

## CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP ROLES OF CHAIRPERSONS IN CONTINUOUSLY PLANNING DEPARTMENTS

Joan S. Stark, Charlotte L. Briggs, and Jean Rowland-Poplawski

Forty-four chairpersons of departments judged by academic vice presidents at randomly selected institutions to be engaged in especially effective curriculum planning were interviewed about their roles. The interviews suggest 7 leadership roles used in the curriculum development process. The roles varied by institutional type, department size, and personal choice. This article reviews the conceptual framework that guided the study, describes the interview population and sample, illustrates the leadership roles with quotations, relates the roles to curriculum planning and organizational contexts, and develops implications for researchers.

**KEY WORDS:** curriculum; department chairs; leadership; planning.

### BACKGROUND AND STUDY PURPOSE

In a series of reform-oriented critiques and proposals that began in 1985, national and state leaders have called for curriculum reform in colleges. Curriculum reform efforts were accompanied by a parallel administrative movement, often referred to as the “continuous quality” initiative, urging regular examination of all aspects of college operation. The calls for curriculum reform suggest that one area in which colleges might well develop a greater capacity for continuous improvement is regular appraisal of educational programs. Where frequent reappraisal becomes an expected practice, it may improve “curriculum vitality,” which Hefferlin described as “the capacity to grow and adapt to new social demands” (Hefferlin, 1969).

The academic department is one key locus of curriculum reappraisal. Many recent authors have emphasized the importance of curriculum leadership and have ascribed the responsibility to department-level leaders (Gmelch and Mis-

Joan S. Stark, Charlotte L. Briggs, and Jean Rowland-Poplawski are affiliated with the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, University of Michigan.

Address correspondence to: Dr. Joan S. Stark, 4271 Pratt Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103; Jsstark@umich.edu.

kin, 1993; Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, and Tucker, 1999; Leaming, 1998; Lucas, 1994; McAdams, 1997; Tucker, 1992). According to the Pew Policy Roundtable (February 1996), "By any reckoning, teaching and learning are the first domains of departmental responsibility" and "discussions concerning the quality and coherence of the department's major are essential to accept this responsibility. To achieve such discussions, the department must have the leadership of a purposeful chair." Empirical research also supports the importance of department-level leadership. In an exploratory study of curriculum planning, faculty enthusiasm for department-level planning was uniquely associated with strong leadership and a supportive institutional climate (Stark, Lowther, Sharp, and Arnold, 1997).

Yet lack of leadership, lack of motivation, failure to use data in curriculum decision making, and lack of accepted patterns for making program changes have long been identified as impediments to departmental curriculum renewal (Dressel, 1980). Jennerich (1981) reported that a number of studies conducted between 1953 and 1981 showed that department chairpersons concentrate on managerial duties to the exclusion of curriculum development and related academic tasks. Some seasoned administrators believe that this lack of attention to curriculum is deliberate because most faculty groups do not want a chairperson who is a strong leader in curriculum matters. Rather, faculty members prefer that the chairperson strongly endorse their interests in forums outside the department (Henry, 1974) and/or protect them from external pressures for curricular change and coordination (Mayhew and Ford, 1971). In contrast to these views, however, Knight and Holen (1985) reported that, in the eyes of faculty members, the most effective department chairpersons were those who both initiated change and considered the needs of individuals. In a recent literature review, we noted a continuing discrepancy between rhetoric that urges department chairpersons to exercise curricular leadership and empirical studies of random samples of chairpersons that report that such leadership is not a high priority (Stark and Briggs 1998).

Using a process of nomination rather than random selection, Creswell and others (1990) studied 200 department chairpersons who were named as effective on 70 campuses. The researchers examined how these chairpersons initiated change through teaching improvement and created a positive interpersonal work environment. The authors suggested that some department chairpersons accept an educational leadership role, while others reject it, becoming mere "caretakers" who focus on administrative "housekeeping" tasks rather than provide leadership to move the department forward. Other researchers who recently interviewed faculty and department chairs found that departments that strongly support undergraduate teaching are those in which members work together in collegial ways (Massy, Wilger, and Colbeck, 1994). They defined departmental conditions that presumably can be observed when a "purposeful" chairperson fosters these conditions, but they stopped short of identifying what might influence a chairperson to acquire and exhibit appropriate behaviors.

Based on our review of the literature, we felt that the potential for helping academic departments engage in continuous programmatic reappraisal rested on better understanding of departmental curriculum planning and related leadership processes. So we developed a conceptual framework to guide research that might explain some of the ambiguities previous researchers have exposed. In deriving the framework, we examined a wide variety of literature on curriculum development and leadership (both in higher education and K–12 education), educational change, educational innovation and diffusion, improving college teaching and learning, characteristics of the disciplines and professional fields, and organizational environments of colleges and universities. The literature review reinforced the idea that understanding curriculum planning in a department requires knowledge of four key determinants: (a) the context; (b) the roles played by individuals; (c) the planning processes that are used; and (d) the types of decisions that are made (Stark and Briggs, 1998). A framework that includes these variables could guide studies in a wide range of departments and institutions.

To delineate each of the four sets of variables more fully, we used Stark and Lattuca's (1997) view of curriculum as an academic plan to guide teaching and learning at various levels—course, program, college-wide. According to this view, the *context* in which a group of faculty members constructs a plan at the program level includes institutional, departmental, and disciplinary characteristics and cultures, as well as important current influences that may demand prompt attention. Within this context, the faculty group makes curriculum decisions that constitute an academic plan for the foreseeable future.

Stark and Lattuca outline eight elements of an academic plan about which the faculty group, consciously or unconsciously, makes *decisions*: purpose, content, sequence, learners, instructional resources, instructional processes, evaluation, and adjustment (1997, pp. 9–12). Because Stark and Lattuca include evaluation and adjustment among the key decision categories, their definition of curriculum development includes the potential for regular or continuous review of a program's decisions, rather than sporadic or occasional consideration.

In outlining a cyclical curriculum planning *process*, Stark and Lattuca mention three general steps: development, implementation, and evaluation (1997, p. 313). Their scheme is consistent with those proposed by others. For example, Barak's (1987) system-wide perspective asserts that "academic programming" refers to the management of academic programs through three highly interrelated components: (a) program planning—the conception and design of programs; (b) program development—the continuous process of developing and maintaining program vitality; and (c) program evaluation.

Stark and Lattuca were less clear about the roles individuals play in the curriculum planning process. Although they outlined some presumably desirable roles for administrators, they did not explain why some department chairpersons accept a leadership role and others do not; why some who accept the role lead successfully and others do not; or why, in some departments, faculty members

other than the chairperson may become the curriculum leaders.<sup>1</sup> Because such questions are unresolved, our framework posits that three role considerations—who (if anyone) accepts responsibility for curriculum leadership, the leaders' specific leadership activities, and the leaders' expertise in curriculum—are worthy of study. Furthermore, we hypothesize that these role considerations are central; they may be influenced by the department's context, and, in turn, they may influence planning processes and decisions, including evaluation and adjustment. The framework, which is elaborated in detail elsewhere, suggests many potential relationships to be explored (Stark and Briggs, 1999). Accordingly, we have launched several interrelated inquiries.

In the study reported here we focused on two specific aspects of the conceptual framework. We identified department chairpersons' self-reported roles in curriculum leadership for undergraduate programs, and we examined the congruence of these roles with a generalized process of curriculum planning that includes development, implementation, and evaluation of an academic plan (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 313).<sup>2</sup> Finally, in an exploratory way, we examined some contextual factors, such as institutional type, discipline, and departmental size and organization, that appear to influence the chairpersons' roles.

Our research questions, stated broadly, were:

1. How do chairpersons of "continuously planning" departments view their leadership role in curriculum?
2. How might contextual variables influence the role these department chairpersons play?

## METHODS AND ANALYSES

### Data Source

In this analysis we used data from a broader study of curriculum planning, guided by the framework described above, which focused on the department context, the roles of curriculum leaders, the processes of curriculum development, the existence of discourse communities about curriculum issues, and the influence of technology on curriculum development in continuously planning academic departments.<sup>3</sup> Previous research reporting that most department chairpersons give little attention to curricular leadership, at least relative to other pressing administrative concerns, used random samples of department chairpersons. We saw no reason to replicate this finding. Rather, to identify positive practices in curriculum leadership, we sought departments that engaged in regular, collaborative, and information-based curriculum planning as their routine practice, rather than as an exception. We called these "continuously planning departments."<sup>4</sup>

To identify the continuously planning departments for the comprehensive study, we used a two-stage sampling process. First, we drew a 15% stratified random sample of institutions from those Carnegie classifications most likely to have academic departments with seven or more full-time faculty members: Research I and II ( $N = 18$ ), Doctoral I and II ( $N = 16$ ), Master's I ( $N = 71$ ), and Associate of Arts ( $N = 148$ ). By mail and telephone follow-up, we invited the chief academic officers at these 105 4-year and 148 2-year colleges to nominate academic departments that are "especially effective" in reviewing and planning their undergraduate curricula. Based on Stark and Lattuca's synthesis of existing literatures regarding effective curriculum development (1997, pp. 310–335), we developed and supplied seven possible, but optional, effectiveness indicators (shown in Table 1) and invited provosts to contribute relevant others. Through these procedures, we developed a pool of 213 departments from 81 institutions that appeared to meet our criteria.

In the second stage of the sampling process, we arrayed the nominated departments in a 28-cell matrix (four primary Carnegie classifications by seven broad groups of pure and applied academic fields) and selected 50 departments for study. To the extent possible, we chose at least one department in every cell of

**TABLE 1. Reasons for Nominating Continuously Planning Departments\***

Reason	Number of Times Academic VPs Designated Each Reason in 213 Nominations
Gives frequent attention to appraising the curriculum for renewal and redirection	174
Maintains a high level of faculty involvement in curriculum issues	173
Is attuned to external issues that may influence curriculum	156
Gathers and uses relevant information about program successes and failures in the planning process	154
Implement curriculum plans in a timely and effective way	146
Is attuned to internal issues that may influence curriculum	141
Has identifiable curriculum leaders who encourage systematic appraisal	133

\*About 10% of the academic vice presidents contributed additional reasons for their nominations. Those most frequently mentioned included: a successful recent overhaul of the curriculum, adopting new pedagogy, integrating media, and strengthening interdisciplinary efforts. Other reasons included: positive comments by accreditors, outstanding assessment procedures, responsiveness to community and employer needs, respect on campus, collegiality, receipt of grants and awards, and building a flexible program.

the matrix. From the 50 departments we obtained 44 usable interviews of department chairpersons and 83 additional interviews from one or two of their faculty members. This article uses data from the department chairperson interviews, the personal and departmental data gathered directly from the chairpersons, and data from departmental web pages. Table 2 is a matrix showing the wide variety of disciplines and institutional types encompassed by the departments our informants chaired. The situations of these departments provided varied contexts in which to explore leadership roles of chairpersons.

Each of the three authors interviewed about a third of the 44 department chairs by telephone for 50 to 90 minutes. The senior author listened to all of the taped interviews, read each transcription, and prepared a summary of each case including factual information about department context such as enrollment, union status, curriculum committee structure, the chairperson's term of office and method of selection, and the issues currently under consideration by the department. In doing so she gained an initial sense of the kinds of answers chairpersons gave to questions in the interview protocol that focused directly or indirectly on leadership roles and behaviors. (These questions are shown in Table 3.) Then, using the verbatim transcriptions but no preexisting codes, she used the QSR NUD\*IST Vivo 1.1 qualitative data analysis program (Fraser, 1999; Richards, 1999) to code references to the chairpersons' leadership roles in the interviews. In the initial coding of the self-reported leadership roles, the actual words of the informant were retained in the coding whenever possible. Subsequently, the senior author studied the coded passages retrieved from the database and grouped similar roles into a more parsimonious set of themes.

The qualitative analysis was intended to let the chairpersons' voices suggest roles and themes rather than use any a priori notions about leadership roles the chairperson or other faculty members might play. Although she attempted to code neutrally, the researcher's choice of codes was no doubt influenced by her past experience as a department chairperson and dean, and by her long-term research interest in leadership practices associated with continuous curriculum planning.

## RESULTS

### Description of Informants

Departments in our study varied widely on several dimensions. In some departments graduate programs coexisted with the undergraduate programs on which our study focused. Some 4-year college departments offered courses primarily for upper-division majors, while community college departments typically provided lower-division general education or vocational education. Overall, the number of undergraduate majors graduated each year ranged from 10 to

**TABLE 2. Disciplines and Institutional Types of Departments in Sample**

General Field of Study	Research I and II	Doctoral I and II	Master's I	Associate of Arts
Humanities	History	English	English (2)	Humanities*
Social Sciences	Sociology	Psychology Sociology/Anthropology*	Psychology Sociology/Anthropology* Geography, Political Science, & Sociology*	Social/Behavioral Sciences*
Science and Math	Microbiology Math & Computer Science* Math	Math & Computer Science*	Chemistry (3) Biology (2) Math Math & Computer Science*	Math & Computer Science* Biology
Enterprising Services	Accounting and Information Systems* Biological Systems Engineering		Applied Engineering & Technology Industrial technology*	Business Administration Engineering Technology Electrical & Electronics Engineering
Human Services		Nursing	Nursing (2)	Nursing
Information Services	Curriculum and Instruction Communication	Communication	Communications Studies*	Communications Media Communications/Humanities*
Artistic Services	Art			Fine Arts*
Total N	44	6	17	11

\*Indicates a department we called composite because it includes several disciplines.

**TABLE 3. Interview Questions Used in the Analysis**

- 
- How would you describe your role in curriculum development?
  - To what extent is the role you play one you prefer or one that is expected of you?
  - Some say that department chairs are reluctant or unwilling to lead in curriculum matters. Would you share your thoughts about that?
  - Are there members of your department that you think especially contribute to curriculum leadership? In what ways?
  - What are some situations in which you feel it is better to have a faculty member rather than the chair take leadership in curriculum matters?
  - Will you describe for me a curriculum decision that has recently been made by the program and how it came about?
  - What curriculum issues and decisions are currently of interest to the department as a whole?
  - Are there other issues that you, as chair, are especially interested in?
  - What things do you think are particularly important about your department in terms of its process of curriculum decision making?
  - Would you say that your department shares a mission or “vision” of its work? If yes, would you describe that vision.
  - How would you characterize your department’s curriculum activities with respect to faculty collaboration?
- 

530.<sup>5</sup> The number of full-time faculty members ranged from 6 to 38.<sup>6</sup> Some departments employed no part-time faculty members, while others depended heavily on such individuals to carry out the teaching program. The chairpersons’ estimates of the distribution of time devoted by department faculty to research or service varied from 0% to 50%, and to teaching varied from 30% to 100%. Finally, about 41% of the colleges had faculty unions.

As might be expected, most chairpersons (75%) had a doctoral degree, held the top professorial ranks applicable at their college (89%), and had many years of teaching experience (mean of 23 years). Their ages ranged from 40 to 75 years with a mean of 54 years. Seventy percent were male and 30% were female. The chairpersons reported relatively little work experience outside of college teaching, but some had held college administrative posts other than department chairperson. Most had been chairpersons of their department for 5 or more years, although their tenure in this position ranged from 1 to 38 years. The time they reported allocating to departmental administration ranged from 10% to 99% with a mean of 59%.

### Leadership Roles

Twenty-seven leadership roles mentioned by the chairpersons were coded in the initial analysis. Often a chairperson described more than one role, and such statements were coded for all of the different ideas mentioned. Whenever possible, a term used by one of the interviewees was used to characterize a role.



After reading the quotations in these initial categories several times, and noting linked themes and those coded under more than one category, the senior author reduced the list of self-reported leadership roles to seven: sensor, facilitator, initiator, agenda setter, coordinator, advocate, and standard setter. The frequency of mention of these themes is described in Table 4, and each leadership role is described below. As will become apparent in the discussion, some of the roles are not mutually exclusive. A chairperson may play different roles at different times in the curriculum planning process and may vary his or her role according to the situation.

After we had studied chairpersons' discussions of their roles, listened to their descriptions of curriculum development processes, and derived the seven leadership role themes, we asked ourselves what major "concern" characterized each role. It seemed to us that the sensor role uniquely concerns identifying relevant external and internal issues and trends. The facilitator, initiator, and agenda setter roles all concern the process of curriculum planning, that is, translating issues and ideas into curriculum proposals and decisions. The advocate and the coordinator roles concern implementing curriculum decisions, specifically obtaining resources and support and ensuring that faculty work is coordinated. Lastly, the standard setter role concerns standards of quality and success. In a sense, these four "concerns" represent a further consolidation of the role themes. Following our presentation below of the data that support and characterize a role theme or related group of themes, we will discuss briefly how the roles relate to these four major concerns.

### *Sensor*

The department chairperson's role we have called sensor encompasses sensing both problems and opportunities. It includes the roles we originally coded as problem sensor, external sensor, information broker, and vision setter. The role includes four different types of sensing, and a chairperson may emphasize

**TABLE 4. Leadership Role Themes**

Role	Numbers of Interviews in Which Theme Occurred	Percent of Chairs
Facilitator	32	73
Sensor	26	59
Initiator	21	48
Agenda Setter	21	48
Advocate	18	41
Coordinator	17	39
Standard Setter	11	25

one or more of these types: sensing internal issues, sensing institutional issues, sensing national or regional issues, and developing comprehensive visions.

One type of sensing involves problems or difficulties within the department's curriculum that merit attention and possible adjustment as illustrated by the following quotation:<sup>7</sup>

And during the exit interviews, I sort of sensed, from the seniors, that we are not fully meeting all the objectives we have in that two-course series. I then collected some additional information from our juniors and the current sophomores and found out what the problems are. And I'm going to bring that to the curriculum committee, and maybe the faculty members who are directly involved with those two courses, to correct that situation. (Male chairperson, biological systems engineering, research university, 17 FTF<sup>8</sup>)

A second type of sensing is to be aware of what is going on in the institutional environment external to the department and help the faculty respond to new institutional mandates, budget crises, state initiatives, and the like.

I would call myself . . . a watchdog. What I mean by the watchdog function is the fact that I am in other levels of the university so I see things when they're coming. I see problems, I see enrollments, I see things that are happening and so I bring things to the faculty's attention. (Female chairperson, communication, doctoral university, 20 FTF)

I have some ideas, my advantage is that I get to see a little bit larger picture than all of the faculty do. . . . by dealing with other department chairs. I'm kind of the contact with some interaction with other departments. So I get a little more information on some interdepartmental kinds of offerings. Within the department, a lot of times I'll introduce an idea, see how it floats. (Male chairperson, industrial technology, master's university, 9 FTF)

Sometimes there are things that come from the state that I have to bring to the department and ask faculty to consider in revising courses. A few years back the state legislature passed a requirement for incorporating in our general education courses a discussion of gender equity issues, sexual harassment, and diversity issues. . . . So, my role was, in part, to present this issue to the department, then work with the individual faculty as they were making some revisions. (Male chairperson, communication, community college, 16 FTF)

In a third type of sensing the chair strives to be nationally or regionally connected within the discipline and its constituencies, such as employers and professional associations, and to bring emerging issues and trends to the faculty's attention.

I like to go to department head meetings that are field specific and to find out what's happening nationally in the area and you hear about interesting innovations that are happening other places. Or I talk to the employers and they tell me here's what your students are really strong in but here's what we would like to see more of. So I think I can be a leader in the sense of taking all that information that I'm privy

to, by virtue of being department head, and bringing it in a coherent form to the faculty as suggestions. (Female chairperson, mathematics and computer science, doctoral university, 24 FTF)

The fourth and least frequently described type of sensing is to develop and share with the faculty comprehensive visions for the future based on the other three types of sensing.

I think that I try to give the faculty a sense of direction. I try to suggest a vision. I try to suggest ideas. I can help them identify the ways we should be going. I keep reminding them that we're educating our graduates not for just two months post graduate but for a whole lifetime in transition, and they may not stay around in [the area]. (Female chairperson, nursing, doctoral university, 24 FTF)

*Concern with Internal and External Issues and Trends: An Active Role.* The sensor is concerned with identifying current and future contexts for departmental activities, especially issues and trends in the environment of the discipline and the institution that may that deserve attention and suggest review of the curriculum, and possibly change. The chairperson may accept the sensor role or not. Sometimes, whether or not the chairperson is an active sensor, a similar role may be played by other faculty members who are active in external affairs.

Chairpersons who are sensors may initiate curriculum proposals based on their internal and external sensing activities. The sensor who actively shares visions for the future may thus also play the role of initiator to be discussed shortly. But some sensors may choose another method of involvement in curriculum planning, such as facilitating or agenda setting as described below.

#### *Facilitator*

Most frequently, chairpersons of academic departments see themselves as facilitators of the curriculum planning process. The role of facilitator subsumes the roles we initially coded as process leader, integrator, first among equals, and prodder. Chairpersons in various disciplines and types of institutions described the role as follows:

I spend a lot of time organizing meetings, getting various groups of people together to talk about various issues, and usually good things happen in these meetings that wouldn't have happened without them. I'm not so much directly involved in the actual nuts and bolts of the planning, but I try to facilitate it by getting people—the right people—to talk to each other. (Male chairperson, mathematics, research university, 20 FTF)

The faculty are the ones that deal with the content of the curriculum and the curriculum revision but I highly control the process by setting up strategic planning sessions, facilitating, organizing, having groups, and those kinds of things. So I'm a very strong process leader and facilitator. (Female chairperson, communications, doctoral university, 20 FTF)

A facilitator almost never puts a proposal of his or her own on the table for faculty consideration, feeling that such a move would create resistance or show bias for a particular decision, thus negating faculty authority and responsibility. Facilitators try to avoid even the *appearance* of initiating proposals or ideas, although they may plant ideas with individual faculty members or committee chairpersons and hope that the individuals develop them. They may even make committee appointments with the expectation that certain issues will be considered. One chairperson described such an appointment strategy this way:

My role right now has been to encourage activity at the undergraduate program level. I've selected somebody who's a real go-getter as the chair [of the undergraduate curriculum committee] on purpose because I really wanted him to not come to the end of the year without making some changes that I thought really needed making about some of the requirements and so on. So I picked somebody who was interested in these issues. He and I have talked about these issues and so I'm cheerleading him. (Female chairperson, sociology, research university, 27 FTF)

A facilitator gets the right people to talk together. He or she is concerned with setting a tone—supportive and welcoming of the free flow of ideas. Facilitators often mention that they establish processes in which the faculty can work and produce their best thinking. These may include committee structures and faculty meetings or off-campus retreats with carefully constructed agendas to encourage focus, consensus, and closure.<sup>9</sup>

### *Initiator*

Chairpersons who play the role of initiator may introduce proposals, ideas, or drafts of changes because various constituencies (faculty, students, others) have expressed a need or voiced a concern. They also may introduce a proposal because they know about new administrative mandates, changes in job markets within a profession, or curriculum trends at other institutions. Thus, initiators are often also “sensors,” feeling a responsibility to know what is going on internally and externally that needs a departmental response. The initiator theme usually was expressed quite directly by our interviewees; it subsumed no other coding categories. The following quotations illustrate the process of initiation in response to problems or trends.

I think it's [a process] of stimulating thought, of bringing one's views and print material to the attention of the faculty to indicate that . . . here's some trends we ought to look at, here's some feedback we're getting through the advisory committees, here's what we're seeing as occurring at the four-year institutions, and to kind of put that in the hands of the faculty and say “Well you know, why don't we think about this: “Is there some particular interest in developing certain courses, or even looking to a new concentration?” . . . That's certainly the job of the chair. (Male chairperson, social/behavioral science, community college, 9 FTF)

I just do a little study before hand, [such as] contact universities who have a course of this nature, and present a brief outline or brief syllabus, maybe even speak to a [book] salesperson if they have a good text on that and present it [to the faculty] as a package. I say “Now this is a brief outline, this is what we can do, and now let’s have your inputs.” (Male chairperson, humanities, community college, 13 FTF)

Sometimes, in order to get the process moving, an initiator capitalizes on a faculty discussion that has already been held to write up a document that he or she believes reflects faculty sentiment:

I took the responsibility for calling the faculty together to discuss this curriculum. And during that following summer, I had an undergraduate revise all of the courses in accordance with the discussion from that faculty meeting. All of the revisions of the individual courses and the revision of the major went out to everybody in the faculty. (Female chairperson, social science, doctoral university, 17 FTF)

Finally, initiators may introduce proposals because they feel they are needed to overcome faculty lethargy or to break a stalemate. In this case, the chairperson takes on a role some referred to as “prodder.” Like a facilitator, an initiator occasionally may also decide to be a prodder if he or she feels closure definitely is needed:

In the final analysis, I have learned over the years, to make something happen you have to provide the framework, if you will. So I did that: I wrote up the proposal. And I sent it to the curriculum committee. I said “This is my idea how to make it work.” Before that point, we’d had lots of discussion on the various approaches but nothing got written. So I sent them a draft. It was not a fait accompli because then, of course, they jumped into it and started tearing it up. Which is fine. If I hadn’t sent them something, they wouldn’t have had anything to get their teeth into. (Male chairperson, chemistry, master’s university, 11 FTF)

Sometimes the need for prodding relates to the department generally, sometimes to a specific issue:

Like this biochemistry issue that’s ordained by the outside agency, so I’m the one who is pushing that, and I keep saying, “We have to solve this problem. We only have two years. We gotta get it going.” Every once in a while I’ll remind them. (Male chairperson, chemistry, master’s university, 22 FTF)

Like the facilitator, the initiator calls meetings. The difference is that the initiator often puts forth a proposal or a draft for faculty to consider; a facilitator definitely does not, preferring merely to arrange conditions for discussion unless the process is totally bogged down. In rare cases chairpersons say they are both initiators and facilitators, but when their actual statements are examined, they tend to emphasize only one of these roles.

*Agenda Setter*

The role of the agenda setter lies somewhere between the facilitator's concern with process and the initiator's development of specific ideas or proposals for faculty members to consider. The following quotes illustrate various reasons for agenda setting:

In the beginning of the academic year I give a charge to the committee. . . . These are problems that I perceive. I typically do not recommend solutions, although at times I do make a suggestion and say, you know, this is what I see. I work very hard not to have the committee sort of sit down and say "OK, he thinks this is a problem, now what does he want? How does he want it solved?" (Male chairperson, accounting and information systems, research university, 23 FTF)

I think you have a limited amount of time to help set an agenda, the chairperson is an agenda setter and the agenda is one that is either picked up on or not. I mean you can't mandate it, particularly, I mean we're not heads here<sup>10</sup> or anything like that. But you can bring items to attention that can forge an agenda and it can be prioritized relative to other needs and consensus built around the agenda and the priorities. (Male chairperson, communications, research university, 15 FTF)

The agenda setter prefers to bring issues and problems to the table, rather than proposed solutions. Thus, he or she acts in a more neutral way than the initiator, expecting that the faculty will develop their own suggestions or solutions, but takes a stronger control of process than the facilitator. An agenda setter, as one chairperson said, sets forth a "what if" rather than a draft proposal. Agenda setters often give charges to committees, then wait a lengthy time to see what the committee will suggest before taking a stronger prodding role.<sup>11</sup>

*Concern with Curriculum Ideas, Proposals and Processes: A Chosen Role.* The facilitator, initiator, and agenda setter all demonstrate concern with developing curriculum proposals. But the leader behavior they exhibit with respect to such proposals differs. The facilitator is most concerned with the *process* of responding to the issues (and sometimes arranges a specific process), leaving both the particular issues and solutions to other faculty members. The initiator is concerned with the proposals themselves, assessing how well they might respond to the issues. The agenda setter is concerned with issues but open to solutions by others. Although some leaders may play more than one of these roles, especially when they prod faculty members, chairpersons generally see themselves as preferring one of them. The role of facilitator should not be perceived as a *laissez faire* role in curriculum leadership since it is undertaken consciously in preference to the other two roles and to ensure that curriculum planning takes place. The choice is based on chairpersons' beliefs, influenced by personal style and local tradition, about the relative amounts of responsibility they and other faculty should play in the curriculum development process.<sup>12</sup>

*Coordinator*

The role the coordinator plays is to provide structure, task orientation, and paperwork support to the faculty as they implement curriculum decisions. The role of coordinator subsumes the roles we originally coded as supervisor, manager, conflict resolver, and juggler. The roles of manager and supervisor are similar and are illustrated by the quotes below:

Oftentimes after we've gone through a curriculum development phase, I will help sum up what's done and make sure that faculty get that information. Sometimes I have my administrative assistant write a report so we get the gist of what we decided and make sure that that report is accurate from my perspective. (Male chairperson, education-curriculum and instruction, research university, 34 FTF)

[The faculty] expect that I provide the opportunity and on the other end of it, I also provide the support. I don't want to bog them down with paper, I mean whenever you're putting together a curriculum that has to get approval, there's a lot of paper, you know there are forms to fill out and all that. And I'll take that duty on and provide secretarial staff to do that . . . so that they're not wasting their time filling out papers, but they're putting their time into developing a curriculum. (Male chairperson, industrial technology, master's university, 9 FTF)

The coordinator also resolves conflicts and juggles competing interests, detecting and remedying problems that arise after a curriculum change is made. In particular, he or she mentions staffing courses and resolving schedule conflicts as important curriculum roles:

I'm having to restructure a lot of teaching schedules because we've phased out a lot of old courses. We have the two new introductory courses and three brand-new core courses that were never taught before coming online, so there's a lot of uneasiness within the faculty in terms of who's going to be teaching and all of that, so right now I'm working on a five-year plan to try to make sure that the courses are covered and that people know what they're supposed to be doing, and when they're supposed to be doing it. (Male chairperson, biology, master's university, 22 FTF)

The stress on coordination frequently appears to be associated with the existence of numerous committees for large multisection courses where the teams of faculty teaching the courses are seen as primarily responsible for their development. Sometimes a chairperson describes a unilateral action to achieve coordination where he or she perceives problems:

This is a case, though, where I simply had to notify people via e-mail how we would be teaching these courses next year . . . in the first three years of these new introductory courses, we were going to have nine different faculty rotate through them. I didn't believe that would allow us to anchor the courses down initially or provide any continuity . . . we had complaints from students about the lack of continuity . . . so what I did was just assign a team of two people to each of these new course for the next three years. . . . And then we can revisit having multiple people involved in those courses. (Male chairperson, biology, master's university, 22 FTF)

A chairperson who plays a coordinating role may or may not take an active role during the curriculum planning process, but he or she is ready to advance and implement the decisions when they are made. The coordinator frequently mentions writing course descriptions or catalog copy to fulfill requirements of various curriculum committees above the department level.

### *Advocate*

The chairperson who plays the advocate role believes it is important to open doors to upper administrative offices to seek advancement and respect for the department within the college or university. He or she concentrates on getting resources to support faculty both for individual efforts and for department-wide curriculum decisions. This role subsumes the roles we originally coded as resource procurer, advocate, priority setter, and communicator. Because the need for resources, facilities, and public relations varies widely for different fields, the examples of this activity also vary:

I think part of my role is to serve our members of the department, to promote and seek our advancement within the college. I don't think collectively we perceive ourselves in the academic culture as having the same status as some of the more traditional departments and so I try to be an advocate for us in terms of the share of resources. [The faculty] expect me to open doors, get resources whether it's technology, additional TA support, whatever, make sure that staff is there to support them. (Male chairperson, communications, master's university, 6 FTF)

My big job is to get [our facilities upgrades] prioritized [at the institutional level] and that can be very tough and difficult to do but that's one of the big challenges you face as chair. (Female chairperson, art, research university, 24 FTF)

And [department faculty members] will come and talk to me if there is some obstacle or something needs clarification, or I need to talk to the dean or the vice president and see what needs to be done to get things moving. (Male chairperson, communication media, community college, 16 FTF)

The advocate role is concerned with procuring resources and building credibility for the department. Fewer than half of the chairpersons we interviewed mentioned playing the role of advocate for their department within the university.

*Concern with Resources, Relations, and Operation—A Managerial Role.* The coordinator and advocate roles both seem to comprise managerial activities concerned with implementing curriculum decisions. The coordinator emphasizes the paperwork requirements to which curriculum descriptions eventually must conform and puts high priority on activities such as staffing and scheduling the teaching program. The advocate is concerned with a different aspect of implementation, namely the more external, persuasive role of procuring resources and



making the department visible. According to literature we reviewed, both of these roles are typically a part of the chairperson's job and few may be at liberty to ignore them. Unless the chairperson is willing to delegate or obtain assistance, especially for the coordinating role, these activities can consume time and overshadow concern with sensing or dealing with proposals. These optional roles may distinguish the leader from the "caretaker"; thus, such cases may characterize the "typical" chairpersons studied in previous research who seemed to be so busy with administrative duties that they spent little effort on other aspects of curriculum leadership. In our sample, relatively few chairpersons emphasized the role of coordinator or advocate. Those who did, however, tended to mention these managerial duties first and not to speak much about the other roles they might play. Others more casually mentioned these roles, perhaps considering them too routine to stress in response to our broad questions about their leadership.

#### *Standard Setter*

Chairpersons who see themselves as standard setters indicate a responsibility to be either role models or monitors of quality in the department, or both. This role subsumes roles originally coded as monitor, role model, employer of good people, and time protector. The first quote below illustrates monitoring activity with respect to standard setting. The chairperson describes his role as being sure the assessment process is followed, rather than with sensing the need for the process or developing it:

I also facilitate our assessment of student academic achievement process which links up to curriculum, because we had our North Central visitation a couple of years ago and [they placed] heavy emphasis on assessment of student academic achievement. And we have a whole cycle that we run through with all our courses. And part of my job is to make sure that we are following that assessment process out each year. (Male chairperson, communications, community college, 16 FTF)

The chairperson who acts as a role model attempts to set an example for faculty, as indicated in the following quotation:

I think they use me in a kind of consultative relationship . . . particularly the younger faculty—being a bit of a standard setter, you know? I not only model those behaviors, I look for opportunities for the faculty to think about those. (Male chairperson, communications, research university, 15 FTF)

The chairperson who serves as a role model may also act as an initiator and the distinction between the two may not always be clear:

and so, since I was the department chair, I figured I should probably write the first unit and then circulate that to kind of give them an idea of what might work. (Male chairperson, biology, community college, 9 FTF)

In academic departments, it is frequently assumed that well-prepared faculty members are intrinsically motivated and require little supervision. In a sense, this type of concern with standards and success is the antithesis of the monitor role. The idea that “good people” will produce good work if given the opportunity and latitude is illustrated by the following chairperson’s comment:

I think if a person wants to develop a good program, the best way to do it is to surround yourself with good people and then give them the leeway to give input and help make the decisions when it comes down to it, when a final decision has to be made on a particular topic. (Male chairperson, education-curriculum & instruction, research university, 34 FTF)

The role of time protector was assumed by only two chairpersons in our study, but it might have been mentioned by more had we been able to study all departments we originally selected from our pool. A limitation of our research is that, on grounds of protecting faculty time, some chairpersons declined participation in the study. Although this particular chairperson did eventually allow us to interview faculty members, the following comment illustrates this point of view:

I guess the main thing is that I feel that one of my jobs is to protect the time of the people that work for me, and although I was willing to donate my own time to this [interview] project, I do feel that part of my job is not to let extraneous things come at the people that I’ve delegated tasks to. (Female chairperson, mathematics and computer science, research university, 21 FTF)<sup>13</sup>

*Concern with Standards, Quality, and Success—A Neglected Role.* Standard setters may monitor compliance with mandates such as institution-wide assessment, program review, or accreditation standards. Using strategies somewhat less direct than those used by initiators, they may write model drafts of curriculum or grant proposals to illustrate new possibilities and appropriate styles to the faculty. They may collect and review course syllabi (or suggest that a committee do so) as part of each faculty member’s annual evaluation or as input to curriculum decisions. In this way, the standard-setter chairpersons may serve directly as mentors to faculty members, but some emphasize their responsibility to hire “good people” who will also be seen as role models and upholders of quality. Only one quarter of the chairpersons mentioned a role as standard setter and, despite discussion in almost every interview about recent (usually mandated) assessment initiatives from both institutions and states, we found very few chairpersons who said one of their roles was to lead the faculty in evaluating the curriculum to determine if it achieved what they hoped. One who did mention this role (cited previously) emphasized a coordinating role, rather than a proactive one.

One type of standard setter is concerned with monitoring the program’s successes and failures in a pro forma way to assure that both externally imposed

and internally accepted standards are met. Another role we expected to find in these selected departments, but seldom did, was that of the “reflective evaluator” (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 379). Such a leader might propose, advocate for, and coordinate a process of regular, thoughtful examination of whether the curriculum is meeting its intended goals. Theoretically and ideally, this type of reflective or formative evaluation would create a feedback link in a continuous curriculum development process. In most settings, it appears that chairpersons are obliged to play neither a standard setting nor a reflective evaluator role and many do not include either in their leadership repertoire, even when they are comparatively attentive to curriculum leadership in other ways.

### Mapping Leadership Roles to Curriculum Planning Processes

In our analysis we first identified seven themes that seemed to capture the various roles department chairpersons play in curriculum work. Second, we grouped the themes into four categories, according to the extent to which they related to similar areas of concern in curriculum planning. Lastly, we considered whether each theme and concern could be associated with one of the stages of curriculum planning outlined by Stark and Lattuca: development, implementation, and evaluation. We found that we could map the leader roles and the areas of concern quite closely to these three stages. In Figure 1, we attempt to portray graphically these relationships and our sense of the choices chairpersons have at each stage. We show the identified roles as circles, the related areas of concern as boxes, and the general curriculum planning processes in boxes with bold uppercase letters.

Starting at the top of the figure and moving in a counterclockwise direction, the first stage of curriculum planning is *curriculum development*, including both sensing and concern with proposals and processes. Sensing was viewed by most chairpersons as a key role in curriculum leadership. By portraying the sensor role top and center in the diagram, we are speculating that whether or not a department is one that continuously plans and is responsive to stakeholders may depend on whether the chairperson or other leaders perform the sensing function.

When it comes to concern with translating issues and ideas into curriculum proposals or the process for developing and deciding among proposals, the chairperson may play no part at all or may choose among three roles: facilitator, agenda setter, and initiator. Facilitating was less often associated in our data with external sensing than were agenda setting or initiating. In our graphic, we use a dotted arrow to show this weaker link. Most chairpersons try to either play, or be perceived as playing, the facilitator role so that curriculum development will be seen as a grassroots effort from the faculty. Thus, they may be reluctant to be active in the sensing role.

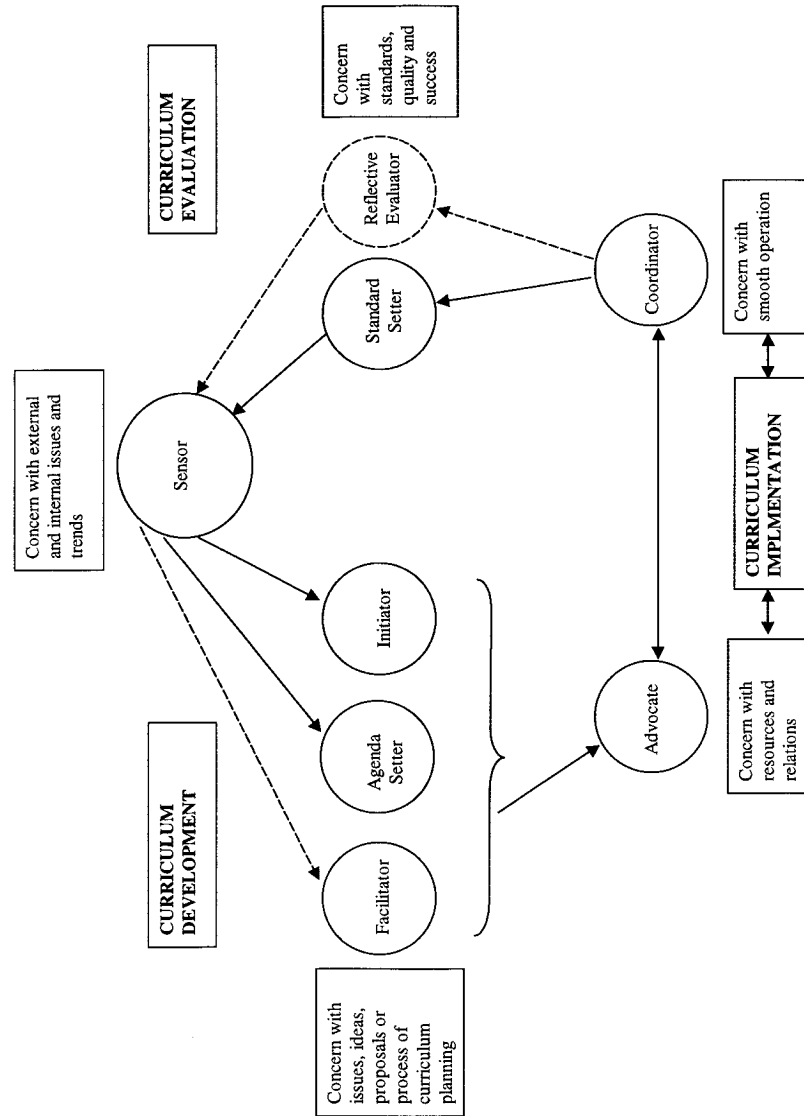


FIG. 1. Chairperson leadership roles and the curriculum planning process.

The next general process is *curriculum implementation*, including coordination. Unless they delegate these duties to others, many chairpersons are concerned with the tasks advocacy (building relations, obtaining resources) and coordination (keeping the departments educational program running smoothly). Because these roles both support implementation, we have shown their interaction with a double-headed arrow. Most studies of department chairpersons' tasks have highlighted these managerial roles as routine tasks that may squeeze out other leadership activities. In our study, these roles were mentioned somewhat less frequently than others. This might have occurred either because our sample was selective or because the interview questions we asked caused the chairpersons to focus on broader roles.

The final general process is *curriculum evaluation*, which involves a concern with standards, quality, and success. While some chairpersons expressed this concern, nearly all of the chairpersons we talked to believed their departments should be doing more evaluation and predicted, in fact, that they would soon be expected to do so. But, almost uniformly, they lamented their lack of expertise and confessed they provided little leadership in this area. To portray this acknowledged deficit, we drew a dotted circle to represent the potential role of reflective evaluator and dotted lines in the process diagram connecting it with both coordination and sensing.

#### Context for Departmental Leadership: Variations by Department Size, Type of Institution, and Discipline

Our sample was chosen to explore a wide variety of institutional and disciplinary contexts rather than to compare in any valid and reliable way how leadership roles vary within settings and disciplines. We share our impressions of contextual variations gained from the interviews for other researchers who may wish to pursue comparisons more systematically.<sup>14</sup>

Department size affects the role that a department chairperson plays, especially in regard to the undergraduate curriculum when the department also offers graduate programs. In large departments, major responsibility for curriculum development is often assigned to associate chairpersons, undergraduate and graduate curriculum committee chairpersons, or specialty teams who work under the chairperson's (or associate chairperson's) general supervision. Coordination of the curriculum after it is developed may also be delegated to these groups. Thus, in large departments, the chairperson frequently plays the roles of agenda setter or facilitator, rather than initiator or sensor. The large department seemed to us to resemble an orchestra where first chairs (i.e., committee chairpersons) are responsible for each instrumental section, while the conductor (i.e., department chairperson) puts all the sections together and guides interpretation. This pattern

of leadership contrasts sharply with that in the smallest departments where faculty often act as a committee of the whole directly led by the chairperson.

Institutional type also affects the type of leadership department chairpersons provide. In research and doctoral institutions, department chairpersons see their primary roles as those of facilitator and advocate. They trust that research-oriented faculty members are “self-starters” and view them as most knowledgeable about curriculum trends and needs in their subspecialties. For external sensing and initiation especially, the chairperson may rely on these specialists to recognize needs and opportunities for responsive planning and to initiate proposals. Standard setting may focus on hiring the best faculty available and supporting their efforts. In contrast, faculty in teaching-oriented universities and community colleges are more often “generalists” in their field and the subject matter to be taught is somewhat familiar to all. Here, chairpersons more often initiate curriculum discussions. They are more often sensors, too, serving as liaisons with other institutions, the workplace, and professional associations. Standard setting, more often than in research universities, involves role modeling and mentoring.

In both research and teaching institutions, chairpersons stress that advocacy—both obtaining resources and staff for the group’s plans and endeavors, and portraying the department positively to higher level administrators—is an essential form of leadership. Thus the advocate role is common to all types of institutions, large and small, although it may become considerably more complex in large institutions.

When asked directly, most of the chairpersons we interviewed in institutions where a faculty union existed indicated that the union had little influence on the curriculum planning process. The union, many chairpersons told us, affected mostly personnel and workload issues. A few cited it as a positive influence because the contract guaranteed faculty ownership of the curriculum or provided professional development opportunities related to curriculum and teaching. However, we heard muted clues that the union may exert indirect influence, especially through its impact on how the role of the chairperson is defined in a unionized setting. We found institutions where the chairperson’s authority and initiative were limited by union contracts specifically assigning curriculum matters to a faculty group that excluded chairpersons as management-level personnel. In some cases, participation in curriculum planning may be a condition of promotion and tenure, but the power to evaluate or reward a faculty member’s contributions may be beyond the purview of the chairperson. Conversely, we found other colleges where the union contract provides explicit authority through its personnel provisions to the chairperson (usually called a “head” and considered a member of a “management team”) to lead, to initiate proposals, to appoint committee chairpersons, and to reassign faculty time for curriculum planning.

Finally, curriculum leadership is influenced by whether the institutional climate emphasizes curriculum planning, assessment, periodic program review, or other types of strategic planning. Especially in community colleges, we found that the college administration had sometimes created an ethos of monitoring and improvement that caused department chairpersons to view themselves as members of an administrative “quality team” that implied their clear responsibility to lead curriculum planning.

Earlier empirical literature stresses differences among disciplines in terms of curricular purposes and processes, the type of leadership faculty will accept, the types of curriculum discussions they have, and their desire for direct involvement (Braxton and Hargens, 1997; Stark and Lattuca, 1997). We found only modest evidence of such differences, perhaps due to the wide variety of disciplines in our study and the simultaneous variation of other characteristics like size and institutional type. In some disciplines and professional fields, such as chemistry and nursing, however, key issues and ongoing discussions were attributed to the influence of disciplinary or professional associations and accrediting agencies. The need to procure resources (and the impact of technology) was discussed more prominently by chairpersons in some fields than others. For example, computer science, biology, and communications had more resource needs than did history. Also, regardless of institutional type, external sensing was much more common in professional fields. Chairpersons in fields such as business, engineering technology, art, nursing, and communications, that prepare students directly for entry-level positions, are far more active in sensing job markets and potential enrollment than are chairpersons in most arts and science disciplines.

An unanticipated issue that stood out in our interviews was the complex situation of “composite” departments (see Table 2) that include disparate fields of study (for example, several different social sciences, several humanities fields, several performing arts fields, science and mathematics or mathematics and computer science, several types of technological studies, or communication studies programs including both psychology of communication and the technicalities of TV production). Unquestionably, the chairperson’s leadership role in such departments is difficult. Chairpersons are more likely to facilitate the process of discussion without advocating any specific proposal. They are extremely wary of seeming to advocate more strongly for their own specialty and reluctant to set standards in fields not their own. Repeatedly, chairpersons of such composite departments described their inadequacy in acting as sensors, initiators, agenda setters, and standard setters for fields in which they had not been specifically trained. This reluctance seems to mimic the facilitating role of the chairperson in dealing with the within-department differences in a large research department where a few faculty members are responsible for each sub-specialty.

## SUMMARY

Contrary to previous studies that focused on chairpersons in general, we found that most department chairpersons in our more selective sample are articulate about curriculum development and give it a high priority. These chairpersons are concerned with sensing the possible need for change, with supporting faculty members who have good ideas, and with setting agendas, facilitating, or initiating—but less frequently directing—curriculum renewal. Often eschewing a hands-on approach, they use varied organizational structures and ways of delegating responsibility to facilitate faculty curricular initiative. We suggest that previous researchers may have underestimated chairpersons' curricular leadership by seeking more directive manifestations than those described by our sample. The balance between chairperson leadership and faculty ownership of the curriculum is maintained in nondirective ways in many settings. As one of our informants summed it up concisely: "Let me also say it's a kind of leadership but it's 'softly directive' if you understand what I mean" (Male chairperson, psychology, master's university, 18 FTF).

Yet, our sample was selected from among chairpersons that lead continuously planning departments. It is possible that in departments that provosts did not nominate for our study, some chairpersons may completely delegate or even neglect curriculum leadership as previous research indicated.

Chairpersons in this study expressed a special responsibility for viewing the department's curricular issues more broadly than faculty within the contexts of the institution, academic field, job market, and transfer articulation needs. We also noted, however, that the role the chairperson chooses to play because of his or her concern for ideas or process may help to determine whether and how other types of curriculum leaders arise within the department faculty, and vice versa. Chairpersons definitely do not work alone in curriculum planning nor do they feel solely accountable. Most chairpersons identified one or more faculty colleagues who play distinct leadership roles, often complementary to their own, especially with respect to technological advances, teaching improvement, or newly mandated evaluation and assessment activities. Curriculum development, the chairpersons told us, is the responsibility of the faculty. The chairperson's job is to make sure, often by subtle means, that faculty fulfill that responsibility.

Most chairpersons we interviewed felt especially challenged when it came to the demands of information gathering associated with the sensing and reflective evaluation roles. Information that continuous planning departments gather to support curriculum decisions varies widely, is largely informal, and is seldom used systematically in the curriculum planning process. Chairpersons view information about curriculum trends in peer and transfer-related institutions as especially important data that they usually know how to obtain. However, nearly all chairpersons expressed a sense of inadequacy with their department's curric-



ulum evaluation and assessment practices and with the expertise available within the department to gather and analyze such information. While many relied on institutional researchers for alumni satisfaction and success data, they often felt that such offices did not supply information sufficiently focused on more specific department issues to be useful.

## IMPLICATIONS

This study has several implications for researchers who study curriculum development processes, and for practitioners, including department chairpersons, deans, and institutional researchers. We have made a start in identifying a variety of roles that department chairpersons may play at different points in the curriculum planning process. A next step would be to discuss each of these identified roles in depth with chairpersons of especially effective departments in order to better understand when and why they choose to emphasize each role.

When administrators work with department chairpersons or when researchers study their roles, it is important for them to recognize that chairpersons may exercise very different leadership roles in the curriculum planning process. These roles range from the facilitator's process-oriented approach to the initiator's idea-oriented approach in initiating proposals. Administrators may need to work with chairpersons in different ways, and often with faculty leaders other than the chairperson, depending on how curriculum leadership is exercised in a particular department. Furthermore, it seems likely that researchers and administrators could provide self-assessment materials to help department chairpersons recognize and understand the various roles they might play with respect to curriculum development. For chairpersons, considering a wider variety of roles to suit specific contexts may depend on knowing that various alternatives are possible.

Institutional researchers may recognize in our analysis a role (coordination) that is heavily emphasized for department chairpersons by administrators, and at least one role (sensing) about which there is less institutional direction. Institutional researchers customarily assist chairpersons in coordination by supplying internal data, such as enrollment trends and faculty workload figures. In their sensing role, chairpersons are much concerned with how to detect external trends specific to their disciplines and professional fields. They believe they do this well, but their approaches seem quite ad hoc. Institutional researchers obviously cannot do the sensing in every field, but they could help chairpersons learn how to obtain data more closely tailored to department needs.

Finally, this study suggests an important role for administrators in helping to improve departmental capacity for evaluation and assessment. Institutional researchers are positioned to encourage continuous curriculum review and increasingly have opportunities to do so as they provide information and assist with assessment, program review, and long-range planning. Information needs

of departments, as well as approaches that faculty find acceptable, vary greatly. Our findings reinforce the importance of working with department leaders in context, especially taking into account the differences among departments in terms of size, mission, and organizational complexity.

## ENDNOTES

1. Creswell and his colleagues (1987) noted that when the chairperson does not take a leadership role, others in the faculty group may do so.
2. Additional articles in progress will explore the extent to which the department chairperson and other faculty leaders possess and seek to enhance expertise in curriculum planning.
3. The authors appreciate financial support from a Spencer Foundation Small Grants Award for the broader study.
4. An article describing empirically derived criteria for continuous planning in curriculum development is in progress.
5. Community college vocational programs considered their graduates “majors” even if the program was less than traditional baccalaureate length.
6. We attempted to limit the study to departments with seven or more faculty members because we were interested in curriculum planning by sizeable groups of faculty.
7. The quotations have been “smoothed” to eliminate false starts and clarify ambiguities.
8. In response to a reviewer’s request for department size, we have provided the number of full-time faculty (FTF) since that is an indicator of the decisionmaking group. The reader should keep in mind that not all of these department faculty teach undergraduates, and that additional, part-time faculty may teach them.
9. A few chairpersons used the word facilitation in a sense quite different from guiding the discussion process. They saw it as helping faculty by ensuring that the detailed paperwork of curriculum approval is done, either by doing it themselves or seeing that support staff are available to do it. This type of facilitating role was coded under “manager/coordinator.”
10. A few chairpersons made a distinction between department “heads” with considerable administrative power (frequently in a union context) and department chairpersons who often lead by power of persuasion.
11. We note that the term “agenda setter” can be used in a different way, that is, to speak of someone “having an agenda” can mean they have a particular viewpoint or solution in mind. In our categorization, a chairperson with such a viewpoint would not be an agenda setter but an initiator.
12. The role of delegator seems to be a special case of either agenda setting or facilitating that takes lack of initiation to an extreme. An agenda-setting chairperson stays somewhat involved in overseeing the curriculum planning process and helping to move it forward; a facilitator helps devise and guide the process. In contrast, a delegator simply selects capable people to lead the process and then turns to other tasks. The delegator also typically delegates the burdensome paperwork, believing that this is a faculty responsibility. We did not encounter total delegation in our interviews.
13. Refusal to participate and/or to allow faculty to participate was most common for departments in the sciences and engineering.
14. Although we did not plan to compare leader roles mentioned by chairpersons with varying personal or professional characteristics, we noted that the 31 male and 13 female chairpersons in our sample mentioned each of the various leadership roles about the same percentage of the time.

## REFERENCES

- Barak, R. (1987). Program planning, development and evaluation. In M. W. Peterson and L. A. Mets (eds.), *Key Resources on Higher Education Governance, Management and Leadership*, pp. 218–237. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Braxton, J. M., and Hargens, L. L. (1996). Variation among academic disciplines: Analytical frameworks and research. In J. C. Smart (ed.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Vol 11, pp. 1–46. New York: Agathon Press.
- Creswell, J. W., Seagren, A. T., Wheeler, D. W., Vavrus, L., Grady, M., and Egly, N. (1987). The faculty development role of department chairs: A naturalistic analysis. Paper presented at Association for the Study of Higher Education, Baltimore, November 21–24.
- Creswell, J. W., Wheeler, D. W., Seagren, A. T., Egly, N. J., and Beyer, D. D. (1990). *The Academic Chairperson's Handbook*. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press.
- Dressel, P. L. (1980). *Improving Degree Programs: A Guide to Curriculum Development, Administration and Review*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fraser, Donald (April 1999). *QSR NUD\*IST Vivo Reference Guide*. Melbourne, Australia: Qualitative Solutions & Research Pty, Ltd.
- Gmelch, W. H., and Miskin, V. D. (1993). *Leadership Skills for Department Chairs*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Hecht, I. W. D., Higgerson, M. L., Gmelch, W. H., and Tucker, A. (1999). *The Department Chair as Academic Leader*. Phoenix: Oryx Press.
- Hefferlin, J. B. Lon (1969). *The Dynamics of Academic Reform*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Henry, D. D. (February 1974). The academic department and educational change. *Management Forum* 3(2).
- Jennerich, E. J. (1981). Competencies for department chairpersons: Myths and realities. *Liberal Education* 67: 46–60.
- Knight, W. H., and Holen, M. C. (1985). Leadership and the perceived effectiveness of department chairpersons. *Journal of Higher Education* 56(6): 677–690.
- Leaming, D. R. (1998). *Academic Leadership: A Practical Guide to Chairing the Department*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Lucas, A. F. (1994). *Strengthening Departmental Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Massy, W. F., Wilger, A. K., and Colbeck, C. (July/August 1994). Overcoming “hollowed” collegiality. *Change* 26(4): 11–20.
- Mayhew, L. B. and Ford, P. J. (1971). *Changing the Curriculum*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McAdams, R. P. (1997). Revitalizing the department chair. *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin* (February): 10–13.
- Pew Higher Education Policy Roundtable (February 1996). Double agent. *Policy Perspectives* 6(3): 1–11.
- Richards, Lyn (April 1999). *Using Nvivo in Qualitative Research*. Bundoora Victoria, Australia: Qualitative Solutions & Research Pty, Ltd.
- Stark, J. S., and Briggs, C. L. (1998). Program leadership for college curriculum development: A background paper and guide to future research. Paper delivered at Association for the Study of Higher Education. Miami, November 7.
- Stark, J. S., and Briggs, C. L. (1999). A framework for exploring curriculum leadership. Manuscript being revised for *The Review of Higher Education*.

- Stark, J. S., and Lattuca, L. R. (1997). *Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Action*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Stark, J. S., Lowther, M. A., Sharp, S., and Arnold, G. L. (1997). Program-level curriculum planning: An exploration of faculty perspectives on two different campuses. *Research in Higher Education* 38(1): 99–130.
- Tucker, Alan (1992). *Chairing the Academic Department: Leadership Among Peers*, 3rd ed. Phoenix: Oryx.

Received May 28, 2000.