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Section I: Working with Faculty Communities

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Section I

Working with Faculty Communities

This volume of *To Improve the Academy* begins with essays examining different groups of faculty within our institutions. We clustered these together because each spotlights a special group of faculty. One danger in institutions of higher learning is that the term "community" may be misused. It could be restricted to an academic department that must get along by reason of budgets, proximity of offices, or shared parking lots. Or the term could be a convenient designation for a group of people sharing a category—such as the "research faculty." Or it could be used to disguise problems within or between campus groups. Authors of each of the articles in this section identify a group of individuals who may or may be members of only a superficial community. In each case, the essays exemplify the role faculty development can play in assisting individuals to become truly members of the academic community.

The first essay by Julia Lamber, Tony Ardizzone, Terry Dworkin, Sam Guskin, Deborah Olsen, Phil Parnell, and David Thelen, helps us understand the perspective of mid-career faculty at a research university. A faculty committee—the members of which are the authors of this piece—made up of mid-career professors decided to take a look at their colleagues. The results of their study revealed that issues of isolation and reward trouble their colleagues. These responses suggest that faculty developers need to find ways to facilitate community

building among mid-career faculty who often form the backbone of our institutions.

Most colleges and universities across the United States could not function without part-time instructional staff. Yet these individuals are often neglected members of the academic community. In his essay, George Drops gives seven ways to improve the climate of teaching for part-time faculty, and thus give them status in the academic culture and community.

In their essay, Eric Kristensen and David Moulton call attention to another kind of new faculty member. Sometimes a faculty member can come on board from a profession that has had little to do with academia and its mode of credentialing. The authors tell the story of how Bill, an expert in his field but without an advanced degree, discovered that he could, indeed, teach.

James Eison and Marsh Vanderford call attention to how faculty developers can help departments better initiate graduate teaching assistants into the teaching community. They offer a set of five guidelines, each with a set of relevant questions, which the department faculty can use to evaluate a GTA training program. A real case demonstrates how the evaluation works.

The last article in this section, by Mike Kerwin and Judith Rhoads, is set in still another kind of faculty community. The authors describe a means of extending the services of a central faculty development office in a community college system. The workshop described in this essay is part of a program to train selected faculty as "teaching consultants." Community building is exemplified in the networking that happens during the workshop and, at the same time, in the back home consultantions with faculty colleagues.