

New Deans Forum

Engineering Deans Institute
St. Petersburg Florida, April 11, 2010

Discussion of relations with faculty
members, students and direct-reports.

Richard C. Benson
Dean of Engineering, Virginia Tech

Their success is your success!



Students



Faculty



Direct-Reports

Students

For a college of any appreciable size, it will be impossible to have a close relationship with a large fraction of the student body. The following techniques can help you stay connected:

- Meet regularly with student organizations and leaders.
- Host student groups that have gone on the road with you to professional meetings.

Students

- Involve students – especially design teams – in other events, such as awards ceremonies, home football games and reunions.
- Connect using social web sites such as LinkedIn, but maybe not Facebook.
- Feature students on your web site, alumni mailings, etc.
- Use students in awards ceremonies.

Students

- Be more willing to say “yes” to an invitation if it comes from a student; e.g. interview with the campus paper, dinner at a frat house, etc.
- Spend some time at the campus recruiting fair. Congratulate the recruiters (preferably in front of your students) on their wisdom at coming to *your* campus.
- Use students – *judiciously* – on search committees and strategic planning committees.

Faculty

As with student groups, for a college of any appreciable size, it will be difficult to maintain a close relationship with most faculty members. Here are a few things to consider in your relationships with faculty members:

- Show up at departmental faculty meetings, but only if invited. (Don't invite yourself.)

Faculty

- When at a national meeting, attend however many of your colleagues' talks that you can.
- Resist "grade inflation" at promotion and tenure time, but do be prepared to move aggressively early with your best people.
- Resist the expectation that an endowed chair or professorship is as regular a "promotion" as that to associate or full professor.

Faculty

- Be aggressive with raises. Preemptive retention is better than retention.
- Be generous with sabbatical leaves, IPA opportunities, etc., but don't give leaves-of-absence to people who don't intend to return.
- Promote your good colleagues for external recognition.

Direct-Reports

As dean, you will likely have the following individuals reporting to you: department heads; associate deans; and directors for development, diversity, communications, alumni relations, and college-based research institutes. Here are a few ways to help them be as successful as possible in their jobs:

Direct-Reports

- Remember that they are doing the “heavy lifting.” Give them the resources they need.
- Insure that there is consistency across departments.
- Make sure that *you* are consistent in your actions. (It will be assumed that you favor your home department, except in your home department where it will be assumed that you overcompensate against them.)

Direct-Reports

- Benchmark with peer institutions.
- Beware of unintended bias.
- Provide administrative training for your direct-reports, and be at peace with the fact that this will hasten the day that they leave your employ for some good career opportunity.

Enjoy!

Dean of Engineering is an important and demanding job, but it is also highly rewarding.

Best wishes from **V**
T