Beyond the dean and the faculty senate president, who is responsible for professional development of the faculty? In this chapter, three educational practitioners present a “hands-on” approach from outside the traditional academic circle and present their views as trustee, president, and financial officer regarding creating a campus-wide environment that promotes and achieves faculty development.

Creating a Culture of Appreciation for Faculty Development

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Introduction

Typically viewed as an academic issue, faculty development discussions too often take place between academic interests. The vice president for academics encourages deans or department heads to make their plans for enhancing the abilities in their areas. Funds are made available, and committees composed of representative faculty members decide who will be able to make what trip, what scholarly presentation will be supported, and what research will need to wait for new budgetary sources. Likewise, the arena for the publicity and professional adulation of successful accomplishments tends to be equally fixated on academic settings: the faculty senate, the faculty assembly, the faculty meeting. It is no wonder that those with only a casual appreciation of higher education argo would opine that the academy consists of “scholars writing for scholars.”

It is with the intention of broadening the discussion of faculty development that the following pages are dedicated. Specifically, what are the wider institutional concerns for the successful accomplishment of faculty development? Who can and should be involved in creating a campus-wide climate that promotes and expects there to be successful faculty development? What stakes do trustees, presidents, and chief financial/business officers have in the enterprise of faculty development? By examining concerns from these areas, engaged faculty will find new allies in their
efforts to grow their institutions by growing opportunities for faculty development.

From the Governing Board: A Board/Trustee’s View for Fostering a Campus-wide Culture of Faculty Development

Faculty development is one of many issues that might arise in various trustee discussions about a college or university’s academic quality and reputation. However, it is likely that the topic is embedded in more general deliberations of academic issues such as accreditation, academic program review, academic planning, promotion and tenure, faculty evaluation, and so forth, and may very well get less attention than it deserves from the entire board. More frequently, the issue of faculty development, if it is a topic of specific focus by trustees, may receive some attention from members of the academic affairs committee, but may not represent a central concern of other board members or the board as a whole. Given this potentially common scenario, the logical question emerges: are there some things that college and university trustees and boards might do to shape and influence the climate or culture of the campus regarding faculty development? Based on personal experiences as a trustee of both a public university and a private college and as a faculty member, the following are four broad suggestions for how this might be done.

Link Faculty Development to Broader Academic Issues and Concerns. Boards of trustees regularly grapple with a broad range of academic issues and concerns as well as a number of complex, macro-level matters: tuition and financial aid, productivity and efficiency initiatives, budget cutbacks, and more. For better or for worse, faculty development represents just one of many items that might be on a board’s agenda, if it is on the agenda at all. As such, faculty development is a “piece of the puzzle” and must be understood as part of a broader context if it is to receive the attention of boards of trustees. Presidents, provosts, and deans play an important role in shaping and framing discussions of faculty development for trustee deliberation. They can translate and explain the importance of faculty development in relation to broader academic concerns and challenges facing the institution, put the importance of the topic in perspective, and describe some specific benefits of effective faculty development initiatives.

At least some trustees see the need for fundamental change and transformation of the higher education enterprise. Such perspectives will have important implications for board discussions of both existing faculty development programs and any new faculty development initiatives an institution might subsequently develop and pursue. In a recent study report that summarized interviews with 39 college and university trustees, one board member remarked, “Our nation has an education model whose calendar was based on the 19th-century agricultural calendar, whose classroom is
based on a 20th-century industrial model, trying to produce a high-quality product in a 21st-century, global, technology-infused environment. We are never going to be successful until we can completely disrupt the model of our classroom, and our model of teaching, that has been pervasive in the entire continuum from kindergarten through graduate degree program” (Immerwahr 2011, 16). Productive trustee discussions of faculty development must reflect broader concerns about the potential changes in the ways in which colleges and universities pursue their teaching and learning missions. Presidents and other institutional leaders must play an active role in bringing these issues to the attention of their boards in compelling and clear ways.

Connect the Dots—Faculty Development and Learning Outcomes. With much of the current public debate on higher education focused on issues such as learning outcomes, degree completion, affordability, and so forth, it is rarely possible to place faculty development “front and center” on a board’s agenda. Furthermore, while the issue of faculty development might be on the minds of many constituents, this topic does not get universal recognition in various campus governance venues. One potential strategy for raising the profile of faculty development initiatives might be to show how these efforts support improvements in learning outcomes. For example, a recent review of college and university websites conducted by the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment indicated that faculty/staff development was specifically noted as a capacity-building effort for developing expertise in learning outcomes assessment by at least 20 percent of all institutions (more often at doctoral level institutions [50 to 60 percent] and approximately 20 percent for master’s and baccalaureate, and just over 30 percent for associate’s level institutions; Jankowski and Makela 2010, 4). Perhaps these types of disclosures could be expanded to more institutions, and this may increase trustee awareness of the potential links between faculty development and student learning outcomes.

It is important to acknowledge that trustee engagement in issues like student learning outcomes and faculty development remains a challenge. For example, a recent report by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) noted some mixed news about the trustee role in monitoring student learning outcomes. Perhaps not surprisingly, 79 percent of respondents to a survey of 1,300 trustees and campus leaders noted that their boards spend more time discussing finance and budget issues than academic issues (AGB 2010, 6). Potentially more troubling was the data from the same survey that showed that “over 20 percent of all respondents said that monitoring student-learning outcomes is not a board responsibility” (AGB 2010, 6). Presidents and board chairs will need to find ways to ensure that faculty development and related issues are viewed as matters worthy of board deliberation and review.

Provide Trustees with More Learning/Professional Development Opportunities Regarding Faculty Development. A recent report by the
AGB noted: “All board members, not just those on academic committees, need to understand academic programs, the heart of the work of a college or university” (AGB 2011, 16). All trustees, not just those who serve on academic affairs committees, must have a solid understanding of their institution’s academic programs, faculty teaching and research activities, and student learning outcomes. To achieve this level of understanding, trustees themselves need to take advantage of professional development opportunities and other mechanisms. For example, the Indiana Trustees Academy, an initiative of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the Governor’s Office, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, and the Lumina Foundation held a daylong program for trustees of Indiana colleges and universities that focused on college success and learning outcomes. Other ways to engage trustees in conversations about academic affairs issues, including faculty development, could include setting aside time in trustee meeting schedules for informal discussions between trustees and faculty, holding joint faculty/trustee retreat sessions to discuss teaching and learning issues and to review the impact of faculty development programs, and enhanced trustee orientation programs that highlight faculty development initiatives and needs.

Regardless of the particular mode or mechanism a trustee and her or her institution might utilize to improve their understanding and awareness of the academic dimensions of their institutions, the main point is that they devote some time to learning and professional development in this aspect of their work. As was noted in a recent AGB report, “It is often observed that trustees lack professional experience in higher education academic programming and delivery and come to board service more commonly from business and industry, with a focus on fiscal oversight. This lack of preparation and understanding of academic culture may be a reasonable explanation for the lack of trustee involvement in discussions of educational quality, but in a period of increased public demand for accountability from higher education and its governing board that excuse is no longer sufficient” (AGB 2010, 4). College and university leaders would do well to capitalize on this opportunity to expand programs and activities that provide trustees with a more in-depth understanding of academic matters, including faculty development.

Explicitly Monitor Institutional Performance Regarding Faculty Development. A key role played by boards of trustees that is comfortable for and well understood by most, if not all trustees, is monitoring institutional performance regarding plans, goals, and key institutional strategies. If an institution wanted to increase trustee involvement and engagement in issues relating to faculty development, then framing the topic along the lines of determining measures and metrics for progress toward important strategic goals (improved quality, institutional reputation and competitive position, or better mission/impact achievement) might help. Among the key questions that might raise faculty development to a more strategic level in the eyes of a board of trustees are:
• What is our institution's strategy for faculty development and how does it link to other academic priorities and initiatives?
• What level of commitment is our institution making to faculty development in terms of financial and human resources?
• What indicators does our institution use to assess the effectiveness of our faculty development initiatives?
• What impact do our faculty development efforts have on the overall quality and performance of our institution?

Trustee discussions that focus on questions such as these might generate ideas and strategies for ensuring that faculty development efforts are an integral part of an institution's plan and strategy and that these initiatives receive appropriate levels of financial support. Ongoing campus deliberations of this type might increase the likelihood that faculty development might become more deeply embedded in the overall teaching and learning culture of the institution.

From the President: A Chief Executive’s View for Fostering a Campus-wide Culture of Faculty Development

Within the informal triage systems employed by college presidents to arrange the items on their “what to do today” lists, regrettably, the issue of faculty development is probably lurking in the background, relatively far in the background. To be fair, it is unlikely that many faculty members wake each morning focused on the singular objective of getting their college president to move faculty development to the apex of the institution's policy agenda. The “tyranny of the urgent,” as Charles Hummel (1967) noted so many years ago, pushes important matters aside, as situations and individuals demand the diversion of attention from planned priorities. In particular, the president’s responsibilities tumble (messily) across all boundaries of the institution, and well-intentioned and carefully crafted planks of strategic plans often smack up against the realities of day-to-day management. In such cases, faculty development initiatives that are heavily dependent on presidential imprimatur for success are likely destined for days, perhaps semesters, of famine.

Among the host of relationships with both internal and external constituents that any president must maintain, the bond with the faculty is a singular key to success. Indeed, this connection with the professoriate is foundational to forming and maintaining positive relationships with all other constituencies and exercising effective leadership in an academic presidency. Presidents depend on the faculty to fulfill the academic teaching and research mission and to advance a vision for development or change (Fleming 2010). Put another way, in rhetoric that presidents have borrowed from hundreds of colleagues over the years, “no university may be stronger than the faculty.”
In recent times, in a dramatic shift from decades of support, policy makers, the media, parents, and students are questioning the meaning and value of higher education. Contemporary meetings of college presidents feature lamentations that the academy is under siege, with the corresponding hunkering and bunkering of men and women awaiting the next wave of turbulence from Washington, the state capitol, or invading squadrons of helicopter parents. The 2011 publication of Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses, by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, created something of an uproar, at least in academic circles, in its assertions that students are experiencing an education lacking in academic rigor and are unable to demonstrate significant learning. The continual flow of new technologies, the explosion of information, and deeper appreciation for variances in student learning styles combine to challenge long-standing teaching methods. Responding to Arum and Roksa, Gary Rhodes, former general secretary of the American Association of University Professors, challenged presidents to articulate a clear vision for improving learning and fostering practices to energize the curriculum and raising expectations for student performance (Rhodes 2011).

Articulate a clear vision? Improve learning? Energize the curriculum? Raise expectations for student performance? For presidents with the experience of more than a few months, such clarion calls for executive leadership are regular occurrences. But successful presidents know that articulating a vision is worth little, or perhaps less than little, without an engaged faculty. An engaged faculty is a developed faculty, and development activities are central to creating and sustaining a culture within any institution that values and rewards effective teaching.

The argument may be made that development programs for both faculty and staff are the remnants of a “feel good” approach to management and that the activities themselves were and are reflective of the perceived soft culture within higher education. If so, then the same line of reasoning must be adopted in evaluating similar programs throughout the remaining sector of the economy. The truth is that development programs are a mainstay of the world of work and that it is possible, and necessary, to document their effectiveness to the organization.

Indeed, the academy is awash in a changing environment, and faculty development activities may provide the best path toward reckoning with the future shape of higher education. Academic presidents must nurture such efforts through executive leadership, effective management, use of the bully pulpit, and skillful adaptation of budgets. In addition, as far as is possible, presidents should demonstrate personal commitment to teaching, research, and their own professional development as members of the faculty. There is no substitute for walking the walk.

It is at about this point in any such chapter that a paragraph begins, “In this time of limited financial resources . . .” Within the sweep of higher education, that line has almost always been appropriate, so the current age
is not necessarily an outlier. As stewards of limited financial resources and amidst growing calls for accountability in higher education, presidents must form alliances with faculty, student development professionals, and indeed with all members of the community to assure that true learning, not simple (and artificial) means of accountability, is the goal of the enterprise. Rhodes (2011) suggested that these alliances be used to develop activities to enrich teaching and learning, fostered through the use of instruments to measure progress that are appropriate for the school, discipline, and the particular mission of the university.

An examination of any institutional budget reveals the value placed on various aspects of the mission. For the seasoned college president, the process of developing the budget provides an opportunity to strengthen the academic programs that are central to the higher education mission. Even within the economic downturns of the past decade, higher education in America has witnessed a pervasive and growing demand for colleges and universities to provide services that are ancillary to the central mission. Some of the expenditures may be readily justified, including the student health and counseling services required to meet the multiple needs of diverse populations. Other expenditures may be in response to “keeping up” with the institutional arms races in athletics and student recruitment, including the branding of the institutional “product,” further compelling eligible students to join an institution’s happy throng. The siren calls for the diversion of resources are many and legendary, and perhaps a few beckon in positive directions. Now, then, and always, it falls to the president and other leaders to evaluate the balance of institutions and to remain focused on the primary enterprise of student learning. To the extent faculty and staff development efforts lead along that path, it is vital to find at least a few dollars to advance the cause.

The public platform for college presidents is often used, ironically, to discuss concerns that are external to the institution. Perhaps such occasions may be used to highlight the enterprise of teaching and learning and to support the notion of faculty development. Across a typical academic year, any president has the opportunity to address dozens of internal and external groups. Academic presidents have long been masters of incorporating virtually any topic within a tightly prescribed speech, so there is always the hope of underscoring the institution’s core mission of learning and to celebrate quality teaching. For a change of pace, perhaps the local Rotary Club attendees would be hearing President X engage in an impromptu interview with Professor Y about her recent sabbatical experience in which she lived for two months in an obscure place in the world.

An institution with an effective and sustained faculty development plan is an energizing place to work and study. Development programs provide a forum for adopting institution-wide goals for student learning, articulating the desired outcomes, and nurturing the professoriate to be better guides for students in achieving the goals. In the same way a course of
study is adopted for students, colleges and universities may adopt a systematic approach for the professional development of the faculty. There will always be the occasion for short, stand-alone professional development programs, but how satisfying it would be for an institution to invest in each faculty member with the goal that each is the very best teacher possible.

The University of Iowa College of Medicine established a “Teaching Scholars Program” in 1999 with the aim of developing a cadre of faculty in each department with deep and enriching preparation in teaching skills. In turn, recognized as experts in teaching, these faculty members mentor others in their respective departments. This approach yielded a cadre of eighteen faculty members who were equipped to provide peer-to-peer faculty development activities within their departments. As a result, departments gained ownership of the process and the number, quality, and participation in faculty development activities rose. The success on the department level spread across the entire school as more college-wide programs to enhance teaching were offered to increasing numbers of faculty (Rosenbaum, Lenoch, and Ferguson 2005).

Developing better teaching skills throughout the faculty will require an investment of resources. But institutions should not view these investments as burdensome. To the contrary, expenditures for professional development of the faculty should lead to transformed learning outcomes. Helping faculty advance active and practical learning, improving interactions with students, and clarifying course expectations and desired learning outcomes are three aspects of effective teaching that can easily be improved through faculty development (McGowan and Graham 2009).

The demands of the academic president’s schedule are well documented and could be considered daunting by any standard of measure. With various decision-point meetings with colleagues, building relationships with alumni and supporters, lobbying public policy makers, speaking and writing on behalf of the institution, hosting events and greeting almost every outside group coming to campus, the list of opportunities to invest a president’s time is enough to tire even a professional athlete. Perhaps in a spare moment each day, the president must gaze outside the office window, look on the students passing by, and remember—as she or he must have done at the beginning of a productive career—that these men and women are the reasons why institutions exist. All the rest is fluff. If higher education professionals care about them, their families, and their futures, they will find the ways to invest in those who shape that future, turning to budgets and microphones in support of faculty development.

From the Chief Financial Officer: A Business Manager’s View for Fostering a Campus-wide Culture of Faculty Development

The third person of influence that should not be overlooked when seeking to develop a culture or campus-wide climate of faculty development is the
finance officer. Highly educated themselves, chief financial officers and/or chief business officers are integral to successful college and university administration. Their responsibilities place them in strategic conversations about every aspect of the institution. Yet far too often these highly competent and credentialed individuals are viewed as necessary evils in the process, mere bookkeepers standing in the way of progress, rather than engaged educational professionals working for the overall good of the university.

In the fall of 2011, 764 chief financial officers and chief business officers were invited to participate in a survey designed to understand their role in cultivating a campus-wide climate or environment that is conducive for faculty development. Of those invited, 103 participated. These included 41 public institutions and 56 private, nonprofit institutions from across the six regional accrediting bodies. The Higher Learning Commission (a Commission of the North Central Association) accounted for the largest group with 37.9 percent, and the Southern Association next with 26.3 percent. These institutions vary in size from fewer than 2,000 students (37.1 percent) to more than 5,000 students (25.8 percent). The amount of their endowment funds range from $0, accounting for 3.1 percent of the institutions surveyed, to over $500 million, accounting for 2 percent of the institutions surveyed. Approximately half (49.5 percent) of those participating reported endowments under $25 million. The largest group of private, nonprofit institutions has fewer than 2,000 students (29.9 percent), and the largest group of public institutions has more than 5,000 students (20.6 percent; Tew 2011).

The research instrument sought to determine the extent to which chief financial officers and chief business officers believed they contribute to an effective faculty development climate. To the statement “I am very involved in cultivating a climate of faculty development on my campus,” 44 percent of the total group disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 56 percent agreed or strongly agreed. When cross-referenced by governance type, 68.3 percent of the business professionals from public institutions indicated they were very involved in accomplishing faculty development on their campuses as compared to only 50 percent of these from private, nonprofit institutions (Tew 2011).

Regardless of their perceived engagement in creating an overall supportive climate, those surveyed overwhelmingly rejected the idea that budget cuts were tied to their offices and their decisions. Specifically, 74 percent indicated that the chief business/finance officer did not initiate faculty development budget cuts. Additionally, 78 percent indicated that during times of financial constraints the chief academic officer made such budget reductions. These numbers ranged from 60 percent of business personnel at private, nonprofit institutions over 5,000 students to 85 percent at public institutions with student enrollment over 5,000 where chief business/finance officers indicated they do not initiate such reductions.
Furthermore, the percentages of those business personnel who indicated budget reductions for faculty development are initiated by the chief academic officer ranged from 64.3 percent at public institutions with enrollment between 2,000 and 4,999 to 85 percent at public institutions with enrollments over 5,000 (Tew 2011).

Chief finance/business officers surveyed were asked if their institution designated a faculty member as an official liaison between the faculty and the administration concerning faculty development issues. Overall, those responding indicated that only 33 percent have such a position. More public institutions acknowledged designating a faculty position as a liaison between faculty and administration than did the private, nonprofit institutions (41 percent to 31 percent, respectively; Tew 2011).

Business officer executives participating in the survey were asked what factors drove the need for faculty development at their institutions. Specifically, they were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement that faculty development was important in order to (1) improve teaching and learning, (2) improve academic experience, (3) improve retention of students, (4) reduce cost of recruiting faculty, and (5) enhance the academic reputation of the institution. While all five categories were considered important reasons for fostering faculty development by the participants as a group, improving teaching and learning and improving the academic experience of the students were both at 98 percent agree or strongly agree. With respect to improving teaching and learning, 100 percent of the public chief finance/business officers agreed or strongly agreed as compared to 96.4 percent of their private counterparts. Regarding improving the academic experience of the student, 97.6 percent of the public finance executives agreed or strongly agreed as compared to 98.2 percent of the private institution chief finance/business officers (Tew 2011).

When viewed in the aggregate, 88 percent of all chief finance/business officers agreed or strongly agreed that faculty development was important as it helped reduce recruiting costs. However, the business executives from institutions with smaller endowment levels rated this issue higher. Specifically, 91.7 percent of those with endowments under $25 million agreed or strongly agreed as compared to 94.2 percent of those with endowments between $25 million and $50 million, 92.3 percent of those with endowments between $50 million and $100 million, and only 71.4 percent of those with endowments between $100 million and $500 million.

In conclusion, very little significant difference could be observed between the chief financial/business officers of the various governance types, enrollment sizes, and endowment levels. To the contrary, they presented themselves as a very homogenous group. For the most part, they perceived their administrative function to be very important to the institution’s agenda of professional development of the faculty. They strongly rejected the notion that their office was responsible for reducing faculty development budgets during times of financial difficulty, laying that
responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the chief academic officers. The surveyed chief financial/business officers indicated the consequences of supporting faculty development included improving teaching and learning, improving student academic experience, retaining students, reducing recruitment costs, and improving the academic reputation of their institutions. Finally, there was similar response regarding an official liaison position. Specifically, only one in three business office executives work with a specific faculty member designated to achieve faculty development.

Additionally, the survey data validated what seemed self-evident. Chief financial officers and chief business officers express an enlightened self-interest in working to accomplish faculty development issues. In the current entitlement-rich educational environment, students are demanding more of institutions and are increasing their academic expectations, both in class and out of class. Improving the teaching moment, giving students better, more rewarding academic experiences, even enhancing the academic reputation of the institutions they attend will pay enormous dividends in terms of student retention and graduation rate. The converse is equally self-evident. Faculty who do not progress as educational practitioners and discipline-specific scholars run the risk of intellectual atrophy. Such “professional” sloth communicates to students the acceptability of a minimalist approach to education and ultimately to their future endeavors. When colleges and universities fail to provide engaging faculty development, they fail to model for students the learning process and communicate thereby a lack of conviction in the entire educational enterprise. Simply stated, an institution cannot afford not to promote and achieve faculty development.

Two observations from the survey and conversations with business professionals in the field should be noted as a potential new direction for achieving a supportive campus-wide climate of faculty development. First, it is the academic officer and not the finance officer who is responsible for cutting funds designated for use by the faculty for professional development. Second, only one in three chief financial/business officers have the luxury of working with a faculty liaison whose designated task is to work collaboratively in order to achieve greater faculty development opportunities. The reality of these two observations work together to marginalize the influence of the chief financial/business officer and thereby limit the positive impact engaged professionals may achieve.

In order for the chief financial/business officer to reverse the effects of what are probably unintended consequences of administrative structure and budgetary procedures, the business executive that desires to make a positive and lasting contribution to faculty development must determine to get involved in the conversation. By asserting the strategic nature of their administrative appointments, business executives may position themselves to take a more active role in creating a campus-wide culture that is supportive of faculty development. Using their influence as a member of the
senior administration, chief finance/business officers can keep the issues of enlightened self-interest at the forefront of the institution's conversations. Furthermore, when the chief financial/business officer takes a leadership role in securing budgetary resources for faculty development, the chief academic officer may feel greater support during difficult financial times, resulting in resources remaining dedicated to faculty development. Finally, by insisting on the establishment and utilization of a faculty liaison dedicated to the task of faculty development, business office professionals can gain greater insight into the particular needs of the faculty, and over time, create a synergy whereby the academic and business operations of the institution work in tandem, not in opposition.

Conclusion

As colleges and universities face a future of uncertain funding and demands for increased accountability and accessibility, colleges and universities that can accomplish faculty development not as an “add-on” but as an integral part of the fiber of the organization will position themselves to succeed. Such a comprehensive campus-wide culture will be achieved only by engaging campus resources that are not directly related to the classroom. Professional development of the faculty should be everyone’s everyday job.

References


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