
LOOKING BEFORE YOU LEAP:
THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE
BECOMING AN ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



Jeff Dobbins, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Willamette University College of Law – Salem, Oregon

AALS Section for Associate Deans for Finance & Administration
Bootcamp for Aspiring Deans / Associate Deans
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CONSIDERING THE POSITION

- Perspectives
- What to consider in advance
- What to consider in the thick of things

PERSPECTIVES

- Every Law School is Different
 - Public vs private
 - Size
 - Historical Circumstances / Path Dependency
 - Leadership (internal and external)
- Every Associate Dean / ADAA job is different & changes
 - Institutions change
 - Circumstances change
 - People around you change
 - You change
- (Hint #1 – things will change – but you will get better at things, too.)

MY PERSPECTIVE

Institutional

- Willamette University is a small private institution focused around an undergraduate liberal arts college
- Main Campus, including the College of Law, is in Salem – the only law school in the state capitol
- Law school has entering class of ~120, total ~340
- 32 FT Faculty
- University has School of Management, is working on growth into other graduate programming, some new presence in Portland
- Law is the University's largest graduate / professional presence



ADAA – A POSITION OF MANY HATS

YOU MAY NEED TO KNOW A LITTLE OR A LOT ABOUT...

- Course scheduling and load assignment
- Stipends & research grants
- Faculty management
- Advising / Development of academic programs
- Facilities
- Registrar
- Budgeting / Long range planning
- Admissions
- Accounting
- Accreditation (ABA / Law School)
- Accreditation (at the University level)
- Hiring – adjuncts and staff
- HR management / payroll and payments
- Technology
- University process liaison
- Communications
- Alumni Relations
- Advancement
- Grant management
- Teaching
- Scholarship
- Student Advising

QUESTIONS TO ASK IN ADVANCE

- What has the role looked like historically?
- What is the Dean's personality / management style / communication style, and how will it mesh with yours?
- What is the team in the Dean's suite like – how much experience is there, and do you think they will be around?
- What are the Dean's goals for the institution?
- What are your goals for the position – professionally and personally?

WHAT TO CONSIDER IN ADVANCE

ABA & Accreditation

- Where are you in your ABA cycle, and how will responsibilities when the cycle comes up again be allocated?
- Review the ABA standards, as well as Strategic Documents and Accreditation materials and decisions from past cycles.

Where the Law School fits in the University

- How does the University engage in planning and decision making, and how does the Law School fit?
- How does the University engage in **budget** planning and decision making, and how does the Law School fit?
 - Where are the inflection points /control points, and where is the flexibility in budgeting?
- Learn what you can about the university's strategic and budget situation and how it may affect your school.

WHAT TO CONSIDER IN THE THICK OF IT

- Communication: Hard (though possible!) to have too much.
- Assume the best.
- Keep an eye on long term goals. Push back against the reactivity when you can.
- Track Standards / Accreditation issues.
- Anticipate change.
- Their emergency is not your emergency.
- Their emergency is their emergency.

WHAT TO CONSIDER IN THE THICK OF IT

- Know you're making a difference –
 - Students
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - University
 - Wider community
- Talk to your peers!

FINDING RESOURCES

- AALS Section for Associate Deans of Admin & Finance (this section!)
- AALS ADAA Section & Listserv
- ABA AD Listserv (leap-associate-deans@mail.americanbar.org)
- ABA Questionnaire Listserv (leap-abaquestionnaire@mail.americanbar.org)
- NALSAP Web site & list serv
- ABA AD Conference
- Other AD conferences – Most recently at Texas A&M (October 2022)
- The people in this room!

CONTACT / OTHER QUESTIONS

Jeff Dobbins – jdobbins@willamette.edu

503-370-6652

Questions?

Other thoughts? / What did I miss?