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## Section I: Reconceptualizing the Practice of Faculty Development

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# Section I

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## Reconceptualizing the Practice of Faculty Development

In his keynote speech at the 1994 POD Conference, William Plater declared that faculty development professionals “by bearing in mind the incredible organizational, social, economic, and technological upheaval that is occurring right now . . . have unprecedented opportunity to make a difference in the lives of individual faculty and the viability of whole institutions.”\* The authors of the articles in this section provide different perspectives on the practice of faculty development, past, present, and future, and suggest ways that we might adapt our approaches to the changing environment of higher education.

Ronald Smith, drawing on his 21 years of experience in higher education and the work of thinkers such as Donald Schon, Peter Senge, and Parker Palmer, examines faculty development practices in terms of the way we have defined the “problem” we are trying to solve. In his survey of some of the historical definitions of the problem and the programs that were created to solve them, he points out that most of these strategies have been aimed at the problem of changing the behavior of faculty members (through support or coercion). However, Smith suggests that we have begun to move toward a new, more holistic, conceptualization of the problem that takes into account the

social, psychological, and institutional environment of higher education.

Surveying the research on teaching improvement, Ben Ward poses the question: How do we improve teaching and learning *across the academy*? The research tends to focus on particular areas—the faculty, the reward system, teaching evaluation—but we need to see the complete picture in order to understand the dynamics that operate within and across the academy. He divides the research results into three categories (driving forces, neutral forces, and restraining forces) and examines what research tells us about each of them, concluding that only a comprehensive approach that combines organizational and faculty development is likely to create the desired changes.

Donna Qualters also sees faculty development at a crossroads, suggesting that we really operate in a “quantum world” in which *relationships*, not *things*, define reality. From this premise, she examines the ways we can exploit the strength of relationships through various means, including reflective practice, transformative learning, and dialogue. Our task is to help teachers reach a transformative stage of understanding in which they become aware of the assumptions and values that underlie teaching and the environment in which it operates.

A different conception of faculty development, drawn from the literature on management theory, is represented in the article by Margaret Morgan, Patricia Phelps, and Joan Pritchard. They suggest that faculty developers can achieve credibility through the practice of six “disciplines” related to leadership. Each of these disciplines represents an important facet of faculty development, and together provide a checklist of practices that are vital to our success.

Although William Plater did not address the issue, another important change in American society is the tendency for workers to remain employed well past the traditional retirement age. The abolition of a mandatory retirement age for tenured faculty in 1994 will have important consequences for the practice of faculty development, since much of the focus of our work seems to be on junior faculty and graduate teaching assistants. Arthur Crawley’s article addresses the professional development needs of the senior faculty and how well these needs are currently being met at research universities. Crawley’s survey of faculty development programs and policies at research

universities provides a fairly positive picture of the level of support for traditional approaches to faculty development, especially with regard to helping faculty members integrate their research and teaching roles. He suggests various ways faculty developers might work with senior faculty to promote renewal and help them maintain their productivity through the end of their careers in higher education.

We have always known that professors at research universities are not all alike, that they respond differently to the same faculty development programs and services. In her article, Lynnda Emery addresses the question of how they appear to differ by discipline. In surveying the faculty at a research university, she found interesting differences in their perceptions of incentives for teaching improvement and their beliefs about the rewards for various professional activities.

\*Plater, W. (1994, October). *Future work: Faculty time in the 21st Century*. Keynote speech presented at the annual meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network, Portland, OR.