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Current and Desired Faculty Development Practices Among POD Members

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In 1984-85, POD sponsored a survey of all four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. to determine which of them had "...faculty development, instructional development, or teaching improvement programs or activities" (Erickson, 1986, p. 182). Of the 1200 respondents, 750 reported having at least one person responsible for such activities. Subsequent surveys yielded a portrait of faculty development circa 1984-85 based on responses from 630 institutions. The results indicated that, contrary to reports at the time, faculty development was alive and well with a diverse array of practices in use.

Today, the changing context of higher education presents challenges that may alter the character of faculty development work. Teaching, a major concern of faculty development efforts in the past 20 years, continues to draw national attention, with growing numbers of conferences and books on teaching and learning appearing each year. The condition of the professoriate, too, remains a focal concern, exemplified in such substantial projects as the Carnegie Survey (1989), Clark's extensive review (1987), and recent work by Schuster and Wheeler (1990). With increased demands for faculty excellence in both teaching and scholarship, professional developers may find themselves in need of new ap-

proaches, a stronger research base, new theoretical frameworks, and stronger organizational linkages.

We were interested in learning what faculty development practices are currently favored among POD members and what trends are likely to emerge in the future. Specifically, we wanted to know 1) whether the current national focus on teaching has translated into support and program diversity at the local level, 2) whether new demands for faculty scholarship are reflected in a corresponding programmatic emphasis or desired emphasis at POD members' institutions, and 3) the degree to which POD members' programs are systematically evaluated.

Method and Sample

To explore these questions, we surveyed POD members. Using Erickson's survey as a general guide, we constructed a list of items related to teaching improvement and campus climate for faculty development. We sent this preliminary list to fifteen randomly selected POD members equally distributed by region. They were asked to identify the items they would most like to know about and to mention additional items of interest. The twenty-six most frequently nominated items were included in the survey under "Program Components and Characteristics." To assess possible trends in the use of various practices, we asked respondents to indicate which programs or activities are presently in use and which are planned or "sound desirable." We also surveyed practices for evaluating teaching, value accorded to teaching on campus, and views of faculty development.

The survey was distributed early in 1989 to 330 POD members (one per campus, randomly selected). We received 155 returns, for a response rate of 47%. No follow-up requests were sent. The distribution of responses corresponds roughly to the distribution of membership based on the 1988-1989 POD Membership Directory from which our mailing list was drawn. Table 1 compares the two distributions.

TABLE 1

Sample Distribution Compared to Estimated POD Distribution by Individual Type

	2 yr	4 yr	4 yr + MA	Doctoral
POD Membership	7.5%	7.5%	44.6%	40.4%
Sample (N=155)	12.0%	7.0%	37.0%	44.0%

Results

Program Structure and Evaluation

A surprising 11% of responding POD members are on campuses where there is no formal faculty development program. Only 27% of respondents report having a person responsible for faculty development full-time, and another 27% have a part-time person. The remaining 34% have a committee structure.

Instructional development is the exclusive focus of 46% of respondents' programs. Career counseling supplements instructional development in only 6% of the institutions represented in POD's membership (cf. 16% of private and 20% of public institutions in the Erickson study reporting individual help available on "career goals and other personal issues," p. 187). Another 24% report having programs that include research and scholarship development practices. An additional 10% of respondents reported that their programs are aimed *only* at developing the faculty's scholarly research and writing. Table 2 shows the distribution by institutional type of programs focused on research and scholarship.

TABLE 2
Distribution by Institutional Type of Respondents Reporting Programs That Include Research and Scholarship

	2 yr	4 yr	4 yr + MA	Doctoral
Instructional Development Plus Research/Scholarship (N=37)*	11%	0%	56%	33%
Research/Writing Only (N=16)*	0%	10%	30%	60%

Although most POD members would probably not dispute the value of evaluating teaching, only 13.5% responded that their own programs are systematically evaluated. Most often evaluated are workshops for new faculty, individual consultation on teaching, videotape-based consultation, grants for instructional development, and training of TAs.

Current and Desired Practices

The most frequently reported current practices were released time for instructional development (67%), individual consultation on teaching (57%), videotaping and consultation (56%), orientations on teaching skills for new faculty (53%), travel money for instructional development (53%), use of outside speakers for teaching workshops (52%), and faculty discussion groups on teaching (48%). Although training on topics directly related to teaching is commonly reported, "generic" workshops on teaching are evidently a thing of the past, garnering only 8% of responses and rated "desirable" by only 7% of our sample. Table 3 summarizes the distribution of current practices ranked by frequency and indicates the percentage of respondents rating each practice desired or planned.

An important component of faculty development is evaluation of teaching, whether for personnel reasons or for improvement. Student evaluations are by far the most widely used method for scrutinizing teaching on most POD members' campuses. Eighty-six percent of respondents report that this method is widely used on their campuses, and virtually all the remaining respondents desire or plan to use student evaluations. This figure corresponds closely to Seldin's recent report (1989) that 80% of the institutions in his national survey of 604 campuses "always use" student evaluations. Similarly, both our respondents and Seldin's report that just under 30% of campuses employ classroom visits for teaching evaluation. However, Seldin reports that self-evaluation and peer evaluation are "always used" on over 40% of the campuses he surveyed, while our respondents report less widespread use of these practices. All three of these evaluation practices are considered desirable by an additional 44-50% of POD respondents.

In addition to the range of practices traditionally used for formal evaluation, we asked about evaluation by the faculty developer. Developers report participation in faculty evaluation (whether for diagnostic purposes or personnel review) on 19% of campuses, with an additional 32% reporting interest. The Small Group Instructional Diagnosis format is currently used by 11% and desired by an additional 38% of respondents. Table 4 summarizes current and desired practices for scrutinizing teaching.

The most frequently selected practice POD members would like to become involved in is training department chairs to facilitate teaching. Currently only 16% of respondents employ this practice, but 60% rate chair training as "desirable." Additional practices checked by a high percentage of respondents include recruiting senior faculty as mentors of

teaching for new faculty (50%), training faculty to identify thoughts, feelings, and logic while teaching (48%), facilitating faculty exchanges (47%), conducting classroom research (47%), coaching faculty to teach

TABLE 3
Current and Desired or Planned Practices

Type of Activity	Now in use	Desired/Planned
Released time for instructional development	67%	24%
Individual consultation	57%	25%
Videotaping and consultation	56%	25%
Orientations on teaching skills for new faculty	53%	36%
Travel money for instructional development	53%	32%
Outside speakers for teaching workshops	52%	16%
Faculty discussion groups on teaching	52%	34%
Grants for instructional development	48%	34%
Newsletter	39%	37%
Faculty encouraged to engage in scholarship and publishing related to their teaching	39%	44%
Training faculty re: writing-intensive courses	39%	33%
Training on learning styles	38%	38%
Research on classroom teaching	36%	47%
Training TAs	33%	22%
Training faculty to teach critical thinking	30%	47%
Colleagues as catalysts for evaluating/facilitating teaching	28%	46%
Faculty exchanges	27%	47%
Senior faculty as mentors of teaching for new faculty	25%	50%
Training foreign TAs	24%	25%
Training faculty to identify thoughts, feelings, logic while teaching	22%	48%
Encouraging faculty to model good teachers	22%	32%
Involving faculty in TA training	19%	26%
Training department chairs to facilitate teaching	16%	60%
Teaching fairs (where faculty display innovations)	15%	37%
Teaching fellows visiting campus	13%	39%
Workshops on teaching	8%	7%

critical thinking (47%), and employing colleagues as catalysts for evaluating and facilitating teaching (46%).

Importance of Teaching

We probed the value accorded to teaching on respondents' campuses from several angles; results are summarized in Table 5. First, we asked what percentage of campuses offer annual teaching awards. Seventy-nine percent responded affirmatively; of these, 60% make such awards to between one and four faculty, and 21% make between five and nine awards. Next, we assessed the relative importance of teaching vs. research in tenure and promotion. Fifteen percent of respondents report that teaching counts more than research and publication on their campuses. Forty-five percent believe that teaching counts significantly towards tenure, and only 40% believe it counts significantly towards promotion. Thus, excellent teaching is most frequently honored with teaching awards, followed by merit pay and promotion. A few respondents mentioned additional incentives for excellent teaching such as grants, travel to conferences, sabbaticals, and released time.

Only 18% of respondents rate their campuses' valuing of teaching as "excellent," although an additional 50% rate their campuses above average in this respect. Campus climate for teaching is considered excellent by only 7% of respondents, with an additional 41% rating the climate "good"; of the remaining one-third of our sample, 20% report an "average" climate for teaching, and 12% believe the climate is "poor."

We also asked respondents to rate campus support for instructional development in five categories: budget, administrators, chairs, senior faculty, and junior faculty. Only 21 respondents (13.5%) feel they have

TABLE 4
Current and Desired Practices for Scrutinizing Teaching
(Campuses Reporting Widespread Use)

Type of scrutiny	Already in use	Desired/Planned
Student evaluations	86%	13%
Peer evaluations	27%	45%
Teachers' self-evaluations	33%	30%
Faculty developer evaluates teaching	19%	32%
Faculty developer uses Small-Group Instructional Diagnosis format	11%	38%
Chairs visit classes and evaluate them	29%	44%

support in the majority of these categories; most checked only one or two categories to indicate sufficient support. As Table 5 shows, fewer than one third of the respondents believe that instructional development is sufficiently supported by administrators or budgetary resources. Only about 20% report sufficient faculty support, and an even smaller number (10.3%) believe department chairs adequately support their efforts.

Views of Faculty Development

We asked respondents to indicate their agreement with three statements about faculty development, listed below. The numbers in parentheses indicate respondents who agreed with the given statement.

TABLE 5
Campus Value of Teaching

1. Percent of campuses with annual teaching awards:		79%
—distribution according to # of awards:	1-4	60%
	5-9	21%
	10-14	6%
	15+	8%
2. Respondents who rate campus value for teaching:		
	excellent	18%
	above average	50%
	average	20%
	poor	12%
3. Respondents who rate campus climate for teaching:		
	excellent	7%
	good	34%
	average	30%
	poor	29%
4. Respondents who checked: "Instructional development is sufficiently supported by my campus":		
	budget	44 28.4%
	administration	49 31.6%
	chairs	16 10.3%
	senior faculty	30 19.4%
	junior faculty	31 20.0%

“Faculty development, properly done, confines itself to instructional development.” (N = 8, 5.2%)

“Instructional development could profit by integrating faculty’s scholarly writing with classroom teaching.” (N = 71, 45.8%)

“Instructional development should be based, even locally, on empirical validation of its effectiveness.” (N = 50, 32.3%)

Discussion

Many of the most frequently cited *current* practices are individualistic in nature. Practices such as individual consultation, videotape-based consultation, travel to conferences or research sites, and released time for instructional development may involve collaboration, but their primary focus is on the individual faculty member.

In contrast, we think we detect a distinctly organizational and collaborative flavor to practices POD members desire or plan to use *in the future*. Desired practices include training chairs to facilitate teaching, mentoring new faculty, facilitating faculty exchanges, and involving colleagues as catalysts for change. This apparent preference for collaborative activity may be necessary to distribute the work of faculty development since only 27% of the institutions represented have a full-time developer. Equally likely, POD’s collaborative philosophy may be evident in this pattern of results.

Perhaps the strongest indicator of interest in new collaborative efforts is the high proportion of respondents (60%) who report that they would like to work with chairs to facilitate teaching improvement, compared with the low percentage who currently do so (16%). Working with department chairs seems an especially important and productive direction for future alliances. In a study of 433 sociology departments in the U.S., Bradshaw (1983) found that department chairs who reported holding regular meetings with faculty about their teaching also reported the greatest variety of innovative teaching practices used by faculty in their departments. The correlation leaves unanswered the question of whether chair interviews encourage innovation or simply uncover more of what is actually going on in classrooms. It may be that where teaching is valued, chairs naturally discuss it in more depth with faculty in their departments. In any case, the department chair is clearly a key person in fostering and maintaining a healthy climate for teaching.

The current low level of perceived chair support for faculty development suggests that POD members may have neglected this important aspect of organizational bridge-building. Alternatively, chairs may be

perceived as least supportive of faculty development because they are most directly in a position to be threatened by the existence of such programs on their campuses. Chairs may perceive (rightly or wrongly) that to the degree faculty members have alternative sources of guidance, their own influence over their department is lessened.

We found that a substantial percentage of programs attend to research and scholarly writing of faculty members (a total of 34% of our sample). Only a few respondents believe faculty development programs should be confined to instructional concerns (5%). A substantial proportion of respondents (45.8%) report interest in better integration of teaching and scholarship as well. One way to accomplish such integration is to encourage scholarship and publication related to teaching, reportedly a current practice in 39% of respondents' programs and desired by an additional 44%.

Interest in classroom research may reflect both the desire to integrate scholarship and teaching and the growing realization that teaching is a professional practice whose empirical investigation is an intellectually stimulating and educationally productive activity. Prior surveys did not ask POD members about the extent of their involvement and interest in facilitating scholarship, so we can only speculate that this index would have risen over earlier measures. We plan subsequent surveys to assess this and other trends in faculty development.

Although program evaluation is considered important by nearly a third of respondents, we found that only 13.5% report that they systematically evaluate one or more components of their programs. We hope that respondents' interest in research on teaching and the value of local, empirical validation of program effectiveness (expressed by just one-third of our respondents) will translate into increasingly systematic self-study. Imaginative, collaborative investigations of program effectiveness, such as that described by Ferren and Mussell (1987), provide a vehicle by which faculty development programs strengthen communication with faculty, respond to changing faculty needs and institutional dynamics, and demonstrate the values of reflective practice we encourage faculty to adopt. Studies of our effectiveness and the factors that contribute to it are a necessary foundation for the growth of our profession in the demanding future ahead of us in the 1990s and beyond.

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