transition successfully.

Leader	Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule meetings with the former chair to assist in your transition. • Meet with the dean and discuss expectations on both sides. • Meet with faculty and staff to learn about their concerns and to establish the foundation for your leadership style. • Seek ideas to improve departmental functions. • Invite a former or current chair to be your mentor. Meet with this person regularly for feedback, reflection, and development. • Begin developing long and short-range departmental goals with the assistance of faculty and staff. • Identify academic leadership qualities you want to focus on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synchronize the academic calendar with departmental calendars so that important events are highlighted and coordinated. Ensure the departmental calendar is prepared and distributed to faculty and staff. • Meet with the School’s Finance Director for guidance and to determine how you will support each other and work collaboratively. • Verify the processes associated with leave tracking, P-Card use, and signing contracts. • Develop a plan for managing departmental resources (facilities, finances, and equipment). • Manage your time wisely. Proactively schedule yourself blocks of time to focus on strategic priorities. Prepare a personal calendar that schedules time for you, your family, and your scholarly work. Take advantage of time management tips from this podcast.
Faculty Developer	Student Advocate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the faculty handbook, become familiar with its content, and keep it handy. Carefully read the sections pertaining to faculty review. • Begin preparing plans for upcoming faculty recruitment searches. • Review existing faculty mentoring programs. Ensure faculty have mentors and receive the information they need. • Understand part-time faculty collective bargaining agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your predecessor or other department chairs about the kinds of student issues you may expect • Identify departmental student programs (e.g., orientation) that you need to know about before the academic year begins. • Become familiar with resources to help students (e.g., University Counseling Center, Tutoring) and student conduct policies). • Understand the forums established for you to interact with student leadership groups. Identify the mechanisms in place for you to get student feedback.
Scholar	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize the selection of graduate research assistants and prepare a schedule for their development. • Plan how you will stay current in your academic discipline and continue your research activities • If applicable, develop a plan for soliciting external funds (research grants and contracts). 	

Tips adapted from “[Chairing an Academic Department](#)” by Walter H. Gmelch and Val D. Miskin (2nd Ed) (2004) and with input from a focus group of George Washington University department chairs.