

Update

VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 2 • JULY 1996

Faculty Development: Opportunity and Satisfaction

I. What is the Issue?

New technology, the increasing flow of information and rapidly changing science compel many Americans to continuously update to their skills and working knowledge to stay even in their jobs. Taking postsecondary education classes has become an integral part of this self-improvement. For many employers, professional development is a key strategy for keeping ahead of international competition, especially those in leading edge industries. Colleges and universities are supposed to be the providers of expertise in science, technology and information. It makes sense that the postsecondary community should be firmly committed to faculty development to assure that teaching professionals stay abreast of new information and technology in their fields.

There is no consensus on what faculty development means. The term is used here to classify activities provided by an institution to improve scholarship, contribute knowledge to an academic or professional field, or keep current in a discipline. Other activities that

might qualify as professional development include programs to improve teaching skills, curriculum development, personal development such as career planning, and institutional development such as team building. The available data do not allow one to make unambiguous distinctions among these categories.

The National Education Association believes that faculty development programs can contribute to improving teaching and learning on college and university campuses if they meet three criteria:

- They are designed by the faculty.
- They are set up on a voluntary and equitable basis.
- They are adequately funded.¹

The current report provides descriptive information on the number of faculty members who work in institutions that provide faculty development programs. It is not possible, with the available data, to describe the operating principles of the programs.

II. Source of Information

Data for this report comes from the *1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty* (NSOPF:93) by the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education. NSOPF:93 includes information on nearly 900,000 faculty members, of whom 595,340 were full-time. The universe includes everyone with a faculty appointment, even those who did not teach any classes. The data do not include graduate students who served as teaching assistants. Unless otherwise noted, the report is limited to full-time faculty members.

III. Results

Most professional development is voluntary. The institution must first provide the opportunity, then the faculty member must take advantage of it. Therefore, the information is reported two ways. Table 1 presents information about the percent of the faculty members who say the institution for which they work provides the opportunity. Table 2 shows what

¹ *Faculty Development in Higher Education: Enhancing a National Resource*, National Education Association, 1991

percent of the faculty members participated in the activities. It may also be that some faculty members participated in development programs that their employing institution did not support. The data did not show the extent of the institutional support, only its availability.

A. Availability of Professional Development Activities

The first indicator of institutional commitment to professional development programs is the willingness to support programs. Table 1 lists the percent of full-time faculty members who reported that their employer offered specific professional development opportunities. This table does not show whether the faculty member participated in the activity.

Faculty members were most likely to report (78 percent) that support for professional travel was available at their institution compared to the other development options. Just over half the faculty members worked in institutions that offered tuition remission, sabbatical leave, or funding to improve their teaching skills. Faculty members were least likely to report that their institution offered retraining.

Faculty members teaching in different types of institutions varied in their report of available professional development activities. The results were surprising. Faculty members in research universities were less likely to report the availability of these developmental opportunities compared to those in other institutions.

Faculty members in private liberal arts colleges were more

likely than others to report the availability of specific professional development opportunities in four of the six choices

(noted in a bold typeface). Community college faculty members were more likely to report availability in the remaining two cat-

Table 1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE (percent of full-time faculty members reporting)

Program	Percent Providing
Funding for professional travel	78%
Tuition remission	55%
Sabbatical leave	52%
Funding to improve training/teaching skills	52%
Dues for professional associations	43%
Retraining	17%

Table 2

AVAILABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR (percent of full-time faculty members reporting)

Institutional Type	Funding for Tuition Remission	Funding for Professional Association Dues	Funding for Professional Travel	Funding for Improving Training/Teaching Skills	Funding for Retraining	Funding for Sabbatical Leave
Pub. Research	44%	32%	76%	46%	14%	52%
Pri. Research	59%	38%	71%	40%	14%	46%
Pub. Doc.	52%	45%	79%	48%	14%	48%
Pri. Doc.	57%	50%	79%	47%	14%	47%
Pub. Comp.	50%	40%	80%	50%	17%	53%
Priv. Comp.	72%	55%	84%	57%	18%	60%
Priv. Liberal Arts	66%	58%	86%	59%	18%	62%
Public 2	63%	47%	78%	63%	25%	55%
Other	54%	49%	79%	52%	18%	47%
Average	55%	43%	78%	52%	17%	52%

Table 3

PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES (percent of full-time faculty members reporting)

Institutional Type	Tuition Remission	Professional Association Dues	Professional Travel	Improving Training/Teaching Skills	Retraining	Sabbatical Leave
Pub. Research	11%	27%	61%	16%	2%	10%
Pri. Research	15%	32%	55%	11%	2%	10%
Pub. Doc.	12%	38%	66%	22%	2%	6%
Pri. Doc.	13%	42%	63%	19%	3%	8%
Pub. Comp.	10%	32%	62%	20%	2%	9%
Priv. Comp.	14%	46%	64%	24%	1%	8%
Priv. Liberal Arts	13%	34%	67%	26%	3%	16%
Public 2	21%	34%	54%	34%	5%	5%
Other	15%	38%	58%	24%	4%	7%
Average	14%	43%	60%	22%	3%	8%

egories, “improving training and teaching skills” and “funding for retraining.”

Faculty members in research universities were the least likely to report availability of professional development opportunities. Sometimes the public research university faculty members were the least likely to report the existence of the development opportunity and in other cases the private research university was lowest.

This is a surprising result since research universities have more funds available per faculty member. Universities require less teaching and provide more time for faculty members to pursue research compared to other sectors. It would be expected that this would result in more time to pursue professional activities. One explanation for this seeming anomaly is that professional development funding may come through research overhead accounts instead of institutional sources.

Faculty member participation in college-sponsored development activities declines when reporting the share of faculty members who participated in the different developmental programs. Table 3 shows the percentage of faculty members who participated in each of the institutionally funded professional development activities during the last two years. For example, 8 percent of the full-time faculty members took a paid sabbatical in the last two years but 56 percent of the faculty members reported that the opportunity was available.

More faculty members received support for professional travel

than any other professional development activity, although it is unclear whether the amount of support was adequate to cover all travel costs. The smallest share of faculty members (3 percent) reported participating in retraining activities over the last two years.

Faculty members in community colleges were more likely to participate in professional development activities than those in other sectors in half the categories (tuition remission, improving training/teaching skills, and retraining). Community college faculty members were least likely to participate in professional travel and sabbatical leave. Faculty members in private liberal arts colleges led in two other categories.

B. Satisfaction With Time Available

One reason for faculty not keeping up with the growing body of academic knowledge is lack of time. Over half of the faculty members indicated they were satisfied with the time available to keep current in their field. There were two exceptions. Only 43 percent of the faculty members in private liberal arts institutions and 46 per-

Table 4

SATISFACTION WITH THE TIME AVAILABLE TO KEEP CURRENT

Institutional Type	Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Private Research	64.0%
Public Research	58.7%
Public Doctoral	55.4%
Public 2	51.7%
Public Comprehensive	51.1%
Private Doctoral	45.8%
Private Liberal Arts	43.1%

cent of those in private doctoral universities felt they had enough time. Faculty members in research universities were the most likely to say they had enough time.

C. Availability of Outside Funding

Another source of support for faculty members to pursue their interests is the availability of outside funding. Respondents were asked if they thought their ability to get outside funding had worsened, stayed the same or improved. Overall, 41 percent believed that the opportunity to get outside funding had worsened. Only half as many, 20 percent, thought their ability to get funding was improving.

Table 5

FACULTY ABILITY TO GET OUTSIDE FUNDING

Academic Rank	Do Not Know	R E S P O N S E			Total
		Worsened	Same	Improved	
Professor	7.9%	43.1%	27.8%	21.3%	100%
Associate	11.1%	41.9%	27.4%	19.6%	100%
Assistant	19.4%	29.6%	29.7%	21.2%	100%
Instructor	21.2%	34.1%	30.5%	14.3%	100%
Lecturer	23.3%	46.5%	5.4%	25.8%	100%
Other	21.2%	21.2%	26.4%	29.8%	100%
Average	11.2%	40.7%	28.0%	20.2%	100%

D. Opportunity for Promotion

One measure of the commitment that faculty members make to professional development is how they perceive their chances for advancement in the institution. Table 6 shows faculty members' opinions of the opportunities available for junior faculty member advancement. Most thought the chances were unchanged, but those with tenure were more optimistic than those without, who were inclined to express uncertainty about their chances.

Faculty members indicate different levels of satisfaction with their own opportunity for job advancement. Those with tenure have a much more positive attitude than those with no tenure options.

IV. Conclusion

Opportunities for professional development depend on money, time, and interest. In tight budget times, faculty members may choose to pursue salary increases instead of increased pro-

fessional development programs. It does not appear that the opportunities for professional development are limited to wealthy institutions.

There is a sense of pessimism. Faculty members believe that the opportunities for outside funding are getting worse. More respondents believe that junior faculty members' opportunities for promotion are declining than believe they are getting better. Those with no tenure are noticeably dissatisfied with their own chances for advancement.

The results provide a limited overview of professional development opportunities for faculty members. No information is provided about the operation of the programs, their perceived value to faculty members, or the adequacy of their funding—simply their availability. This report does not include professional development activities that faculty members pursue on their own time and money. That would be an important supplement to this report.

Table 6

CHANCE FOR JUNIOR FACULTY MEMBERS TO ADVANCE

Tenure Status	Do Not Know	RESPONSE CATEGORY			Total
		Worsened	Same	Improved	
Tenured	5.6%	27.1%	42.6%	24.6%	100%
On Track	14.1%	27.1%	42.6%	16.2%	100%
Other	20.5%	21.6%	41.8%	16.1%	100%

Table 7

SATISFACTION WITH ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITY

Tenure Status	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Tenured	8.7%	15.2%	32.1%	44.1%
On Track	9.6%	19.9%	43.6%	27.0%
Other	22.9%	26.9%	32.0%	18.2%



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