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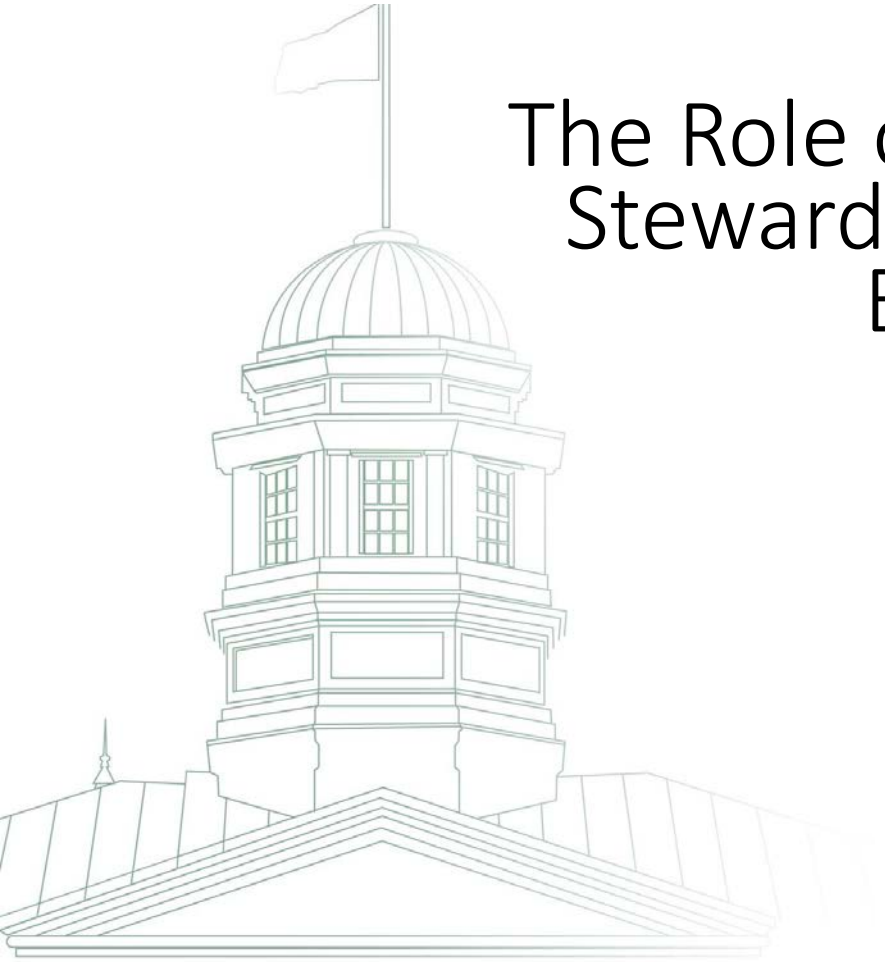


The Role of Academic Affairs in Stewardship of the Learning Environment

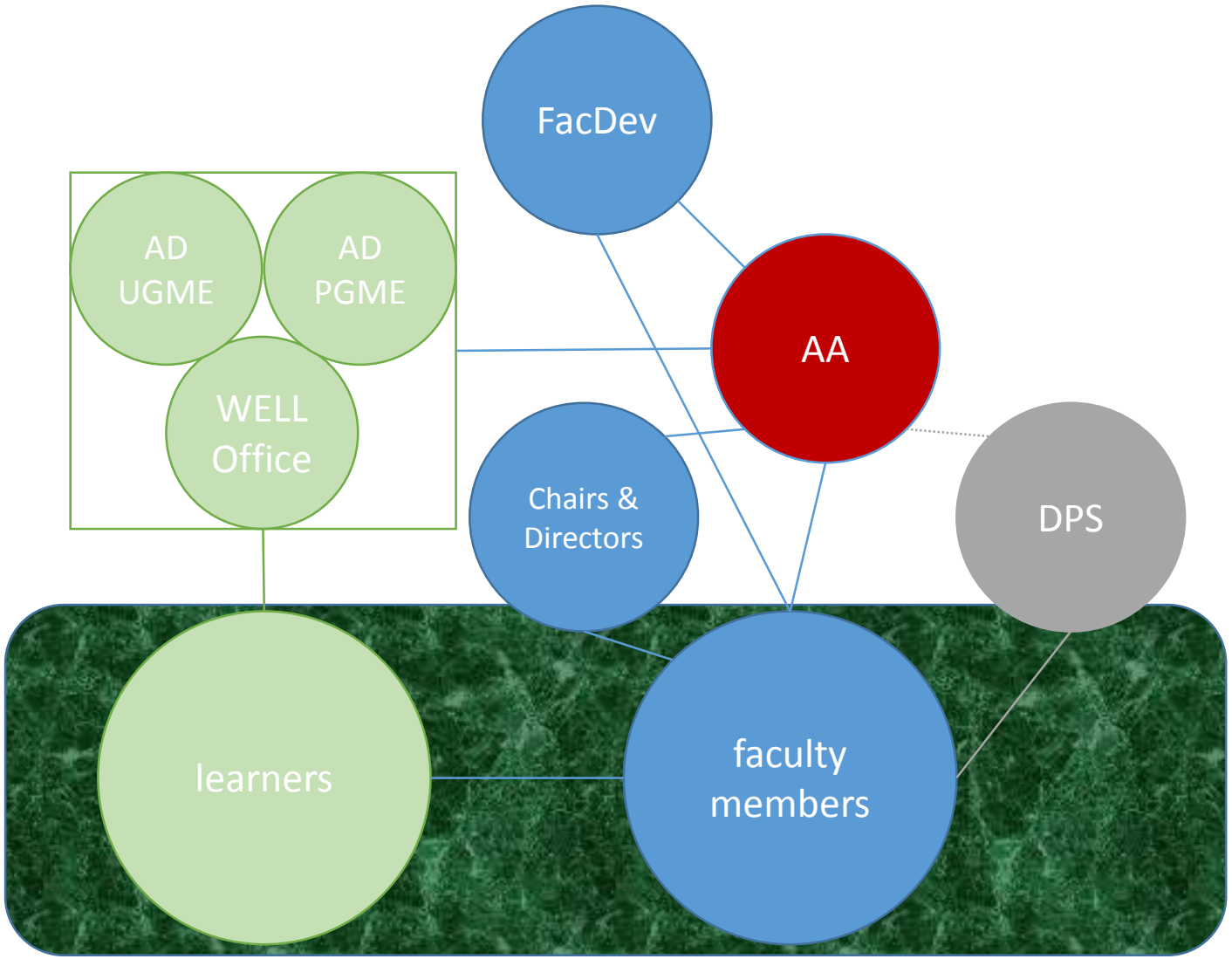
Lesley Fellows

Faculty Retreat

October 2018

Overview

- Academic Affairs: Position in the ecosystem…
- Supporting excellence in the learning environment
  - Individual Faculty Members
  - Departments & Schools
  - Faculty-wide
- Reactive & Proactive Roles
- Strong points
- Areas for improvement


FacDev
AD
UGME
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Chairs &
Directors
DPS
learners
faculty
members

Individual Faculty Members

- **Recruit** people with the expertise and attitudes to be excellent teachers
  - advertising, searches, vetting all emphasize teaching
- **Expectations**
  - Academic duties, time commitment
    - excellence in teaching is a core expectation of the University, the Faculty, and individual Departments
    - time commitment and specific duties customizable
- **Resources & Support**
  - Orientation (in-person; online)
  - Material resources
  - Mentorship

Individual Faculty Members

- **Recognition & Feedback**
  - Annual performance review (merit)
  - Re-appointments (3, 6 years) and tenure (6 y)
  - Promotions
- **Addressing Problems: fair, timely, respecting confidentiality**
  - Protocols for clarity and consistency
  - Support to Chairs (advice, Toolkit)
  - Informal interventions
  - Formal investigations re: University discipline
    - temporary removal from learning environment
    - reprimand, suspension or dismissal
    - coaching and remediation

Towards a culture of a healthier learning environment

- Organizational Culture:
  - Faculty Values and Expectations
    - Orientation
    - Mentorship
    - Spoken and unspoken priorities
      - revision of annual review and promotion criteria
- Departmental or School Cultures
  - Support to Chairs & Directors
  - Selecting and Reviewing Chairs
  - Efforts to provide data at the Unit level

Towards a culture of a healthier learning environment

- Recognizing and addressing systemic learning environment issues
  - Data
  - Potential solutions
- Learning environment without borders
  - Many actors in the learning environment
  - A need to work together
    - communication
    - timely responses and adjustments
    - follow-up

Strengths & successes

- Shared vision across the Faculty leadership
- Progress towards better communication leading to more consistent responses to problems
- Implementation of improved faculty orientation and mentorship (ongoing)
- Excellent support from the central University (Associate Provost, Legal Counsel) for difficult cases

Persistent challenges

- Communication across the many actors involved
- Reactive (e.g. disciplinary) response is inherently slow, stressful, and opaque to the community
- Very imperfect data make it challenging to monitor progress
- Under-developed “proactive” strategies
  - Early detection and intervention
  - Prevention
- The learning environment is our work environment
  - many variables outside the scope of the Faculty...

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Questions?