1-1-1993

Applying For a Faculty Development Position: What Can Our Colleagues Tell Us?

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Faculty Development is an emerging field for institutions of higher education; therefore, the procedure for recruiting center directors and faculty developers has not been carefully examined or published. Constructing or reviewing resumes, curriculum vitae, or application portfolios is still an uncharted area in our profession. Information about these procedures is currently available only in the experiences of employers and potential employees for positions in faculty development. The objective of this article is to begin the process of accumulating useful criteria for employees and employers

to find the right match of needs and qualifications. As a unique field in the academic setting, faculty development demands more specific guidelines for the job application process.

As faculty developers, we all have probably presented workshops, planned faculty conferences, or attended a national or regional conference about portfolios for university teachers in the past year or two. At the very least, we have read the latest publications on teaching portfolios for university faculty (Seldin, 1985; Seldin; 1991; Miller, 1987). Amid the flurry of providing information to faculty and administrators about the portfolio as one variable in a faculty promotion and/or tenure dossier, we, as faculty developers, may be neglecting the fine tuning of our own portfolios for promotions or job applications.

Prior to the 1992 POD Conference, the professional members of our staff discussed the need for additional insight into developing guidelines for faculty developers who may either be involved in applying for a new position or needing to fill a position in their center. From those discussions emerged the two-part program entitled "Recruiting Faculty Developers: Anecdotal Accounts" and "Portfolios for Faculty Developers: Anecdotal Accounts." The objective of these programs was to begin isolating criteria determined to be important for employers and employees alike who were trying to fill faculty/instructional development positions. In this article we will look at the employee's perspective only.

Since most faculty development centers combine full-time staff, faculty members with joint appointments in academic units, and graduate students who work part-time, finding the right match between staffing needs and the applicant's expertise is not an easy task (Sell & Chism, 1991). To provide some insight into this matchmaking process, we asked a series of questions of three colleagues who had recently accepted faculty development jobs at diverse institutions, which expected a wide range of skills and responsibilities. Through their answers they have shared their firsthand, personal knowledge and experiences about the job application process in our field.

Applicants and Institutions

The backgrounds of three applicants and a short description of the institutions that hired them are presented to indicate the diversity of the demands placed on applicants for faculty development jobs across the nation.

Eric W. Kristensen was hired as the Director of Faculty and Instructional Development at Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Berklee is a 4-year, degree-granting liberal arts college with approximately 300 faculty members and 2,500 students. The faculty development center has two staff members and two work-study positions; the Director is the only full time position in this center. The Director reports directly to the Dean of Faculty and works with the Faculty Development Advisory Committee.

Carol A. Weiss was hired as the Director for the Teaching & Learning Center at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy & Science in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This institution is a specialized health professions college that offers undergraduate and graduate programs. The college has approximately 118 faculty members and 1,600 students. The center has two full-time positions for a director and a secretary. The Director reports directly to the Dean of Arts & Sciences.

Christine A. Stanley was hired as an Instructional Development Specialist at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. This research institution has 4,000 faculty members and 60,000 students. The Center for Instructional Resources employs approximately 40 people with 5 full-time positions in the Faculty and Teaching Assistant Development area of the organization. The program director for this area and the other three subdivision program directors report to the Director of the Center for Instructional Resources.

Questions and Responses

1. *What was your background and training that made you feel you would be 'right' for this position?*

Eric Kristensen listed his 11 years of training with the Teaching and Learning Center at Harvard University as probably being more than adequate preparation for the faculty development portions of the position he applied for. In addition, his undergraduate and master's

degrees in music gave him the specific training necessary to potentially develop a good rapport with the specialized faculty at Berklee College of Music.

Carol Weiss listed 17 years as a faculty member, five years as the chair of an academic department, and two years experience with NCRIPTAL researching and working with faculty at several universities as her background strengths. She felt that her doctoral degree in educational psychology would give her a distinct advantage as Director because it would help her provide the pharmacy and science faculty with insights into teaching and learning processes.

Christine Stanley cited as one of her major strengths, her experience as an instructional specialist in the Faculty Development Center at Texas A&M University during her doctoral program. While at Texas A&M, she not only had completed course work in college teaching, she also had the opportunity to teach biology courses at the university level.

The common themes in the applicant responses to our first question indicated the following background experiences were important: (a) teaching experience in higher education, (b) course work and/or training in teaching and learning in higher education, and (c) work experience in faculty or TA training centers. Both applicants for director positions had extensive teaching and faculty development experience and Carol Weiss also had administrative experience prior to accepting her director's position. All three applicants were well-prepared with educational backgrounds, work experience, and faculty development knowledge.

2. As an applicant, did you provide a portfolio to the advertising institution?

Eric and Carol indicated that they did not provide portfolios. Christine said that she provided a portfolio for Ohio State as well as for other institutions where she interviewed.

3. If you did use a portfolio, please list the items you included in the first application.

This question was not applicable to Eric, since he didn't submit a portfolio. Carol said she provided the institution with a cover letter that targeted the announcement items and her curriculum vitae. Christine indicated that she provided a cover letter stating her philosophy

and goals, samplings of her writing style, her curriculum vitae with references and list of publications, and, on one occasion, she provided a copy of her dissertation.

4. If you did not use a portfolio, what information did you send to the search committee?

Even though Eric and Carol both indicated they did not provide portfolios. Eric said he sent writing samples, thought pieces, and a revised résumé after his first application. The answers to questions three and four indicate that all three applicants sent very similar documents (i.e., cover letter addressing the job advertisement, curriculum vitae, and samples of writings). Yet, not all the applicants agreed that these items constituted a portfolio.

5. Was any additional information requested by the institutions?

Their answers to this question indicated that not one of the applicants was asked to mail additional materials. Eric said he felt the entire process was not very sophisticated. These responses also reinforce the idea that the first packet of information an applicant provides should be as complete as possible, since there is not likely to be another opportunity to add application materials.

6. Please rank the materials you sent in the order of importance in relationship to the interview and subsequent hiring.

Eric indicated that the cover letter, resume or curriculum vitae, and his writing samples were the priority documents. Eric stated "Cover letters are critical. Before I sent them off, it was invaluable for me to show each letter to someone whose opinion I could trust. Each letter was an opportunity for me to discuss my experience and education in direct relationship to the job in question."

Carol listed the cover letter first and the curriculum vitae as second in importance. Christine indicated that the cover letter, including a philosophy statement, curriculum vitae, writing samples, and her list of references were the four most important documents.

The three applicants were in close agreement about the order of importance of specific documents. Evidently they felt that these documents gave the search committees sufficient information about them and their qualifications for the positions.

7. *What types of presentations were you asked to perform? (Workshop, evaluation of faculty videotape, interview dean, etc.)*

Since much of what faculty developers do involves presentation skills, writing skills, and evaluative skills, we wanted to find out whether the applicants were asked to actively demonstrate their proficiencies.

Eric completed a series of interviews with Dean of Faculty, Associate Dean of Faculty, Associate Dean of Curriculum, four division chairs, and the Faculty Development Advisory Committee. He was not asked to present a workshop or demonstrate his critiquing skills.

Carol indicated that she conducted a one-hour seminar that addressed her ideas for the Teaching and Learning Center if she were hired as Director. In this seminar, she said that she covered: (a) her own ideas about the relationship between teaching, learning, and current research findings, (b) a suggested model for the structure of the Teaching & Learning Center, (c) a list of possible services that the Center might offer, and (d) a sample interactive exercise for thirty plus faculty and administrators. In addition, she was interviewed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of the School of Pharmacy, the search committee, and two different groups of faculty members.

Christine was asked to evaluate a videotaped instructor and to demonstrate how she would provide feedback to a faculty client. She did not indicate that she went through the rigorous interview process described by Eric and Carol.

The experiences of the applicants for the director positions clearly dictate the importance of the interview process at different levels in a particular institution. The ability to provide a personal philosophy for a faculty development center and to indicate directions for such a center appear to be crucial in the interview process for director candidates.

8. *Which of the activities were the most crucial in your mind as an applicant?*

Eric, Carol, and Christine all clearly stated that the interviews were the most crucial part of the total hiring process. Through interviews you discover whether you would *really* want to work with these

people, whether their personalities and philosophies mirror yours. The interviewers can also learn a great deal about you. They can investigate how you react to questions and stress, your thinking processes, and your ability to communicate orally.

9. *What activities and/or information did you request of the institution? (Faculty interviews, review of institution commitment with administrators, etc.)*

When someone is going into a new institution and work environment, what kinds of information should he/she be looking for? What information might be critical to one's ability to "fit in" at this institution?

Eric said that he asked for background material on the college before the interview process. He examined the following information before his campus visit: (a) the college catalogue with faculty biographies, (b) the faculty union contract, and (c) student profiles from the admissions and dean of students offices. After he arrived for his series of interviews, he was given ample time to meet with faculty members and department and division chairs over lunch. During the entire visit, he gathered information about the level of their commitment to teaching and their perceptions of the scope and function of the faculty development center.

After Carol was offered the position, she felt she needed additional information about the teaching environment at the institution. She asked for a second campus visit at her own expense, but the college paid for the trip. She asked that respected teachers be asked to interview with her, regardless of their personal support for the new core curriculum or the creation of a teaching and learning center. During the second visit, she met with eight faculty members, including four department chairs, who ranged from new hires to veterans from several departments. Carol also met with the College's president during her second trip. She asked questions such as: "What is it like to teach at this College? How does the College reward good teaching? How could the College better support your teaching? What do you think my biggest challenge will be if I become the director?"

Christine requested general information about the institution and the center. She reviewed the center's mission statement, the organizational structure, and the operating budget. She asked to review the

annual report data that included program accomplishments. She also reviewed the number of faculty and TAs served by the center and client evaluations of the center's services.

The responses from all three applicants demonstrate a thoroughness in their approaches to the job application process. Each applicant became well-informed about the hiring institution, the institutional and faculty commitment to a faculty development center, and the potential for continued commitment. Each applicant investigated the hiring institution proactively.

10. *What did you do in the application for your present job that you would do differently next time?*

Eric answered, "I think I wound up doing a good job, and answered all the questions I needed to answer." He said that he might have negotiated harder for a higher salary but had won the battle over parking. He stated that his next résumé would be far better the *first time*.

Carol stated she was very pleased with the materials and total process she went through during the job application. She stated, "There have been no surprises on either my part or the College's part, and it seems to be a very good fit for both."

Christine responded that she would ask to meet with deans and department chairs to gather her own information about the campus perception of the center. She wanted this insight to work with individual faculty and administrators to forge a strong working and collaborative relationship in support of teaching at the university level.

11. *Would you use a portfolio for the next job application?*

Because the three applicants responded differently to the term "portfolio" earlier, their responses to this question may help clarify their opinions about portfolios for future job searches.

All three applicants answered yes and Eric indicated that he would make the effort to do a much better job for each inquiry.

12. *How would you prepare your portfolio differently for the next application?*

Carol stated that she would definitely expand her portfolio to include documentation of the many services and activities she had organized over the years. She would include faculty and administrative evaluations of these center services and activities. She thought it

would be important for faculty to indicate how center activities had contributed to teaching and learning. Carol felt it was important to accumulate copies of center activity reports sent to deans and other upper-level administrators.

Christine indicated that a "...portfolio for faculty developers is similar in concept to that of faculty teaching portfolios, but with a different focus, and varying objectives. Identifying professional objectives, such as geographical location, type of institution, salary range, and job requirements, are extremely important." She listed a doctoral degree in education or a related field, experience in organizational and staff development, teaching experience, educational consulting, and evaluative skills as important areas for portfolio documentation.

13. *How important do you believe a portfolio is for a faculty development specialist or center director?*

Eric indicated that a portfolio could only help by giving a reviewer or committee a much clearer picture of the applicant's professional life to date. He suggested that the applicant adapt faculty development experience materials to mesh with the advertising institution's described needs. A job change from a large research institution to a small liberal arts college would require an interpolation of materials by the applicant to illustrate a fit between the two parties.

Christine said that the portfolio "conveys one's preparation, qualifications, accomplishments, and philosophy" of faculty development.

14. *How would you prepare to build a portfolio in faculty development?*

The three applicants made the following suggestions:
(a) Keep different types of information about your work
(b) Keep evaluations and assessments of your work
(c) Review Seldin's book entitled *The Teaching Portfolio*
(d) Write out a personal philosophy of faculty development
(e) Collect letters from faculty members, clients, administrators
(f) Build an itemized list of activities and accomplishments
(g) Build a list of faculty and administrative references.

15. What kinds of records would you keep to prepare for a potential job application in today's marketplace?

Eric, Carol, and Christine recommended that anyone in faculty development maintain very detailed records of professional activities. Eric would file records of programs, evaluations of work by clients and superiors, mentions of Center in institutional self-studies, and citations by accreditation teams.

Carol would collect both quantitative and qualitative sources of information: data concerning the number of faculty contacted by the center, as well as in-depth written evaluations distributed by the center.

Christine recommended a list of accomplishments in faculty development, including publications, evaluations, workshops, committee assignments, consultations inside and outside the university community, and appreciation letters.

The three applicants agreed that a multi-faceted portfolio file would provide the greatest choices if a job change became necessary.

16. What are the three best pieces of professional advice you would give to job applicants in faculty development?

Eric bluntly stated, "Never work for someone you don't respect." Second, he felt you must secure all the necessary information about the institution early in the interview process, so you would be in a strong negotiating posture. His third recommendation was to remember that almost everything about a job offer is negotiable, so, start the bargaining process above your personal bottom line.

Carol advised that a job applicant be concerned about the commitment of the institution to faculty development and that the position not be "window dressing". Carol also suggested that if you were taking the first faculty development position ever offered on the hiring campus, you would probably have more knowledge about center issues and activities than anyone on the search committee. She indicated that it should be of primary concern to you that the institution's perception and your perception of the center's role be very similar. The institution's objectives for the center should mesh well with your personal philosophy of faculty development, your professional training, and your interests and strengths.

Christine summarized her answers to other questions very well with the these three pieces of advice: (a) Research the hiring institution

thoroughly. Look closely at the institutional stance about the importance of teaching versus research, centralized versus decentralized faculty development, and the campus perception of the center today and in the past. (b) Clearly present your strengths and skills in relationship to the stated goals for the hiring center. (c) Attempt to negotiate for an adjunct or teaching faculty position to add credibility to your role in the faculty development center.

Conclusions Drawn from Applicants' Answers

The conclusions which can be drawn from the responses of our three colleagues present some thought-provoking and practical information for faculty development professionals. The experience of these three individuals suggests that applicants in the field of faculty development will be asked to address these issues: teaching experience in higher education, course work or training in teaching and learning in higher education, and work experience in training faculty and teaching assistants. Faculty development job applicants should expect to provide the following documents to indicate formal interest in the interview process: a cover letter addressing the job advertisement, a curriculum vitae, sample writing, and a list of professional references. Job applicants should definitely make their first materials their best effort at documenting a "match" between themselves, and the job position and the hiring institution. Most often there will not be an opportunity to insert additional or improved documentation into the institutional search process.

Our three respondents agreed that the premier step in the hiring process involved the series of interviews; this was true from the perspectives of both employers and employees. Each applicant asked for detailed information about the hiring institution before the scheduled campus visits. Therefore, it is essential that applicants arrive at interviews with substantive knowledge of their own qualifications for the job but also of the environment of the college or university campus. Despite some confusion about the term "portfolio" among the respondents, they all indicated they would choose "a portfolio approach" for possible future positions. Each of these applicants suggested that a professional in faculty development must develop an exhaustive file

of activities, workshops, consulting experiences, evaluations by faculty clients and administrators, all written documents, publications, teaching experience, and any other professional duties performed as a member of a faculty development center.

Hopefully these insights will help others as they prepare (or maintain) their portfolios for use in promotion requests or future job applications. If you have suggestions or ideas about the preparation of a faculty developer's portfolio, the authors would be interested in hearing from you.

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