

**Presenter Information-Primary presenter CV/resume or biographical sketch:**

**Laura Trujillo-Jenks, Ph.D.**

Laura Trujillo-Jenks is the Interim Chair for the Department of Teacher Education at Texas Woman's University and an Associate Professor in the Educational Leadership Program. Books Laura has authored and co-authored are *Survival Guide for New Teachers: How to become a Professional, Effective, and Successful Teacher*; *The Survival Guide for New Campus Administrators: How to Become a Professional, Effective, and Successful Administrator* with Minerva Trujillo; *Case studies: Working through current school issues* with Rebecca R. Fredrickson; and *Case Studies on Safety, Bullying, and Social Media in Schools* with Kenneth Jenks.

**Gina Anderson, Ed.D.**

Gina Anderson is the Associate Dean for Educator Preparation & Partnerships in the College of Professional Education at Texas Woman's University. She has served educational settings for more than 30 years in a number of additional roles, including elementary and middle school teacher, student teacher supervisor, university professor, program coordinator, and department chair. Anderson has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in curriculum, pedagogy, educational foundations, and diversity. Her early research focused on multicultural and discussion pedagogies, and she currently is investigating issues of recruitment, preparation, and retention of teacher candidates. Anderson's honors and awards include the Academic Exchange Quarterly Journal Editor's Choice Award, College of Professional Education Outstanding Teacher Award, College of Professional Education Outstanding Faculty Award for Academic Mentor/Advisor, Dr. G. Ann Uhlir Fellowship in Higher Education Administration, Academic Affairs Faculty Fellowship, and the Innovation in Academia Award.

Proposal 2

**Title:** *The Challenges and Rewards of Co-Chairing a Department: Lessons Learned from Leaders in the Middle*

**Disciplines:** Teacher Education; Educational Leadership; Higher Education Administration

**Presentation Theme:** Operating the Department and/or Leadership and Management

**Presentation Type:** Best Practice

**Abstract:** Newly appointed Department Chairs are often on their own to learn “on the job” the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed. One way to mitigate the challenges of this high-stakes approach is to identify a second leader who can serve in the role of mentor, coach or Co-Chair alongside the new Chair. The Co-Chair may be a leader who has served as a Department Chair in the past and/or who is serving in another middle-management position such as a Chair from a different department, Director, or Associate Dean. During a time of tremendous change and uncertainty, the Co-Chair may provide additional support and stability while also helping the new Chair understand and practice their new roles and responsibilities. During this session, a Chair and Co-Chair will share their experiences, and session attendees will be invited to participate in an interactive discussion.

**Keywords:** Mentoring, Co-Chair, Professional Development

**Presentation Documents:** Description of the Session (300-500 words)

University academic leaders are unique in that there are no additional credentials needed for the job. They typically have the same qualifications as their peers - a terminal degree in their discipline. No additional licensure, certification, or degree is required. Oftentimes, these leaders are faculty members who did not originally set out to become a Department Chair or Dean, but because of their leadership potential they were asked to consider the opportunity.

While university mentoring of new academic leaders is becoming more commonplace, most of the time it is cited as an extra or add-on career activity rather than standard practice (Chacon Vance (2016). A lesser-known mentoring approach involves the use of a Co-Chair who serves as a mentor or coach. Co-Chairs can help new Chairs process problems and challenges, reach their goals, think through their options and ideas, generate next steps and actions, and develop a leadership agenda (Olwell, 2008). A Co-Chair can provide a “safety net” for new Chairs to develop and practice skills while assuming their full privileges and responsibilities associated with the role.

Deans and Associate Deans during typical times have demanding schedules. With the addition of Covid-19, declining enrollments, and budget reductions, their challenges have increased exponentially, leaving little room for these academic leaders to implement structured mentoring or coaching programs. However, when the mentoring can occur simultaneously within the collective work of an entire program or enterprise, it may resemble more of a partnership or peer mentoring rather than an extra duty for the Co-Chair, mentor, or coach.

In order to provide a more seamless transition during a time of tremendous change and uncertainty, the Dean of a College of Education within a mid-sized university in the southwest

U.S. region implemented a Co-Chair model for supporting a newly appointed Interim Chair in the Department of Teacher Education starting the Fall 2020 semester. The Co-Chair is the Associate Dean for Educator Preparation who had served in the role of Chair of this department in the past. This is the first time the Co-Chair model has been implemented in this department and college.

During this presentation, the Interim Chair and Co-Chair will discuss how they are implementing this unique model and will share successes and lessons learned. As this model is new to the department and college and was implemented at the start of the Fall 2020 semester, the experiences and outcomes have been and will continue to be a process and organic in nature. Session attendees will be invited to participate and engage in discussion, and input regarding this mentoring model will be welcomed.

## **References**

- Olwell, R. (2008). Why your new department chair needs a coach. Magna Report (2016), *New Chairs and Deans: How to Succeed as an Academic Leader*.  
<https://www.academicbriefing.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ALT4-New-Chairs-and-Deans-How-to-Succeed-as-an-Academic-Leader.pdf>.
- Chacon Vance, M. (2016). *The importance of mentoring for higher ed leadership*. Higher Ed Jobs (2020). <https://www.higheredjobs.com/articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=1077>