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The Transformational Mission: Using the Departmental Mission to Initiate Meaningful Change

Craig D. Hlavac

Southern Connecticut State University, hlavacc2@southernct.edu

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Abstract:

This session will provide participants with an overview of the elements of exemplar mission statements, followed by the presentation of several practical methods for using the departmental mission to initiate and sustain meaningful change. Participants will examine and discuss common elements of missions from business, non-profits, and higher education, and will use this information to inform discussion surrounding their own departmental missions. The session will also allow participants to dialogue in small groups about positives and negatives of their own department's mission statements, providing an opportunity for feedback and potential revisions.

Keywords: Leadership, Mission Statements, Mission-Based Management, Change

Session Description:

Academic department chairpersons are often unsure how to use their departmental or organizational missions as catalysts for change at the department level. In a recent study of chairpersons, 67% of respondents indicated difficulty in making decisions regarding how to effectively motivate faculty toward fulfillment of their mission (Hlavac, 2012, p. 145). Despite the reality that virtually all departments have a publicly-stated mission statement, most are uncertain how to utilize this mission to motivate faculty and initiate meaningful and lasting change.

Additionally, many departments (and chairpersons) may be unaware of their current departmental mission or are operating under a mission that is outdated. As the department mission is the public declamation of the academic and professional priorities of the department, disparity between this mission and the actions/beliefs of the department can cause disorder, a lack of focus, and confusion amongst department stakeholders.

Part 1 (25 minutes): This session will begin with an overview of the elements of a good departmental mission statement, followed by collaborative small-group analysis of representative departmental and organizational missions. Groups will dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses about each pair of respective missions and will develop possible revisions for the departmental missions. Resultant group-revised departmental missions will then be reported back to the entire group for brief discussion.

Part II (35 minutes): The second part of this session will be devoted to practical methods for using the departmental mission to initiate change within the department. Specifically, the presenter will discuss how to use the mission to:

- ☐ evaluate program efficacy
- ☐ assess progress toward program goals
- ☐ foster new department initiatives
- ☐ allocate departmental resources
- ☐ guide and streamline communications between the department and the administration
- ☐ align department actions with organizational initiatives

Frequent references to recent publications related to mission development and the phenomenon of mission-based management will be included in this portion of the session.

Networking Break (5 minutes)

Part III (25 minutes): The session will continue with a collaborative, small-group work session focused on the discussion and analysis of representative departmental missions produced by the participants. Groups will collectively read and discuss these missions, offering to one another constructive feedback and pragmatic suggestions.

Question & Answer (10 minutes): Participants will have the opportunity to inquire of the presenter or of any of their colleagues regarding session topics.

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