# Understanding the Academic Culture

As a representative from business, industry, or government, you are familiar with evaluating proposals, overseeing projects, managing programs, and supervising people. You have had experience evaluating and applying technology for the good of society. Going into the academic culture may seem different, however there may be more similarities than you think. Here is some information that we believe will be helpful as you evaluate academic programs. As PEVs you will work with the individuals in the box below. (Industry equivalents in orange.)
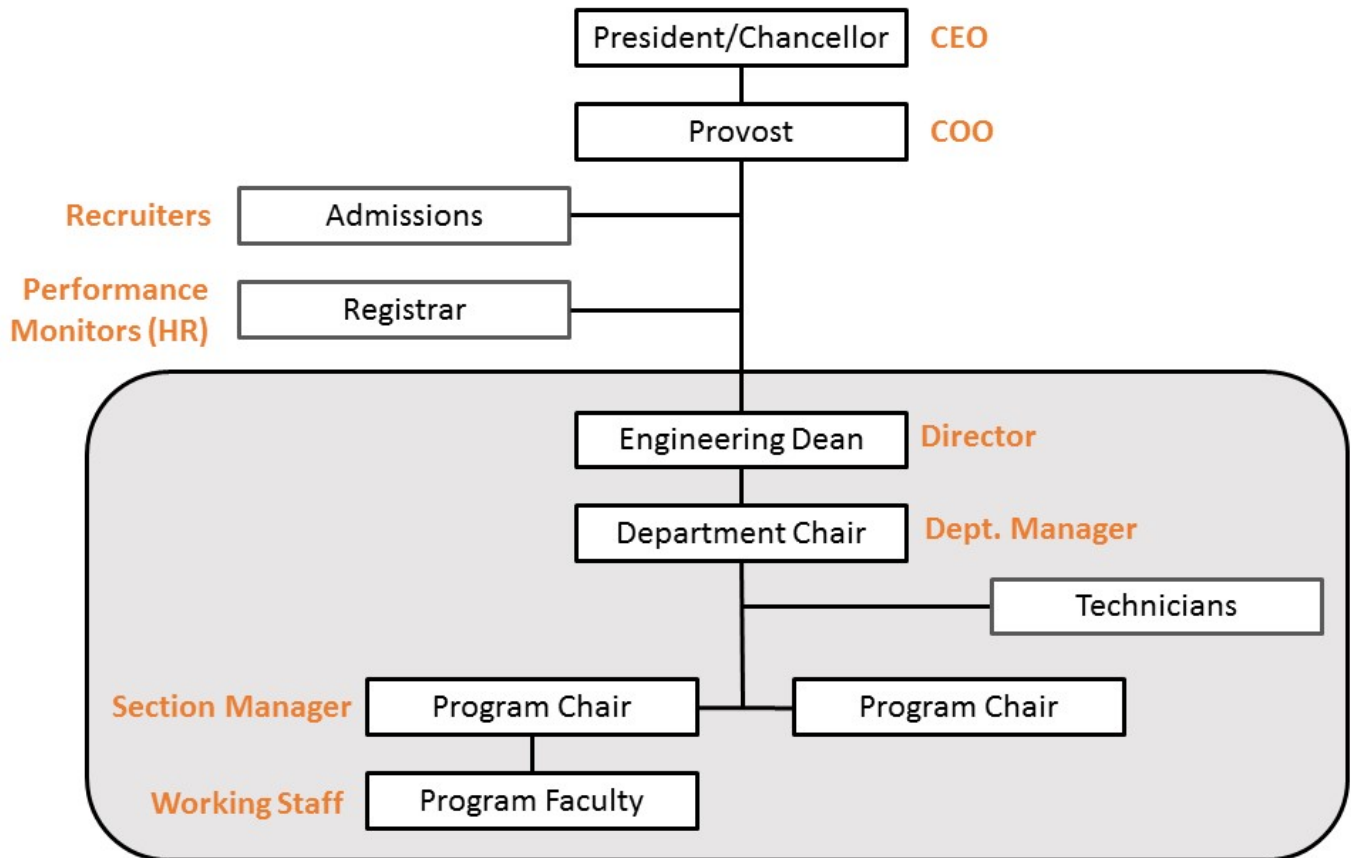
Note: Some department chairs are also program chairs. However, a department is not a program; it is an administrative unit. A department may have one or more programs within it. At ABET, we evaluate programs.

The Faculty

There are several levels of faculty titles:
Tenured: Professor
       Associate Professor
Tenure Track: Assistant Professor (usually will have 7 years to become tenured)
Non-Tenured: Lecturer, Adjunct, and Instructor

The program faculty have collective responsibility for planning and delivering the program to the students. All members of the faculty are expected to have reasonable teaching loads based on responsibilities in other areas such as research, service, and advising. All should be accessible by the students and all should take appropriate steps to remain current in their fields. An adjunct faculty member is not necessarily less qualified than a tenured faculty member by virtue of his/her rank. They generally have both technical or content specific knowledge, as well as practical experience.

Research University or Teaching University

Faculty at a research university would be expected to have high expectations for research productivity. The research focus enables them to stay current in the field and engage students in scholarly work. Faculty at an institution that emphasizes teaching and may not have a significant research program are expected to stay current in their field through other means such as membership and activity with their member professional society, attendance at academic and content related conferences, etc. The nature of the activity in which faculty are engaged in order to remain current in their fields is not a point of evaluation. The Program Evaluator needs only to make a judgment about whether or not the faculty are remaining current in their fields. The evidence can point to research or other areas where faculty are professionally engaged.

Program Funding

Program funding is usually provided by the dean, beased on budget received through the chief academic officer. As a Program Evaluator, you want to find out:

- What the trends look like year to year for overall program funding compared to enrollment?

- What are the trends in program funding for laboratory maintenance and replacement year to year? What about funds for laboratory technicians?

- Does the program chair have any input into the budget process?

- Is the overall program budget dependent on grants and gifts that when expended will leave the program underfunded?

- Is there funding available for professional development of the faculty? If so who controls it?

Most of the above information can be found in the self-study. If you don't feel there is sufficient evidence in the self-study to make a judgment, discuss it with faculty members and the program chair.