



UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

In-Basket Team-Building and Prioritization Exercise

Description of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation's Exercise for Academic Leaders
July 2011

Education Advisory Board Summary

Description

The In-Basket Exercise simulates the many urgent (or potentially urgent) issues that a senior academic administrator might encounter during a typical day on the job. This exercise is used by the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) during the organization's three-day Academic Leadership Program for faculty leaders. The exercise is aimed at teaching effective communication, prioritization, and team-work skills to participants. Groups of six to ten participants are required to reach consensus on the sequence in which 10 to 15 pressing issues, all of which are facing a hypothetical academic administrator on a given day, should be addressed; groups are also expected to provide a clear explanation for their ultimate prioritization of the issues.

While the CIC has developed a specific set of scenarios for use with Academic Leadership Program participants, any institution can recreate the in-basket exercise by using real examples collected from senior administrators.

Key Elements of Exercise

The examples in the exercise should reflect a broad range of issues and situations; scenarios need not be limited to email correspondence, and can include phone calls, memos, and messages from an administrative assistant regarding upcoming meetings.

Examples of scenarios:

- Phone call from a department chair regarding a problematic faculty member
- E-mail from a department chair regarding spousal hire
- Memo from the President regarding faculty retention offer
- E-mail Invitation to address Foreign University delegation regarding potential partnership

Each scenario is accompanied by a two-paragraph summary which provides contextual information. Summary paragraphs include information on the sender's institutional affiliation and relationship to the administrator, other parties involved, and relevant historical information and logistical details.

Examples of information included in summary paragraph for scenarios:

"As you have learned in your time working for the Provost, it is very important to her to have adequate time to process information and prepare before making decisions of this magnitude, so you are not surprised that she has asked to you submit your research and recommendations to her by one week from today (two weeks before the Provosts' Council meeting)."

"A delegation of administrators from International University, including the Vice President, is coming to visit later this week. Due to visa snafus, it was unclear when they would be arriving, and the Director of the International Programs Office and Dean of the School of Fine Arts, who are organizing the visit, are now scrambling to make arrangements."

CIC Contact

For a copy of, or greater detail about, the In-Basket Exercise used by the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, please contact Amber Marks, Associate Director, at (217)265-8106 or aemarks@staff.cic.net