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Mary Lynn Crow
mlcrow@uta.edu

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Executive Director's Message

MARY LYNN CROW

By the time you read this, I will have completed my year as Executive Director, but I was asked to author the first column in an attempt to provide continuity and a kind of overview.

In another part of this first issue of the *POD Quarterly* there appears a chronological history of the organization, so I feel that it might be useful and interesting to provide a kind of emotional history of the organization as well. To portray this history, I have selected an analogy from the field of human growth and development because this is one of the courses I teach and the analogy material is comfortable to me. Also, since I have been involved with faculty development since its infancy and have taken great interest in how the movement has evolved to where it is today, it occurs to me that similar transitional stages have occurred and are occurring for POD.

In my opinion, the POD Network has experienced a brief care-free childhood and now we are passing through a soul-searching adolescence on our way to a mature adulthood with a clear sense of identity. Like the higher education movement it represents, POD is going through a period of having to question and re-evaluate, of collecting new data, and of rethinking our mission and priorities. This is predictable and even necessary. Organizationally, we have all of the enthusiasm and idealism of adolescence and all of the developmental tasks to overcome. We shouldn't, however, become discouraged or disillusioned because adulthood is obtainable and we will be ready for it in due time.

Continuing with the growth analogy, POD's childhood was a happy time. The early members needed one another's support in order to survive in a new venture. It was lonely being the only per-
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son in one part of the country to do this new job called faculty or instructional or professional development. The people-bonding that took place among POD's founders was strong, and the network filled an important interpersonal need. We didn't need a lot of organizational appendages like large-scale communication channels or a strong research base. A small group of enthusiastic volunteers just banded together and became a group. A high level of trust was established and the goal was clear: support one another.

As the national movement began to escalate, however, suddenly many more people were on the horizon—people committed to the same cause but unacquainted with one another or with the POD Network. As these new people learned about this fledgling group, they too wanted to participate. So for the first time, the organization asked for volunteers to run in a national election to choose the incoming group of Core Committee members. It was a confusing period because the solidarity of the initial group was being invaded by people who had not been through the initial bonding process. In the ranks were some visionaries who believed we were experiencing the same type of phenomenon as the students' rights movement of the '60's, and they wanted to be sure that this movement became a stable addition to the higher education community and not just a temporary fad. And some of them were missionaries who wanted to spread the good word to the unconverted hinterlands. Some of the old timers hated to lose the closeness of the small support network, and some of the newcomers wanted to reach out and, if not save the academic world, then at least to help it a bit.

The adolescent period began. New leaders attempted to be integrated with the old leaders, new agendas with old agendas, new members with the tightly-knit established group of old members. Some people became discouraged with the dissonance; others were attracted by the challenge. And everyone rolled up their sleeves and began to pose questions and search for answers.

In March of 1978 we drafted and agreed to a common mission statement, and since then we have taken a giant step forward by conducting a lengthy delphi study regarding POD's organizational goals and priorities. The results of the delphi study will appear in the next issue, and the mission statement we adopted is as follows:

The Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education is an association of individuals committed to the enhancement of higher education through professional development, instructional improvement, and institutional change. The POD Network is founded on the conviction that effective education requires continuing attention to the support, evaluation and recognition of individuals as they grow and change. It focuses attention on teaching and learning as a major purpose of higher education. It is a network of concerned people who work cooperatively to promote professional and organizational development which encourages our institutions to be more humane and effective.

Tremendous integration has taken place this past year—of ideas, of philosophies, of people. The national convention at Shangri-La appeared to provide strong testimony that we can organize to have the efficiency of a traditional professional association while maintaining the adaptability of a network that meets emerging member needs (the item ranked 9th in our delphi study). Today our goal is to provide regular opportunities for interpersonal interaction and personal and professional growth for members, while at the same time becoming an essential professional organization for all of the instructional, professional, and organizational development folks in higher education. We will, in other words, attempt to nurture our own members while at the same time propagating our philosophy of professional development to the academic community.

What does a mature adult state for POD connote? To me it means that to attain this state, we must still address some ongoing problems and concerns and provide some creative answers. From where I sit, these are just a few of the issues:

1. The major issue may be the survival of the professional development movement itself. As we approach the decade of the 1980's, there will be continuing pressure in higher education to have fewer support services and to reduce the level of funding for those that will survive. Because of the predicted diminishing vitality of both faculty and administrators, they will have an increased need for our services at just the time when we will have fewer resources to support them. Doing more for less money, justifying our continued existence, and trying to provide a point of stability in academia will occupy most of our professional time.

2. POD's survival will need more than just dedicated participants; people will have to find the time and energy to be leaders. With heavier demands on our professional time, many people will be willing to wait for someone else to do the work. If we all do this, we will not have the necessary leadership to survive. We must have enough strong people who will be willing to volunteer their valuable time and talents to allow the organization to continue to exist.

3. The issue of membership will continue to loom large on the horizon. Who are our constituencies? How do we better seek them out and serve them? We already know that there is a need for greater minority involvement, for a more diversified geographical representation, and for greater participation by campus administrators.

4. We need to speak to the issue of terminology. What do we call what we do, what we believe in? Is it professional development, personal development, staff development, administrator development? Do we not really have more in common than our various titles and center names denote? I believe we ought to provide the answers, not wait for others to do it for us.

5. The issue of professional ethics and of our professional stance must eventually be addressed in a professional organization. What constitutes conflict of interests; who has a right to the information we get from faculty members we are helping; is there a standard of education or training or personal skill level necessary for us to attain before we do what we do; are we administrators or faculty members or both; and to whom or what is our primary loyalty? Again, I believe we ought to provide the answers—not wait for others to do it for us.

As an organization, clearly we are no longer where we were several years ago, and no doubt we won't be where we are today several years from now. This period of growth and transition has, in my estimation, sometimes been painful, sometimes humorous, and often deeply rewarding. I hope you concur with me, however, that POD will continue to evolve, and that to the extent we continue to meet needs and to contribute to higher education, we will survive. It is an exciting venture, and I hope you and I will continue to grow with it. This is not a time to lose interest or to go our own way. We need all of us. Higher education needs all of us.