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MESSAGE FROM THE AFA PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

The following is the second in a series of articles that focus on a day in the life of a department chair.

THOUGHTS ON BEING A CHAIR

by Nancy Persons, Regular Faculty and Chair, Learning Resources Department

My department chair perspective is affected by being someone whose introduction to SRJC was as a regular faculty member assigned to the Petaluma Campus. I've never known a world in which the Petaluma Campus did not figure prominently in day to day decision-making at SRJC. I've observed and experienced firsthand the daily effort of putting forth an educational program to the District at Petaluma. As department chair assigned to Petaluma, popping up to Santa Rosa or scheduling videoconferences for meetings, consultation with colleagues and workshops is routine. Knowing the differences in structure and culture at each campus makes it easier as a department chair to know whom to contact when and what for.

This is my first year as chair. I've discovered that a job that seemed straightforward on the surface is actually quite complex. My colleagues at



the Santa Rosa campus, while understanding, are unaware of the particulars of working at Petaluma, and my colleagues at Petaluma, also understanding, can only imagine the daily tasks required of the department chair. It's easy to feel like neither location is getting enough of my attention or time. On the other hand, division of my time between the two campuses keeps me cognizant of the big picture of SRJC. My sense is that our department grows stronger in the provision of instruction and services as more of us

experience firsthand working life at both campuses.

Many aspects of a department chair's responsibilities are written between the lines of the job description. "Modeling good leadership" and "serving as liaison to the administration" are parts of a delicate dance which requires lots of activity on a personal level not obvious on my calendar. On Fridays, I reflect on the week to assess how well I earned my pay. The answer lies in what's not recorded: lengthy chats with various colleagues to lay the groundwork for productive department meetings, hours spent preparing class schedule proofs that require conversation between myself and instructors, conversations with the Dean to keep the lines of communication between faculty and administration open, making sure deadlines are met and everyone's keeping up with new developments.

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ON BEING A CHAIR *(cont. from page 1)*

Being a new department chair means doing lots of research – who's up for evaluation as an adjunct? How is a proper evaluation summary report written? How does one evaluate the work of online instructors? What kinds of measures should one include in a PRPP to make clear the work of our department? Communication and negotiating personalities require the most time and care. Being organized is key. I have

learned to keep everything I can on the District server, not my computer, so I can access it no matter which campus I'm on. This allows me, for example, to contact my Department Chair Council co-chair, departmental colleagues, or the Senate Executive Committee from either campus to talk about upcoming meetings. Having generous space for email on the Outlook Exchange server has saved me – department chairs seem to

get hit with more email than regular faculty members. Some things aren't received digitally and are carried everywhere. This includes course schedule proofs, evaluation materials, homework from students, and other college business that is printed, not online. Being a chair requires a district-wide perspective and the willingness to trade in passivity for active involvement on several axes. It's a rush and I love it.



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