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From Faculty *Developer* to Faculty Development *Director*: Shifting Perspectives and Strategies

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Very often faculty development staff, instructional development specialists, or faculty members on development committees are called upon to assume administrative duties as the director of a faculty development program or office. This article suggests strategies for addressing the perspectives and skills that successful faculty developers have that can be adapted, shifted, and enlarged to serve them well in a new role.

I loved being an instructional developer; it meant close contact with individuals, inspiring work which changed teachers and influenced students. I felt deeply satisfied and rewarded when I could see the fruits of my labors and was told I made a difference. It's not that it was easy work—it's time-consuming and repetitive and frustrating at times—but I got to talk about ideas and teaching strategies and educational theories and do research that applied to my work. I was not concerned what anyone else thought except the person I was working with; in fact, success came from experimenting and revealing ourselves in confidence. My life was a "warm, close, accepting circle of colleagues with whom I was mentor, guide, and friend." "Why would I even want to know what it cost in dollars and cents?"

When I became the administrative director of the faculty development office, everything changed! I felt pressured to take the job because

I didn't want the unit to go under, and I was told that I was selected because I was known and respected by the faculty. It was flattering to know I was "one of them." I never anticipated the full force of change on my role as a developer and on myself as a person. My close warm circle has expanded to include fiscal officers, facilities managers, strategic planners, technology technicians, budget and personnel officers. Do I really need to know what they do? Isn't it their job to handle this stuff? I report to a new vice-president who likened the faculty development office to "the trauma unit where we would quick-stitch the new faculty struggling with teaching problems and low student ratings and transfuse the tired senior faculty." How can I work with someone who sees my world so differently, but who controls my budget?

My door is now mostly closed to people and I'm glued to paperwork. Suddenly I questioned my own values and doubted my skills. And that was the first week. . .

The writer of this vignette is undergoing an extreme transitional experience, familiar to some degree to most faculty developers who become faculty development directors. Such a professional transition challenges even the most stable ego, in the same way a new faculty member is challenged by the demands of teaching, research, and publishing or a senior scholar by the responsibilities of serving as a department chair. Like teaching and chairing, administering is rarely discussed openly. The academic tradition that values the skills of the teacher, scholar, or developer rarely trains one to practice the craft of these roles. Tradition also separates faculty from administrators with the myth that each has opposing values, operating procedures, and skills.

Erickson (1986) determined that 40-63% of colleges and universities have an organized unit or center devoted to faculty development and Centra (1976) noted that the majority of units have a "director". Since formal training in faculty development "directing" is rare, most skills are learned on the job. Given the numbers of organized programs with small staffs, the major job training is undertaken by individuals struggling in isolation. Some director assignments may last for only a short period of time. What we lack is a definitive study of what directors do, and how they prepare for their responsibilities for institutional processes, such as planning and personnel and budget management.

Let me pause and impose some perspective: while I have not moved from being a faculty developer to being a director, I have been a career administrator for over a decade. Being on “the other side” has given me a view of transitions when faculty or educational specialists take on administrative work. Most insights I have to share come from experienced faculty directors with whom I’ve worked and new directors with whom I have trained in workshops and consultation on transition strategies.

The thesis of this paper is that some new skills are required but successful shifts are more a matter of perspective and outlook. The majority of skills required of faculty developers are compatible with those of administrators and are more in concert than in conflict. Even budget management—which poses the most threat to new directors—really requires knowing how to work with people and process more than learning accounting skills. What is required is an enlargement of vision and scope, a willingness to learn how institutional systems work, and the ability to move between dual roles to manage different situations. Let’s see how that can be done.

The Seven Competencies Required by Faculty Developers

Sell and Chism (1991) provide a succinct, yet comprehensive, analysis of the general competencies required for successful faculty developers. The degree to which these competencies are required and used by individual faculty developers varies according to the mission and goals of particular programs. General competencies should include:

1. Engaging in Needs Assessment Activities

Surveying, understanding, and validating the needs of individual clients, and identifying the patterns of need among faculty from different disciplines and at different career stages in relation to their roles as teachers, researchers, and scholars requires individuals to work in the context of a particular institution, in congruence with institutional needs and goals.

2. Designing and Developing Strategies that Promote Individual, Pedagogical, Curricular, and Organizational Growth

Focusing on growth strategies requires some knowledge of adult development and the sense of the interrelationships among personal, professional, and institutional change. Program design and development means taking direct actions with persons through a series of defined and structured activities.

3. Organizing and Implementing Specific Programs, Projects, and Studies

Identified needs must be translated into specific activities designed to accomplish desired outcomes.

4. Planning and Delivering Oral Presentations

Teaching and communicating through the dissemination of information means leading audiences and readers to action by effective use of language, style, and appropriate material.

5. Producing Print and Non-Print Communications

Effective and appropriate materials must be designed and developed to support development activities.

6. Conducting Research About Teaching and Learning

The assumptions, strategies, and impacts of instructional development and validating practices must be investigated.

7. Establishing and Maintaining Consulting Relationships

Networking and collaborating with individuals and groups must occur in support of teaching and learning and in the helping dimensions of faculty development.

If we accept that competent faculty developers have the attitudes, values, and skills suggested by Sell and Chism (1991), what happens

when they become faculty development directors? If they are to be successful they adapt, enlarge, and apply these basic competencies to their new roles.

Seven Competencies Required by Faculty Development *Directors*

1. Seeing Your Part in the Big Picture

Developers focus on the needs of individual clients and deliver hands-on specific services. A director needs to stand back and see with a wider lens how the program fits into the broader information, influence, and budget processes of the institution. New directors may tend to focus on the functions of the development unit and the clients and leave the long and wide view to other administrators. Seeing only the narrow view poses a danger to units who isolate themselves from the bigger issues, processes, and trends on campus.

Determine how you can take the initiative in positioning your development center or office directly in the larger institutional context; don't wait for your supervisor to do it. Do you know why and how (or why not) faculty development activities are valued and supported in your unique academic climate? How are the results of needs assessments (done by those competent faculty developers) integrated into campus strategic planning and priority documents? How does this prioritization affect your budget?

A common disappointment of support units is that their supervisors may not set clear goals and expectations for them. Consider several possibilities: Perhaps they really don't know what you do. Are you asking the History professor, now the vice president, what she expects you to do about mentoring new faculty or improving the technology skills of mid-career faculty? Should you instead be telling her how your teaching skills workshops or course assessment service are supporting undergraduate education?

It is also possible that what you do may not be a high priority for that administrator. While this may be frustrating to accept, you may not be seen as central to the educational mission. As director, how can

you get faculty development positioned more prominently during institutional strategic planning prioritization?

Some key administrators may expect you to advise them on what to do. This may be an unspoken expectation. New directors are often too deferential to superiors or skeptical about their abilities or commitment. Do you have a clear development plan for your own unit for the next five years even if the institution does not? Never hesitate to inform a supervisor of what *both* of you need to do in concert to accomplish your mutual goals. How can you also use your own unit master plan to educate and influence your advocates and clients about the goals and needs of your center?

2. Understanding Institutional Politics or How to Read War and Peace and Remember All the Characters and Why They Do What They Do

Few academics admit enjoying institutional politics, although we seldom resist analyzing and discussing them. The political aspects of governing institutions within a collegial, but competitive, mode are framed in the outward manifestations of traditions, practices, and cultural norms. The current interest in the study of organizational culture reinforces the need to use a framework for creating order out of the complex and often baffling aspects of organizational life (Berquist, 1992). An effective director needs to understand how the system works to intervene for the benefit of the program he or she administers. Seeing the organizational link to faculty and instructional development provides a perspective to deal with the key players who can hinder or enhance your success. The faculty development director must be a part of that interrelated circle.

Colleges and universities, especially large campuses, are by their very nature “anarchical institutions” (Birnbaum, 1988). Few members of the academic community speak the same language or share the same perceptions about academe. An institution seldom has a single mission or a clear process for defining its goals, but often has many voices articulating competing goals and contradictory values. Middle managers charged with functional and support activities often become frustrated if they strive to control these ambiguities in a system in

which success or failure is strongly influenced by the decisions of other administrators. A shift in perspective to accepting and using ambiguity might actually leave one with an affection for the system and its workings.

3. Getting and Spending

In most institutions, financial processes are the most esoteric and least understood. While this is usually interpreted as a strategy inflicted by the financial side, directors too often are content to let fiscal officers handle all fiscal matters. For one still focused on the satisfactions of working with people rather than money, the temptation may be to devalue or ignore fiscal skills. A competent director does not have to do the bookkeeping, but needs to know how monies flow through the institution and the unspoken rules for getting and spending it. Many fiscal processes have options that allow for the most useful and creative use of funds. Especially in tight times, a director who knows how to get and spend money is the most valuable asset a faculty development unit can have.

Rather than accepting what funds are allocated, can you learn the actual budget process from planning through final allocations and the key people who influence it? Fiscal officers are more apt to discuss the budget than most people think. If they believe you are interested and have some knowledge of what they do, it is easier to say yes than no to your requests for information or help. What is the official budget development process? For most institutions this begins one to two years before the actual budget is allocated. Who prepares it? Who reviews it (deans, chairs, faculty committees)? Who influences it? Who allocates funds? What is YOUR part in this process? Who processes your fiscal requests? Where are the discretionary funds (*all* institutions have them)? Who holds and allocates them?

If the official budget process is inflexible, what small grant programs, temporary funds, or project-related money can be identified to support your programs? One-time, small grants can provide the edge to be innovative or to satisfy an important need. Often at the end of the fiscal year, unused monies are reallocated quickly. Have a request list tucked into your bottom drawer for use if the occasion

arises. In other words, don't wait for your money to come to you. Learn how the fiscal system works and take a proactive role in participating in the process.

4. Selecting and Motivating Staff

Part of the "warm close circle" described by our new faculty director is the pleasure and stimulation of working with people in peer relationships. Even though faculty members come to development programs in the role of client or learner, we see them as peers. Members of a faculty development staff usually work as peers in a team effort to develop and deliver services. Few faculty development centers are hierarchical in structure or function.

When one of the peers takes on a supervisory or administrative role, it may alter the balance of peer relationships. The director who is one of the shared "keepers of the vision" must also take final responsibility for selecting, training, evaluating, and rewarding subordinates. Personnel skills often appear more complex than they are because the tendency of a developer is to identify with the person rather than the process. The rules for advertising a position, writing a job description, adhering to EEO/AAO regulations, processing time and pay forms, and completing periodic performance evaluations are not always clear. They need to be learned. Get to know your personnel officer by taking time to ask about the rules; complete the forms effectively and on time. Personnel officers don't make the rules, but they appreciate those who help apply them with knowledge and good humor. This does not have to be a one-sided exchange; many a personnel officer who developed a good working relationship with a director became more willing to see the human implications of personnel decisions.

The best signal to send about performance appraisal is that *all* members of the staff, including the director, should seek feedback on performance and undergo some formal assessment which becomes part of the record. Reviews can be the opportunity to highlight a job well done and identify opportunities for further training and support. A director who ignores assessment through fear or discomfort sends the message that it's only a negative activity. Even if the administra-

tion does not require an annual performance review, develop a review process with your staff that focuses on improvement and recognition of accomplishment.

5. Evaluating Program Centrality, Quality, and Effectiveness

Just as competent developers know it is important to conduct research to validate the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the director needs to conduct research and develop a data base to justify, defend, improve, and expand programs. Even if the university does not demand program assessment, the unit needs information to function effectively. The strength of a budget request often hinges on having needs and program assessments and data on program use, impact, and effectiveness. Faculty and administrative advocates for the program will be influenced by data showing the program's effect on the improvement of teaching and learning (or whatever meets campus priorities).

New directors may feel threatened by requests for data and interpret them as criticism. However, senior administrators love to have information on program effectiveness for units under their responsibility. Be willing to give them information that makes them look good. Wouldn't it benefit your programs to have them mentioned in the administrator's reports or speeches? In fact, develop a quick-use fact sheet and give it to your superiors as part of your support for them.

6. Developing and Maintaining Visibility and Credibility

"Public relations" may be distasteful to a director if it is interpreted as hollow self-interest. Think of it as a form of ensuring support over time. Particularly in times of accelerated change and shifting priorities, having everyone know what you do is most important. The value of autonomy is deeply embedded in the academic culture. In frustrating moments most of us have thought, "if only they would leave me alone to do my job." Autonomy can give a director a sense of control over day to day functions, but the long-term result of isolation from the mainstream of campus processes and colleagues carries a heavy price.

The cost may be low visibility and dubious credibility, which can translate into low priority and limited funding.

Positive, risk-taking leadership means that no director can stand behind the scenes. A competent director is on the front line, integrated into other support ventures, always in danger of attention, assessment, and critical opinion. Ironically, it may be necessary to expose your needs and weaknesses as well as strengths. Competence alone has little to do with institutional attention. Children from big families learn this quickly; those who get in trouble often get more attention than those who quietly follow the rules. Community, not autonomy, produces the high visibility that results in credibility and recognition.

7. Using Networking and Collaboration

Inexperienced administrators seek status and importance by association with a high level administrator. The assumption is that these are the real sources of power and influence. The organizational chart itself has become a powerful myth. The tight boxes are supposed to represent offices with clear lines of authority and power, but in the modern "multiuniversity" and even in small colleges, power is increasingly "decentralized and diffused" (Bensimon, 1991). "Fluid management" and "collaborative leadership" have become the new power reality. The real organizational chart calls for a redefinition of power and positioning from the symbolic individual to the "team as leader" (Reich, 1987). For directors of faculty development offices, the collaborative, integrative approach best positions one for full empowerment.

The first step would be to recast a "working organization chart" that changes hierarchies into a series of interactive collaborations. Create a circular chart that identifies shared influence and support by a network of peers and advocates rather than a single patron in a linear system (Wunsch, 1992). Adjust this chart to fit your institutional structure [see Figure 1].

Much of the power in budget negotiations, for example, has to do with trade-offs and agreements among senior administrators. The vice presidents for academic affairs, student affairs, and graduate education, for example, may all have an interest in supporting the develop-

POSITIONING YOUR OFFICE: The **REAL** Organization Chart

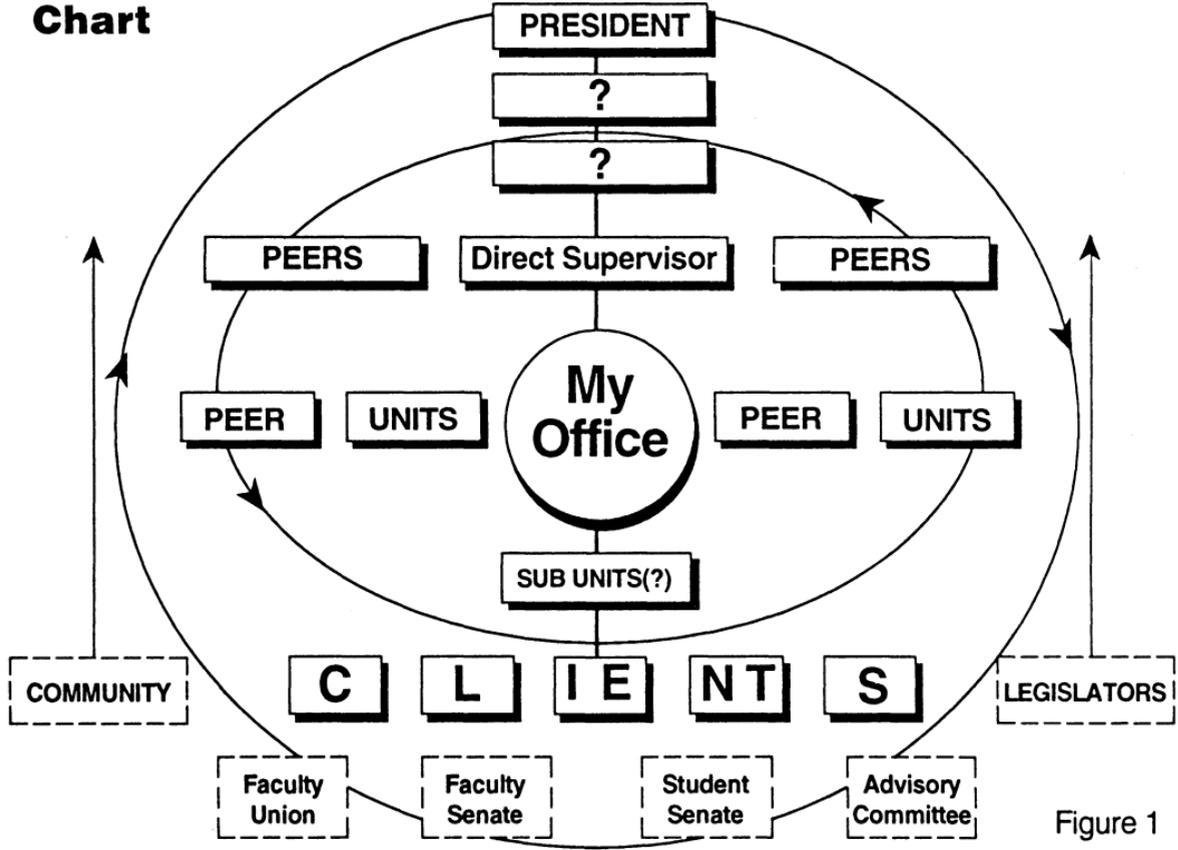


Figure 1

ment of teaching assistants. Their combined support for your program may be more powerful than having only one compete for your funding. Your part in the process is to see that they are all informed about your program, its needs, and their part in its support.

Conclusion

Moving from faculty *developer* to faculty development *director* can be a traumatic transition, but one that must be seen through to a comfortable end. Even if directors don't like to think that they "manage," they can agree that they "lead" for the good of their units. First, we must understand how complex academic institutions operate, the key planning and budgeting processes, how priorities are derived, and who are the key players. We must understand the academic culture (as defined by our particular piece of academe) and be willing to analyze and use campus politics to informed and creative ends. Second, effective directors must take risks to gain visibility and earn credibility through a sustained effort to educate the institution about their programs. Finally, and most important, we must be good at what we do, in the service of the institution's highest values and mission and make sure our accomplishments are known by our clients, advocates, collaborators, supervisors, and competitors.

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