

Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Unit Leader Models (2026-2027)

Committee Charge: To examine elected chair models at comparable public institutions, including Missouri State's benchmark institutions, to better understand: (1) the specific duties of department chairs; (2) the compensation models for these roles; and (3) the election processes and terms of these positions, all as compared to the current AUL duties, compensation, and terms at MSU. As part of their deliberations, the committee will take into consideration the impact of an elected AUL model on the practice of shared governance across campus. The committee will write a report of their findings, with the goal of presenting this report to the Senate in the January session. If in the course of their work the committee determines that a switch from an appointed model to an elected model (or some variation thereof) is preferable, the committee will draft and present a Senate Action with the proposed model to the Senate at the January 2027 session for a vote in February.

As part of the work, the committee has been tasked with considering the following as they examine other models of leadership at our peer institutions and gather input from the campus community. (Note: this list was created in collaboration with input from the deans of each college; survey feedback will also be added to this list.)

1. Term specifications:

- Term length and limits: consider allowing more than one consecutive term; establishing a good rapport with donors and community members is an important part of the role of AUL, and allowing more than one term can help to foster those relationships
- Consider a policy for removal of a chair if their performance is unsatisfactory
- If an elected model is preferred, make sure the policy is an election for every new term and not a forced rotation among department faculty

2. Compensation:

- An equal stipend for all AULs across campus may not be entirely appropriate, since some units have many more faculty than others (and, thus, more administrative responsibilities for the AUL); perhaps consider a stipend partly based on size of the unit? Some units have lower numbers of faculty but higher SCH; should this also factor into the stipend calculation?
- Consider current salary disparities between heads/directors and faculty within the same unit
- Consider course releases alongside stipends; department chairs are also typically still active teaching faculty (albeit with a significantly reduced teaching load)

3. Cost savings of a potential new model (and applications thereof):

- Consider the savings (if any) of a move to a new model as part of ongoing budget cuts and continued restructuring of colleges
- Depending on the amount saved, MSU could potentially use the residual savings for faculty professional development funding or even for ATB faculty raises

4. Other issues to consider:

- Make sure that the model gives the chair incentive/ability to handle personnel issues

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- Think about onboarding/professional development for incoming AULs, whether in-house or external to MSU

5. If an entirely new model would be advisable, consider the transition process:

- Allow the current AULs to finish their contracted term (whatever amount of their 5-year contract remains)
- DCOA and MCHHS have a school structure that may necessitate a slightly different approach:
 - Are school directors different enough from department heads/chairs to warrant a different approach in these colleges? Should school directors only be hired via national searches, which would include a typical faculty-driven search committee with input from all faculty?