BIG PICTURE COMPONENT

The importance of seeing the ‘big picture’

Academic leaders need to have a big picture vision and know how to get there by understanding the structures and systems that will enable the enactment of that vision. These include “policy formation, managing relationships, working with challenging staff, involvement in various aspects of planning, and attending meetings” (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008).

Potential future leaders need to gain understanding about how their university and the university sector work in order to see the big picture and develop inspired leadership visions. At the same time they need to become aware of the — often conflicting — pressures confronting universities and staff in universities.

The PROPEL Big Picture Component

The Big Picture Component will allow you to gain an insight into how universities work on a day to day basis through attendance at high-level committee meetings. Attending such meetings will help you develop a realistic picture of how the university operates and enable you to “connect the dots”, to experience the complexity of academic management.

- Each PROPEL participant will attend at least two committee meetings.
- At least one committee should be in the teaching and learning area and one in the research area.
- A full list of committees will be available at the Leadership Skills Workshop, where you will be asked to select your preferences.
- The PROPEL Coordinators will allocate you to committees to achieve a good balance for all participants, and will organise your attendance through the Chair of each committee.
- After attending each meeting, you will make a time to meet with the committee Chair to discuss your observations and gain further insights.
- You will write a short general reflective report on each meeting which will be submitted to the committee Chair.
- You will have the opportunity to discuss your meeting experiences with other PROPEL participants at points during the Program.
Identifying appropriate committees

Committees which have been identified for the Big Picture Component:

- are at university governance level,
- have a regular schedule of meetings,
- deal with topics which give an insight into issues of significance to the university as a whole,
- are active in developing options and solutions.

You are welcome to suggest other committees or events you would like to attend (such as Faculty-level committees or university planning meetings). PROPEL will assist you to negotiate attendance at these events.

Timing of meeting attendances, follow-up discussions and reports

PROPEL will arrange your meeting attendances to best suit you and the committee Chair.

As a guide:

- First committee attendance — within three months of commencing PROPEL Program.
- Second committee attendance — around six months after commencing the Program.

You will attend at least one meeting of each selected committee during the training year. Where the committee Chair approves, you may arrange to attend a number of consecutive meetings of the same committee. This will allow progress and development of issues to be observed.

After each committee attendance, you will need to arrange an appointment with the committee Chair to discuss your observations. This discussion should take place as soon as possible after the committee meeting.

Following your meeting with the committee Chair, you will write a short general reflective report to be submitted to the Chair. To preserve confidentiality, this report does not need to be forwarded to the PROPEL Coordinators.

Support to complete the Big Picture Component

Supporting materials are provided as a guide to assist you to record and review your observations during committee meetings.

The PROPEL Coordinators will provide follow-up support at regular intervals to ensure you are managing to attend the selected committee meetings and are meeting with the committee Chairs for follow-up discussions. PROPEL will liaise with committee Chairs if any difficulties arise or if you wish to change your committee selection.
Confidentiality

All PROPEL participants will be required to provide the committee Chair with a signed confidentiality agreement which states that they will not disclose any confidential or sensitive information they have received as a result of their participation in that committee.

As part of this confidentiality agreement, you will be asked to step out of a committee meeting at any time that the committee is discussing sensitive matters regarding your own Faculty.

References