Foreword

This handbook is designed to help new and continuing department chairs at NIU quickly orient themselves with their administrative responsibilities. This handbook is meant only to be a resource guide and not a policy document or procedures manual. This handbook is not intended to advocate any particular viewpoint and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Office of the Provost, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, the Department Chair Development Group or Northern Illinois University. For policies and procedures on the central responsibilities of department chairs, refer to NIU’s Academic Policies and Procedures Manual, Section II. Item 20.

The title “chair” is used in this handbook to indicate the head of the academic unit and includes similar titles such as “school director” or “director”. Similarly, the term “department” is used to indicate academic units and includes similar names such as “school”, “division”, etc. Links to relevant websites are embedded within the document.

This handbook would not have been possible without the support of Raymond W. Alden III (Executive Vice President and Provost) and the Office of the Provost. This handbook was developed by Kay Forest, (Former Chair, Department of Sociology) with contributions from Murali Krishnamurthi (Director, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center) and the members of the Department Chair Development Group at NIU. The handbook website was designed and published by Stephanie Richter (Instructional Technologies Coordinator, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center) at NIU. If any web link or the information covered in this handbook is obsolete or incorrect, please email the link or section title and location information to provost@niu.edu.

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I. Knowing Your Department, College, and NIU

One of the first steps a new chair should do is to become familiar with the university, college and department and their policies and procedures. This section provides a quick overview of NIU, the organizations structures, policies and procedures, and other useful information.

1. University and college mission and scope, constitutions and bylaws

Paramount to the responsibilities of the department chair is upholding the mission of the university and the college. NIU's Mission and Scope Statement are available online. The Constitution and Bylaws are also available online. Additionally each college may have its own bylaws and its own mission statement. Chairs should familiarize themselves with these policies and mission statements.

2. Organizational structure and reporting lines

NIU’s organizational structure includes four main divisions: Academic and Students Affairs, Finance and Facilities, Administration and University Outreach, and University Advancement and Development. Of these, the Division of Academic Affairs is probably the most germane to the day-to-day operation of academic departments, followed by the Division of Finance and Facilities. For more detailed information, please follow the embedded links to the relevant websites.

A. Division of Academic and Student Affairs is headed by the Executive Vice President and Provost, who is the chief academic officer of NIU. The seven academic colleges, the University Libraries, the Division of International Programs, the Division of Research and Graduate Studies, the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, and the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center report to the Executive Vice President and Provost. The Division’s staff and the full range of units and programs that report to the staff are listed in its website. The Provost’s Organization Chart is also available online.

B. Division of Finance and Facilities is headed by the Executive Vice President. Although each academic department’s office staff will most likely be the source of contact with many of this division's units, the chair needs to be familiar with their functions and the administrators of various units that are under this division. The full list of units reporting to the division can be found on the Division website.

C. Division of Administration and University Outreach is headed by the Vice President for Administration and University Outreach. This division serves the educational, technological, and outreach needs of the NIU campus and the surrounding communities of Northern Illinois. These activities and projects are organized with four units: Information Technology Services (ITS), NIU Outreach, Northern Public Radio (WNIJ and WNIU), and Public Affairs. More information about the Division is available on its website.
D. Division of University Advancement and Development is headed by the Vice President for University Advancement and Development and the units that report to this division include Alumni Relations, NIU Foundation, and the Office of Publications.

Along with these divisions and their reporting units, chairs should also familiarize themselves with their college offices and the units reporting to the college dean.

3. Policies and procedures

Listed below are the links to some of the important policies and procedures documents at NIU that department chairs should bookmark on their web browsers:

- Business Procedures Manual
- Information Security Policy
- Collective Bargaining Agreement
- Human Resource Services Policies and Procedures
- Travel Policies Governing Travel by NIU Employees

4. Shared governance and committees of the university

Shared responsibility for the governance of the academic institution is a long-standing tradition (see AAUP: “Governance of Colleges & Universities”). In this regard, NIU’s Constitution and Bylaws, Preamble stipulates that faculty share predominantly in all policy decisions that involve the faculty personnel process, curriculum, admission, and academic standards. This shared governance is the foundation of the dual track personnel process and departments’ standing committees. In practical terms, effective faculty governance requires effective leadership from the chair to keep faculty members well-informed and to facilitate the making and interpretation of policy in ways that encourage the faculty’s full participation and investment in the life and responsibilities of the department. See also Section II Chair’s Role and Responsibilities and Leadership.

5. Department bylaws and mission

Each academic unit has its own bylaws and mission statement, which guide the personnel, policy, and committee activities of the department. These are in accordance with the tenets of NIU Constitution and Bylaws and must be approved at the college level to take effect. Because department bylaws are upheld as legal contracts by the university, the department chairs should be familiar with the details of both their own department bylaws and those of their colleges. The mission statement is less legally binding; nevertheless, it serves the significant purpose of guiding the department’s curricular and scholarly decisions and practices. Periodically both the departmental bylaws and mission statement should be reviewed and revised by the chair and
faculty in order to stay current and relevant to the department’s academic and disciplinary enterprise.

6. College personnel, committees, and chair selection process

Academic departments and their faculty and staff are linked together in NIU's seven colleges, where the work of the university is coordinated, supported, and rewarded. Because colleges are united around the commonalities of their instructional and scholarly orientation, they also serve as academic communities.

They are responsible for promoting the spirit of the teacher/scholar, nurturing a climate conducive to inquiry, fostering intellectual freedom, and stimulating the pursuit of excellence in the transmission of knowledge. The colleges provide the essential community--the organizational structure and the framework for intellectual interaction--that makes the academic enterprise operational. The colleges, then, are a basic mechanism through which the faculty discharges its prerogatives and responsibilities. Constitution and Bylaws, Article 15.

- Roles of the Dean and Associate Dean(s). In general, the dean is the academic leader and chief administrative officer of a college and is accountable directly to the Executive Vice President and Provost for aspects of the operation of the college, including its conduct and development as an instructional, research, and public-service unit (APPM, Section II, Item 13). Each college also has one or more associate deans to work directly or indirectly with the dean and to provide supervisory support in the operations and development activities of the college. An effective department chair will develop and maintain a healthy liaison with the college office. It is the chair’s responsibility to balance the mission and best interests of the college with those of the department. Such a nuanced relationship cannot happen without open lines of communication between the chair, the dean, and the associate dean(s).

- The College Business Manager. The department chair has a fiduciary duty of good fiscal stewardship over an assortment of department budgets (see also Section VIII Fiscal Management). In this regard, the college business manager may be an important mentor, especially for a new chair who is still learning about fiscal management issues.

- College Senate. The college senate consists of the department chairs of the college, the dean of the college, the associate dean(s), and any additional academic personnel that the dean deems appropriate and necessary to the work of the senate. The college senate is not only a venue for communicating with the dean and associate dean(s) but is also a salient network of support and the opportunity to work in collaboration with other department chairs, who are the chair’s peers, despite his or her faculty status.

- College Council. The college council consists of faculty members whose responsibilities include the review of personnel and policy decisions at the college level. On occasion, the department chair will meet with the college council and is well-advised to take the council’s power in the policymaking process very seriously as a key component in the organizational structure of faculty governance. In this case, the chair needs to be both timely and thorough
(but not excessive) in providing the relevant information to the council for its consideration, especially when the occasion involves the appeal of a tenure and promotion decision.

- **Chair selection process.** One important function of the college, in conjunction with the department’s search committee, is the selection of a new chair. The dean of the college, or the dean’s designee, chairs the search committee. The process is detailed in the *Constitution and Bylaws, Article 18.341*. It is the search committee’s responsibility to survey faculty, staff, and students to determine which candidates are acceptable for appointment; however, it is the dean who ultimately appoints one of the recommended candidates or who determines that none of the department’s candidates is acceptable.

If the chair seeks to have another term, the review and reappointment process is also initiated by the dean in the spring of the penultimate year of the chair’s term of service. At this time, the dean consults the department faculty to determine whether or not the incumbent chair should be offered an additional term. If the review and evaluation of the chair indicates that reappointment is inappropriate, the dean can start the selection process for a new chair.
II. Chair's Role and Responsibilities, and Leadership

While much of the daily life of a chair is shaped by the managerial demands of the department, it is the leadership role that distinguishes the position from that of an organizational bureaucrat. In fact, the bulk of the APPM’s statement on chair’s responsibilities focuses on several outcomes of effective leadership. Although new chairs rightly may feel that their academic training has not prepared them adequately for some of the challenges of the chair’s responsibilities, it is within the domain of leadership that they will most often apply their professional skills and knowledge. Perhaps the most important quality of leadership is therefore the ability to understand the “big picture” that represents the interests of all faculty and students, beyond one’s own narrow disciplinary focus and priorities.

1. Responsibilities

The general responsibilities of the department chair are clearly stated in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual, Section II, Item 20. These include factors that reflect the quality of the chair's leadership. In addition to these general responsibilities, individual departments may assign additional or varying responsibilities on their chairs depending on the size of the department (number of faculty, students, programs, etc.), accreditation requirements, interactions with external constituents, etc.

2. Long-term vision

The daily rigors of academia can overwhelm faculty morale in the absence of a higher developmental goal that shapes individual faculty members into a community. The successful chair will inspire faculty to develop a long-term vision and take initiatives to move the department to “the next step”. This vision may include ongoing departmental curriculum planning and development, and the regular evaluation of teaching effectiveness and scholarly productivity, shaped around a set of collective principles and objectives. Part of the chair’s responsibilities is the persistent promotion of this vision across departmental activities, from student advising to faculty recruitment. In this regard, the chair is an agent of change whose leadership keeps the department in touch with the salient issues affecting not only the discipline but higher education in general.

3. Management style

A management style usually describes how an administrator makes decisions. The department chair’s management style will be shaped by three key factors beyond individual personality traits: the scope of responsibilities assigned to the chair, the relative authority and power that accompany the chair’s position, and NIU’s tradition of faculty governance.

Because department chairs are appointed by their college deans and the provost, they are accountable to these administrators for “all aspects” of the daily operation and the professional development of their departments. With those responsibilities comes a modest degree of formal authority to direct resources or to enforce the policies and practices of the university and college. In addition, however, a chair has “position power” related to the distinction of being the chief
academic officer of his or her department (Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, and Tucker, 1999). This power carries a measure of influence not only within the department but also with people external to the college, over whom they have no formal authority. In this regard, a chair can affect faculty development opportunities across the university as well as within professional associations. A third type of power is informally earned by the chair on the job through effective interpersonal skills, consistent credibility, transparent decision-making, and the ability to communicate to faculty how the institution works and to apply that knowledge to promote the best interests of the department (Holton, 2006). This sort of power may be the most important resource at a chair’s disposal to shape department culture, guide department dialogue, and nurture a vision for department development. Key to a chair’s successful leadership, however, is the ability to balance position power with engaged faculty governance.

The long-standing tradition of faculty governance stipulates that faculty share predominantly in all policy decisions that involve the faculty personnel process, curriculum, admission, and academic standards (see NIU’s Constitution and Bylaws; also AAUP: “Governance of Colleges & Universities”). This shared governance is the foundation of the dual track personnel process and departments’ standing committees. In practical terms, effective faculty governance requires effective leadership from the chair to keep faculty members well-informed and to facilitate the making and interpretation of policy in ways that encourage the faculty’s full participation and investment in the decisions and responsibilities of the department.

Departments will vary in their expectations of the chair’s exercise of final authority. Some faculty members may prefer to have the chair make most decisions, while others will seek regular faculty involvement. In addition, some decisions mandate faculty involvement, such as curriculum changes and personnel decisions, while others do not. There is no magic formula; the best approach is a style of open communication and as much transparency in decision-making as possible.

4. Communication

Fundamental to leadership is the chair’s ability to maintain transparent and open communication about department matters with faculty, staff, and students. Severed communication between administrators and faculty members can breed distrust in an academic department, which can foster disruptive behavior and suspicion and erode morale. Some personnel matters cannot be discussed openly; however, faculty will respect reasonable confidentiality from a chair who otherwise is open to feedback and is transparent about non-confidential administrative decisions. It is also important that communication from the chair, whether written or verbal, be impeccable as a model of civil discourse, regardless of the tone and/or content of received communication. As its chief academic and administrative officer, the chair is also the official spokesperson for the department. In this position, there is little, if any, private speech when discussing matters related to the department, the college, and the university.

5. Constituents

Critical to the life and growth of the academic home department or school are groups and individuals outside the department. These may include departments (often in other colleges)
whose curricular requirements include one or more courses from the home department. Multidisciplinary research projects can build networks of collaboration across departments. Professional accrediting agencies can also be stakeholders in sustaining curricular quality and rigor. Of special importance are the prospective employers of NIU’s baccalaureate and graduate degree recipients. These businesses, agencies, and organizations can be fertile ground for student internships. NIU’s regional proximity to a vast community-college network can facilitate potential partnerships between departments; in fact, a significant portion of community-college instructors in the Northern Illinois region are NIU alumni. See also Section X. External Relations.

6. Department Climate

No other unit on campus has the multiple, and sometimes contradictory, characteristics of an academic department or division. Despite its pedagogical professional mission, the academic department can have an acutely personal quality as various faculty and staff personalities coalesce and collide, resembling a large family whose diverse members are bound together by common interests. At the same time, the professoriate is a highly individualistic enterprise; and philosophical and pedagogical difference can undermine a department’s collective identity. The new department chair will quickly learn information about her or his colleagues that those within the faculty ranks may not know. She or he may inherit the wounds and excesses of previous chairs, including the consequences on faculty morale of neglect or mismanagement. As in any workplace setting, a faculty member’s personal external circumstances may spillover into departmental and classroom interactions. It is the chair’s responsibility to ensure that collegiality prevails within departmental affairs without becoming autocratic. This could mean taming the department pot-stirrer while promoting civil and healthy disagreement in departmental discussions. Maintaining an academic/employment environment that has “[r]espect for the intrinsic dignity of each member of the University community” (NIU Constitution, Preamble) is possibly one of the most important strategies for successful faculty retention. See the APPM: Statement on Professional Behavior of Faculty.

7. Diversity

In its service to the Northern Illinois regional corridor, NIU attracts a diverse student body. Moreover, according to the NIU Mission and Scope Statement:

The multiple and ever-changing demands of society require the continuing development of academic and professional programs that are current, responsive, and of the highest possible quality. The university thus seeks to recruit and retain faculty of national stature from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, attentive to developments in their respective disciplines, and capable of educating students who will be able to serve the region, the state, the nation, and the world with distinction in the coming decades.

To this end, departments are uniquely situated to promote the university’s commitment to diversity. Whether through faculty recruitment efforts, course offerings, accessible student advising, service learning opportunities (to name a few), part of the chair’s responsibility is to guide his or her department’s sustained effort to promote and enhance diversity. Links to a wide
range of campus resources and diversity-related commissions/task forces are available at Diversity Resources.

8. Celebrating achievements

Faculty morale has its foes, some of which are beyond the ability of the department chair to control. One antidote, which is part of leadership, is to remind faculty of the cumulative force of their achievements. Whether through a department newsletter, a bulletin board, email announcements, or on a homepage (see Section III Department Operations), the chair can model pride in the accomplishments of the faculty, students, and staff. Not only will this practice help to ward off disappointments related to the daily grind, but it will enhance the sense of community effort that is fundamental to the sustainability of the academic enterprise. These are also excellent ways to stay in contact with external audiences.

9. Planning and retreats

Key to meeting the responsibilities of the chair’s position is effective planning. On a daily basis, an efficient system of managerial organization can save time and energy. However, long-range and short-range planning is needed to ensure the department is meeting its obligation to continuous improvement and contributing to college and university’s mission. As the “chief academic and administrative officer for the academic unit,” the chair can orchestrate planning activities to maximize faculty input and encourage the development of faculty stakeholders in the process itself. Annual faculty retreats, held at venues away from department and usual distractions, can provide an opportunity for collective interaction and creative input, especially at those times when the department is considering or launching a major new development initiative or strategic plan. The chair can later use those issues and decisions that surface at a planning retreat to remind faculty of their common goals to keep the momentum moving forward across the academic year.

10. College and university liaison

The chair is most effective when she or he works in tandem with the goals, visions, and plans of the college and the university. It is necessary both to be an advocate for the department when seeking resources and support from the dean and the provost; however, it is the chair’s responsibility to support the decisions and goals of upper administration within the practices and policies of daily department life. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the chair: maintaining a balance between the directives of the dean and the provost and the expectations of demands of the department’s faculty. An effective chair will be able to communicate and interpret perspectives to each constituency accurately and in ways that create trust and a sense of common purpose.
III. Department Operations

The variable functions of organizing and maintaining an academic department depend, to a considerable extent, on its size, its complexity, and its stage of development. Small departments may have concerns that are quite different from those of departments that have 30 or 40 faculty members. Departments that include master and doctoral programs require a form of organizational management that may not be necessary in purely undergraduate units; interdisciplinary divisions may be divided into sub-disciplines that require another level of administrative oversight. The gender, racial, and age balance shape interpersonal relations and department culture. And departments with a majority of senior faculty members face internal dynamics that are different both in structure and temperament from those of departments with many probationary faculty members recently recruited from doctoral programs.

1. Department office

The department’s main office is, for many, among the first points of contact for visitors to campus as well as prospective students and their parents. Friendly and respectful interactions in the main office can also have a substantial impact on the overall department climate for faculty, graduate assistants, students, and other staff. Reasonable access to the office staff and the chair, in person or by phone or email, is essential for the smooth functioning of department business. The appearance of the main office also represents the department’s disciplinary identity to the public, its majors, and its staff and faculty; purposeful organization, décor, and displays can make the main office an effective center for departmental contact and activity. Care should be taken, however, to avoid turning the main office into a lounge where social interactions trump getting work done.

2. Operating staff (Civil Service personnel)

NIU has a tiered civil service structure that is administered in accordance with the rules of the State Universities Civil Service System. These rules for employment include a comprehensive set of tests and interviews, which are conducted by NIU’s Human Resource Service/Operating Staff Services personnel. On occasion, civil service positions are also available on an “extra-help” basis and limited to no more than 900 hours per year. In either case, offers of employment must go through HRS and its procedural regulations.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the members of the department’s operating staff can have a dramatic effect on the chair’s ability to manage his or her administrative responsibilities. Hecht and colleagues summarize this relationship well:

*Although department chairs may expect to manage the staff, ironically, staff often “manage” department chairs. Staff with long experience are often the most knowledgeable in the university. They have control of files and information. They know who really makes the decisions. They can anticipate the cycle of events. They know the quirks and idiosyncrasies of the system. They have seen it all before, and they know that every new administrator is bound to make unavoidable mistakes. Savvy department*
chairs will take full advantage of their staff's knowledge and experience (Hecht et al. 1999).

It is also office staff who can monitor unscheduled visitors and regulate the amount of daily traffic that is admissible past the door into the chair’s office. Regular gestures of appreciation to the office staff from the chair are appropriate. Because of their centrality to department functioning and well-being, office staff members must understand clearly the department’s mission and its policies. Unlike faculty members, staff members require clear direction from the chair as supervisor; the smooth running of the main office – as well as the rest of the department – depends on effective communication and counsel. Chairs may also be called upon to manage tensions between faculty and office staff; however, the status differential of academe may leave all but the most vocal of staff members feeling disempowered. For this reason, it is imperative that the chair protect office staff to ensure that they are able to fulfill their responsibilities to the department effectively.

It is the chair’s responsibility to review regularly the job descriptions of the department’s operating staff and ensure their currency with the files on record with HRS Operating Staff Services. These job descriptions are vital in both the annual evaluations of office staff and, should unfortunate circumstances arise, in executing disciplinary action.

3. Disciplinary process

Unfortunately there are times when the department chair will have to initiate a disciplinary process to correct an office staff member’s deficient performance. It is important that this process is confidentially protected and based only on patterns of conduct related to the job performance itself. Most difficulties with office staff can be resolved in an informal private conversation with the chair, which can serve as a first notification that a problem exists and needs to be addressed. At this stage, the chair should write a private memo of record that documents the date and content of the conversation and that is placed in a confidential file in the chair’s office. If this first step does not resolve the situation, the next option is to contact the Employee Assistance Program for consultation on additional strategies to remedy the situation, including referring the staff member for counseling. Contact the Director of Employee Relations at HRS for more specific advice.

4. Payroll, benefits, and other reports

Although the chair may not be the individual who completes the following reports, she or he has the responsibility of initiating and overseeing its completion. The due-dates for most of these reports are available from each college office. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Payroll reports or timesheets. Payroll reports must be submitted for all civil service staff, student workers, and extra help. Without them, no paychecks are issued. Payroll reports are due at HRS by 4:30pm on pay day, which is the 15th day of each month and last day of each month. If the 15th or last day falls on a Saturday or Sunday or banking holiday, pay day will be the prior banking, business day.
• **Benefit Usage Reports.** Human Resource Services is required by the State to maintain records of all salaried employees’ benefit usage. Each salaried employee within the department must complete a Benefit Usage Report for each month of contractual employment. The department office staff compiles the department’s benefit usage statistics and forwards the forms to HRS.

• **Faculty Service Reports.** The *Bylaws, Article 6.12* specify that the annual merit evaluation shall be started and completed in the spring semester of each academic year, based on annual faculty service reports. It is the chair’s responsibility to initiate the process, oversee the selection of the Personnel Committee, and convene the committee, with all relevant information gathered, to conduct the annual merit review for regular faculty as per department bylaws. Instructors and supportive professional staff (SPS) may also be required to submit faculty service reports, depending on the department's negotiated agreements with these employees. See also Section IV Personnel.

• **Annual Report on Oral English Proficiency.** By public act, all universities are required to monitor whether or not all instruction is provided by people who can deliver it in English that students can understand. The Provost’s Office expects departments to keep a report of any complaints; and students are advised of the policy and where to file complaints.

• **Annual Assessment Report.** At the completion of every academic year, each program will submit an Annual Update Report to track the implementation and outcomes of its assessment plan. At the department level, it is the chair’s responsibility to insure that assessment data is collected by the appropriate faculty committee and the report is submitted on time. In the event that changes in the curriculum are deemed necessary, the chair can initiate the curriculum revision-and-development process.

5. **Scheduling classes**

One of the most sensitive and complex of the chair’s responsibilities is the assignment of faculty teaching loads. It is also one of the few tasks over which the chair has final responsibility, balancing the needs of faculty to have time for scholarship on the one hand, and the student demand for classes on the other. Because faculty workload is a complicated issue, and despite the chair’s “final responsibility” for assigning teaching loads, it is wise to include the department collective in a discussion of general guidelines to follow, especially if the outcome is likely to be less than ideal.

For each semester, the process of constructing the schedule of classes begins several months in advance to conform to NIU’s registration and enrollment deadlines. Several considerations will shape the schedule of classes. If the department has a regular rotating curriculum for its majors and minors, its requirements will influence the frequency with which courses need to be offered and the number of sections required. A starting point is to look at earlier semesters to determine necessary patterns of courses to be offered. Projected shifts in student enrollment will also need to be part of the equation and may require a conversation with the college’s advising dean. Characteristics of the student body have an effect on when classes need to be offered, especially if a large portion of likely students are juggling employment or family demands. In addition,
many departments have centrality obligations to other departments and colleges in which one or more of courses are required or recommended for students in other majors.

Faculty expertise and preferences and an overall fairness in assigning workload become part of the equation, which will be further shaped by instructors’ collective bargaining agreements and part-time versus full-time teaching appointments. Finally, laboratories, independent study, thesis and dissertation supervision, and negotiated course reductions will all be part of the workload distribution. Irene Hecht and associates (1999) point out that, in addition to the familiar workload dilemmas facing chair, new questions and employment models are changing the face of the professoriate; these, in turn, complicate the chair’s task of completing the teaching schedule.

6. Employee travel authorization and reimbursement

Whether for professional presentations, job training, or other official university business, a clear and transparent travel policy is in the best interests of all members of an academic department. As fiscal manager, the chair is the steward of the department's travel budget and is the person responsible for communicating to the faculty and staff both the guidelines for reimbursement and the amounts available to cover approved travel arrangements.

Authorization for employee travel should be approved by the department chair and the authorization for department chair’s travel should be approved by the college dean. Travel by a grant or local fund advisor requires the approval of appropriate personnel managing those funds. The funds available for employee travel will vary by department; however, NIU follows a policy of uniform regulations that determine what travel expenses may be reimbursed. Details, including per diem allowance and approved accommodations and forms of travel are available online in the NIU Business Procedures Manual, Travel Regulations.

Although not a University requirement, departments are encouraged to require their employees to prepare a Request for Authorization to Travel form prior to being placed on travel status. This is particularly recommended where out-of-state travel is concerned. This will help the departments to allocate the necessary funds to reimburse the authorized travel expenses. Upon returning to campus, the employee must complete a Travel Voucher to be reimbursed for approved travel expenses. Both forms are available on the Accounting Office website.

7. Department website and promotional materials

Having an attractive and informative website is a highly efficient if not essential method for the department to communicate with external audiences and prospective as well as current students. Departments can follow the NIU Web Presence template for their websites, using NIU’s web content management system. Contact the Office of Public Affairs for more information on NIU’s web presence template and graphic standards, and contact Information Technology Services (ITS) for web server space hosting departmental websites. Support and training are available through ITS and their technical support staff. Depending on the scope of the department’s outreach (e.g., student recruitment), other promotional materials may also be useful. A wide range of design and printing resources are available at Document Services on campus. A number of free design services are also available through the Office of Publications.
8. Compliance issues

NIU is committed not to engage in any employment, academic, or institutional decisions on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or any other factor unrelated to professional qualifications. It is also the position of the university not to tolerate harassment or discrimination in any form. The chair is responsible for the oversight of the department’s compliance with university policy. Any violations should be reported to the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources. See also Section IV Personnel and Section VII Tenure-Track Faculty.

NIU also participates in a program of ethics training. All full-time, part-time, regular and temporary faculty members, staff, graduate assistants, extra help and student employees (i.e., anyone who receives a paycheck from the University) must complete also annual ethics training. The training covers such topics as accepting gifts, conflict of interest, inappropriate use of university resources for personal matters, whistleblower protection and avoidance of political activities during the work day. Employees are notified of the timetable for completion of the training by e-mail and through campus mail. It is the department’s obligation to insure that all employees are in compliance. For further information, check the HRS Ethics Compliance website. Or contact the Ethics Training Administrator at (815) 753-6039 or Human Resource Services at (815) 753-6000 for information or assistance.

9. Management of records

As a public university, NIU is accountable under the laws of the State of Illinois regarding the management of state records. This includes the protection of confidential personnel records, including both faculty and staff employment and student educational records, and the proper storage and disposal of any and all records made in the transaction of university, college, or department business. Federal law may also apply.

- **Storage and access.** To maximize the protection of confidential records of any kind, the preferred storage method is a “double-lock” system, in which the records are kept in locked file cabinets or similar containers in locations (e.g., offices, rooms) that are also locked. Access to records is on a “need-to-know” basis only. University officials and employees must have a legitimate university-related educational or administrative interest and a need to review a record in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities. Neither may they disclose information to anyone who does not need that information to do her or his job at the University. Needless to say, unauthorized browsing through records in any form, hard copies or computer files, is not allowed.

- **Faculty personnel records.** Pursuant to the Illinois Personnel Record Review Act 820 ILSC 40/.0, faculty members have the right to access their own personnel files, but are asked to give reasonable notice of their intent to do so. They have a right to copy materials in their personnel file at their own expense; however, they may not remove any materials from their personnel files. Faculty viewing their personnel files will do so in the presence of one administrator. No materials will be placed in the faculty member's personnel files without the
faculty member receiving a copy or notice that material is being added. Special procedures apply for some types of records. See the full policy statement at “Protocols for Personnel Files”.

- **Disposal of records.** The management of all university records, “regardless of physical form or characteristic,” is regulated by the State Records Act (5 ILSC 160/1). While much of the State Records Act will not concern department chairs, the disposal of any university records is regulated by the state. Cleaning out old file drawers may seem to be a simple good-housekeeping practice; however, the State Records Act protects against the unauthorized disposal (e.g., mutilation, damage, transference, removal) of records made “in the course of public duties,” regardless of date. The Illinois Secretary of State’s Office provides instructions for applying for authorization on its official website.

- **Student records and FERPA.** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords students over the age of 18 the right to have access to their children’s education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. Prior to age 18, this right is afforded to the student’s parents. FERPA-related issues are a common part of department management for the chair. Familiarity with the law before an issue emerges is highly recommended. The U.S. Department of Education website contains detailed information about FERPA. See also Section VI Students.

- **Freedom of Information Act.** On rare occasions, the department chair may receive a request for confidential information from a party who has evoked the Freedom of Information Act – Illinois. If this occurs, inform the college dean and contact NIU’s Chief Legal Counsel for guidance. And, again, have a working knowledge of what the law covers and does not cover in these circumstances.

10. **Faculty meetings and committees**

Communicating regularly with faculty and staff is essential to the smooth management of an academic department. Because it is rare that the full department membership is together on campus at any particular time, department chairs may be tempted to use regular faculty meetings as communication venues. This practice, however, can waste valuable time and energy in the absence of genuine department business to be addressed. At the same time, an efficient and organized meeting can both encourage faculty input on important issues and provide an opportunity to nurture the department’s collective identity. This happy outcome will depend on several components. The faculty meeting needs to be scheduled with sufficient advance notice for all involved. There needs to be a clear agenda to keep the meeting moving forward; and in the event that the business at hand requires background material or discussion, an agenda is most effective when distributed a day or two before the meeting. Announcements or information that can be handled via email need to be kept to a minimum, with the majority of the meeting focused on discussion, brainstorming, and/or collective decision-making that cannot be accomplished in any other venue.
When faculty meetings are “working meetings,” faculty members have the opportunity to share in department governance as stakeholders; and they are less likely to regard meetings as administrative trivia. Even in working meetings, however, the chair-facilitator is responsible for starting the meeting promptly, giving everyone a chance to contribute, preventing tangents on hot-button topics, and knowing when to adjourn, even if this means postponing some agenda items. The most effective meetings will also have one or more identified goals that can be met within the allotted time frame.

Each department also develops its standing committee structure and provisions for any ad hoc committees that it deems are appropriate to effectively doing the work of the department. Although not formally defined by the Constitution and Bylaws, these committees, at a minimum, must reflect the principles of faculty governance at the department level in the areas of personnel, curriculum, admission to the undergraduate and graduate programs, and any policies related to academic standards. In addition to its standing and ad hoc committees, each department has an elected Personnel Committee. The responsibilities and the composition of the Personnel Committee vary by department and college; however, all department personnel procedures, including the election of the Personnel Committee, must conform to the appropriate college bylaws. It is part of the chair's responsibility to initiate the committee nomination and election processes.

11. Checklist of operational deadlines

A substantial portion of departmental operations involves meeting deadlines. It is important for chairs and the office staff to know what these are and to plan accordingly. An established checklist of important dates for the academic year, based on department and college obligations, can help with operational efficiency as well as with staff training. It can also provide administrative continuity in the event that the chair becomes unavailable.

Special attention should be paid to non-negotiable "hard" due-dates, such as the deadline for the submission of course fees requests, end-of-fiscal-year purchase cut-off dates, and pay day timesheet submissions for hourly employees. Although the consequences for overshooting "soft" deadlines may be less severe, no chair needs a reputation for being chronically tardy. Establishing a checklist of the department's important deadlines and planning the workload to meet them on time can prevent both missed opportunities and the loss of political capital for the department.
IV. Personnel

At the top of department management is the task of handling personnel concerns. Regardless of other pressing issues and department commitments, matters related to faculty, support staff, and student will consume the majority of a department chair’s time and energy. Most personnel issues are difficult, if not impossible, to plan for; instead they present themselves without warning, often demanding immediate action. Almost all personnel issues require a high degree of confidentiality and sensitivity. This section discusses a number of departmental personnel matters.

1. Employee health and medical issues

Some issues related to employee health concerns may be resolved at the department level. For example, a faculty member may simply notify the chair of a medical issue (personal or familial) that requires a temporary schedule adjustment that can be covered by other faculty. All NIU employees receive two sick days per contract month. If these are used during a benefit period, they must be reported on the employee’s monthly Benefit Usage Report. If they are not used, they will accumulate, with no expiration date.

More likely, however, a faculty or staff member’s reason for consulting with the department chair is to request a substantial reduced work load to accommodate the medical situation. At this point, the resolution will require the involvement of the college and human resource services and the application of the Family Medical Leave Act. (See next section for more FMLA details.) No chair can make work-reduction promises to faculty or staff members that are not consistent with NIU’s FMLA policy; therefore, it is a chair’s responsibility to involve the college promptly to ensure proper procedural action. The chair needs to be familiar with NIU’s Sick Bank Policy, which is designed to alleviate hardship caused if an employee exhausts all paid leave time due to a qualifying illness or injury.

2. Employee leaves of absence

Faculty and staff members may request one of several types of leaves of absence, depending on the circumstances. Each of these requires a response that is coordinated between the chair, the department personnel committee, and the college.

- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) When serious health conditions render a faculty or staff member incapacitated and unable to perform the essential duties of her or his appointment, a faculty member may apply for up to 12 work-weeks of unpaid leave under the FMLA. The Federal government stipulates that the employer must maintain the employee’s health care coverage under the same conditions as coverage would have been provided if no leave had occurred, including benefits increases. FMLA leave is also available to faculty or staff under the following conditions:
  - Birth of a child
  - Placement of a dependent child with the employee for adoption or foster care
  - Need to care for the employee’s spouse, child, or parent (but not parent-in-law) suffering from a serious health condition.
In the case of a faculty member’s FMLA leave, the college serves in the role of the employer, in consultation with the department chair, in the negotiation of a flexible leave arrangement that addresses both the faculty member’s needs and the teaching needs of the department. The chair may request funds from the college for replacement teaching to cover some or all of the faculty member’s teaching load; a similar arrangement may be made to cover a staff member’s workshop while on an approved FMLA leave.

If possible, the faculty or staff member is required to give at least 30 days advance notice to the department and the college. In the case of a serious medical emergency, the university may, at its own expense, require a second opinion for medical documentation. The FMLA Application Form and any supporting medical documentation are submitted to Human Resource Services (HRS) for evaluation. To protect the confidentiality of the faculty or staff member, the chair is not involved in the discussion or evaluation of medical documentation unless disclosed by the faculty member voluntarily.

If the faculty member is on a probationary tenure-track, she or he may request an extension of the tenure probationary period for a period of one year with an approved application for benefits under the FMLA or in accordance with NIU’s family leave policies. This request may be denied in the event that the faculty member is not making adequate progress toward promotion and tenure. See APPM, Section II, Item 28.

- Unpaid leave. On occasion a faculty member, for valid reasons, may choose to take a leave from contractual teaching responsibilities without pay. The leave proposal should describe the activity to be undertaken during the leave period and must be approved by the department chair, the college dean, and the provost.

- Vacation days. Employees on more than 10-month contract receive two vacation days per month as part of their employee benefits. Unlike FMLA and unpaid leave, the use of vacation days does not require approval outside of the department. Employees are required, however, to give the department chair sufficient notice before using one or more vacation days. Upon return to work, the employee must report any used vacation days on the monthly Benefit Usage Report.

Contact HRS for current policies and guidelines on sick leave, FMLA, vacation and other types of leaves of absence.

3. Annual performance reviews

The annual performance review may vary by employee classification. Regardless of classification, however, all employees have access to their own personnel files.

- Civil service staff. For each staff member, HRS provides the appropriate form for the civil service performance review. Unlike the schedule for other university employees, annual civil service reviews are scheduled based on the starting date of employment. Once the form arrives from HRS, it is the chair’s task to initiate the evaluation of the staff who report to her or him, including a brief conference with each employee concerning her or his job.
performance. At this time, the employee also allowed to respond in writing to any comments provided by the chair in the evaluation process. The evaluation is based on professional performance related to the job description; and every effort should be made to avoid personalizing feedback. This cannot be over-stated. A highly positive evaluation will require a written explanation from the chair; however, unearned praise can create difficulty later on in the event that there is a needed performance correction. Likewise, a highly negative evaluation can be demoralizing for the staff member, especially if there is any personal strain in the relationship. As with any supervisory role, the chair is best served by open and timely feedback with her or his office staff rather than relying on the evaluation process to initiate a conversation. Annual performance reviews are also important to the maintenance of a high-quality operating staff at NIU. Past evaluations are available to chairs and other authorized department personnel when a position comes open for rehire; fair and candid evaluations are the best insurance that one department’s problem will not be inherited in a subsequent hire.

- **Instructors.** In 1992, the instructors at NIU voted to unionize, establishing Local Chapter #4100 of the University Professionals of Illinois. Under the current **Collective Bargaining Agreement**, the department chair has a set of responsibilities to instructors to fulfill, including but not limited to making offers of employment, hiring, assigning workloads, and conducting annual performance reviews (see CBA, Article 6). Article 6 of the CBA lays out a standard set of factors or criteria that can and should be used in evaluating instructors who perform various functions for the university. If a chair wants to add some new factor or criterion that is not included among the standard set, the chair must get the approval of the majority of the instructors who will be affected by the change or addition. The chair is then responsible for conducting the instructors' annual performance reviews based on these criteria and forward a copy of the reviews to HRS.

- **Supportive Professional Staff.** Supportive Professional Staff (SPS) are professionals who provide expertise and support for offices and colleges at NIU and its regional locations. They are appointed by the Board of Trustees and are designated as “faculty no-rank.” There are several hundred SPS employees at NIU, a large portion of whom are serving educational and technical roles within the university. The interests of SPS staff are represented by the Supportive Professional Staff Council (SPSC). SPS staff members are evaluated by their supervisors; in academic departments, the supervisor is generally the department chair. HRS sends the appropriate forms to the department every spring; chairs and other unit heads must complete the annual reviews by June 30th and return them to HRS. Details are available in the SPS Handbook, which is linked to the SPSC website.

- **Tenure-track faculty** (a.k.a. regular faculty). In compliance with the **Constitution and Bylaws, Article 6.12**, each department has an approved method of calculating faculty merit ratings and recommendations for faculty salary increments. This personnel responsibility is also part of the dual track system, carried out by the department’s Personnel Committee, with a separate role for the department chair. It is also part of the chair’s responsibility to initiate the request for Faculty Service Reports (FSR). The FSR is the main method by which faculty members report their annual accomplishments in teaching, research/artistry, and service. The FSR is completed by tenure-track faculty at the start of each spring semester and reports on
the accomplishments of the previous calendar year. Each College has its own FSR process; and department chairs should familiarize themselves with the process and deadlines.

4. Performance mentoring

Once the evaluation is complete, the task often falls to the chair to advise those employees (faculty and staff) whose professional performance fails to meet expectations. The follow-up to a student complaint may also require that the chair engages in some form of performance consultation with a faculty member. Given that few department chairs have formal mentoring training, there can be no small amount of discomfort involved. Whereas many of the chair’s duties are framed by the needs of the department collective, performance mentoring is a person-specific activity that focuses on that individual’s unique areas of expertise, job description, stage of career development, and employment rank and status. It goes without saying that effective mentoring also requires a high degree of confidentiality and sensitivity, without which the chair risks eroding employee trust. Performance mentoring is best done in reference to clear job performance expectations. Recommendations can then be linked to specific and manageable goals for improvement. It is also effective to establish a time frame for further review, coordinated with the task that is under improvement. Whatever the issue, the conversation needs to be focused on the objective performance, not on personality characteristics or subjective interpretations.

5. Complaints and grievances

The chair will inevitably face student complaints about faculty behavior, especially unfair grading, or faculty-to-faculty claims of discrimination or harassment. In the first case, it is critically important for the chair not to rush to judgment when a bevy of students arrives at the door to complain about Professor X’s unfair classroom policies. There may be two sides to the story, and it is up to the chair to gather all information fairly. In the event that a student requests to appeal a course grade, however, the university provides clear procedures to follow, for both undergraduate and graduate students (see Section VI Students). Similarly, the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources has a formal procedure to follow in the case of a discrimination or harassment complaint by individuals who are members of protected groups. In the case of a faculty or staff claim of inappropriate behavior, the university (Bylaws, Article 11) has a formal grievance procedure to follow. Part of the chair’s responsibility is to attempt to resolve complaints at the department level; nevertheless, once a situation rises to the level of formality, as in a grade appeal or a grievance, the chair should notify the appropriate member of the college staff promptly that such action is underway.

6. Collegiality and conflict resolution

Not all conflict can be managed or resolved at the department level. The university (Bylaws, Article 9) provides for a Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor to assist faculty members and SPS with personnel difficulties and any dissatisfaction with personnel decisions. The Office of the Ombudsman is also available for consultation. These services are available to department chairs as well as faculty members and SPS staff!
Part of the chair’s leadership charge is to protect faculty, staff, and students from injury and/or discrimination and protect the university from lawsuits and legal claims of injury and/or discrimination. Prevention is the best protection. The chair may request training from the Office of Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources (AADR). University policy prohibits employment or academic decisions that are based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, status as a victim or perceived victim of domestic or sexual violence or any other factor unrelated to professional qualifications. Conduct that results in sexual harassment and/or retaliation is also prohibited. Prompt investigation of complaints and, if required, correction action can prevent a situation from rising to the level of litigation.

7. Legal documentation

Equally important to prompt investigation is reliable, objective documentation (i.e., a memo of record) of any potentially damaging behavior or activity within the department. A single incident may not constitute illegal activity; however, a cumulative pattern of behavior may contribute to a hostile working environment or discriminatory situation. Without a “paper trail,” it may be difficult to make a compelling case to the college dean and/or the Human Resource Services staff. A memo of record should include the date and approximate time of the event, the names and titles of the persons involved, and an objective description of the behavior, the conversation, as well as any attempts to intervene or correct the situation. The most credible documentation occurs close to the event. Do not characterize (e.g., the employee was hostile); rather record exactly what was said and done (e.g., the faculty member refused to show up for class). Be prepared to defend any documentation legally.

Unless the complaint includes a formal statement from a student, faculty or staff member, the documentation should remain in the chair’s office files until corrective action is appropriate. Formal complaints, however, must be brought to the attention of the alleged violator and any written record that is added to a personnel file must be shared with that person, even if the complaint is not actionable (see Bylaws, Article 12).

If the complaint originates with a student and involves one or more grades in a course, the chair may advise him or her about the grade appeal process, either undergraduate or graduate, as appropriate. If the complaint involves the allegation of a grievable act, the chair should follow the procedures described in the Bylaws, Article 11.

Separate disciplinary procedures apply to civil service staff (Labor and Employee Relations) and instructors (Collective Bargaining Agreement). Contact Human Resource Services for more information.
V. Curriculum and Program Reviews

As the chief academic officer of the department, the chair is responsible for coordinating, with the help of appropriate departmental committees, the curricular and catalog revision processes, program reviews, and assessment. This section summarizes these responsibilities.

1. Curriculum development and approval

According to the university’s principles of faculty governance, faculty will share in all policy-making related to the department’s programmatic and curricular structure. In the vast majority of cases, changes to a department’s curriculum will begin at the department level with its Curriculum Committee. Before beginning the process, however, the chair needs to be well-acquainted with the complexity and order of the approval process as outlined in the APPM, Section III, Item 4, for it can be lengthy and formidable and not to be initiated lightly. Changes to the curriculum will include approval from several of the following, the number and order of which depends upon the type of change recommended: the College Curriculum Committee, the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC), the General Education Committee (GEC), University Coordinating Council, the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee (APASC), the Graduate Council Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Council. In the event that the change involves a programmatic change, such as the addition or deletion of an emphasis or major, the item will be transmitted through the Provost’s Office to the President and to the Board of Trustees (BoT) and, if appropriate, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Changes to courses may be applied in the semester following their final approval; changes in programmatic requirements are not official until they appear in the NIU catalog.

2. Catalog revisions and deadlines

Changes to the NIU catalogs require approval at the department, college, and university levels. Changes to the Graduate Catalog require approval by the College Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council Curriculum Committee. Changes to the Undergraduate Catalog require approval by the College Curriculum Committee and the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum. In addition, changes in undergraduate policies and regulations dealing with admission to impacted and restricted programs and retention, both in the university and in particular programs, must be reviewed and approved by the Undergraduate Coordinating Council and the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee (APASC).

3. Assessment

In addition to upholding the quality of its programs and curriculum, each academic department is responsible for collecting data on student learning outcomes, with the intention of measuring the effectiveness of the teaching curriculum. The Office of Assessment Services (OAS) coordinates a range of assessment activities across campus and reports to the Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Development. NIU’s University Assessment Plan requires that each academic program and unit throughout the university has an approved and operational assessment plan. At the completion of every academic year, each program will submit an Annual Update Report to track the implementation and outcomes of its assessment plan. At the department level, it is the
chair’s responsibility to ensure that assessment data is collected by the appropriate faculty committee and the report is submitted on time.

4. Program review and deadlines

Per the mandate of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), each academic unit is responsible for conducting an internal review of its degree programs once every eight years. For some departments, this review process may also include accreditation review or other professional credentialing. The current format reflects the Priorities, Quality, and Productivity (PQP) initiative that began in 1991 and represents the review findings that are required by the IBHE. The process is coordinated by the Provost’s Office.

The review process begins in the academic year prior to the review year and takes about a year to complete and is detailed on the Program Review webpage under Academic Affairs.
VI. Students

Much of the daily activities in the academic department involve student issues. MyNIU and a variety of websites serve as portals for a significant portion of student contact with the department and the university. Yet face-to-face interaction remains at the heart of university-student relations and student success.

1. Recruitment and retention

At the undergraduate level, some department chairs may view student recruitment as an additional task to handle, especially in times of high student enrollment in their departments. However, student recruitment offers the department an avenue for shaping its major cohorts beyond a mere head count. Area high schools and community colleges have student populations that may not be aware of the unique curricular opportunities available in various departments at NIU and their connections to career potential. Here the chair can work in conjunction with the Office of Admissions as well as develop departmental or division outreach programs to area middle schools and high schools. The active recruitment of graduate students is also vital to the growth of a department’s graduate program.

Retaining and graduating majors and minors are, of course, paramount. Ensuring that those courses required for graduation are taught on a regular basis will help move majors and minors through the program in a timely manner. Student surveys also indicate that a sense of connectedness makes a substantial difference for student retention in a major. The Office of Student Academic Success offers resources for student academic success. At the department level, a system of effective and personal student advising is essential, and the department chair can ensure if this system is functioning effectively and meeting students’ needs.

2. Advising

At the heart of any department’s instructional mission is a program of effective advising. There are several different models of advising at NIU; the two predominant models are faculty advising as part of workload and a dedicated department advisor (usually in larger departments). There are also two groups of students that need advising: incoming freshman, transfer, or new graduate students; and continuing majors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Undergraduate students who are new to NIU must attend an orientation session and meet with an academic advisor in the college of the intended major or, in the case of undecided students, with an advisor in the Academic Advising Center.

In each academic year, it is the department chair’s responsibility to know how many declared majors and minors are in the department, how many are incoming students (both freshmen and transfer), and how many students are close to degree completion. At NIU, a steady flow of student data comes from the Office of Institutional Research and the Office of Registration and Records; deans may also keep chairs updated on comparative departmental-student data within individual colleges. Regular communication with the department advisors will also keep the chair informed about relevant student numbers, especially any fluctuations could influence prospective course enrollment and demand. In the event that department advising is carried out
by one or two advisors, the chair’s task is simplified through regular contact and information-sharing. In departments in which faculty members advise majors and minors, the chair’s oversight responsibility is more complicated. The essential contribution of academic advising to student success means that individual faculty members must be well-informed and carry out due diligence in the advising process. The chair provides oversight and leadership. To say the least, the chair should understand the department’s curriculum, requirements related to limited admissions, course prerequisites, degree and emphases (if any) requirements, and so on.

Regardless of a department’s advising structure, some advising tasks are likely to fall to the chair. Parents of prospective students may want to meet with the department chair in lieu of or in addition to meeting with a faculty advisor. The chair may be involved in summer advising when many faculty members are away from campus. NIU also has a “third-repeat option” for undergraduate students who successfully convince the college’s advising dean that they deserve a third chance to pass a certain course. Approval for the third-repeat option involves more than a pro forma nod from the chair; it requires that the chair is familiar with the student’s academic record in order to make an informed decision and may also call for a brief interview with the student. Finally, the chair should know how students declare the major and minor, especially in departments with limited admissions, and be familiar with the Major Request and Minor Request forms.

Advising at the graduate level is generally assigned to department Directors of Graduate Study. Informal advising is also carried out by Graduate Faculty mentors who may also serve as thesis or dissertation directors or members. All admission and advising decisions are carried out in coordination with the Graduate School and its advisors.

3. Student records

Student records are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 as amended in 1998. They are available only to university officials with a legitimate, university-related educational or administrative interest and need to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility; this includes faculty members who may access student records only on a “need-to-know” basis. It is the responsibility of the department chair to safeguard the integrity and the confidentiality of student information available within the department, both computerized and print material. Hard copies of student records should be stored in a double-lock environment such as locked file cabinets in a locked office space. Without the student’s prior written consent, this information cannot be shared by the chair, faculty, or staff with individuals outside of the university, including a student’s parents, or with anyone inside NIU who does not have authorization to view such records. A complete set of FERPA guidelines for faculty and staff use is available through Registration and Records.

4. Articulation and transfer credit

A sizable percentage of NIU’s undergraduate population comes to the University from the Illinois community college system. Some arrive with Associate degrees; others simply have transfer credit. Those students who have completed the Associate degree at an Illinois public community college may enter NIU with all general education requirement complete and with
junior standing if they have meet all requirements. For other transfer students, various criteria apply, depending on the number of credit hours completed and the grade point average attained. See Transfer Admission Criteria. Most matters related to transfer credit will be handled by advisors; however, the issue of course articulation requires regular attention from the department chair. The department should consider if and how its courses compare to similar courses taught at the community college level. The extent of course equivalency has implications for the percentage of the NIU degree and its baccalaureate course load that is actually taken at NIU. See Transfer Program Major Guides for more information.

5. Grade appeals

In the event that a student requests to appeal a course grade, the university provides clear procedures to follow, for both undergraduate and graduate appeals. NIU’s Academic Policies and Procedures specify that each academic department will establish a Grade Appeals Panel early in each academic year to be available to consider allegations of capricious grading. Some departments may specify in their bylaws the Grade Appeals Panel selection process. From this Panel, a Grade Review Board will be selected for each specific appeal.

Prior to the occurrence of a student allegation of capricious grading, the department chair has several responsibilities. As with any student complaint, the chair should remain a neutral party in the evidentiary process. The chair should also be well-informed about the appeal process before a distraught student appears at the office door and must be able to explain to the student the criteria for capricious grading as explained in APPM. Once the complaint of capricious grading has been formally documented by the student, the chair should direct the student to the grade appeal procedure and follow-up with the faculty member involved. It is imperative that the chair does not apply pressure to a faculty member to change his or her grading criteria; however, that faculty member should be able to explain her or his grading process clearly enough to demonstrate that no capriciousness occurred. Short of clear evidence of capriciousness on the part of the accused faculty member, the department is best served by giving its faculty the benefit of the doubt. As faculty members are committed to fairness in grading and face regular pressure from students to engage in grade inflation, they deserve the chair’s support in their efforts to uphold academic standards.

6. International student issues

Prospective students from outside the United States are more likely to be interested in both undergraduate and graduate study at NIU. Their admission may require both adherence to U.S. Federal Regulations (and related paperwork) as well as departmental support for visa applications and other regulatory functions in the home country. At NIU, the International Student and Faculty Office is available to assist chairs and directors with the navigation of the various regulatory hurdles involved. The ISFO also assists with international scholars on J-1 visas. For more information, contact Division of International Programs.
7. Financial support for graduate students

Each department may allocate funds in its budget to offer a limited number of graduate assistantships to support qualified students in their graduate studies. Each assistantship includes a full tuition waiver. Graduate assistants are employees of the university whose employment is usually situated within an academic department under the supervision of its college. As employees, they are subject to some of the same requirements as other faculty and staff members, such as Ethics Training. For more information, see the APPM, Section IV, Item 1. A limited number of competitive fellowships and other awards are also available through the Graduate School.

8. Internships

As universities work to build better bridges between higher education and the world of work, internships and other applied experiences can play an important role. Two related tasks fall to the chair. First, the chair can initiate a discussion within the department about the kind of applied experiences the department needs to encourage for its undergraduate and graduate majors. Because not all students have the flexibility to undertake a full-semester internship, paid or unpaid, this discussion needs to include other options for enriched applied experiences within the discipline. For example, a capstone course or independent study can focus on the application of disciplinary knowledge to a short-term community-based project. Second, as the chair takes the lead in building on the shared interests of the area “communiversity,” internship possibilities in local and regional business are more likely to become available and further lead to employment opportunities for department alumni. The public community is becoming increasingly important to the health of universities. The department chair thus has the responsibility of legitimizing this relationship within the mores of the department culture itself. NIU’s Office of Outreach and Community Resources is a source of up-to-date opportunities in the Northern Illinois region, including a wide range of volunteer activities.

9. Student employment

There are two types of student employment offered on campus in addition to assistantships for graduate students. They are regular employment and Federal Work-Study employment. To participate in NIU’s student employment program, students must be enrolled for at least six semester hours. Students are not required to take classes during the summer session to be eligible for summer employment; however, they must be enrolled for at least six hours during the semester immediately preceding or following summer employment. Student employees may work a maximum of 40 hours per pay period (semi-monthly). Permission to work 65 hours per pay period may be granted to undergraduate students who maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or better or 3.0 for graduate students. Also, in accordance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 which requires all employers to verify employment eligibility of anyone hired after November 6, 1986, students must complete the I-9 form and present documentation verifying their citizenship/immigration classification to the Student Employment Office prior to being hired.
The Student Employment Office maintains job listings on their website. For further information concerning on-campus employment call (815) 753-1394 or visit the office in Swen Parson Hall, room 232.

10. Study abroad

The Study Abroad Office at NIU is located in the Division of International Programs. Like internships, study abroad programs provide an excellent opportunity to connect students with the broader world beyond departmental boundaries. As NIU prepares its students for participation in the global economy, a study abroad experience can greatly enhance their international perspective and ability to engage in cross-culture encounters. Too often students and faculty fail to recognize the opportunities associated with study abroad, in part, because of financial concerns. Department chairs can help smooth the way for more students to explore study-abroad programs by actively engaging their departments in dialogue about the benefits of an international experience as well as working with faculty who may be interested in developing their own study abroad programs. Several types of programs are available through the Study Abroad Office.

11. Addressing student concerns

Beyond handling individual complaints, the chair needs a process for addressing ongoing student concerns at the department level. One example is the town hall model, in which the chair meets regularly with students in a safe venue (with or without faculty present) to discuss their concerns about the program, solicit ideas for improvement, and nurture a departmental connection with students beyond the formal classroom experience. It may also be useful to involve the department's Student Advisory Committee (SAC) in such a process, both to recruit attendees and to serve as student representatives who can frame issues and build confidence in the process.
VII. Tenure-Track Faculty

Three main issues are at the core of changes in the academic professorate and the realities facing the daily lives of faculty. First, there is more blending in governance – leading to the faculty governance model of NIU. Second, and following the first, is the expanding expectations of faculty involvement in all areas of university and departmental life, a far cry from the autonomous professor model that beckoned many to enter the field in the day. And finally, there are dwindling resources that require chairs and their senior department members to make careful decisions about hiring, tenure, and promotion.

1. Search and hiring process

Department chairs typically inherit an existing faculty but also have opportunities to shape the direction of the department through the recruitment and hiring process. Different disciplines have varying procedures for identifying and interviewing candidates for faculty positions. Moreover, the recruitment of tenure-track faculty is not identical to the hiring process of temporary faculty, such as visiting professors or instructors. Nevertheless, NIU has a set of Guidelines in place to comply with federal guidelines and to insure a fair and just hiring process in order to fulfill its own mission. Read these carefully; they offer valuable direction beyond the scope of this Handbook. Because faculty recruitment is part of the university’s contractual obligation, the faculty search process must be carried out within sound legal parameters.

It is crucial that the department is able to offer a clear rationale to search for new faculty. The process often begins with one or more informal conversations with the dean and, if the outcome is affirmative, moves to a written justification to the dean. Because the dean must consider the college’s mission and any ongoing strategic plan when replacing tenure-track faculty, the chair will be most effective if he or she is able to connect faculty replacement requests with the best interests and best practices of both the department and the college. Once the request to hire has been approved, the department is fairly autonomous in its recruitment efforts until an acceptable candidate for the position is identified. Then the conversation begins again with the college in order to negotiate the offer and make a successful hire. Established goodwill between the college dean and the department chair can smooth this process considerably.

• Request to hire: The search for one or more hires for open regular faculty lines begins with the dean’s acknowledgement to the chair that such a search will be supported by the college. Before a department’s recruitment committee can move forward to begin a faculty search process, the faculty search must first be approved formally by the college dean, the provost, and HRS. This process involves four parts: a Position Request Form (PRF), answers to the Dean and Provost's Office Guidelines for Justification for Filling Faculty Positions, and a copy of the proposed advertisement. Working in coordination with the appropriate department committee (e.g., recruitment committee, personnel committee), the chair or the appropriate office staff completes these documents. These items are then submitted to the appropriate college dean. Once approved at the college level, the request materials go to the provost’s office for its approval and then are directed to HRS, where the ad will be edited and/or approved by the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources staff. To speed things up, a chair can also be proactive and “chaperone” the request packet along its way. If this is
the procedure of choice, always remember that other administrative offices have their own deadlines and priorities and chairs should plan ahead for getting the paperwork processed in a timely manner. In any case, the chair is not authorized to place an ad until AADR signals its approval.

- **Placing the ad.** NIU is committed to diversity at all levels of its employee positions. For this reason, AADR will ask about the department’s plan to “cast a wide net” with its advertising strategy. Ads in professional journals are not enough to reach all potential applicant pools. In addition, informal contacts within the discipline can be invaluable during recruitment season; however, these must be established and nurtured in advance. AADR staff can also recommend professional listservs, mailing lists, and other outlets than may extend the reach of the advertising effort.

- **Receiving and reviewing applications.** The department office staff is usually the person responsible for maintaining the received applications in a secure folder, processing application materials and sending the applicants a receipt acknowledgement and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Request Form. The EEO form is an optional mechanism for applicants to identify their protected class status as defined by federal law. All applicant materials are confidential. Throughout the search process, the applicant files must be handled with the same procedures that are in place to protect other personnel documents in the department. In addition, no applications should be reviewed prior to the advertised deadline for screening applications.

- **Evaluation of applications and selection of interview candidates.** Once the deadline for receipt of applications has passed or the deadline for screening the applications has begun, the department begins its review and the completion of the next administrative step: Affirmative Action Recruitment Record, Part I. Be sure to include all attachments noted at the end of the form. Part I will follow the same approval trail as did the Request to Hire paperwork. No invitations for campus interviews can be made before the last step in the sequence: AADR approval. Check with AADR staff for tips on conducting interviews and what the search committee can and cannot ask a candidate during the interview process.

- **Making the offer.** Once the interview process has been completed and the candidates ranked, the offer is developed for the candidate of choice. This stage of the process is best served through open communication between the department chair and the college. Two major issues must be resolved before any official action may be taken: 1) the offering salary, and 2) the length of the tenure track. Offering salary guidelines are available from the dean; however, these may represent a starting point rather than the negotiated final salary. The length of the tenure track is determined by the candidate’s prior academic experience, if any. The standard tenure-track position is considered to be seven years, with the review for promotion and tenure occurring in the sixth year. When appropriate, the probationary period may be shortened to four, five, or six years, with the review period and criteria for promotion and tenure adjusted accordingly (see *APPM, Article 5.4*).

- **Finalizing the hire.** The department is required to complete the next administrative step: Affirmative Action Recruitment Record, Part II and a Personnel Action Form (PAF) for the
selected candidate. Like the earlier paperwork, Part II and the PAF go first to the college, next to the provost, and finally to AADR. No offer can be made without AADR approval. Once AADR has approved the offer and the college has agreed on the salary and length of the tenure track, the chair may contact the candidate. This stage of the hiring process is delicate and requires both absolute confidentiality and finesse. Seldom does a candidate accept an offer without trying to negotiate some additional perks and benefits (e.g., computer, software, office space, teaching schedule, research/travel support, summer salary). The chair must maintain a balance between an attractive offer that the candidate cannot refuse and the resources that are available to the current faculty. Of course, any supplemental support or benefits that involve college monies must be approved by the dean before the chair can include these in the offer. Some chairs write a “letter of intent” to document the supplemental-support agreements. The deadline for accepting the offer is also critical to the process, and some candidates will try to maximize their options at other institutions by requesting an extended deadline from NIU. Be careful to avoid having NIU’s offer becoming a bargaining chip for the first candidate while the second candidate loses interest or accepts another offer. There are no rules for how to navigate these waters; only good intuition and practice can perfect a chair’s hiring strategy.

If the first candidate declines the offer, a second PAF is needed, following the same procedure as earlier. In the unhappy situation in which no offer is accepted, the college may request that the chair submits a “failed search” memorandum with the details of the circumstances.

2. Mentoring new faculty and staff

Once the department, backed by the college and the university, has made a successful tenure-track faculty hire, all stakeholders will be well-served if a solid mentoring plan is in place when the new faculty member arrives on campus. In its likely absence, however, sustained attention to mentoring is still important to support a probationary faculty member’s progress toward successful promotion and tenure. Different faculty, including the department chair, can serve various mentoring roles for a new faculty member. (Bear in mind, however, not all probationary faculty members welcome a mentoring relationship.) One model for mentoring is the “buddy system,” which is an informal – and therefore, less intimidating --- relationship that nurtures professional development:

That person need not be an expert in the specialist research topic. The benefits come from four sources. One is from the formal prompt to take the work of reflecting seriously and to do it mindfully. The second is from having to give an account of research work in a way that makes sense to another person who is representative of the discipline and institutional communities; the principle is that to teach is to learn twice. The third is through responding to questions; and the fourth benefit is the joint creation of ideas, possibilities, and priorities (Knight and Trowler 2001: p. 131).

Because the department chair has an important role in NIU’s promotion and tenure process, it is unlikely that he or she can serve in more than a mentoring supervisory capacity with probationary faculty. However, within the responsibilities of overseeing faculty development, it is within the chair’s purview to encourage mentoring relationships within the faculty, especially
during the first year or two, or until the new faculty member has self-selected a mentoring colleague.

3. Tenure and promotion

The chair plays a major role in documenting the case for promotion and tenure. Articles 5.3 and 5.4 of the APPM give clear guidelines for promotion and tenure criteria and do not require repeating here. The faculty personnel process at Northern Illinois University is a dual track system with faculty and administrators comprising the two distinct tracks and each track composing distinct evaluations. This system originates at the department level and progresses through the college and university levels to final on-campus recommendation by the president. *Constitution and Bylaws, Article 5.11.*

The tenure and promotion evaluation begins in the Fall semester of the review year with the department vote and recommendations from the tenured faculty and the department chair. To ensure that the candidate’s review is fair and thorough, the department should start gathering material in the previous Spring semester. The candidate is responsible for completing Part I of the Recommendation (pp. 1-2) packet. She or he also provides the department Personnel Committee with a current curriculum vitae and copies of publications. At this time, the department chair is responsible for the selection of and invitation to a set of external reviewers (see *Working Rules of the University Council Personnel Committee, Section 11, Item 18, 7.0*). Suggestions for external reviewers may be solicited from the candidate; however, the identity of those external reviewers who accept the department’s invitation must remain confidential. The candidate is allowed to view copies of the review letters, provided all identifying information is carefully redacted. Invitations to external reviewers should be made by the chair only, following the guidelines included in the UCPC Working Rules.

Following the vote for the department’s recommendation for promotion and tenure, the chair is responsible for the completion of Part II of the Recommendation (pp3-4), following the directives of the UCPC Working Rules, Section 11, Item 18, 6.0.

If the candidate is being recommended for early promotion and tenure, a separate letter is needed from the chair explaining the extraordinary nature of the candidate’s performance. In addition, if there is disagreement between the chair’s recommendation and that of the department, a statement describing the nature of the disagreement must be included in the packet that is forwarded to the college.

In the case of a negative recommendation for promotion and tenure, the candidate has available an appeal process at all review levels. Details for the procedures and timelines are outlined in the college bylaws.

Under the university’s commitment to faculty governance, the department has substantial authority over the retention, tenure, and promotion of its probationary faculty. Nevertheless, the college has administrative oversight to ensure that the department has made its recommendations according to its own criteria as approved by the dean and the college council. In accordance with the dual track personnel system, the dean makes a separate recommendation from that of the
college council after reviewing the department’s documentation and justification for its own recommendations. The bar for disagreement with the department’s recommendation is high and requires that the college determines that there is substantial evidence that the department used inadequate or inappropriate professional standards in making its decision. To prevent an extended appeal process, the department chair should ensure that the annual review of all probationary faculty is fair and balanced in accordance with the department’s tenure and promotion criteria and that the tenure and promotion recommendation itself is carried out with the same attention to professional standards.

4. **Probationary faculty and the personnel process**

The University’s investment in a faculty member is supported and protected by the integrity of the probationary period. It is during this time frame that the potential of a junior faculty member will unfold into actuality, while offering the department the opportunity to encourage that individual’s career investment at NIU. Issues of department climate and professional mentoring are important; however, without a consistent and honest process of evaluation and feedback these alone are insufficient. In this regard, the *NIU Constitution and Bylaws, Article 6.21* requires that newly hired faculty are given clear statements of the criteria and policies for personnel decisions within the department; these include the criteria for tenure and promotion. Faculty members are also entitled to receive regular notification of personnel recommendations that affect them; and they have the right of reconsideration of any recommendation at the department level before it is submitted to the college. In addition, the *Constitution and Bylaws, Article 5.17* holds that “[n]ontenured faculty in tenure-track positions shall be entitled to receive annually a written evaluation of their progress toward the achievement of tenure.” Requirements of this procedure, including the importance and timing of the third-year review, are further detailed in the *Constitution and Bylaws, Article 5.4.*

5. **Non-retention of probationary faculty**

Despite the best efforts of the recruitment process, not all faculty hires may be a good fit with the university’s professional norms and criteria for promotion and tenure. In these cases, with appropriate attention to a fair and equitable review process and with due notice to the faculty member, the department may choose not to renew the probationary appointment at any time (see the *Constitution and Bylaws, Article 5.5.*) Should a department decide to follow this procedure, however, it is essential that the chair has a preparatory consultation with the college dean and the appropriate legal counsel to insure full protection of the university from liability.

6. **Faculty development**

Probationary faculty members are not the only ones who need sustained support for their professional development. The promotion-and-tenure process is a first hurdle; encouraging faculty growth and renewal at all stages of their careers helps insure a vibrant department in which the entire faculty has a stake in fulfilling the department’s mission and promoting its standing within the university and the discipline. Through “position power” (see Section II Chair’s Role and Responsibilities and Leadership), the chair can influence both the department culture and reward structure for presenting at professional national and regional conferences as
well as participating in on-campus brown-bag seminars and workshops sponsored by the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center. Timely announcement of the deadlines for Sabbatical Leave Requests and Summer Research and Artistry Grants are important to allow faculty members time to develop competitive proposals.

In a research university like NIU, there is also a delicate balance between meeting the needs of student majors/minors and protecting faculty time to encourage continued advancement in scholarship and pedagogy. The department chair is empowered with the “final responsibility” for assigning faculty workloads (Academic Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM)). In conjunction with the appropriate bodies for faculty governance within the department, the chair thus has a valuable tool in hand to promote ongoing strategic faculty development goals through workload flexibility.

7. Sabbaticals

The award of a sabbatical leave is protected by the Constitution and Bylaws, Article 8, for the purpose of supporting and encouraging faculty scholarship (research or artistry). The evaluation of faculty members’ proposals begins in the department; however, it is the ranking based on relative merit within the college by the dean and the college council that will determine if a sabbatical is awarded. Sabbatical leave is available to faculty members who have completed six full years of service at NIU and are limited to tenured faculty and non-temporary supportive professional staff (SPS). The college does not provide replacement teaching for faculty on sabbatical leave; therefore, the department chair should ensure that there is sufficient teaching personnel to cover the course load of the department in a faculty member’s absence. Sabbatical leave can take place during a single semester for full pay or for an academic year for half pay.

8. Graduate faculty

A department’s graduate faculty is composed of those faculty members who have met approved scholarship criteria to qualify to teach courses at the graduate level, serve on thesis and dissertation committees, and engage in other responsibilities associated with advancing the university’s mission at the graduate level. The Policies and Procedures for Graduate Faculty Membership are detailed in the APPM, Section II, Item 1. Individuals who are not members of the graduate faculty may be approved to teach a course for graduate credit or serve on a graduate committee, pending approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. The person must have professional qualifications equivalent to those expected of a member of the graduate faculty or have special expertise in the area of study. If the department would like to assign a non-member of the graduate faculty to teach a graduate course, then the Request for Permission to Teach a Course for Graduate Credit Form must be completed and submitted to the Graduate School.

9. Extension of the tenure period

Pending approval faculty members are allowed to take leaves of absence from the university to undertake activities related to professional development and for medical reasons (see Section IV). Sabbatical leave is not available to continuing but probationary or temporary faculty. However, time on other types of leave may affect the tenure clock. According to the Constitution
and Bylaws, Article 6.19, time on total or partial leave does not count toward tenure unless it is agreed before the leave begins that it will count. In the case of FMLA leave, a faculty member may request an extension of the tenure probationary period for a period of one year, as set forth in the APPM, Section 11, Item 28. In all cases, variations and changes in the tenure clock require approval from the department, the college dean, and the provost.

10. Faculty representation

In addition to its involvement in policymaking at the department level, the faculty has representation at all policy-making levels external to the department. These include the following:

- **Colledge Council representative.** Each department or school elects one representative to the College Council. The College Council is the body of representatives through which the faculty exercises its rights and responsibilities in the process of shared governance and peer review. With the dean in a separate role, the College Council serves as the personnel committee in the dual track personnel process at the college level. It is also charged with advising the dean in matters related to the mission of the college, selecting and evaluating the dean, and reviewing and approving departmental bylaws and personnel procedures, such as tenure and promotion criteria. For more information, see the appropriate college bylaws.

- **Faculty Senate representative.** The Faculty Senate is the representative body of the faculty. Each department or school elects one (or more) representative to the Faculty Senate.

- **University Council representative.** Each college elects one (or more) representative to serve on the University Council, according to the Constitution and Bylaws, Article 2; each department within the college may nominate a candidate to stand for election. The responsibilities of the University Council are detailed in the Constitution and Bylaws, Article 1. In addition, seven members of the University Council are appointed by the Faculty Senate to serve on the University Council Personnel Committee, along with one member from each college council.

11. Disciplinary actions

Failure of faculty members and staff to abide by the university’s guidelines for professional behavior may result in disciplinary action. These guidelines cover a range of issues:

- **Affirmative Action and Diversity.** University policies prohibit discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or any other factor unrelated to professional qualifications. Consistent with the importance of these objectives, the university maintains an accessible, diligent, and responsive complaint resolution system. Such procedures are outlined online at the AADR website.

- **Civil and professional interaction.** In order to promote NIU’s commitment to civil and professional interactions among faculty and staff, the university has in place disciplinary procedures to maintain an environment “that is free from incivility, misuse of authority, intimidation, retaliation, and infringement upon personal and academic freedoms.” Good faith claims of uncivil and unprofessional behavior may be addressed through NIU’s Grievance Procedure. See Bylaws, Article 11.
• **Research integrity.** The integrity of the research endeavor ultimately depends on the ethics of the individual researcher and rigorous professional review. While honest error or differences of opinion can and do occur in the research enterprise, the key to defining research misconduct is intent. The review process for cases of alleged misconduct consists of four phases: informal review, referral to appropriate university officer, inquiry, and investigation. These are discussed in detail online at Research Integrity at Northern Illinois University.

• **Institutional Biosafety Policy.** Those research and classroom activities that involve recombinant DNA, potentially pathogenic substances/toxins, and/or human tissue/body fluids must be carried out in accordance with applicable federal, state and local regulations and this policy, irrespective of the source of funding. Laboratory facilities and researchers who are found to be in non-compliance may be referred for disciplinary action. It is the department chair’s responsibility to make the appropriate faculty members aware of NIU’s Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and to work with the IBC to ensure compliance.

12. **Personnel-related resources at NIU**

Several personnel resources are available to faculty as well as to department chairs. Before a difficult personnel issue becomes unmanageable, chairs are encouraged to seek advice from one or more of the following supports:

- Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor
- Employee Assistance Program
- The Ombudsman
- Employee Relations at HRS
- University Legal Services
VIII. Fiscal Management

This section provides a quick overview of some of the basic information that chairs should know about budget and related activities at the department level. Even though department office staff may handle day-to-day financial transactions and the college Dean and Business Manager may handle major budgetary issues related to the department, it is important for department chairs to be familiar with their departmental budget, general guidelines and timelines related to financial transactions and be proactive in managing their budgets effectively.

1. University’s budget
NIU’s revenue sources include appropriated and non-appropriated funds. A detailed description of these funds and what they are used to support can be found on the Office of Budget and Planning’s website at http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/TypesOfFunds.shtml.

2. Budget-related resources and training
College Business Manager is the first line of resource that chairs can call on budget-related issues. The Business Manager is knowledgeable about the different types of funds, their guidelines, timelines, and related development and approval processes. Some academic units may also have their own Business Managers and most often office staff may know some of the operational issues related to the use of funds.

The Office of Budget and Planning’s website at http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/ is a good resource on general information related to budgets.

The Accounting Office’s website at http://www.niu.edu/Accounting/ is an excellent resource on financial management-related training, access to online forms and departmental budget reports, and accounting-related deadlines.

3. Budget process and timeline
NIU’s overall budget process includes both external and internal budget processes. A good overview of the budget process and timeline can be found at the following websites:
http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/BudgetingProcessOverview.shtml
http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/BudgetCalendar.shtml

Individual colleges usually have their own budgeting process and timelines that conform to university’s budget process and chairs must familiarize themselves with these with the help of the Business Manager of the college/department, as appropriate.

NIU’s fiscal year cycle is from July 1 of one year to June 30th of the following year. The following website clarifies a number of budget development-related questions:
http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/BudgetingFAQ.shtml

4. Financial vocabulary
Similar to any institution, NIU uses some financial vocabulary that chairs must know to process related paperwork and communicate easily with Business Managers. Listed below are some terms commonly used in budgeting and accounting transactions at NIU:
Fund source – refers to the type of revenue source and is usually designated by a two-digit code such as 02, 04, etc. The different funding sources are explained in the next section.

Cost Center – refers to a particular budget assigned to a department or project. This is usually a 7-digit alphanumeric code such as AB12345.

Subclass codes – these are three-digit alphanumeric codes such as 01A, 02A, etc. The first two digits refer to type of activity such as instruction, organized research etc., as defined by IBHE’s classifications, and the third digit refers to a particular subclass within an activity. More information about the subclass codes can be found on the following websites: http://www.finfofacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/RAMP_codes_definitions.pdf http://www.finfofacil.niu.edu/BudgetAndPlanning/SubClass_codes_list.pdf

Account Number – refers to particular expense items such as personnel salaries (640), commodities (670), travel (830), equipment (880), etc. A complete list of account numbers and their explanations can be found on the following website: http://www.niu.edu/accounting/reference/index.shtml

All transactions should include the fund source, cost center, subclass code, and account number to indicate where a particular charge should be recorded.

5. Funding sources and related guidelines
The revenue sources that department chairs usually deal with include the following, and each funding source has guidelines on usage, carry over to next fiscal year, and approvals.

02 – These are general revenue funds that come from the state for particular fiscal year and cannot be carried over to the next fiscal year. These funds are generally used for personnel and operating expenses and have restrictions on how the funds can be expended.

04 – These are material fees directly-related to courses and instructional activities, and managed by the departments. The fees have to be assigned to courses through Fee Request Forms and require a formal approval process by established timelines. These funds also have restrictions on how they can be used and have limits on how much can be carried over to next fiscal year.

41- These are considered local funds and specific to units. The cash funds have no carry-over limits but the indirect charges maintained as 41 funds have carry-over limits.

91, 92, 93, 55, etc. – These are Foundation funds generated through endowments, gifts, etc., and are used for scholarships and other purposes as defined. These funds have fewer restrictions for expenses such as meals and entertainment compared to other funds mentioned above.

Chairs must know the funding sources available to their departments, their intended purposes, restrictions and approval process, especially for 04 funds which have established time lines for request and approval each year. Any transfers can only be made between same fund sources. For example, budget transfers can be made from one unit’s 02 fund to another unit’s 02 fund but not from an 02 fund to a 41 fund.
6. Financial statements

The Office of Budget and Planning posts financial statements on departmental budgets periodically online. These statements provide timely and accurate information on departmental funding sources and are useful for better planning and decision-making. The financial statements include the following:


HR/GL Personnel Report (NHRSGL.XLS) – a summary of funds expended on personnel such as faculty, staff, graduate assistants, extra-help, student workers, etc.

Financial Detail Report (NPRDGL.XLS) – a summary of all the expense items other than personnel charged to a funding source.

Obligation Report (NOBLGL.XLS) – a summary of all the obligated amounts for various expense categories for a funding source.

Budget Detail Report (NBUDGL.XLS) – a summary of all the budget-related transactions such as allocations, transfers, etc. (link sample report with call out boxes explaining various items in the report)

All chairs must familiarize themselves with these reports and the department office staff is usually helpful for verifying each report to ensure if the charges have been recorded accurately and if any adjustments should be made through budget transfer to correct any deficits in certain line items of the budget.

The financial reports are posted online on a monthly basis for the first 10-months of the fiscal year, and then on a bi-weekly or weekly basis as the fiscal year come to a close. Each report posted online is identified with a distinctive filename with the following conventions:

OOOOOOO_FF_YYYY_PP_NRRRgl.xls, where OOOOOOO is the cost center, FF is the fund such as 02, 04, etc., YYYY is the fiscal year, PP is the accounting period such as month 10 of the fiscal year, N designates an NIU developed report layout, and RRR is the report name as follows: FSR – Financial Summary Report, HRS – Human Resources Period To Date, OBL – Obligations Period To Date, PRD – Period Actuals Detail.

7. Tips for managing your budgets effectively

Listed below are some general tips on managing departmental budgets effectively, and it is a good idea to work closely with your department office staff and college Business Manager on budget-related issues.

- Familiarize yourself with the budget-related websites, campus units such as Office of Budget and Planning and Accounting Office, and your college Business Manager.
- Learn NIU’s financial vocabulary and the various financial statements. Attend any budget-related training necessary.
- Be aware of deadlines for budget reviews, submitting budget plans for the following fiscal year, cut-off dates for purchases, course fee requests, etc.

- Use previous year’s expenses for different categories as a guide and develop budget plans for the following fiscal year. Work closely with your Dean and college Business Manager and submit the budget plan by the deadline and get it approved.

- Develop a monthly routine for working closely with office staff to print and review budget reports to ensure charges have been recorded accurately and identify any discrepancies.

- Check with your college Business Manager on resolving any identified discrepancies in the budget reports.

- Monitor the budget transactions closely during the last quarter of the fiscal year and estimate expenses for the rest of the fiscal year so that you can make sure the allocated budget is sufficient to cover all the charges.

- Inform your Dean and college Business Manager if you foresee any problems with the budget and address the problems proactively before the close of the fiscal year.

- Make necessary budget transfers to cover any deficits in particular line items in a cost center. Budget transfers can be made between line items within a cost center for a particular funding source or between same funding sources as appropriate.

- Deposit any checks received into appropriate accounts within 5-days of receipt of those checks.

- Establish departmental guidelines on the use of particular funds for intended purposes, and be transparent with the process with your faculty and staff. For example, it is good to clarify in a department meeting at the beginning of the academic year the amount budgeted for travel funds for that year and the guidelines for requesting the use of those travel funds for purposes such as conference presentation, work-related training, etc.

- Network with your fellow chairs and share tips on budget planning, handling discrepancies, and explaining budget-related information to faculty and staff.
IX. Facilities and Materials Management

This section provides a quick overview of some of the basic information that chairs should know about managing departmental facilities, purchasing various items and related issues. Departmental facilities and materials also directly impact the department’s budget as the maintenance of facilities and procurement and disposal of items require the department chair to authorize the use of funds from appropriate accounts.

1. Departmental Facilities

Departmental facilities include (a) physical space allocated for faculty/staff offices, departmental office and mailroom, graduate assistants’ area, laboratories and computer rooms, store rooms, department-specific classrooms, and other work areas, (b) utilities such as heat, electricity, and cooling, and (c) network and telecommunication lines.

a. Physical space allocated to a department can impacts its programs and operations, and any future expansion plans. Program reviews also generally include a review of department’s facilities for supporting ongoing programs as well as anticipated future changes. As physical space is a limited resource, department chairs must ensure that the allocated space is used effectively and that the facilities are in good condition. For any facilities-related work requests, the Work Order Desk (http://www.niu.edu/phys_plant/workorders) at the Physical Plant should be contacted. Departments may be charged for the work depending on the nature of the work request.

b. For general building maintenance issues related to heating, air conditioning, electricity, cooling or issuing or replacing keys or locks, contact the appropriate department at the Physical Plant http://www.niu.edu/phys_plant/departments/index.shtml. It is critical that the department office effectively manages the keys issued for access to departmental facilities and that the keys are retrieved from those who no longer need access to the facilities. In case of lost keys, report them immediately to Key Control department at the Physical Plant.

c. For network and telecommunication-related issues, check Information Technology Services’ (ITS) website at http://www.its.niu.edu/its/index.asp. ITS also has special rates for cell phones for employee and departmental use, and provides other services such as software distribution, copying services (Document Services), and email/web support.

2. Purchasing Materials

Departments usually purchase a variety of items such as office supplies, equipment (computers, lab equipment, etc.), software, furnishings, professional/artistic services, etc. Even though department office staff may be responsible for placing orders for items, department chairs must familiarize themselves with NIU’s Procurement Policies and Procedures and make sure necessary funds are available in appropriate lines before authorizing the purchase of items and services for the department.
Procurement Services’ website at http://www.niu.edu/procurement/ contains a wealth of information on procurement policies and procedures, when a formal bid is required for purchasing an item or service, purchasing cut-off dates for a particular fiscal year, various forms to be used for purchasing items or services, sole-source justification, P-Card (departmental credit card) forms and procedures, and other useful information such as discounted car rental agreement and hotel agreement for NIU faculty and staff.

When purchases are made at the end of the fiscal year, it is important to make sure the purchases are made and the charges are appropriately recorded for that fiscal year by the cut-off dates. Otherwise, the charges may roll over to the next fiscal year and the departments can end up paying twice, that is, losing the funds allocated in the budget for the purchase in one fiscal year (if the purchase is made from general revenue funds) and letting the charges roll over to the following year’s budget and paying again for the same purchase.

Some purchases that require agreements with vendors will also require the review and approval of the agreement documents by University Legal Services before the item or service can be purchased. Contact the Procurement Services’ office for additional information on procurement policies and deadlines.

Office supplies can be ordered through NIU’s Central Stores and their catalog and related information can be found at http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/MaterialsMgt/centralStoresIndex.html. Departments can also obtain a bookstore card for purchasing items from the University Bookstore. The bookstore card can be obtained by contacting the Holmes Student Center Accounting Office at 815-753-6542.

3. Managing Materials

It is the department’s responsibility to manage purchased items and make them available for annual inventory verification by the Property Control office at NIU. A purchased item should be tagged by the Property Control office for inventory, if the item is over a certain dollar amount or has high theft potential. If the value of an item is below the dollar amount for Property Control office to tag, then departments can develop internal guidelines for tracking and maintaining such low-value but important items.

Information about tagging of equipment, reporting on missing items or items to be transferred to other campus units, and the use of departmental equipment off-campus can be found at Property Control office’s website at: http://www.finfacil.niu.edu/MaterialsMgt/propControlIndex.html. Property Control office also has furniture, which can be purchased by departments or transferred free of charge, as applicable.

Disposal of purchased items also requires following university procedures, and disposal of computing equipment with hard disk storage may also incur fees, which will be charged to the department’s budget. Contact the Property Control office for any issues related to missing, disposal or transfer of any purchased items.
X. External Relations

Some of the enjoyable aspects of department chair’s responsibilities are the opportunities to interact with the department’s external constituents, engage in fundraising activities to support the department and contribute to the external community through outreach and public service activities. This section summarizes these opportunities.

1. Alumni

Of all the department’s representatives, alumni are among the most valuable ambassadors, helping to shape the public perception of the department’s effectiveness in carrying out its mission within the framework of the public trust. The large majority of NIU graduates remain in the Northern Illinois region, making them important contacts for internships, conduits for new students, professional mentors for current majors, and potential donors during funding-raising efforts. Thus, part of a chair’s leadership role is to encourage sustained alumni relations and the NIU Alumni Association can assist in this regard. Contact information for individual department’s alumni can be obtained through Registration and Records. Some alumni maintain contact with their favorite professors. The department’s homepage can include a focus on alumni news. And a regularly schedule “Department Week” can provide the opportunity for current students to meet and mingle with alumni, giving the latter a chance to contribute to the ongoing life of the department.

2. Advisory board

A departmental advisory board can be organized by the chair, with a potentially high benefit to the department. The advisory board should include key individuals who are stakeholders in the department's programs, such as alumni in high positions in various organizations in the region or other individuals with similar degrees and backgrounds who serve those regional organizations where your graduates find employment.

The purpose of a departmental advisory board is to engage these stakeholders to support your program, faculty, and students; and to contribute in a variety of ways. Advisory board members may offer feedback on the curriculum from an employer perspective, present guest lectures and seminars in classes to offer a real-world perspective to students, conduct mock interviews for graduating students, provide internships and job opportunities for students, provide project and outreach training opportunities for faculty, participate in fund-raising and recruitment activities, serve as spokespersons and ambassadors of the program, and establish scholarships and endowments. The chair can also invite advisory board members to departmental banquets and award ceremonies and recognize them with service awards.

3. Fundraising

Fundraising is an important aspect of the chair's responsibility to establish and develop scholarships, endowments, support for faculty development, and other funds for department enrichment activities. The NIU Foundation oversees a wide variety of fundraising opportunities. For details and donation guidelines, see the Development Office website.
4. Outreach and public service

Working at the local, regional, national, and international levels, NIU’s Outreach programs are committed to taking the university’s research, technology, technical expertise, academic programs and non-credit professional development opportunities beyond the main campus. From life-long learning opportunities to public service opportunities in Northern Illinois’ communities, NIU’s Outreach program is essential to maintaining the university’s leadership role in the Northern Illinois corridor. For more information, check the NIU Outreach website.
XI. Self-Care

Faculty who become chairs and directors are often drawn from the ranks of overachievers. While having no limits can be stressful for a regular faculty member, it can render a department administrator ineffective and have negative repercussions for department growth and well-being. This section addresses some of the personal issues that confront department chairs, with a few suggestions for what to do and what not to do.

- **Network.** The transition from faculty member to administrator can leave the new chair feeling cut-off as former friends and colleagues shift their perceptions and expectations. This distancing is accentuated by the reality that chairs have information and a degree of influence and power that are not available to regular faculty. To avoid becoming isolated, it is important to develop collegial relationships with other administrators, especially those with whom a degree of confidentiality can be maintained. Sharing war-stories and problem-solving strategies can be essential for keeping the demands of the job in perspective.

- **Avoid living on red alert.** As the leader who is responsible for the well-being of the department and its members, the chair can be vulnerable to a limitless flow of requests, many of which come packaged with the expectation of an immediate response. Learn to identify genuine emergencies. There is more to the job than can be finished neatly at the end of the day, or week, or semester. It is critical to pace work demands and plan ahead for deadlines that may cluster at certain junctures in the academic year.

- **Manage expectations.** Depending on the characteristics of the department, what a chair can accomplish in terms of professional development may be limited. It is quite difficult to be present in the department five days a week, teach one or more courses every semester, and maintain a steady pace of scholarly activity. Set priorities and plan on some work time away from the department to stay current with teaching or research or service to the profession. These activities can be rejuvenating as long as they do not add to an already full work schedule. Be willing to re-evaluate priorities, if necessary.

- **Learn to juggle.** Much of the work day will involve putting out administrative fires while the to-do list lies neglected on the desk. Interruptions are part of the job description. To be effective and efficient, plan the flow of the work day. If it is not possible to be sequestered in the chair’s office to concentrate on a large project, develop the ability to multi-task through smaller responsibilities and chip away at the more demanding projects in the quiet of early morning or the late, late afternoon.

- **Take breaks.** Administrators have vacation days. Use them. The same rule holds for sick days; ill or injured chairs are less effective. The best defense against burn-out is to avoid exhaustion. Schedule time during which you are away from your phone, your computer, and access to email. If you can’t get away, learn relaxation techniques that you can do in the office.

Contact [Employee Assistance Program](#) for tips and suggestions on self-care and support services available.
XII. References


