



Excellence in Academic Leadership Session Summaries

Session 1: The Special Challenges of the Academic Environment

In our introductory session, we cover the unique structure of the academic environment, the role of leadership within such an environment, and introduce the concept of boundaries (between being friends and being friendly; between roles of colleague and chair, etc). We present the Decision Making Framework (DMF) as a tool for systematically evaluating a situation and possible outcomes. Cohort members craft an initial definition of leadership and are asked to consider *why* they accepted (or are considering) leadership positions.

Session 2: Critical Friends/Group Problem Solving

This session introduces the Critical Friends tool, and practices it using a provided case study, applying the DMF to structure discussion. We discuss the Academic Unit Diagnostic Tool (AUDiT) and lay the groundwork for managing emotions and developing personal scripts through the "Testing Yourself" exercise that presents commonly-occurring challenges to authority in academic environments.

Session 3: Vibrant Academic Units

We revisit the foundational skill of knowing yourself as an individual and as a leader and relate it to academic unit vibrancy. We cover indicators and warning signs for unit health, along with a focus on the unit mission. Participants practice creating an elevator pitch for their units, with a particular focus on what makes their department distinct from similar ones at other institutions.

Session 4: Difficult Conversations & Personal Scripts

This two-hour session covers difficult conversations, listening as a foundational skill, personal scripts, and introduces the concept of aligning as a way to conduct problem-solving conversations using the And Stance developed by the Harvard Project on Negotiation. Participants practice these skills in a series of interactive exercises and discussions.

Session 5: Exploring Leadership

President Emeritus Robert Easter shares his thoughts on leadership in the academic environment, gleaned across his long career in all levels of university leadership: department head, dean, provost, chancellor, president. The cohort considers paradigm shifts occurring in their fields and strategic considerations driven by internal and external factors.



Session 6: Negotiation

Another two-hour meeting, the session on negotiation emphasizes that negotiation is about influence, persuasion, and dealing with conflict. Through interactive exercises and case studies, we tie fundamental leadership concepts to negotiation skills and encourage participants to recognize and build skills for negotiations in their daily lives.

Session 7: Giving and Receiving Feedback

The session on giving and receiving feedback reviews best practices, different kinds of feedback, and the concept of the growth vs. fixed mindset. Participants practice crafting personal scripts for negative feedback through a case study. Using examples of scripts, they start to develop their own for a range of scenarios.

Session 8: Bullyproofing Academic Units

In this two-hour session, we revisit a video scenario from the beginning of the program and examine it with the tools practiced throughout the year. Cohort members learn about the different types of bullies, how those bullies twist the environment around them in their favor, and how to prevent them from dominating a unit. After the session, participants watch an alternate version of the video scenario, where the beleaguered department head employs skills practiced throughout the course in order to effectively manage the interaction.

Session 9: Conversations on Leadership, Shared Governance, and DEI

In this session, we reflect on the impact of leadership in academia and the role of shared governance in fostering trust through transparent processes. We open a conversation about fundamental differences in what we *mean* by different terms around vitally important topics, such as DEI initiatives. We discuss different ideas of what it means to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive and how to ensure that a group is working from a shared understanding.

Session 10: Capstone Case and Closing

Participants work in small groups to present their approaches to a capstone case study to the entire cohort. Using skills built throughout the entire program, facilitators and participants discuss the proposed solutions and refine strategies for addressing complex problems in the future. The program closes with key takeaways being shared by each cohort member.

