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Thoughts and Advice for Getting EHS a (Better) Seat at the Table

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The keys to having a seat at the table are somewhat simple. Be knowledgeable. Be warm. Be relevant. The first two should be easy. Being relevant is the challenge.

First, you have to be able to connect what you and your team is doing to the mission of the institution. It should be crystal clear. Princeton's mission is to advance learning through scholarship, research, and teaching of **unsurpassed quality**, with emphasis on undergraduate and doctoral education that is **distinctive among the world's great universities** and with a **pervasive commitment to serve the nation and the world**. The mission of my team emphasizes the support for teaching and research, demands excellence from the members of the team, and provides resources and models that other universities can use. I expect my staff to be leaders in EHS beyond the wrought iron gates to Nassau Hall.

It is important to pay attention to what is happening on campus. What is the leadership concerned about? Where is their focus? How can you be a resource?

When there was a focus on administrative burden on research, we took pains to show how the work that we do, including what we ask researchers to do, helps reduce burden. We showed them some of the things that we take off their plate to make compliance simple, including the BioRAFT platform.

Right now there is a focus on equity and inclusion. We have emphasized the importance of ensuring that the most diverse workforce on our campus is treated with dignity and is made to feel safe and secure. We have discussed how cultural differences of the people in the lab affect the culture of the lab.

We demonstrate that we will always come from a standpoint of YES. We don't want to be in the way of progress or discovery or enjoyment, so we work with people to enable projects and such to move forward, but often with some added safeguards to ensure that we reduce the risk to what the university will tolerate. THAT is one of the reasons why leadership values safety – it is integrated, not in competition with the campus objectives.

I earned my seat at the table by being tirelessly supportive, providing constructive ideas, knowing when to stay quiet, and finding the balance between swimming in my own lane and swimming close enough to allow for drafting.

Finally, universities thrive on collaboration. What has helped a lot is that I identify the key stakeholders at Princeton and include them in my strategic planning, and meet with them each at least once a year to see where we can plan strategy together. This has helped all of the stakeholders to see how safety fits into their own departments, and it is noticed by our bosses.

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