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Action Research Process with Academic Departments

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Table 2

Action Research Process with Academic Departments

1. Entry - Consultant's Relationship to the Organization.

- FRC approached by department head.
- Begin developing trust and role expectations.
- Establish ground rule that data will not be shared with central administration but will be public within department.
- Determine the initial willingness of the department chairperson to entertain changes which may alter his/her role or behavior.
- Begin a process of leadership education.

2. Data Collection.

- Meet with department faculty to review discussions from (1) above and entertain questions about the consultation process.
- Establish ground rules that before any data is collected faculty must agree to meet for three hours to discuss the results and action implications.
- Faculty vote to proceed or not on the consulting relationship.
- Identify issues about which the department wishes more information.
- Modify standard Departmental Analysis Questionnaire and interview schedule to fit the department's needs.
- Conduct 1½ hour individual interviews (est. 10-20 per dept.).
- Request completion of questionnaire (20-50 Min. per individual).
- Prepare summary report of results without interpretations and conclusions.

3. Feedback and Discussion of Priorities and Alternatives.

- Distribute departmental report to all faculty and the department chairperson.
- Meet with the department chairperson to continue process of leadership education begun at entry, to facilitate thinking about the results and the department, and to plan agenda for the faculty meeting.
- Meet with faculty (3 hours) to help the faculty validate the results and to test what the department wants to do.
- Facilitate the setting of priorities and preparation for action.

Table 2 (Cont'd)

4. Follow-up -- Implementation and Evaluation.

- Implementation depends on the issues and the priorities assigned by the department. Some typical examples are: a) work with department chairperson on improving leadership, b) assist in improving departmental meetings, c) assist in the revision of the undergraduate curriculum, d) conduct teaching effectiveness workshops, e) consult on developing new means of involving graduate students in departmental teaching and research activities, f) assist department committees in developing policy statements and processes regarding By-Laws, promotion and tenure, and program requirements, g) assist in the design of studies of market needs for students from a particular discipline, h) consult on long range planning, and i) help develop new programs in career planning and development for faculty.
- Evaluation of follow-up activities is made mutually by the client and consultant. There is periodic review of the consulting relationship.