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20. Hiring a Director

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Hiring a Director

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1 Introduction

Directors of quantitative and math support centers take on many roles, each of which requires specialized skills. A director needs a strong quantitative background, the ability to teach/tutor in various quantitative subject areas, and strong management skills. Because QMaSCs often serve many constituencies, patience is a necessary quality in a successful director. Those served by the QMaSC include students, some with math anxiety; faculty, with unique needs specific to their courses; and administrators. This chapter seeks to arm administrators and search committees with sufficient information about the role of a QMaSC director to enable the identification of the best candidate for the job.

This chapter addresses the concerns of hiring a QMaSC director through discussing aspects of the director's role that inform the hiring process, budget considerations, and search committee composition.

2 Aspects of the Director's Role that Inform the Hiring Process

Position within the Academic Organization

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The director's position within the overall organization varies greatly depending upon the culture within the academic institution. Who is hired is often determined by where the director sits in the organizational structure.

Some schools centralize resources by creating an academic “supercenter” in which all resource centers are housed. In this way, the institution gains some economy of scale with one senior member at the head and lower-level individuals in specialized subject areas. In this case, the supercenter director may hold a position equivalent to that of an associate dean or vice-president. Such a reporting structure is demonstrated in the diagram below.

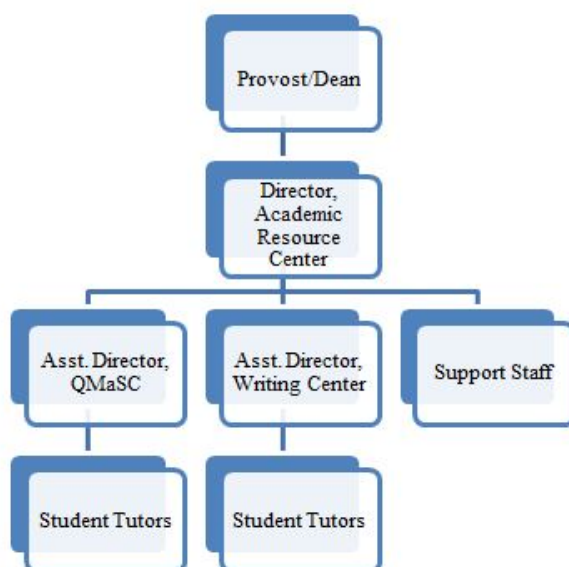


Figure 1: Sample Reporting Structure for a “Supercenter for Academic Resources”

Some schools may look to a stand-alone QMaSC to save money due to mounting fiscal pressures. In this situation, schools may choose to hire someone with fewer academic credentials or less experience. For example, schools may consider candidates with a master's degree even though a previous search required a candidate with a Ph. D. Interested readers may find specific examples of different reporting structures for QMaSC directors as well as their specific role within the institution in the Case Study section at the end of this handbook.

The changing external environment calls for individuals with strong quantitative résumés. The demand in the corporate job market for candidates with strong quantitative skills is rising and it appears that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future. This change in the competitive landscape will likely make it harder for schools to hire well-qualified individuals. Some schools may need to either be creative in terms of organizing their resource centers or lower their expectation level for a director.

Once the specific positional level within the academic organization is established, the next

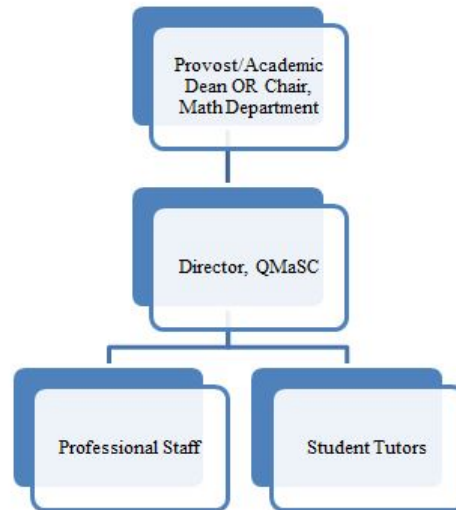


Figure 2: Sample Reporting Structure for Stand-Alone QMaSC

question is whether or not the director will teach classes. Is the director a member of an academic department or only tangentially related to a department?

Consider the three main resource centers at Babson College. In recent years, the four people who have held the leadership positions of these resource centers consisted of a senior tenured faculty member, a full-time lecturer, a part-time lecturer, and a part-time staff member. Each is highly regarded by most faculty members. Recently, the part-time staff member replaced the senior faculty member in the leadership position. While this sequence may not be representative of all institutions, it reveals two key issues. First, many full-time faculty members shy away from leading a QMaSC because it takes them away from their primary responsibilities of teaching and research. Second, the institution may feel that the return on the budget item is better spent on someone who is not a member of the faculty.

Hiring Full- and Part-time Staff Members

Hiring staff, whether full-time support staff or student help, is an important function of every QMaSC director. Larger institutions will likely have a larger academic support staff. In such cases, the larger environment will require a management-oriented director who may rarely interact with QMaSC patrons. Such institutions may choose to expand the responsibilities of the director. Many of the sections below will address some of these opportunities.

At smaller institutions the director plays a much different role, often wearing many different hats. The director may go from teaching a class to attending a curriculum-planning meeting to covering an understaffed shift in the resource center.

As schools strive to have increasingly more diverse student bodies, consideration should be given

to hiring staff who can work with a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities. For example, if the QMaSC serves a large Spanish-speaking population, consideration should be given to hiring some individuals who can speak Spanish while assisting such students. Because quantitative material can be viewed as a language unto itself, students may find that having a difficult concept explained in a more familiar language can often lead to a breakthrough in their overall understating of the material. For more information, refer to the chapter of this handbook on Addressing Diversity.

In any case, the director will likely need to establish relationships with relevant departments for regular consultation regarding the recruitment of students with the requisite knowledge to serve as tutors.

For more information refer to Section IV of this Handbook on staffing, hiring, and training QMaSC personnel.

Training

Training is another vital responsibility of the director. Traditionally, the director ensured each staff member was up-to-date in the subject matter supported, prepared to work with students, and, perhaps, knowledgeable in several software packages. As previously noted, QMaSC staff members may also need to be trained to handle a host of different issues. As schools look to diversify their student population, new challenges may emerge that have little to do with being good at teaching math. Directors and tutors might need to learn new technologies in terms of delivery of their services. For example, remote access, on-line support and even things like Skype and social media might be used to deliver support services. For more information on how technology may be incorporated into the management and services of a QMaSC refer to Section II of this Handbook.

As quantitative data analysis permeates the academic institution, QMaSC directors might provide assistance or training to faculty and interested staff members in quantitative techniques as well as the latest versions of available software.

Adaptability to Emerging Trends in Curriculum

Many of the changes in the academic environment are forcing schools to review and update their curriculum, particularly in the quantitative areas. One megatrend is the transition of state-mandated curricula (K-12) to focus more on statistics and data analysis and less on traditional pathways into calculus [1]. Babson, a small business college, introduced a new curriculum in the fall of 2013 to address this trend. The College is prepared to revise the curriculum again in the near future, given the expectation of seeing as many students arriving with AP statistics as currently arrive with AP calculus. As such, a new QMaSC director should be up-to-date with these curricular trends as well as the latest advances in quantitative software and delivery technologies.

Massive On-line Open Courses (MOOCs) are perhaps the biggest megatrend in academics in recent years. Many colleges and universities now offer MOOCs. Additional information regarding

a current list of schools that offer MOOC programs may be found by searching online for “Colleges that offer MOOCs.”

It is unclear how MOOCs will affect QMaSCs. If the integration of MOOCs into large-scale curricula is successful, it follows that better online support systems will not be far behind. Could these replace QMaSCs and other resource centers altogether? Some might argue that MOOCs will have a bigger impact on larger institutions, whereas smaller, more specialized schools will be less likely to see an impact. In particular, students at smaller institutions are likely to demand the personal attention that can only be provided at the QMaSC. A cursory survey of a few online quantitative courses shows the potential for remedial and lower level teaching and support. However, as the material becomes more complex, the online courses become less effective at the present time. While there is still a lot of uncertainty in this area, the QMaSC director will need to pay close attention to the impact of MOOCs in quantitative learning.

Many publishers bundle textbooks with electronic homework. The software often comes with dynamic parameterized problem sets, which allow students to complete the same kind of problem many times without encountering the same exact example. This prevents students from memorizing answers for the second and third attempts. Faculty at many institutions use these tools, viewing them as an added resource for the students. Students might see those same questions again at the QMaSC, but that possibility results in increased familiarity with the material as opposed to a redundancy. QMaSC directors need to understand how the use of these tools can be integrated into their overall support strategy as well as ensuring that the QMaSC staff is familiar with how the tools work.

Assessment

The goal of assessing the QMaSC should be to ensure that the center reaches its intended “market” of students and appropriately serves those students by providing the necessary assistance for the students to be successful in all aspects of developing their quantitative skills. Several years ago, accreditation bodies began requiring an assessment component to ensure that college and universities “measure” their success in terms of achieving their learning objectives.

Achieving the assessment goal involves determining how to measure and record results of the QMaSC services in a meaningful way. Assessment should not be taken as a measure of failure but as a constructive means to identifying areas in which the QMaSC is not fully achieving its objectives. An assessment may also provide a mechanism for making improvements.

While assessment of QMaSCs is formally addressed in Section V of this Handbook, the following example demonstrates why considering future assessments is relevant to hiring a director. One measure of success is to demonstrate that students who routinely visit the QMaSC, after performing poorly on an exam early in the semester, show improved performance on assignments and exams later in the semester. Such a measure requires the collaboration of faculty, the Registrar, an

academic dean, and the QMaSC director, coupled with various electronic tools, to provide a record of the student's performance over time. Consequently, a successful QMaSC director will need to establish strong relationships with relevant faculty and administrators while possessing knowledge and skills for using technology and data analysis in performing assessments.

3 Budget Considerations

The QMaSC budget is another important aspect to consider when hiring a director. Budgets vary widely and are dependent upon the overall organizational structure around the QMaSC. QMaSCs staffed mostly by students often have small budgets. Budgets will be higher for QMaSCs staffed by professionals. In the budget-conscious world of academia, one question of importance is how much control the director will have over the QMaSC budget.

The strategic role of the QMaSC, its place in the institution's organizational structure, and the budget allocated to the QMaSC should all be considered collectively. An underfunded center that plays a key strategic role in the institution is likely doomed to failure. Savvy candidates for the position of director are likely to understand that and will shy away from the position. In such a case, the institution may end up losing the better candidates.

Appropriate compensation for student workers may be another challenging issue for a QMaSC director. The director may need to fight for higher hourly wages for the student tutors on the basis that only a select few students are qualified to hold such a position. Competition for the best students is also challenging, as they tend to have other equally lucrative opportunities on and off campus. By contrast, some institutions may find just the opposite for several reasons. Some schools, like large schools, may simply not have sufficient funding to pay tutors at a premium rate. In addition, the demand for good positions may outstrip the supply of available positions. Hopefully, the schools that find themselves with limited budgets will have the advantage of the supply being greater than the demand.

Other budgetary considerations include money for the purchase of new technology, small hardware items, software, travel funds, paper, copies, print and digital resources, food for training, training materials, etc. In short, a QMaSC director needs to be assertive enough to lobby for budget increases to cover not only student wages but a myriad of other line items.

4 The Search

Before starting, the search committee should check with the institution's office of human resources for guidelines to follow in a job search. Developing a job description, or updating an existing job description, is the first step in the process of hiring a QMaSC director. This task may be primarily the responsibility of the individual who will supervise the director, but ideally it should be

done in consultation with others, such as a committee. If, for example, the director reports to a program dean, the department head (or division chair) responsible for teaching quantitative methods courses should be consulted. Conversely, if the director reports to a department head, then a program dean should be consulted. The job description should be written by those familiar with the student body as well as other resource centers and support services provided by the institution.

The job description will reflect the culture of the institution and its services while addressing whether or not the position is that of a founding director. Schools starting up a new QMaSC will seek a founding director. In such a case, the new director influences the success or failure of the center. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to the experience level of the candidates. The founding director should be someone with considerable experience working at or running a resource center and teaching at a similar institution. Conversely, because most established QMaSCs already have well developed policies, procedures, and routines, candidates for the director position may not require as much experience as a founding director. Schools seeking a non-founding director might prefer to hire a less experienced candidate in favor of one possessing a wealth of technology skills and a fresh perspective to take the center to a new or different level.

Once the job description is finalized, the recruitment process for the new director can begin. The search committee should consist of an academic Dean, three to five faculty members, and may include some experienced student tutors.

Determining where to “place the ad” is often a consequence of the QMaSC’s position relative to the institution’s organizational structure and the budget allocated to the search. The search process may take up to one year. Institutions with considerable resources may opt to employ a search firm. Search firms, usually very expensive, can reduce both the duration of the search as well as the amount of time spent by the search committee. Institutions not employing search firms typically advertise their search nationally. For example, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a popular destination for academics seeking positions, has two offerings. In particular, as of 2014, a 2” x 3” advertisement costs about \$1,500 and comes with a 60-day free posting on their web site, whereas, to post the ad only online for 60 days costs about \$300. Given that today’s candidates are likely to start their job search for a new position online, search committees may also want to consider other online offerings such as higherjobs.com and mathjobs.com as alternatives to the *Chronicle*. In addition, some online sites, like monster.com (jobs.com), offer free or low-cost job postings.

5 Conclusion

A QMaSC director needs to possess a diverse set of skills and attributes. The individual may also need to be nimble enough to adapt to emerging trends in pedagogy and technology. The following is a list of some of the skills and attributes that are desirable in a QMaSC director: strong

quantitative skills, good organization skills, good interpersonal skills, strong oral communication skills, good written communication skills; be a community and team builder, a competent manager, and possess the ability to work in a diverse environment.

Finally, careful consideration should be given to identifying the particular goals, needs and constraints of the institution when hiring the director. The director will encounter unexpected demands and face many challenges. Finding the individual who is the best fit for a given institution will not only enhance many students' experiences in their quantitative courses but also allow faculty to achieve more in their classes. This will enrich the overall quantitative portion of the institution's academic mission.

6 Bibliography

- [1] Common Core Standards Initiative, "Mathematics Standards." <http://www.corestandards.org/Math/>. Retrieved on October 22, 2013.

7 Appendix

Position Descriptions:

For examples of other job postings, see <http://www.higheredjobs.com/admin>.

Position Description I

The following is a sample of the position description for the director of the Math Resource Center at Babson College.

Director of the Babson College Math Resource Center

One of three academic resource centers at Babson College, the Math Resource Center (MRC) serves students in the undergraduate programs and to lesser extent graduate programs.

The MRC is a dedicated facility that offers:

- Walk-in consultation and tutoring in the core quantitative competencies
- Use of physical space and equipment for practicing quantitative skills using the most up-to-date technology and software tools
- Outreach to the community (custom-designed events integrated with existing curricula in the UG and MBA programs).

Reporting Structure: to Chairman of Math & Sciences Division while keeping the UG Program Office fully informed.

The Director of the Math Resource Center has responsibilities in three related areas (in addition to maintaining professional competence in field):

- A Administration & Staffing
- B Curriculum Design/Outreach
- C Day-to-Day Activities & Public Relations

A. Administration & Staffing

Staffing:

- Hire, train, and assess undergraduate student tutors who help to staff the Center.
- Design job descriptions; manage work schedules and compensation for the undergraduate student tutors.
- Interface with instructors of three quantitative foundation courses to identify qualified student tutors.

Manage Physical Facility and Equipment:

- In order to enhance this permanently dedicated space, the Director interfaces with CITG, ITSD, UG Program Office, and the Math & Sciences Division to help re-design and renovate the technology and software available to the students.
- Manage relationships with those same constituencies on an ongoing basis in order to maintain the physical attributes of the facility.

- Write summary reports to UG Dean's Office to keep them informed about goals of the MRC, condition and use of facilities, service to community, etc.

B. Curriculum Design/Outreach

- Take a lead role in the evaluation, development and implementation of new technology in the three quantitative foundation courses.
- Lead training sessions in new software.
- Serve as a resource to other faculty on certain software programs and packages.
- Work with new faculty on the use of technology as it pertains to the three quantitative foundation courses.
- Work closely with ITSD on incoming student needs as they pertain to quantitative methods and in particular to the standard laptop software load.

C. Day-to-Day Activities & Public Relations

- Manage schedule of student tutors.
- Track MRC usage by course and instructor.
- Arrange for and oversee security of facility, which contains expensive equipment
- Ensure (with help of ITSD/Media Services) that equipment is maintained in good working condition.
- Create awareness of services available to the college community by:
 - designing brochures for distribution
 - arranging for announcements placed in The Free Press
 - composing tailored e-mail letters to UG & MBA students and to faculty
 - placing notices in UG and MBA handbooks

Position Description II

The following is a sample of a position description for a QMaSC Director at Hamilton College. Director of the Quantitative/Symbolic Reasoning Center. Hamilton is one of the nation's top liberal arts colleges. It is independent, highly selective, coeducational and residential. Originally founded in 1793 as the Hamilton-Oneida Academy, Hamilton is today composed of 1,812 diverse and talented students from nearly all of the 50 states and approximately 40 countries. More information can be found at www.hamilton.edu/about.

Hamilton College invites applications for a full-time academic-year director of its Center for Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning. The Center provides resources and tutoring for students in courses designated as fulfilling Hamilton's Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning requirement and for faculty teaching such courses. We expect the Director will also teach one credit-bearing quantitative skills course each year. We seek an engaging professional leader adept at working both independently and with multiple constituents on campus to provide superior academic support in the areas of quantitative and symbolic reasoning. The Director oversees the daily operation of the QSR Center facilities and is responsible for recruiting, training, and supervising student tutors. In addition, the Director coordinates the Peer-Tutoring program for students enrolled in quantitative/symbolic courses as well as in courses in other areas of the curriculum. Other responsibilities include the development of tutorial materials, conducting faculty workshops on quantitative/symbolic reasoning in the curriculum, participation in professional communities, and publicizing the activities and resources of the QSR Center.

Experience in an administrative or leadership capacity, teaching experience, and an advanced degree in a quantitative/symbolic field required. Characteristics of a successful candidate may include a PhD. Equivalent combination of education and experience will be considered.

Please submit a résumé, cover letter, and the names and contact information of three references to apply@hamilton.edu. Address questions about the position to Human Resources at (315) 859-4302. Review of applications will begin on May 13 and continue until the position is filled.

Hamilton (www.hamilton.edu) is a residential liberal arts college located in upstate New York. Applicants with dual-career considerations can find other Hamilton and nearby academic job listings at www.upstatenyherc.org. Hamilton College is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer and is committed to diversity in all areas of the campus community. Hamilton provides domestic partner benefits. Candidates from underrepresented groups in higher education are especially encouraged to apply.