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A FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
for change and growth

Daniel W. Wheeler

"NUPROF has broken barriers to imagining and thinking about job changes, large or small, and about ways of accomplishing goals. It has sanctioned opening the doors of opportunity for change." This quote from a mid-career professor captures the essence of a program that encourages reflection, continuing growth, and possible redirection at a time many faculty are searching for ways to make changes. As you read about the design and development of a program called Nebraska University Program for Renewal of Faculty (NUPROF), recognize that this process can apply to other adult educators who confront continuing development and potential stagnation issues.

To understand the quote, one must understand the institutional environment that precipitated it. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources in the early 1980s, faculty were often in static career patterns without a systematic professional development process. Few faculty were taking sabbaticals or participating in other broadening professional opportunities.

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Purpose and Objectives of NUPROF

With the commitment of a group of risk-taking faculty and a dean with a passion and commitment to professional development, NUPROF was born in 1983 and has provided career planning and enhancement opportunities for over 135 faculty. The purpose of the program is to foster systematic, planned change benefitting the individual and the institution. The stated goals of the program are as follows:

- To understand the role of change and how to use it in one's professional and personal life.
- To provide the support structure for participants to make intentional changes.
- To provide the opportunity to develop self-insight and reflection for faculty to make intentional changes.
- To provide the tools to make the changes initiated by the faculty member.

The most important part of this process is that each faculty member determines the outcomes—there are not any predetermined outcomes.

Program Format

The program consists of six phases: (1) Choosing to enter the program, (2) Attending the faculty development institute (a three-day, off-campus retreat), (3) Exploring alternatives, (4) Writing a growth plan, (5) Implementing the growth plan, and (6) Evaluating the achievements of the plan.

Choosing to enter the program.
A faculty member considers a number of factors in deciding to enter the program. Besides the openness to participate in the change process, a professor has to commit to attendance at the Faculty Development Institute and begin a dialogue with his or her supervisor about future

plans. The institution pays $300 per person for the three-day experience.

Attending the Faculty Development Institute.
All participants are required to attend the Faculty Development Institute. Participants first take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to provide a basis from which to discuss change and some perspective on how each psychological type prefers to approach the change process. A number of individual and group activities are used to encourage participants to reflect on their career—past, present, and future. One of the most powerful is developing a career/life line in which participants examine their career/life activities over time and then assess next steps or possibilities in their career. Often an outside resource person with experience with both academic and non-academic institutions is used for this experience. The last morning is spent in small support groups (consisting of three to four faculty) to discuss and suggest plans of what the faculty member will do after leaving the institute.

A fascinating aspect of the Faculty Development Institute is participation in "the Van experience." From the beginning, we encouraged faculty to ride together in a van to and from the institute. The travel time was used as preparation to move into the institute and a debriefing on the return. In this situation, many faculty developed new and close bonds that have carried over to campus. Some faculty and administrators have somewhat facetiously said that the program might be just as powerful if faculty meet in a van in the parking lot and just pretend they were at an isolated retreat! Unfortunately, as we have had participants from all over the state, the community van experience is more difficult to facilitate.

Exploring Alternatives.
After attending the Faculty Development Institute and returning to the workplace, participants collect information on their experiences and explore new directions. Exploration activities have included reading, discussion with colleagues, personal assessments through taking tests or inventories (the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory and the California Psychological Inventory are most frequent), taking stock with friends or other close associates, visits to other institutions, workshops, informational interviewing of those in situations of interest, and discussions with faculty development consultants.

This phase frequently lasts three months, but depending upon the individual, it may be shorter or longer. The exploration phase is crucial for each individual to gain a clear picture of the possibilities. This reaching out process encourages a new perspective outside oneself and an understanding of how these experiences can clarify the options in a faculty member's career.

Writing a Growth Plan.
After exploring and integrating new experiences and knowledge into future considerations, participants develop a growth plan that outlines their present situation, goals and objectives, activities to meet the goals, resources needed, evaluation, and a budget (each faculty member can submit a plan for up to $1500), which will be funded by the appropriate dean(s). Plans address a range of levels of development, both professionally and personally, including developing new methods or subject matter, defining new roles, switching content areas, or even moving out of higher education. The most common pattern is to develop a new role or redesign the present situation. Participants often find by making adjustments that they can create something better at the university. Plans have ranged from a one page flowchart to a twenty-five page life history!

The department administrator is required to sign off on each growth plan as an indication of the commitment to the faculty member's growth and to follow up on the plans at a later date.

Implementing the Growth Plan.
After approval by a steering committee, composed of a wide range of eight faculty and two administrators, participants often implement a growth plan in a year to eighteen months. The growth planning process provides the temporary structure for participants to be supported in a time of change, and yet doesn't add to the permanent organizational structure. Depending upon the magnitude of the professional/personal changes, the development process may require one to five years.

Evaluation.
Each participant is expected to complete an evaluation of the growth plan. In addition to self-evaluation, faculty often use peer and administrative evaluation to help them assess their progress. Examples include formal annual evaluations and development of new job descriptions reflecting the new skills and abilities. The faculty trio formed at the Faculty Development Institute often plays an important role. Some trios have continued to meet and challenge each other to growth while others have been less successful. To be successful requires that a member of the group initiate the meetings and the group develop an openness to discuss any aspect of professional/personal development.

In a follow-up of NUPROF participants, Lunde, Wheeler, Hartung and Wheeler (1992) in an article in *Innovative Higher Education* found that the outcomes included both external and internal changes. For example, one professor developed a new role as manager of enrollment management to develop a process to attract new students. Another faculty member moved to a business managerial position since he had already experienced a wide range of university roles. A second level included internal changes—new attitudes toward oneself, family members, colleagues, and the institution. Many of these changes incorporated new priorities, expectations, and commitments into the faculty member's long-term and immediate behavior.

Beyond these changes, a number of faculty described NUPROF as a process for further change. This flavor is captured by a faculty quote, "I'm at a point now where I've got another decision to make. NUPROF is going to play a role in this again."

NUPROF is the kind of program that provides good "risk management" for faculty and the institution; it encourages an investment in faculty to prevent staleness and burnout. Often institutions wait too long to make these investments. Why not consider a systematic effort and structure to encourage continuous planning and adjustments?