

# Making Faculty Development Appealing to Faculty

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DURING MY THIRTY YEARS OF COLLEGE TEACHING EXPERIENCE, I have also served as a department head, coordinator, division chairperson, director, and dean of instruction. In performing these various roles, I have observed that even though new teachers and some "seasoned" teachers are enthusiastic about faculty development, a significant percentage of these teachers eventually grows skeptical and weary of faculty development. Ann Lieberman (1995), a professor at Columbia College and co-director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, agrees and states that in-service training is "unconnected to life," and "it is often a *mélange* of abstract ideas that pays little attention to the ongoing support of continuous learning and changed practices" (p. 592). A multimillion dollar industry supplies the workshops, in-service programs, and half-day training sessions that characterize much of the professional development. While some of this professional development does the job, much is intellectual junk food.

Over eighty percent of professional development money is controlled by the individual institutions or their districts (Bradley, 1996, p. 32). Therefore, the responsibility for providing faculty development usually falls upon a busy administrator who does not want to take the time to confer with departmental chairpersons or to poll the faculty about their needs. Consequently, the busy administrator calls an outside expert. This "expert" is too often one of the administrator's best friends from another institution or a state agency or an acquaintance from a recent conference. The latter type of "expert" is frequently discovered during a social hour at the conference.

The faculty members usually do not share the administrator's fascination with the expert. What this consultant or staff developer has to offer may or may not be particularly relevant to teachers. And it may not have any connection to an institution's or district's overall professional or educational goals. The topics for faculty development may also be too general and boringly repetitious of those topics presented in the past at professional conferences and at the faculty's own institution. Thus, many faculty members long for fresh, innovative, and relevant workshop content that does not waste their time. By relevant content, I mean content that is directly relevant to each subject area. Gary Sykes (1996), a professor in the Departments of Educational Administration and Teacher Education at Michi-

gan State University, says that many teachers "still hunger for something more direct, immediate, and definite" (p. 466).

Although educators and researchers continue to lament the superficial programs pushed on faculty, a consensus has begun to emerge about the kind of professional development that faculty should be receiving. Topping the list is a belief that classroom teachers should be involved in planning their own learning experiences. Consequently, when I was a dean of instruction, I gave the faculty members of each department an opportunity to select their own workshop topics, speakers, dates, and times. Most departments chose topics directly related to their subject areas and prominent, well-respected speakers from near-by universities. These speakers, in a number of cases, chaired or taught in doctoral programs that attracted our faculty. Therefore, we created an expertise link with the greater "learning community" on an on-going basis. The link encouraged many instructors to begin or complete their doctoral work. Thus, we met the individual needs of the instructors and advanced the institution's goal of increasing the number of faculty with doctoral degrees.

The built-in incentives for this faculty development program were equally appealing. Working with the college president and director of faculty development, I was able to offer the faculty some incentives for participating in faculty development. Because the college supplied food and drinks for these workshops, most divisions in the college chose to have the workshops at the noon hour. (I firmly believe that people cannot learn well when they are hungry and tired. I, likewise, believe that attractive, delicious refreshments rejuvenate people and encourage them to attend workshops.) An additional incentive involved monetary rewards for participation in faculty development. The faculty earned professional development units for every workshop they attended. Each time a faculty member acquired sixty units, that individual could choose between a cash award or advancement on the faculty pay scale. Adjunct faculty also earned cash awards. These monetary incentives made the faculty development program attractive to all ranks of faculty. Therefore, the program was a success throughout the academic disciplines of the college.

The success was not limited to the large turnouts for faculty development workshops. For instance, the interaction among new, part-time, and experienced teachers was extremely impressive. The experienced

teachers discovered that new and part-time teachers had fresh, innovative ideas, which veteran teachers could use as Geritol for tired units or lessons. The new and part-time teachers, likewise, appreciated the experienced teachers as sounding boards, shoulders to cry on, confident advisors, or content experts—all of which classroom veterans can be. An additional positive outcome from this interaction was the mutual respect and trust that developed and created a “win-win” situation for most participants. Consequently, new and part-time faculty became acclimated quickly to the practices and standards of their departments, and experienced faculty and their chairpersons grew confident in their new and part-time colleagues’ abilities to teach. In fact, some of the veterans became long-term mentors to the adjuncts and neophytes. This enhanced teamwork eventually spread into other areas of departmental work, like accreditation and catalog planning.

Although specialized departmental professional development topics serve their purposes, general topics work well when faculty are confronted with new state legislation that requires changes in the whole curriculum. For instance, when I was in California, the state legislature passed a bill that required every college course, even physical education, to provide writing assignments that would total at least 10,000 words by the end of the course. Since this requirement involved all departments in the college, the faculty did not mind attending workshops planned for the whole college. They were eager to hear how other departments planned to address the writing requirement. Because most of the course outlines throughout the college had to be rewritten, even the veteran teachers wanted to attend the workshops.

A general workshop topic also proves to be relevant when a common problem plagues a number of disciplines. For example, if an institution has a significant number of faculty teaching over-load classes, some of these people may be enduring professional burn-out. Most faculty experiencing this predicament would not mind attending seminars with people from other departments as long as the seminars fulfilled their needs and helped to alleviate the problem.

Additional occasions for campus-wide faculty development workshops are the orientation sessions for new and part-time instructors. These workshops usually focus on surviving during the first year and following the “rites and rituals” of an institution. However, many institutions include sessions on syllabi planning, effective teaching, computer-assisted instruction, and audio-visual aids. Since these topics are relevant to most new and part-time teachers, the majority of participants want to attend the workshops. The workshops are, in many cases, their first connection with the institution. Consequently, this first connection should be an extremely positive experience. This goal can be achieved by providing the participants with a variety of interest-

ing and useful workshops and an assortment of attractive, delicious snacks, since some of the participants come directly from their full-time jobs after working all day.

All of these professional development activities are excellent ways to improve the total learning experience for faculty. However, for professional development to become woven into the fabric of a teacher’s job, rather than squeezed in at the end of the day or on weekends, institutions must rethink their use of time. In this country, teachers spend the majority of their working time engaged with students. On the contrary, in Japan, China, and most European countries, instructors have substantial amounts of free time built into the school day for preparation, curriculum development, and collaborative projects with their colleagues. Many schools consider their schedules and resources with this faculty development time in mind. Some schools use block scheduling to allow common planning time for instructors and early-release days for students. Having the students to do independent projects creates time for teachers to learn on the job. It also frees faculty to enjoy some quality time with their families or to pursue personal interests. Thus, teachers are not preoccupied with school during all of their waking hours. Furthermore, the burn-out rate among them is reduced significantly.

Other types of impressive professional development presently address the needs of various institutions. Some of these needs require high-tech conveniences, which not all institutions can afford. However, regardless of what kind of professional development an institution chooses, it should have these standards:

- show respect for the participants by treating them as professionals and not wasting their time
- ensure depth of content knowledge (often found in departmental workshops)
- offer specific knowledge about the teaching and learning processes in particular disciplines
- reflect the best available research
- address common needs, problems, and changes among all disciplines (usually achieved in campus-wide workshops)
- contribute to measurable improvement in student achievement
- encourage inquiry, reflection, and experimentation
- involve a sharing of knowledge and focus on a community effort
- connect to the teachers’ work with their students
- allow sufficient time, support, and resources to enable faculty to master new content and pedagogy for utilization in their classroom
- be designed by those individuals who participate in it, in cooperation with experts in the field (also selected by the participants)

- link classroom teachers to a larger learning community that offers expertise on an ongoing basis (like nearby universities with doctoral programs)
- create a balance between meeting the needs of the individual teachers and advancing the organizational goals of their institutions and districts
- take a variety of forms, including some that I have not discussed
- become a serious consideration in the scheduling of faculty
- include part-time faculty
- reward faculty who take professional development seriously with salary increments, cash awards, release time, and travel compensation
- continue as an on-going process that grows and improves with each year (even when funding is limited).

This sustained change in teachers' learning opportunities and practices will require sustained investment in the infrastructure of professional development. This

means investment in the development of the institutions and environmental supports that will promote the spread of ideas and shared learning about how professional improvement can be attempted and sustained. This mission can be accomplished if administrators will only listen to what practicing teachers have to say about the countless hours of their lives that have been wasted in boring, meaningless, and poorly planned professional development activities.

## References

- Bradley, A. (1996). Teachers as Learners. *Teachers Magazine*, 1, 32.
- Lieberman, A. (1995). Practices that support teacher development. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 76, 592.
- Sykes, G. (1996). Reform of and as professional development. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 77, 466.

# At KSU...

## 1997-1998 Master Teaching Program Award Recipients

THE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT & AWARDS COMMITTEE is pleased to announce the recipients of the 1997-1998 Master Teaching Awards. The program encourages, recognizes, and rewards tenure-track faculty who demonstrate effective and innovative teaching and have the leadership qualities necessary to develop solutions to complex issues facing KSU in the area of teaching and to guide others in the implementation of those solutions.

Each selected Master Teaching Project includes:

- a stipend for Summer '97 equivalent to a one-course teaching assignment to provide time for project development;
- an award to support the project (travel, equipment, consultants, materials, etc.);
- priority for the assignment of a SALT student during the 1997-98 academic year;

- the opportunity to pilot the project goals in a fully equipped presentation technology classroom.
- The recipients and their projects are highlighted below:

### ***A Student Text/Workbook for Global Economics***

**Mary Bumgarner & Penelope Prime**  
**Associate Professors of Economics**

Global economics will be part of Kennesaw State University's unique semester core curriculum. The course will be driven by international economic issues and will provide the basic economic literacy necessary to make good decisions as citizens, consumers and employees. While the need for these skills is increasingly being recognized by educators, politicians, and the public at large, there are no economics text books that take this approach.

The purpose of this project is to research, develop, and write learning-centered materials geared to inter-