Practical Tools for Success
New & Aspiring Aid Directors

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Session Agenda

- Getting the Job
- Now You're in Charge!
  - Managing People
  - Managing Processes and Policies
  - Managing Resources
- Positioning Yourself and Your Office
- "Tips" and "Traps"
- Understanding Leadership
- What else do you need to know – sharing

Loading Your Toolbox

- Do a Self-evaluation
  - To be the Director, I need to…
    - Obtain a degree (advanced degree?)
    - Learn as much about financial aid as possible
    - Develop leadership and management skills
    - Demonstrate willingness to go above and beyond
    - Demonstrate collegiality and exceed expectations
    - Allow yourself to be mentored
    - Present yourself in a professional manner

Loading Your Toolbox (cont.)

- Begin to build momentum for your goals
- Work on your foundation and principles
- Stay open-minded to opportunities for growth and professional development
- Consider/prepare your other obligations and your family and their expectations

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An excellent anthology written by financial aid professionals. This book contains guidance on leadership concepts, long-term planning, change management, budgeting, and so much more.

Internal Move vs. External Move

- Search for the right fit
- What do you know about the office?
  - Why did the last person leave?
  - What are the staff like?
  - How would you rate their experience?
- Do you have baggage?
- How do you sell yourself?

Getting the Job You Want

- Preparing yourself for the search process
  - Researching the institution(s)
  - Know the influencers and their backgrounds
  - Mobilizing your network!
- Using the interview process to evaluate
  - Asking the right questions, observations
  - Use your intuition
- Negotiating salary and benefits

Now You're In Charge!

Prepare Your Staff

Meet with all staff within the first 1-2 days
- Acknowledge their anxiety, and yours!
- Share why you want to be there.
- Set the tone for your leadership at a high level.
- Reinforce your interview statements.
- Prepare them for change, but not whiplash!
- Bring food! (remember to consider culture)

Meet with your boss to establish expectations

Transitioning Tips

Review/Update PPA/ECAR *carefully*

Review policies and procedures

Review audits (internal, external, etc.)

Climb the learning curve as fast as possible, don't limit focus to your office

Understand culture, politics, unwritten rules; be systematic and focused in your approach

Warn your staff that you will ***question everything***

Transitioning Tips (cont.)

- Obtain copies of all personnel files
- Review institutional HR policies
- Review the FISAP *carefully*
- Obtain details regarding budgets: operational, scholarship, personnel
- *Understand* SIS workflow and mods
- Understand/respect chain of command
- Review what has your signature on it

Transitioning Tips (cont.)

Request a 'transition memo' from your predecessor, if possible:
  ◦ Current partnerships and collaborations
  ◦ Scheduling commitments
  ◦ Evaluation/tour of infrastructure
  ◦ Evaluation of staff morale & culture
  ◦ Decisions made during interim
  ◦ List outstanding issues or areas of concern
  ◦ Accomplishments during interim, past year
  ◦ Disappointments during interim, past year

GAP Analysis

…allows you to compare where you think the office should be to where it is. It sets your agenda for improvements.

Policies
Processes
Technology
Staff Training/Organization
Customer Service

Match Your Strategy to the Situation

Have a clear diagnosis for problems and don't assume your past successes will easily translate: fit the solution to the problem at hand and determine the greatest needs for your attention early

Each challenge has unique qualities and multiple variables

Avoid phrases that mention your last position or how things have always been done

Creating an Office Vision

Your Office Mission/Vision should:
◦ Tie to the College's mission/vision
◦ Obtain buy-in from staff
◦ Be simple and memorable
◦ Reflect who you are
◦ Set the tone

Secure Early Wins

- What are the low-hanging fruit?
- Build personal credibility and create momentum with early decision-making
- Identify win-win situations & take action
- Carefully observe reactions and opportunities to help your staff grow and your campus colleagues to trust you
- Identify your up line's priorities & act in accordance
- Communicate!

Ensuring Compliance

- Be current, see trends, anticipate
- Update administration and legislators on the campus impact -- be proactive
- Empower yourself to be an influencer
- Time management: preparing, testing, communicating, implementing, etc.
- Work on your core…professional network
- Secure an adequate training budget
- Have a communication plan

Assess Institutional & Peer Perception

- What do your stakeholders think?
  - Enrollment Management, Admissions, Business Affairs, Bursar, Students, Trustees, Chancellor/President, Provost, etc.
- How do you compare to your peers?
  - Who are your peers?
  - What are best practices in customer service, scholarships, social media, political influence, etc.

Building Your Team

Professional development
◦ Free on campus
◦ Financial aid conferences
◦ Classes, degree attainment

Succession planning
◦ For all levels of positions
◦ Building your bench

Individual and Team Meetings
◦ Build and sustain a positive culture that will assist the team in becoming a highly effective and thriving group

Hiring and Evaluating Your Team

In hiring, be mindful about what you're looking for, consider fit and diversity

Personnel Attributes and Knowledge
◦ Personality Styles and Productivity Styles
◦ General Knowledge versus Program-Specific

Performance Evaluations
◦ Create a performance-based culture
◦ Build clear, specific goals that align with office

Staff Meetings

• How often do you meet?

• How much do you share?

• Communication

• Training/Professional Development

• Industry Updates, Campus Updates

• Positive thinking

Staff Training

Training
- On-boarding: new and promoted employees
- Calendar: annual vs. JIT
- Who trains: subject matter expert or you?
- Record and archive? Any Meeting
- External Sources
  - NASFAA
  - Human Resources
  - Vendors

Staff Professional Development

Managing the Office Budget

Make the most of your office budget
- Know how much flexibility you have
- Determine need for future funding
- Compare to past year expenses monthly
- Prepare for budget reductions or infusions
- Budget for replacement equipment
- Creatively share costs with other units
- Remember that everything has a cost

Managing Institutional Aid Budgets

- How is your institutional aid allocated?
- How do you request more?
- Know your yield rate on offers
  - New vs. continuing students
  - Can you re-award unused funds?
- How is FWS managed?
  - By students
  - By employee units
- Always reserve a portion for boo-boos!

Management Tools

- Policies and Procedures
  - Who prepares?
  - Are they comprehensive?
  - NASFAA tool: Self Evaluation Guide
- Office Calendar
- FISAP, PPA/ECAR, IPEDS, CDS, state reports
- Personnel Polices

Positioning Yourself and Your Office

- Internal promotion vs. new hire
- Starts during the interview
- Information really is power
  - Benchmarking
  - Annual report
  - Presentations
  - State agency
  - Forwarding articles up reporting line

Positioning Yourself & Your Office (cont.)

Responding to complaints

Networking

Media experience
- Student newspaper
- Print media
- TV- live and taped

Management style of your boss

Tips for your First Director Role

- Maintain a core group of professional contacts
- Hire and train staff well
- Learn how to delegate
- Lead by example
- Secure adequate training budget
- Proactive versus reactive
- Be confident

Avoid These Traps

- Set unrealistic expectations.
- Make rash decisions *or* suffer from analysis paralysis.
- Be a know-it-all.
- Fail to let go of your past identity.
- Stifle dissent.
- Succumb to the "savior syndrome."
- Misinterpret the *true* influencers.
- Pick the wrong battles.
- "Dissing" your predecessor.

Qualities of a Good Leader

To generate trust, leaders need to exhibit:

1. **Consistency** for those who follow them.
2. **Congruency.** No gap between the theories they espouse, the words they say, and the lives they lead.
3. **Reliability.** They are ready to support co-workers when it counts.
4. **Integrity.** They honor their commitments and promises.

Characteristics of Leaders

Leaders are:
- Positive
- Decisive
- Intuitive
- Visionary
- Ambitious
- Knowledgeable
- Persuasive
- Competitive

Ethical Leadership

- Put the good of the organization and the general good before your own interests and ego.
- Encourage the discussion of ethics in general and of the ethical choices involved in specific situations and decisions as an ongoing feature of the organizational culture.
- Consider the consequences to others of your decisions, and look for ways to minimize harm.
- Treat everyone with fairness, honesty, and respect all the time.
- Never stop reexamining your ethics and your leadership.
- Review NASFAA's Code of Conduct

What Else Do You Need to Know!