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Faculty Development Programs: A Perspective

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This article describes a study which reviewed information on faculty development programs gathered from 94 institutions of higher learning. The authors collected information to identify common practices of faculty development programs. Elements reportedly used most frequently by institutions include workshops, individual consultations, and resource centers. The authors conclude by mentioning some innovative approaches to faculty development, as well as some new initiatives undertaken at their own institution as a result of their findings.

In recent years, greater accountability in higher education has become essential. Budget cuts, less desirable student/instructor ratios, and changing student populations are a few of the reasons that have made gaining insight into existing programs important.

Faculty development programs are not exempt from feeling the crunch of shrinking resources. At the same time that these faculty development programs are being asked to cut expenditures, they also are being asked to assume more responsibility for improving the institutional climate (Fiedler & Sorcinelli, 1992). This need for parsimony at our own campus initiated a review of other faculty development programs.

Universities strive to promote what Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has found among its faculty: a sense of collegiality and the opportunity for professional growth. For many institutions the question is how to meet these goals while facing the problem of declining enrollments and reduced funding. In 1988, IUPUI joined other institutions of higher learning in affirming a commitment to support and retain its faculty by creating the Office of Faculty Development.

Our office began its pursuit of excellence by initiating new programs and consulting with faculty development offices at other institutions. A review of the literature on the practices of other faculty development offices revealed a paucity of articles. We therefore focused our attention on the review of information available from other institutions. This article describes the findings of that review.

Information Sources

We began our inquiry into the function of other faculty development programs through several sources. First, we obtained knowledge of faculty development programs from reading the POD Network's *Program Descriptions* booklet (Erickson, 1992). Second, we spoke with individuals from other institutions at meetings, and listened to others give presentations on their own efforts. Third, we interviewed established faculty development practitioners, not only to gather information about their own programs, but also to obtain their suggestions about other well-established programs we could investigate. Additionally, we conducted a telephone survey of other individuals in faculty development programs to learn of their practices. And finally, we added IUPUI's fourteen peer institutions to our list (University of California at Davis, University of Cincinnati, George Mason University, Indiana University at Bloomington, University of Illinois at Chicago, Michigan State University, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Ohio State University, University of Pittsburgh, SUNY-Buffalo, Temple University, University of Virginia Commonwealth, and Wayne State University). We gathered information from the 94 institutions on which this study was based. Because the reporting institutions ranged from large, public institutions to small, private

liberal arts colleges and community colleges, great variance was obvious in the depth and breadth of programs. Thus, the Carnegie Classification, number of students and faculty, faculty development staff, and budget were often vastly different from institution to institution. Therefore, we did not rate or otherwise attempt to assign rank to any institution's faculty development practices.

The first information collected was "General Information," which included the institution, the program name, the number of faculty, the FTE staff assigned to the office, and the "hard" dollar, non-salary budget allocated to the office. The last was often most difficult information to obtain. Institutions without a reported budget were eliminated only from the calculations which depended on these data.

Since our main objective for the study was to determine if IUPUI's faculty development office was doing everything possible for our faculty, we did not establish criteria for assessment, but merely assimilated all available information. Moreover, even though several practices were reported at only one or two institutions, we did not exclude any parameters. We did, however, combine like program characteristics for a more readable survey.

Parameters Included

We did not exclude any institutional initiatives. For example, developmental opportunities for teaching assistants and part-time faculty were not excluded, but were incorporated into other program characteristics even though only a few institutions reported those opportunities as a function of their faculty development office. Media and technology programs were included even though they were not present at all institutions within the office of faculty development and were noted as having greater funding resources. Other programs included testing and evaluation and writing centers.

Program Categorization

To identify program characteristics, we used the data reported by offices of faculty development at each institution. Our initial list of almost 40 characteristics was reduced, through combinations, to a

more workable list of 23 and grouped into four categories (see below).

Category I: Program Information

1. Year Begun. The institution's sustained effort over time was indicated by the year of the program's inception. Although this date was often in question because programs had merged or split and missions had changed, it nevertheless provided an approximate beginning date.

2. Number of Staff/1000 Faculty. To determine the staff resources, we calculated the ratio of FTE staff per thousand faculty. Faculty and non-faculty staff were considered together.

3. Dollars/FTE Faculty. The funding resources allocated to faculty development varied among institutions depending on many factors. This study simply divided yearly budgeted, non-salary funds by the number of faculty. Quality was in no way equated with funding of the program. Indeed, often financial hardships have led to innovative and helpful faculty development programs. For institutions hard hit by budget cuts, Fiedler & Sorcinelli (1992) have suggested options for faculty development initiatives.

Category II: Program Elements

4. Resource Center. Resource centers containing books, journals, videos, computer terminals, and reports appear to be fairly common in the faculty development offices reviewed.

5. Publications. Most faculty development offices issue publications not only promoting its programs, but also providing help on teaching, highlighting the work of faculty, informing on findings, and alerting faculty to opportunities.

6. Workshops. Workshops are among the most common activities sponsored by a faculty development office, an initiative judged favorably by Eble & McKeachie (1985).

7. Consultations. Staff consultations with faculty on matters of teaching, such as lecturing, public speaking, writing objectives, testing, and preparing syllabi, while labor-intensive, are beneficial, and quite common among the institutions surveyed.

8. Mentoring. Mentoring provides the opportunity for faculty to establish an informal one-on-one professional association with a respected colleague over a period of time for the purposes of self-improvement, professional direction, and setting priorities.

9. Research. Research on teaching and learning is practiced at some institutions.

10. Orientation. Orientation of new faculty and teaching assistants, as well as training of part-time faculty, help launch careers on the right path.

11. Inventories. Inventories of faculty interest, while in need of constant updating, provide a needs assessment resource for faculty development programs. They also frequently can provide a sound tool when the institution is called upon to respond to public inquiries.

Category III: Grants

12. Teaching grants. Teaching grants are used to allow faculty to test new teaching models, develop new courses, and obtain resources. Boice (1991) found that faculty rarely change teaching styles over their careers. Teaching grants could provide the catalyst for enhancing teaching performance.

13. Research grants. Research grants, while often considered non-affordable, can give the message that not only teaching is valued, but so is the specialty expertise of the faculty member. They add to the belief that research development will enhance the overall climate of the campus.

14. Travel grants. Travel grants are often a scarce commodity, but can encourage faculty to participate in professional conferences and thus stay current in their discipline. Centra (1989) reported travel grants among the most effective practices of faculty development.

15. Faculty/student collaboration grants. These grants are among the least funded activities, yet they have the potential to improve student retention, provide young and energetic support for the faculty, and introduce undergraduates to the research environment.

16. Assessment grants. Assessment grants have grown rapidly in recent years, particularly in public institutions where the call to accountability is constantly increasing.

17. Minority enhancement grants. These grants speak to an institution's commitment to eliminating disadvantages due to gender or race. For example, the allowance of released time to complete a thesis can go a long way in encouraging members of minorities to consider the teaching profession.

18. Book study grants. These grants can help reverse the trend away from reading. A campus' commitment to a select few books per year and the allowance of a few hundred dollars to faculty incorporating these as ancillary materials might well encourage continued development.

19. Technology-based teaching grants. These grants are used to encourage faculty to explore technology-based teaching and learning activities which they might otherwise avoid. One benefit is an increased level of interest among students.

20. Instructional equipment grants. These grants support the implementation of technology-based teaching and learning.

Category IV: Awards

21. Teaching awards. These awards can keep faculty motivated. While public recognition and certificates are good, cash awards can call attention to the importance the institution places on teaching.

22. Research awards. These awards can have merit equal to that of teaching awards if the institution is true to its teaching/research excellence claim.

23. Counseling or Advising awards. Often forgotten, but vital to the success of a student, is the direction given by advisors. Tangible awards to counselors, whether faculty or staff, can be worth the investment.

General Findings

1. The most commonly stated faculty development goals include making teaching and learning higher priorities, providing support for faculty to achieve that goal, and orienting faculty to the institution.

2. No one institution reported activity in all program areas. Institutions reporting the most program characteristics are active in 18 of the 23 categories.

3. The creation of a faculty development program has been, for the most part, relatively recent. While one began in the 1940s, and a few in the 1960s, almost 50% of the institutions surveyed started their programs in the 1980s. As many programs originated in the 1970s as in the 1990s.

4. The impetus for the creation of a faculty development office came either from faculty demands or a visionary administration.

5. The average office is staffed with 4.8 FTE staff per 1000 faculty, with a range of 0.25 to around 45 per thousand faculty. Because of the wide variance in institutional size, and the inclusion of media and technology in some faculty development offices, we included the staff size most frequently reported for further comparison, which is 2.5 FTE staff per 1000 faculty.

6. Since all reported institutional budgetary commitments were used, the variance was great. Budgets range from around \$2 per faculty member per year to approximately \$300 per faculty member per year, with the per-faculty average budgetary commitment at around \$65 per year.

7. By far the most common faculty development activities were workshops and discussions (93%). Other activities are consultations (69%), new faculty orientations and teaching assistant training (60%), research on teaching (51%), teaching grants (34%), and interest inventories (33%).

Conclusions

The materials we surveyed suggest that faculty strongly support the existence of a faculty development office. The typical faculty development office, as determined by our review of program characteristics, is staffed by 2.5 FTE, is allotted an average of \$65 of non-salary money per faculty per year, and is dedicated to making teaching and learning higher priorities. While funding is important, some institutions have used innovative approaches to overcome funding limitations, as for example, the using the services of emeriti faculty in the faculty development office. Some of the most creative programs often have low budgetary requirements, but carry high faculty satisfaction. Among these programs are special incentives for mid-career

faculty, salary supplement for high-prestige but low-dollar awards such as National Endowment for the Humanities grants, in-house sabbaticals and opportunities to study a second discipline.

IUPUI was strong in most of the categories described in this study; however, after synthesizing the information gathered from this review, we determined there were two areas in which our Office of Faculty Development should be strengthened: a resource center and faculty consultations.

Some resources have always been available for our faculty, such as books and articles on teaching, but they were in various locations around the campus. We now have a resource room at our new campus library that has been designed for our faculty to view tapes on teaching, read articles, listen to cassettes, and meet to discuss teaching. A computer terminal also will be available to our faculty in the new resource room.

Another area IUPUI's Office of Faculty Development decided to strengthen was one-on-one consulting with our faculty. After attending the POD Conference and reviewing the POD material from our study, we concluded our faculty could benefit from an expert who would videotape classes, observe classes, and consult individually with faculty.

Conducting this study has been a valuable experience, not only to the Office of Faculty Development by helping to create more defined goals for the future, but also to the faculty who now have additional services available to them.

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