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# Professional development grant evaluative report

Dana W. R. Boden

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln*, [dboden1@unl.edu](mailto:dboden1@unl.edu)

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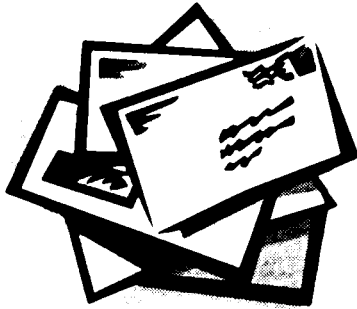


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## **Professional Development Grant Evaluative Report**

— Dana W. R. Boden  
Ph.D. Candidate  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

### Introduction

I am both a doctoral candidate in the interdepartmental area of Administration, Curriculum and Instruction in Teachers' College, and an Associate Professor in Branch Services in the University Libraries at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. The area of emphasis of my doctoral program is Postsecondary Administration. The flexibility of the program has allowed me to relate course activities and requirements to the academic library setting. I was awarded a regular grant by the MPLA Professional Development Grant Committee to help cover the photocopying and mailing costs of the survey research for my doctoral dissertation. The title presently is Chair and Institutional Correlates of Library Faculty Perceptions of Chair Faculty Development Roles and Leadership Practices.

Originally library faculty/librarian's expectations, as well as perceptions, of the role of the department chair were to be surveyed. That was changed, as approval for the grant was being considered. The survey of expectations was dropped in favor of adding a copyrighted instrument (Kouzes & Posner, 1997) on the observers' perceptions of the leadership role of the chair/head. The original portion regarding perceptions of the chair's faculty development role, developed by the researcher, was retained, as was the demographic portion of the survey. The demographic portion was slightly expanded after my dissertation proposal defense.

### Survey

The survey was sent to 361 library faculty members/librarians in the Big Twelve Plus Library Consortium, Carnegie Research I or II member institutions as of September 1, 1998.

The University Libraries allowed me to utilize Bulk Mail for the initial mailing and reimburse the cost. This was very cost effective, but was not time effective. The initial survey mailing was sent on November 12, 1998. Many institutions in Texas and Arkansas did not receive the mailing until three weeks, or longer, after it was sent. This resulted in their receiving it after the date indicated for return! In addition, with the Thanksgiving weekend, and ensuing Holiday mailing season, the timing of the mailings was not good, but unavoidable.

The good news was my colleagues came through anyway. Many went ahead and sent the survey in after the deadline date. Others contacted me, either by e-mail or phone, for direction. I reversed the planned order of the second and third mailings. The second mailing was a followup postcard asking those who had wondered if they should send it in to go ahead and do so. While the followup mailing of the complete packet again was held off until December 18, 1998, to allow more surveys to arrive. This helped reduce costs.



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Of course the postal service threw another wrench in the works when it was announced the one ounce postage rate would increase to thirty-three cents on January 10, 1999. With the holiday mailing delays, campus holiday close-downs, and semester breaks, I gave a response deadline for this final round of January 25, 1999. Thus the higher postage rate had to be on the envelopes for the return of the surveys.

Thirteen respondents withdrew from the research, leaving 348 actual potential participants. A total of 228 useable responses (65.52%) were returned.

### Benefits

This is a unique area of research, since library faculty/librarians have not previously been researched in this area. It should serve to enlighten library department chairs, as well as faculty, on how chairs are perceived.

Seventeen institutions supplied the requested lists of library faculty/librarians. Over half of the institutions included are located in six states in the MPLA region. This research project was one of those presented at the Research Forum at the MPLA/MLA Joint Conference in Big Sky, Montana, June 13 - 16, 1999. Included were the results of the demographic portion of the survey and the overall ratings, by all respondents, of the development activities and leadership practices.

Analysis of the results, to determine if certain demographic characteristics have an impact on the ratings of the activities and practices, is still being conducted. I look forward to the results of this analysis and what it may reveal. It will, hopefully, enable me to finish my Ph.D. in 1999; a personal and professional goal of mine for ten years.

### Advice to Colleagues

This has definitely been a learning experience! Anyone considering pursuing the doctoral degree should give it great consideration first. The estimated four year project can easily become a longer one with full-time work, professional responsibilities, family, and just plain life. (Not to mention the doctoral committee!) One should be sure they have the backing of their workplace, colleagues, and friends. They may be impacted even beyond your chatting about your current class project, preparation for comps, and then the dissertation research.

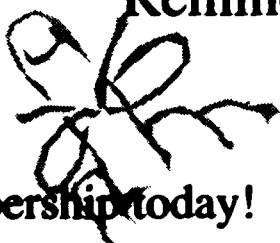
Most important though is family support. The hours are long and the games, events, and bedtime stories missed become many. The whole family should receive a degree for the love, encouragement, hugs, listening ear, and cup of coffee at 6 a.m. after an all nighter.

### Appreciation

I would like to express my appreciation to MPLA for the Professional Development Grants Program. Special thanks goes to the committee for their award, patience, and understanding. Working with changing requirements, required my requesting an extension of the original grant from 1997 through the 1998 calendar year. Their faith in me, support and words of encouragement came when they were very needed. Thank you!

Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (1997). Leadership practices inventory [LPI] Observer. Monte

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