An Iterative Improvement Process: Lessons Learned From Professional Development at an Online University

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This article describes the program evaluation and iterative improvement process used to support increased effectiveness of one component of our institution's professional development program for online faculty. The Center for Faculty Excellence conducted ongoing observations across four sessions of face-to-face faculty meetings, with implementation of improvements made at each session. The goals were to identify needed changes to the faculty meeting via faculty member input and respond to faculty input through implementation of relevant improvements. Both the program evaluation approach used and the outcomes may provide helpful insight for other institutions in approaching faculty development planning.

Adjunct faculty account for 65% of the instructors in higher education (Abowd, 2008). Telecommuting adjunct faculty working for distance education institutions face unique challenges, such as feelings of isolation (Dolan, 2011). These faculty members may feel disconnected from their colleagues (Eib & Miller, 2006). The primary motivators for adjunct faculty include the joy of teaching and personal satisfaction (Tipple, 2010), which reflects that these instructors have a high level of intrinsic motivation both for teaching and for professional development in teaching.

Therefore, an institution that provides access to relevant and applicable professional development opportunities for its adjunct faculty body has the opportunity to support a motivated teaching force and, thus, enhance student learning. According to Clay (1999), "There is arguably no area more important to distance learning administrators than that of training and support for distance educators" (p. 1).

Effective professional development is highly situated, includes social interaction, and fosters community development among practitioners (Bell & Morris, 2009). Effective professional development for online faculty is situated in the online teaching experience and supports community development among those faculty members who are broadly located and may have limited or little interaction with one another. As well, professional development for online teaching must support faculty competence with online tools and faculty knowledge of relevant technology-based skills (Lu, Todd, & Miller, 2011). In addition to learning the appropriate technology tools, online faculty must also understand the pedagogies underlying online teaching (Greer, 2002; Riedinger & Rosenberg, 2006). Furthermore, a long-term approach to faculty development must include community building among the faculty members (Eib & Miller, 2006). Creating a sense of collegiality and connection through community building is one aspect of faculty support that may be particularly relevant for online and virtual faculty (Velez, 2009).

Only 60% of higher education institutions offer training programs for online instructors, and insufficient research has investigated the appropriate training and development of online faculty (Roman, Kelsey, & Lin, 2010). Though online learning has become more common over the past 20 years, and the process of online learning itself has improved and changed, "the methods with which faculty are prepared to teach online have not. Literature suggests there has been little improvement over the last 10 years in increasing the instruction and technical training and support needed by faculty to teach online successfully" (Lackey, 2011, p. 1). The Center for Teaching Excellence undertook a deliberate process to improve the training of our online faculty. The purpose of this article is to describe the program evaluation and iterative improvement process used to support increased effectiveness of one component of our institution's professional development program for online faculty.

An Iterative Improvement Process

Walden University is a fully online university with over 48,000 students and an increasing international student population. As of fall 2011, there

are over 2500 faculty members working virtually from all 50 states, plus the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., Canada, and 20 additional nations. The varied locations of the Walden faculty create a unique challenge for bringing faculty members together for collaboration and faculty professional development.

Walden University's Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) supports the Walden faculty body through professional development opportunities. The CFE is responsible for developing well-qualified faculty who are skilled in working with adult learners. The CFE houses the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) as well as staff members responsible for collecting and reporting faculty performance metrics (such as faculty presence in the classroom and timely return of grades) and managing academic policies and procedures (for instance, ensuring annual updates of the faculty handbook and developing best-practices-based policies for instructional requirements). The CTL is the CFE's training unit, designed to provide faculty members and administrators with the resources, services, training, and community spaces that reflect best pedagogical practices. The mission of the CTL is to foster collaborative professional development and training opportunities. Center staff members work in conjunction with faculty members and administrators to develop a university culture that reflects the scholar-practitioner model, respects and supports diverse learners, and facilitates positive social change.[1]

The CFE provides training opportunities across multiple subject areas and via diverse delivery models to support the needs of the diverse Walden faculty. It offers a variety of professional development opportunities for the faculty body, including virtual trainings (both required, such as a new faculty orientation, and optional, such as online tutorials), real-time webinars, ready reference support guides, instructor-led courses, job aids, online and live-voice discussions, and an online faculty community. Topics address pedagogical issues (for instance, dealing with difficult students), technical issues (such as learning new technology tools), and administrative issues (such as availability and use of various Walden support services). The CFE also acts as the communications center for Walden faculty, distributing announcements about issues and projects that impact the Walden faculty and publishing a monthly faculty newsletter. One ongoing professional development approach has been a twice-per-year, face-to-face faculty meeting, which offers the opportunity for faculty interaction, community building, and professional development over a working weekend.

Walden University traditionally has hosted faculty meetings twice per year, in conjunction with the commencement ceremonies. These faculty meetings serve as the primary venue for mass professional development

across the Walden faculty. We hold the Summer session in Minneapolis, Minnesota (where the Walden University academic offices are located) and the Winter session in the Southern U.S. All academic staff and academic leadership attend as well as a portion of the Walden faculty body and the support staff. All attending faculty members are fully funded, which creates budget constraints and limits the number who are able to attend. The university's colleges select which of their faculty members to invite, giving priority to faculty members who are serving on university working groups and/or on committees or in leadership positions (for instance, the lead faculty member for a multi-section course,) or faculty members who are hooding a graduating doctoral student.

Historically, the faculty meeting was held over a weekend, with most faculty members arriving on Friday (some arrive earlier in the week based on other meeting needs) and leaving on Sunday evening. All attendees participated in a Friday evening awards banquet, a graduate breakfast, commencement exercises, a graduate dinner on Saturday, and a faculty meeting on Sunday. The faculty meeting included a networking breakfast and lunch, a general session for all participants in the early morning, topic-specific breakout sessions in the late morning, and college breakout sessions in the afternoon. The morning general session focused on presentations from members of the university leadership. In Winter 2011, we also changed the schedule and format of the meeting as part of the improvement process; we discuss the updated schedule later in this article.

Beginning in 2010, the CFE made deliberate efforts to improve the faculty meeting through program evaluation. Hixon, Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, and Feldman (2011) used a program evaluation approach to assess an online faculty development program and indicated that this strategy is helpful for determining how a program actually operates. The program evaluation used a formative, process-oriented approach via internal evaluators (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004). This program evaluation was an iterative improvement process carried out through ongoing observation and implementation of improvements across four sessions of faculty meetings conducted from Summer 2010 through Winter 2012, with additional changes made at each session. The goals of this ongoing program improvement were to identify needed changes to the faculty meeting via faculty member input, and then to support increased responsiveness to faculty input through implementation of relevant improvements. The improvements focused on three main goals: (1) to provide additional opportunities for faculty community development, (2) to increase accessibility to the professional development opportunities for all faculty members, and (3) to expand and increase the relevance of professional development topics.

Throughout the process of gathering feedback and implementing changes, we focused on a faculty-centric approach and strove for inclusion of all of our faculty members in order to improve engagement and participation by the faculty members in building their own professional development process. Faculty feedback surveys served as a key source of information. After each faculty meeting, we surveyed participants to gather feedback about various activities held during the meeting, including the CFE meet-and-greet, general sessions, breakout sessions, and college/center meetings. Survey questions also addressed planning and logistics aspects of the meeting as well as overall impressions of the meeting. Finally, we asked attendees for their input on future faculty meetings. Response rates ranged from 52% (for in-person attendees in Winter 2012) to 70% (for in-person attendees in Winter 2011).

Both the program evaluation approach used throughout this two-year period and the outcomes of the iterative improvement process may provide helpful insight for other institutions in approaching faculty development planning. While we are an entirely virtual university, the approaches used and lessons learned offer relevant input for both hybrid and face-to-face institutions regarding how both to improve faculty development offerings and engage faculty members in the improvement process.

Goals One and Two:
Build Faculty Community and Increase Access

Over the two-year process, several key changes to the faculty meeting were implemented that focused on improving opportunity for faculty interaction and community building as well as on expanding access to the professional development opportunities to all of the members of the Walden faculty community.

Summer (July) 2010

Prior to the faculty meeting, the CFE launched a new CFE community, including a virtual faculty lounge, in the eCampus (Walden University's virtual campus center). Faculty members received e-mail invitations to engage in conversation with their fellow faculty members; participating faculty members had the opportunity to win gift cards. We chose to use extrinsic motivation to spark interest among the faculty in this new activity. At the faculty meeting, the CFE hosted an evening meet-and-greet (with beverages and appetizers) prior to the Friday evening awards banquet. The CFE held the gift card drawings on scheduled intervals throughout

the meet-and-greet. After the faculty meeting, we hosted extended virtual discussions of the six professional development topics covered in the topic specific breakout sessions via the CFE community on eCampus. This supported engagement with faculty members who did not attend the faculty meeting in person.

We also modified the content and format of the faculty meeting morning general session to include an interactive activity. Faculty members worked in small groups to provide their input on the university's key strengths as well as their areas of concern and as to suggest potential ways of addressing those concerns. This provided faculty members with a voice in institutional planning.

Faculty survey results indicated increased satisfaction with the meeting as promoting community building. Several faculty members indicated that they appreciated the change in meeting format (that is, the modification of the general session to be a more interactive activity) and felt that their voices were heard via opportunities to contribute to the university. The CFE meet-and-greet for faculty was well received, and faculty members appreciated the opportunity to engage with and collaborate with their colleagues. Faculty specifically mentioned that they liked reconnecting face-to-face; those who were new liked meeting colleagues in person.

Opportunities for improvement that were suggested included better promotion of the meet-and-greet. Several attendees mentioned not knowing about it or finding out just as the gathering began. Faculty members provided several suggestions for future meetings around timing and content. They indicated that they would like more time to meet outside of formal meetings to share best practices. Some recommended that some of the time on commencement day be used for faculty meetings and professional development.

Winter (January) 2011

For January 2011, we modified the format and schedule of the faculty meeting, with the faculty meeting moved prior to commencement ceremonies. Generally, faculty members arrived on Thursday morning; we hosted faculty meeting activities on Thursday and Friday. The new schedule included an expanded meet-and-greet on Thursday afternoon, which was held in conjunction with meeting registration, and an all-faculty general session on Thursday evening, followed by college-specific dinners. We also expanded general session access, inviting all Walden faculty members to enroll for live virtual attendance at the faculty meeting general session on Thursday evening. Virtual attendees were able

to participate in the general session activity and question-and-answer period through online polling and question features. Friday included a networking breakfast and lunch, a morning general session, late-morning topic-specific breakout sessions, afternoon college-specific breakout sessions, and the awards banquet. The Saturday format (graduate breakfast, commencement exercises, and graduate dinner) remained unchanged.

The additional day allowed for more college-specific meeting time via the college-specific dinner on Thursday as well as additional opportunities for networking and interaction with colleagues. We further expanded the meet-and-greet to include all academic support centers and other support departments (including the CFE, the Center for Research Support, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Center for Student Success, and Human Resources). The meet-and-greet coincided with meeting registration to allow for greater visibility and accessibility among faculty participants.

Responses to the expanded meet-and-greet were generally positive, but faculty members' qualitative comments indicated a lack of understanding regarding the purpose and expectations for the event. Participants largely enjoyed the opportunity to engage with colleagues prior to the official start to the meeting, and they welcomed the chance to meet center staff and learn more about the academic support centers.

Summer (July) 2011

We invited all contributing faculty members who lived locally within the Minneapolis area to participate in the meeting as daily attendees (accommodations not provided), increasing the opportunity for attendance without additional budget implications. Further, we again offered the general session virtually as well as one of the breakout tracks (the sessions for research reviewers) and one of the college-specific meetings (the College of Education) to support extended participation. We also extended the opportunity for ongoing engagement with the professional development topics to the full Walden faculty through virtual webinars on the same topics hosted in the following month. Each virtual webinar featured the same presenters and content as the face-to-face topic-specific breakout sessions at the faculty meeting; 125 faculty members attended these sessions.

We continued to enhance the meet-and-greet, with more representation from Walden departments and centers, centers offering interactive activities for greater faculty engagement, and a longer timeframe and larger space to support increased faculty interaction and networking during

the meet-and-greet. Additionally, we scheduled longer periods of time (half-hour blocks) between sessions to allow additional time for ad hoc faculty conversations and networking. The enhanced meet-and-greet was one of the more popular components of the faculty meeting. Participants liked the format and the chance to network and interact with colleagues and center staff.

Winter (January) 2012

In Winter 2012 we continued to expand access, with virtual/call-in attendance options for both the general session on Thursday evening and all of the college-specific sessions on Friday afternoon. Once again, we focused improvements on the meet-and-greet format to provide additional opportunities for engagement with academic staff and faculty colleagues. A bingo activity encouraged faculty members to visit all department tables, with those faculty members who visited all tables entered into a prize drawing. In addition, based on prior feedback from the academic deans and associate deans, we also offered an academic dean networking session during one breakout period time slot to support relationship building and shared best practices among academic leadership.

Faculty members responded favorably to the improved meet-and-greet—in particular to the bingo activity, which several individuals cited as a good way to increase interaction. Criticisms of the event cited scheduling conflicts and/or the event being hosted too early in the day, which prevented some members from being able to attend based on late arrivals of their flights. Other attendees mentioned that the noise and activity levels in the large room made meaningful interaction difficult. Suggestions for improvement included having volunteer faculty members, college- and school-specific tables, and a faculty support area. These improvements may be helpful in particular for new faculty members or faculty members who have not previously attended faculty meetings to help them establish connections and relationships at the first event of the weekend.These suggestions are currently being considered as next steps in the ongoing improvement process.

Faculty members provided multiple suggestions for improving collaboration and faculty relationship building, including increasing overall meeting time; increasing informal time during the meeting weekend; increasing college-specific breakout time; offering casual venues, including seating at the meet-and-greet; assigning "buddies" to new attendees; and using "speed dating" or other icebreaking activities.

Changes in Faculty Attendance and Perception

Over the two-year iterative improvement process, there were small increases in mean faculty satisfaction with faculty meetings (see Table 1), with the exception of Summer 2011 when there was a slight decrease in satisfaction. (The university implemented a new expense reporting procedure in Summer 2011 that created dissatisfaction among the faculty members; this may have negatively impacted overall satisfaction with the meeting.) Qualitatively, responses to the Winter 2012 faculty meeting reflected satisfaction with the ongoing improvement. Several faculty members specifically stated that the Winter 2012 faculty meeting was the best meeting they had attended to date, including a faculty member who indicated that he or she has been attending faculty meetings for 10 years.

The number of faculty participants at the meetings has increased significantly, from 310 in Summer 2010 (all face-to-face) to 942 in Winter 2012 (both face-to-face and virtual). Future efforts to improve the faculty meetings can identify ways to continue the trend of increasing accessibility through both real-time and subsequent virtual attendance in professional development sessions.

Interestingly, although we offered increased opportunities for networking and community building at each subsequent meeting, and though qualitative commentary from faculty members indicated greater faculty satisfaction with collaboration opportunities with colleagues, mean survey scores indicated minimal improvement in this area (see Table 2). Future improvement efforts should focus on clarifying the types of experiences that will increase faculty satisfaction with collegial collaboration and then identify and implement appropriate changes to support this outcome.

Goal Three:
Expand and Increase the Relevance
of Professional Development Content

We sought to both increase the relevance of professional development content at our meetings and increase the overall number of development options available. We expanded the scope of who developed and delivered the content to allow for broader representation in our professional development offerings.

Summer (July) 2010

The general session featured a welcome from the executive director of

Table 1
Faculty Participants and Mean Satisfaction

Faculty Meeting	Face-to-Face Participation	Virtual Participation in General Session	Virtual Participation in College Session	Satisfaction Rate, Face-to-Face[a] M (SD) %	Satisfaction Rate, Virtual[b] M (SD) %
Summer 2010	310	NA	NA	4.03 (0.86) 80%	NA
Winter 2011	314	199	NA	4.21 (0.76) 87%	4.40 (0.71) 93%
Summer 2011	349	259	89	3.99 (0.87) 80%	4.41 (0.76) 90%
Winter 2012	432	167	343	4.31(0.70) 91%	4.43 (0.76) 91%

[a]Satisfaction rate for face-to-face indicates response to "The faculty meeting met my expectations overall" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). Percentage reflects the percentage of participants who *agreed* or *strongly agreed.*

[b]Satisfaction rate for virtual indicates response by participants of the virtual general session to "I would participate in a future virtual faculty meeting" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). Percentage reflects the percentage of participants who *agreed* or *strongly agreed.*

Table 2
Collaboration With Colleagues

Faculty Meeting	*Collaboration With Colleagues*[a]
Summer 2010	3.64 (1.12) 68%
Winter 2011	3.70 (1.16) 72%
Summer 2011	3.71 (1.09) 72 %
Winter 2012	3.86 (1.11) 75%

[a]Collaboration with colleagues rate indicates response to "The appropriate amount of time was provided for me to collaborate with my colleagues" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). Percentage reflects the percentage of participants who *agreed* or *strongly agreed*.

the CFE, a "State of the University" address from the university president, and an activity with the chief academic officer. The activity, "Learning Map: Retention at Walden U," asked faculty to work in small groups to address issues that impact student success and to propose potential ways to support students in successfully moving forward in their degree programs. We offered two content-specific breakout session timeslots between the general session and lunch, repeating the same in each of the two hours. The CFE developed the content, in conjunction with other members of academic leadership. The CFE provided support at each session with the collaborators presenting the content. Session topics were as follows:

- Conversation With the President (first session only).

- Academic Program Directors Meeting With the President (second session only).

- Conversation With the Chief Academic Officer.

- Faculty Engagement in Accreditation Self-Study.

- Supporting Haiti: Assistance, Interventions, and Research Toward Social Change.

- Teaching Toward the Social Change Mission at Walden University.

- The Walden Service Network—Make a Difference TODAY!

- Continuous Improvement With TaskStream.

- Scaffolding Effective Writing Competencies From Undergraduate Through Doctoral Degrees.

- Doctoral Capstone Quality at Walden.

Faculty members responded favorably to the interactive participation during the morning general session; they praised the use of adult learning techniques, which allowed them to share their higher education experience. However, some faculty indicated concern that their input would not actually be used. Faculty members said they also would like to be more involved in planning meeting content and to have the opportunity to indicate their professional development needs.

Winter (January) 2011

General sessions were held on Thursday evening and Friday morning. The Thursday evening session included a welcome from a CFE director, an update on the self-study for reaffirmation of accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, and the "State of the University" from the university president. The chief academic officer presented on "The Faculty Role in Student Transformation"; he discussed how the faculty recommendations offered in the Summer 2010 retention activity had been implemented, and he solicited additional faculty input on key academic initiatives. The Friday morning general session featured a discussion panel hosted by a CFE director; in this discussion panel, current Walden students from each of the degree levels shared their perspectives on their experiences in the online classroom.

There were two content-specific breakout session timeslots between the general session and lunch; the same content was repeated in both hours. CFE members collaborated with other members of the academic leadership to develop and present the professional development sessions. Session topics were the following:

- Increasing Student Engagement in the Classroom Through Multimedia and Collaboration Tools.

- Information and Resources Students and Faculty Need to Produce High-Quality Research.

- Engagement in our Social Change Mission as Part of our Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

- Information Literacy Workshop: Helping Students Find and Write From Reliable Research.

- Overcoming Disruptive Issues in the Online Classroom.

- Program Directors as "Level 5 Leaders" (first session only).

- Navigating Petitions and the New eCampus Academic Leadership Community—for Program Directors (second session only).

Summer (July) 2011

The general session was held on Thursday evening only to allow for more content-specific professional development on Friday. The Thursday evening session included a welcome from the executive director of the CFE, the "State of the University" update from the university president, and an interactive session on the "Reaffirmation of the Higher Learning Commission Accreditation." The chief academic officer and other members of the HLC self-study steering committee presented an update; then faculty members participated in a small-group brainstorming session about topics related to the self-study, with tables reporting back key findings and notes from all groups collected.

Faculty feedback from the Winter 2011 meeting supported replacing the Friday morning general session with additional breakout opportunities, as faculty members indicated a preference for topic-specific professional development content in small, interactive groups. In addition, we organized the breakout sessions into content-focused tracks (for instance, one for academic leadership and one for faculty members who serve as research reviewers for student research). Again, CFE team members collaborated with other academic leaders to develop and present content. Track 1 focused on the development and training of university research reviewers (faculty members trained to provide quality review in the doctoral research process). Track 1 included a live call-in option for those university research reviewers who could not attend the faculty meeting in person. Track 2 focused on academic program leaders and provided training on the research review process (joint session for tracks 1 and 2) and the development of leadership and management skills. Tracks 3 and 4 focused on faculty member development. Session topics were the following:

Track 3:

- Enhancing Instructor Feedback for Student Success.

- They Are Not What We Expected: Undergraduate Demographics.

- Tech Tools to Improve Learning Outcomes.

Track 4:

- Using Humor to Build Community in Organizational Units: A Lighthearted Approach to a Serious Subject.

- Writing Is a Process, Not a Product: Instructor as Writing Coach.

- Maximizing Student Success: How to Leverage eCampus.

The topic-specific breakout sessions received mixed reviews. Participants indicated that the sessions offered information that they could apply to their individual role and work. Participants also indicated that the breakout sessions provided an improved venue to engage with colleagues and leadership around important topics. However, participants indicated that the variety of professional development topics was limited and repetitive. Faculty members suggested that breakout session planning include more faculty input to provide an opportunity for new professional development topics.

Winter (January) 2012

We implemented a proposal submission and peer review process for the content-specific breakout sessions. The CFE issued a call for proposals to all Walden faculty members, and the CFE Faculty Advisory Council, a committee of faculty members representing each of the Walden colleges used a blind peer review process to review all of the proposals and select the content for the content-specific breakout sessions. The Advisory Council also identified the need for an interactive session for the faculty body with the university president, which ultimately developed into a breakout session track related to international student issues. This track included two open discussion forums with the president. We asked faculty members who submitted high-quality proposals that were not selected for faculty meetings due to time constraints to present virtual webinars

after the faculty meetings. The new peer review process offered increased opportunities for faculty input into the professional development content offered.

The general session was held on Thursday evening and included an opening from the executive director of the CFE, the university update by the president, the reaffirmation of accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission update by the chief academic officer, and updates on each of the colleges by the senior vice president. During the general session, academic leadership highlighted recent achievements from each of the colleges, which provided faculty members with a greater understanding of recent improvements across the university.

On Friday morning, we offered three sessions of content-specific break-out sessions between breakfast and lunch. Session content was proposed and planned via the faculty submission and peer-review process described above, with faculty members and academic leadership presenting their proposed sessions. CFE staff members served as hosts at each session to provide logistical support and make introductions. We organized presentations into seven content tracks: research, academic residencies, academic leadership, international, and three faculty development tracks. Session topics, by track, were the following:

Research track:

- New Tools for Assessing and Mentoring Doctoral Capstone Quality (held twice).

- Residency track:

- Guiding and Supporting Residency Faculty.

- Academic leadership track:

- Performance Management and Development for Academic Leaders (two-part session).

- Deans and Associate Deans Networking Session.

International track:

- Internationalization at Walden: Roundtable Discussion With the President (held twice).

- Education Beyond Borders.

Faculty track 1:

- Sharing Your Scholarly Story: Building Effective Vitas and Dynamic Professional Portfolios.

- Developing a Virtual Research Lab With Students as Research Assistants.

- Impact of Form and Style Review on Published Dissertation Quality.

Faculty track 2:

- What Form and Style Editors Would Like Committee Members to Know.

- Teaching Walden's Undergraduates: Lessons Learned and Models for Success.

- "Am I Meeting Your Needs?": Enhancing the Self-Evaluation Process for Faculty and University Leadership.

Faculty track 3:

- Expanding and Implementing Walden's Definition of Social Change.

- Guiding Students Toward Feasible Doctoral Studies.

- Add Some Jing to Your Online Classes.

Faculty members responded favorably to the call for proposals, stating that this change provided an increased opportunity for them to invest in their own professional development. They specifically noted improvements in the quality and applicability of breakout session content compared to prior faculty meetings. Faculty members stated that they appreciated the opportunity to have a voice in the selection of their professional development opportunities.

Summary and Conclusions

Through program evaluation over two years and four faculty meetings, we identified multiple areas of potential development and implemented numerous changes. We focused on three goals during the improvement process: (1) to provide additional opportunities for faculty member net-

working and relationship building, (2) to expand accessibility of the faculty meeting professional development opportunities to all Walden faculty members, and (3) to improve the relevance and usability of professional development topics. Key changes that supported each of these growth areas included the following:

> *Goal one: Provide additional opportunities for faculty member networking and relationship building:*

- Offered CFE faculty meet-and-greet (Summer 2010).

- Changed overall meeting format to add an extra day to the faculty meeting schedule (Winter 2011).

- Expanded format and time for meet-and-greet (Winter 2011, Summer 2011, Winter 2012).

- Offered college-specific dinners (Winter 2011).

- Increased time between sessions to allow for *ad hoc* networking (Summer 2011).

> *Goal Two: Expand accessibility of the faculty meeting professional development opportunities to all Walden faculty members:*

- Offered discussion of professional development topics via electronic message boards in the electronic campus community (Summer 2010).

- Offered virtual attendance option for general meeting session (Winter 2011).

- Made general session recording available for later viewing (Winter 2011).

- Invited local contributing faculty members to attend faculty meeting as daily attendees (Summer 2011).

- Offered virtual attendance option for some topic-specific breakout sessions (Summer 2011).

- Offered virtual webinars for all topic-specific breakout sessions (Summer 2011).

- Offered virtual attendance option for college specific breakout sessions (Winter 2012).

Goal Three: Expand and Increase the Relevance of Professional Development Content:

- Increased opportunities for faculty to voice opinions and share experiences in general session and breakout sessions (Summer 2010).

- Increased number of professional development sessions offered via the extended schedule (Winter 2011).

- Increased relevance of professional development sessions via content tracks (Summer 2011).

- Expanded offerings through faculty involvement in submitting ideas, reviewing and selecting sessions, and presenting content (Winter 2012).

Faculty survey data are anonymous; therefore, we are unable to analyze the impact of the faculty meeting improvements on teaching performance. Likewise, the anonymous data have not allowed for analysis of differences in satisfaction among various faculty groups, such as by college affiliation or by length of service to the institution. Further, we have not asked virtual attendees how their experience with virtual attendance impacts their sense of connection to the Walden community. Future directions in our program evaluation may include the addition of identifiers into the survey to allow for more in-depth analysis of demographic variables, as well as expanding the survey for virtual attendees to allow for comparison of outcomes between face-to-face and virtual attendees. More in-depth analysis could facilitate new insights and improvements to the professional development program.

Other institutions may find the iterative process for program evaluation and program improvement useful in their faculty development planning. The ongoing process of evaluation and improvement allowed for changes at each subsequent meeting to build upon the successful modifications of the prior meeting. This process of gathering faculty feedback, combined with critical reflection, allowed us to implement faculty-centered improvements. The strategy would be effective for virtual, hybrid, and face-to-face professional development programs.

Puzziferro and Shelton (2009) conclude that effective faculty development follows the American Distance Education Consortium's (ADEC) guiding principles for teaching and learning, including that learners be active and engaged via authentic activities, and that learning experiences support interaction and development of communities of interest. Our key

focus on community building and content relevance were aimed at achieving these principles. Other institutions may find that the components outlined above also support their professional development programs in demonstrating the principles of teaching and learning.

Footnote

[1]For the purposes of simplicity in this article, we use CFE as the umbrella term for all functions of both the CFE and the CTL.

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