

# SUGGESTIONS FOR BECOMING

# A MASTER ADMINISTRATOR



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Administrators often gain that status through happenstance, such as stepping into a position temporarily when someone leaves and then realizing they enjoy the work and responsibilities. Though not all administrators planned for their positions they are likely to have entered the role because they already had many of the interests and skills noted below. Each of the ten traits below is followed by activities one can undertake not only to prepare for an administrative role but for greater success once in an administrative position.

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### 1. UNDERSTANDS THE UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITIES IN GENERAL.

To prepare or advance:

- Find opportunities to learn about the university such as becoming a department chair, senator, interim administrator, serve on a search or review committee for an administrative position, or serve as a member of a key university committee or task force.
- Attend university meetings.
- Ask administrators what they do.
- Talk to students about experiences at the university beyond the classroom.
- Use the opportunities to learn about the finances, physical operation, organizational structure, challenges and politics of the university.
- Read higher education journals and newspapers.
- Become a fellow with or member of a higher education organization.

### 2. GAINS AND HONES MANAGEMENT SKILLS.

To prepare or advance:

- Attend workshops and read books on how to manage.
- Pursue temporary leadership positions such as chairing committees, serving as an assistant department chair, or serving as a PI on a grant.
- Carefully observe administrators in action.
- Have good organization, time management, communication, and interpersonal skills.
- Know how to facilitate and run effective meetings.
- Improve decision-making by learning to see the “big picture” and understand how decisions have secondary and unintended effects.
- Learn how to delegate.
- Understand how your unit fits into the bigger picture.

### 3. RESPECTS OTHERS.

To prepare or advance:

- Appreciate that everyone’s opinions, role and contributions are important.
- Listen to and respect others’ viewpoints.
- Consider concerns of those who might not be involved in decision-making but will be involved in execution or effects of decisions.

- Know how to be collegial and a team player.
- Treat people fairly.
- Be reliable.

#### **4. HAS COMMITMENT AND DETERMINATION.**

To prepare or advance:

- Strive to find solutions to problems rather than making excuses or giving up.
- Strive to be sure your work is of outstanding quality.
- Understand the differences between a leader and an administrator. Strive to lead in order to help the university meet its goals and continuously improve.

#### **5. IS WILLING TO TRY NEW THINGS.**

To prepare or advance:

- Expand your knowledge and abilities by taking on new opportunities as appropriate.
- Approach your role with humility; know how to learn from others and from your mistakes.

#### **6. DEVELOPS AND USES GOALS.**

To prepare or advance:

- Set annual goals for yourself and your unit and regularly measure your progress in reaching them.
- Learn how to work with others to set and assess goals.

#### **7. HAS A SET OF VALUES TO HELP GUIDE DECISION-MAKING.**

To prepare or advance:

- Develop a set of values to help guide decision-making, particularly tough decisions like budget cuts.
- Guide important decisions with principles rather than emotions.

#### **8. CONTINUALLY ESTABLISHES AND BUILDS GOOD RELATIONSHIPS.**

To prepare or advance:

- Get to know people outside of your unit and off campus so as to better understand your role, generate new ideas, obtain helpful information, and understand the university better.
- Get to know the people who report to you to help build a stronger team.
- Participate in social activities with colleagues.
- Be involved with at least one off-campus group relevant to your work.
- Learn from mentors and serve as a mentor to others.

#### **9. IS FLEXIBLE AND ABLE TO BALANCE MULTIPLE OBLIGATIONS.**

To prepare or advance:

- Be sure to balance your work and personal life.
- Take care of your personal health and wellness.
- Learn and practice time management techniques.
- Have a support network of people.

#### **10. UNDERSTANDS THE BROAD PURPOSE OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE AT A UNIVERSITY.**

To prepare or advance:

- Understand how your position helps students succeed and employees to have satisfying careers.
- View your role as an opportunity to promote and enhance the welfare of your unit and the university in an altruistic manner.

