

## **Administrative Assistants and Other Support Staff**

One of the main duties of the chair is supervising the departmental administrative assistant and working with the administrative assistant to complete the essential day-to-day business of the department or program. During one's term as chair, no relationship is as constant and essential as that between the chair and the administrative assistant. The administrative assistant completes most of the ordinary business of the department – interacting with other College offices, responding to student inquiries, and dealing with the department's financial details – but does so at the behest of the department, whose representative is the chair. In essence, the administrative assistant acts at the request of the chair, who is authorized to represent the department as a collective. Thus, good communication between the chair and the administrative assistant is crucial so that the administrative assistant can interact with others with the confidence that she or he has the backing of the chair and so that those with whom the administrative assistant interacts can be confident that she or he is acting with the support of the department and its chair.

While administrative assistants are appointed to the Academic Division, formally reporting to the Associate Provosts, day-to-day supervision of the work of administrative assistants falls to the department chair(s). Department chairs, as direct supervisors of administrative assistants, are responsible for confirming the hours worked by the staff during pay periods as well as assessing their performance at the end of each academic year. Performance evaluations are excellent opportunities for chairs to set expectations and for administrative assistants to set their goals for the coming year. Frequent and frank communication between the chair and the administrative assistant can serve to ensure that expectations are clear and that means of cooperating on departmental work are established.

Many administrative assistants support multiple departments and/or interdisciplinary programs. So that an administrative assistant is not caught between conflicting demands and expectations, good communication among department and program chairs is essential. The Office of the Provost will assist in this communication by convening a meeting once annually for administrative assistants who support multiple departments/programs and the chairs of those departments and programs. We include in this section of the handbook a priority ranking of the tasks that administrative assistants can be expected to perform for the department and programs to which they are assigned.

In addition to the administrative assistant, many departments are supported by lab technicians and student workers. Chairs are responsible for supervising those lab technicians who directly support the department as a whole. Many of the comments made above are equally relevant for chairs' interactions with lab technicians. Chairs and administrative assistants often share the supervision of student workers. We include the Student Employment Policies and Procedures document to guide chairs about student employment.

The chair should work to ensure that faculty members do not treat staff members and student workers in a disrespectful or discourteous manner. Instances of actual or suspected abuse should be reported to the Provost and Associate Provosts.