IDEA Chair Survey: Old and New Versions Compared

Section 1-Background:
ECU has used the IDEA Survey (formerly DECAD Survey) since the mid-1990's to evaluate chairs and school director in terms of their faculty ratings. This survey is done at the same time as the Administrator Survey in which faculty rate their dean, provost/vice chancellor, and chancellor. In Spring 2012 a revised version of the IDEA survey was administered without getting prior approval of the Faculty Senate, since it was not deemed significantly different enough from the prior version. However, that did not prove to be the case. Also, a number of faculty complained that they are required to select only 3-6 responsibilities as "highest priority" and/or that some important responsibilities at ECU were not reflected in the IDEA list. This paper will compare and contrast the old and new versions of the IDEA Chair Survey, so that the new version can be considered for approval/disapproval.

Section 2-Materials (old and new versions of each are attached):
1. Department Head/Chair Information Form (CIF)—completed by chair
2. Faculty Perceptions of Department Head/Chair (Faculty Survey-FS)—completed by faculty
3. IDEA Feedback for Department Chairs Report—report of the results

Section 3-Overview of changes provided by the IDEA Center:

Details on revision of the IDEA Feedback for Department Chair Instrument:

The revision of the Chair instrumentation is based on an in-depth analysis of our data, focus group feedback, reviews by subject matter experts, and ongoing feedback from those using the instrument, and focuses on several criterion-referenced score interpretations. Faculty will continue to provide ratings of administrative responsibilities, personal characteristics, and administrative methods. The chairperson will continue to identify the relevance of 21 responsibilities, but will also identify the 3-6 responsibilities that were of highest priority in the last year. To facilitate deeper reflective practice, we now include an optional opportunity for the chair to provide self-ratings on all items, resulting in a gap analysis that allows chairs to compare their perceptions with those of their faculty.

The report has been extensively revised and provides direction on specific areas of strength and strategies for improvement. When at least 70% the of faculty rate the chair's performance of a relevant responsibility Good or Outstanding, it is considered a strength. Second, personal characteristics and administrative methods for which at least 70% of the faculty rated the chair positively are also highlighted as strong points. Third, the chair's self-rating on all relevant items is positioned relative to the average faculty rating as being higher, similar, or lower. This gap analysis enables chairs to review how they are being perceived by others compared to their self-perceptions.

Taken together, the changes made to the survey instruments and the Chair Report are substantial. One administrative responsibility was removed from the CIF and FS, and two new ones were added. Six personal characteristics were replaced with seven new ones. The administrative methods showed a net loss of 9 items, with 10 deleted and one new method added. One summary judgment was replaced and the other modified. Three open-ended comments were rewritten and a new one was created. But, the most notable change was the provision of a gap analysis made possible by having chairs rate themselves on responsibilities, personal characteristics, and administrative methods. By reporting the chair's self-ratings relative to faculty perceptions, the focus is on departmental feedback and not on normative comparisons with other chairs.

You can view Technical Report #14, "Technical Manual for the Revised IDEA Feedback for Department Chairs System", for an in-depth study of the revised instrument at this link:
http://www.theideacenter.org/sites/default/files/Technical%20Report%2014.pdf

Section 4-Major Similarities between the Old and New Forms (somewhat more detailed than section 3):

- There are similar numbers of responsibilities in the new version of the CIF and Faculty survey forms (21 responsibilities) and the old versions (20 responsibilities), and the responsibilities are slightly reworded in the new version but reflect basically the same content as in the old version. Compare the old and new versions to see the exact rewordings. Please see Table 1 for a summary of item additions and deletions.
- In both versions the chair must complete the CIF to have a report created.
- In both the old and new surveys chair personal characteristics and administrative methods are related to the chair's execution of responsibilities.
- In both the old and revised surveys it was possible to add up to 20 items to the faculty survey. This feature would allow ECU to add responsibilities that are not already included in the list, but no comparisons are made between chair and faculty ratings of the additional responsibilities, since chairs do not rate these additional items. These additional items are added to the end of the survey, topics are unlimited; response options can vary among the questions, being either open-ended or Likert-type rating scales with up to 5 response options. For the additional items only, item wording and topics can vary among the chairs.
- The old and revised versions of the chair survey do not differ significantly in cost.

Section 5-Major differences between the Old and New Forms:

1. As noted above, in both versions a report can be prepared only if the chair completes the chair information form (CIF) and the CIF must be completed for a report to be prepared. In the new version, however, the chair is also required to select 3-6 of the responsibilities as "highest priority." Note: In Spring 2012 several chairs strongly objected to being limited to selecting only 3-6 of the responsibilities as "highest priority," and several chairs felt that some important responsibilities at ECU were not represented in the survey form.

2. In the old version, chair ratings of responsibilities (ratings of importance) were used to weight the responses of the faculty ratings of chair effectiveness in carrying out the responsibilities. In the new version chair selections of responsibilities are not used as weights. The chairs identify each responsibility as "not relevant," "relevant," or "highest priority" and these selections are used only so that results of the "highest priority" responsibilities can be presented first in the report and followed by results for "relevant" responsibilities. The IDEA Center believes this helps to focus on the most important responsibilities first.

3. A major new feature is that the institution can elect to have a "gap analysis" done between chair self-ratings (of responsibilities, personal characteristics, and administrative methods) and faculty ratings of those same items. This permits the chair to compare his/her perceptions with those of the faculty. If the gap analysis is selected, then chairs must rate the quality of their performance of the responsibilities as well as the strength/weakness of their personal characteristics and administrative methods. Note that If the gap analysis is selected the chair must complete the ratings of all of these items for a report to be created. If the gap analysis is not selected, then the chair only must select the

responsibilities which are "relevant," or "highest priority" (must select 3-6) and must complete four demographic items at the end of the CIF survey. However, faculty still rate chair responsibilities, chair personal characteristics, and methods. Note: The attached example of the revised chair CIF form assumes that a gap analysis was requested and thus asks the chair to rate his/her performance of responsibilities as well as personal characteristics and administrative methods.

4. In the old version there were graphs of (a) faculty ratings of chair effectiveness in carrying out responsibilities and (b) ratings of chair strengths and weaknesses (in terms of personal characteristics and administrative methods) but in the new version these results are only described numerically; no graphics are used in the revised version.

5. Chair responsibilities have changed very little in the new version. However, over half of the personal characteristics were changed, and almost one-third of the administrative methods were removed.

6. Wording of 3 open-ended questions was changed slightly and a fourth open-ended item was added: "What are the most important challenges facing the department?"

7. Of the 20 responsibilities in the old version, one was dropped (old item 9 re: balance between academic specializations); the remaining 19 were carried over to the new version, most with some minor re-wording, to the new version. Then 2 new responsibilities were added: new item 20 (re: meaningful, ongoing assessment of student learning outcomes) and new item 21 (re: actively support student recruitment and retention) for a total of 21 responsibilities in the new version (see Table 1).

8. Only in conjunction with the new version is there chair coaching available through the IDEA Center for an additional price, and this coaching is only for those chairs who want the coaching (see Appendix).

Table 1 – Item differences between the Old and New (Revised) IDEA Department Chair Instrument (does not include exact rewording of items)

Part I. Responsibilities	Old Chair Survey – Items deleted	New Chair Survey – Items Added
	#9 - Encourages an appropriate balance among academic specializations within the department	#20 - Ensuring the assessment of student learning outcomes is meaningful and ongoing #21 - Actively supporting student recruitment and retention efforts
Part II. Personal Characteristics	#21 - Interpersonal Skill #23 - Appreciation for department's history #24 - Patience in implementing change #25 – Honesty #27 - Willingness to listen #29 - Accessibility to faculty	#23 - Demonstrates caring #25 – Trustworthy #28 - Organizational skills #29 – Consistency #30 – Enterprising #31 - Institution-centered #32 - Clarity
Part III. Administrative Methods	#32 - Supports and protects academic freedom #37 - Maintains steadiness in the face of crisis or unanticipated frustrations #39 - Is easy to understand #41 - Does little things that make it pleasant to be a member of the department #43 - Is more a reactor than an initiator #44 - Works without a plan #47 - Treats all faculty members as her/his equal #48 - Gains input from faculty on important matters #58 - Encourages faculty ownership of a vision for the department #60 - Tries to learn about each faculty member's interests, talents, and aspirations	#43 - Promotes inclusiveness and diversity among students and faculty

Part IV. (old survey only) Impediments to Effectiveness (not included on new instrument)	#61 - The department's facilities are inadequate #62 - The head/chair's effectiveness is impaired by bureaucratic rules/regulations #63 - Financial resources are inadequate to support the department's programs #64 - The department has been given a relatively low priority by the dean #65 - There is obstructionism/ negativism from one or more senior members of the faculty	This section not included on new instrument.
Part V on old survey and Part IV on new survey	#66 - I believe the department would be better off if we replaced the current head/chair	#55 - Overall, this chair has provided excellent leadership
Part VI on old survey and Part V on new survey. Open-ended comments	#69 (reworded) - What reservations do you have about this person as a head/chair?	#57 (reworded from #69 of old survey) - How might this chair improve his or her performance? #58 - What are the most important challenges facing the department?

Appendix – Chair Coaching

Receiving feedback is the first step in professional reflective practice. But professional growth can be even more dramatic when an individual has the opportunity to discuss that feedback confidentially with an experienced coach who can share insights and resources.

The IDEA Chair coaching service provides personalized consultation based on the identified needs of academic department chairs to build leadership skills and maximize talent. Once chairs have completed the **IDEA Feedback for Department Chairs** instrument, The IDEA Center provides several coaching options to extend and enhance self-reflection and leadership development, through consultation with respected and experienced higher education leaders. The IDEA Department Chair Coaching Service guides chairs through an individualized process of professional discovery and reflection, with flexibility in pricing and structure.

Individual coaching, or coaching within a learning community, can benefit both department chairs and institutions to:

- Strengthen chair leadership
- Improve department culture and effectiveness
- Increase chair satisfaction and enhance his or her professional life
- Focus on individualized improvement strategies
- Reduce costly turnover

Learn more about the **Coaching Options**.

Read about our Chair Coaches:

- **Delivee L. Wright**
- **Daniel W. Wheeler**
- **Alan T. Seagren**

Department Chairs

- Feedback Services
- Coaching
- Fee Schedule
- Request Form
- Seminars