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Faculty Developer as Change Agent: A Conceptual Model for Small Institutions and Beyond

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As a newcomer to faculty development seven years ago, I thought I knew what I was getting into; I thought I could manage the task of promoting excellence in teaching and learning. After all, my field is education, so thinking about teaching comes naturally to me. What I did not know, and have only recently come to understand, is the complexity and reach of the role of faculty developer. The purpose of this article is to shed light on understandings that I have acquired through the work of our center and connect my experience to research on the role of faculty developer, on leadership, and on organizational change. Ultimately, I conclude that if we do our work well in the most apparent areas of engaging with faculty and focusing on teaching and learning, we are more likely to have a meaningful impact on the campus community, especially in a small college setting.

Introduction

The role of the faculty developer is especially important in the current higher education climate, where colleges are striving to redefine themselves within a constantly shifting higher education landscape (Gillespie, 2010; Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006). In order to remain competitive and relevant, colleges are introducing strategic initiatives and enhancements to teaching and learning. As a result, faculty at all levels require support from centers for teaching and learning in order to stay current with innovations in pedagogy and adapt to the changing role of the faculty member. There has long been a call for faculty developers to

perceive themselves as change agents within college organizations and take on leadership roles (Diamond, 2005; Schroeder, 2011; Sorcinelli et al., 2006). The current context of higher education presents an opportunity for faculty developers to step out of traditional roles and engage with faculty, administrators, and the organization in ways that we may not have imagined previously.

Using my own experience as a case study, I introduce a conceptual model of faculty development and recommend strategies for advancing the work of faculty developers. As the title of this article indicates, I propose that faculty developers view themselves as change agents within the campus community. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while the faculty developer may play a key role in organizational change, he or she rarely works in isolation. Effective faculty developers are often supported by dedicated advisory groups, engaged faculty and staff, and administrators at all levels. As this case illustrates, the power that a faculty developer may have to effect change is the result of a collective effort and reflects the credibility of the center for teaching and learning.

Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty Developers

College campuses range in size, demographics, location, mission, and type, yet the programming offered at centers for teaching and learning is often similar (Plank & Mares, 2013; Sorcinelli et al., 2006). In most settings, faculty developers construct a menu of programming options that includes new faculty orientation, presentations, intensive workshops, one-on-one consultations, and access to resources on effective pedagogy. The work of the faculty developer can be especially challenging on a small college campus, because staff, resources, and time may be limited (Lee, 2010; Mooney & Reder, 2008). Programming may be similar to what is offered on larger campuses, but it may not be as frequent, or there may be fewer resources to support all that needs to be done. As a result, faculty developers on small campuses need to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that they can maximize their effectiveness. Moreover, faculty developers on small campuses need to fully understand the ways in which their work affects faculty, curriculum, and the college as an organization.

According to the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD), the work of faculty developers falls into three general categories: faculty development, instructional development, and organizational development. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of these three categories and their potential connections to each other. The

Figure 1
**Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty Developers
 Based on POD Network Model**



first area, *faculty development*, is focused on the individual faculty member. Effective faculty development nurtures the faculty member through the process of developing a sense of his or her role as teacher, scholar, and professional. Providing resources and support for new faculty is a form of faculty development. The second category, *instructional development*, is closely tied to student learning with an emphasis on course design, curriculum, and teaching. Facilitating workshops on course design is an

example of instructional development. The final area where faculty developers focus their work is *organizational development* (Cook & Meizlish, 2011; POD, n.d.; Schroeder, 2011).

Activities that relate to organizational development may include a campus-wide strategic initiative to enrich student engagement, where the faculty developer collaborates with campus leaders to plan and implement programming. As these examples illustrate, faculty, instructional, and organizational development are significant to the individual faculty member, the quality of student learning, and the campus community. Research and experience show that if the faculty developer is able to strike a balance across the three areas, then campus-wide visibility, credibility, and leadership follow naturally, contributing to organizational growth and change (Plank & Mares, 2013; Schroeder, 2011).

On the campus of a Research 1 university, where the center for teaching and learning may be large, well-staffed, and sufficiently funded, faculty developers are able to devote their attention to all three areas of faculty development as described by POD (Cook & Meizlish, 2011). For example, centers for teaching and learning on larger campuses may be able to offer a range of quality programs and resources that support faculty and instructional development while representatives of the center simultaneously work with academic leaders on strategic planning, campus-wide initiatives, and other aspects of organizational development. On a smaller campus, the key to a center's success is the development of meaningful, quality programming that connects to the mission of the center and establishes it as a reliable resource (Reder, Mooney, Holmgren, & Kuerbis, 2009). Regardless of campus size, faculty developers who are new to the role may be more likely to focus on faculty and instructional development at first, working their way into organizational development as they gain experience and a better understanding of the college as an organization (Gillespie, 2010; Schroeder, 2011).

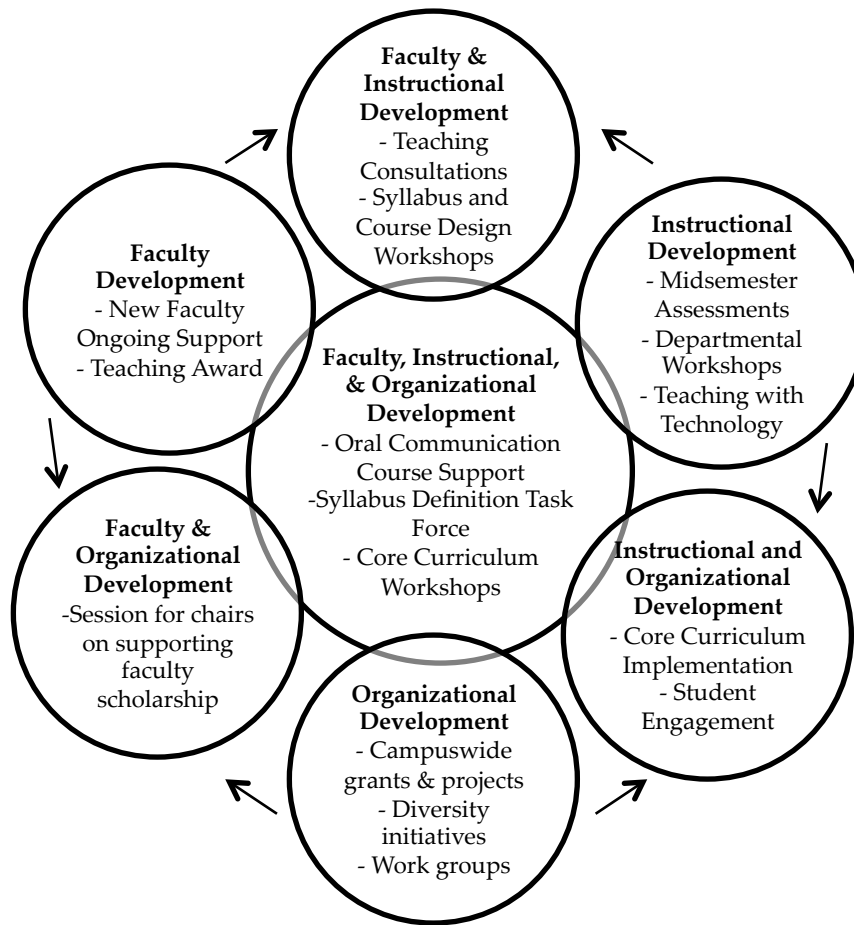
Experts in the field of faculty development cite the changing role of the faculty member as a rationale for developing more focused approaches to working with faculty, such as faculty learning communities (Beane-Katner, 2013) or one-on-one consultations (Plank & Mares, 2013). These methods may be the most effective in engaging faculty and enabling them to develop more enduring relationships with centers for teaching and learning. Studies have demonstrated, especially in recent years, that quality is more important than quantity. Specifically, the quality and depth of interactions between faculty developers and faculty is significant and contributes to a faculty member's long-term investment in the center (Plank & Mares, 2013). A group of experienced faculty developers has

created a heuristic to be used as a tool for self-reflection as we consider those who are influenced by our work (Felten, Little, Ortquist-Ahrens, & Reder, 2013). They encourage faculty developers to examine the various interactions, connections, and collaborations that define the work of faculty development. On a small college campus, focused attention and energy has the potential to yield meaningful results. Most important, faculty developers who understand their roles and develop strategies for approaching their work with faculty have the ability to shape the organization as a whole, even when their attention is not focused directly on organizational development.

The relationships and potential within and across the three components of the work of faculty developers are best understood through a visual representation that includes examples. As Figure 2 indicates, there are occasions when the boundaries between faculty development, instructional development, and organizational development are well defined. For example, an event such as new faculty orientation is categorized as “faculty development” because the focus is on welcoming and supporting the faculty member as teacher, professional, and individual. While instruction and curriculum may be touched upon during an orientation for new faculty, most one-time orientation programs that are offered at the beginning of a faculty member’s first semester on campus would not be considered “instructional development.” A workshop on assessment of student learning, on the other hand, would fall under the heading of “instructional development” because of its focus on teaching and learning. In this type of workshop, faculty might explore the uses of various forms of assessment to improve instruction, leading them to make potentially significant changes to their courses.

The areas where the categories interact with and influence each other are the most interesting, as in “faculty and instructional development,” which includes programming such as one-on-one consultations on teaching and course design. Teaching consultations accomplish the dual goals of cultivating the faculty member as teacher and supporting the curriculum, yielding both growth in the faculty member as an individual and enrichment of the quality of instruction. Another example that represents the overlap of two categories is “instructional and organizational development,” where supporting the implementation of a new core curriculum contributes to the growth of the college. Exploring the possible connections across categories reveals various ways in which centers for teaching and learning function within the college. In fact, close analysis of this conceptual framework reveals that a good deal of our work, indeed, some of our most important work, falls in the center where all three areas

Figure 2
Center Activities Categorized



of development converge. As shown in the center of Figure 2, an event such as a workshop on the core curriculum has the potential to influence individual faculty, instruction, and the organization. Faculty developers as change agents recognize the value of our efforts in each of the three areas while understanding the potential that lies in the center of the conceptual model where the three areas intersect.

Leadership and Organizational Change

Faculty development and leadership may appear to go hand-in-hand, yet many faculty developers enter their roles with little training and don't know how to establish themselves as leaders (Diamond, 2005; Gillespie, 2010; Schroeder, 2011). According to Sorcinelli and her colleagues (2006), the future of faculty development involves faculty developers as participants in governance who work closely with academic leaders and align centers with institutional priorities. In order to become effective change agents, faculty developers need to understand how the institution works, anticipate faculty needs, and collaborate with campus leaders (Cook & Meizlish, 2011; Gillespie 2010). While a center for teaching and learning is only one component within a larger organization, its function can influence the organization as a whole, especially on a small college campus.

Phrases such as "stuck in the middle" often have a negative connotation. Yet in faculty development, the middle may be the most desirable space to occupy, because that is where progress is made. In an interesting proposal to "reframe academic leadership," Bolman and Gallos (2011) describe academic leaders, such as school deans, who "lead from the middle" because they attempt to effect change while they are navigating between faculty and administration. Those who lead from the middle need to respond to pressures from both sides and operate from both a top-down and bottom-up approach in order to be successful. An effective leader understands pressures that influence administrative decisions while supporting initiatives that are generated by faculty. The call for faculty developer as change agent (Diamond, 2005) can be conceptualized in a similar way: Faculty developers work closely with academic leaders while simultaneously providing pedagogical support to faculty, creating space and opportunity for organizational development. Faculty developers are often in the distinctive position of being in the middle as a result of the functions that they serve and the multiple roles that they play, such as center director, faculty member, departmental representative, committee member, and faculty senator. On a small campus, where the faculty developer is called upon to participate in various projects and initiatives, he or she may be one of the few individuals who participates in multiple committees and can make important connections by sharing information and bridging conversations.

In this conceptual model, the "middle" is located where faculty, instructional, and organizational development come together. Some things cannot be imposed top down, yet they won't grow from the bottom up. Somewhere in between administrators and faculty, where faculty developers may be, is where much of the work of change can be done. A center

director who is aware of this space, willing to speak up, and has credibility is uniquely positioned to effect change. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the faculty developer within the organizational context is key to assuming the role of change agent. The following case illustrates the unique position of the faculty developer in terms of role and function and shows the potential influence that our day-to-day work has on the college as an organization.

A Case in Point

To modify a popular expression, “Leadership is what happens when you are busy working with faculty.” In the case presented in the following paragraphs, my experience illustrates the interplay among the distinct aspects of our work: faculty, instructional, and organizational development. More specifically, while focusing on the day-to-day work of faculty and instructional development, our center for teaching and learning was invited to contribute to the planning of campus-wide initiatives. With the support of faculty colleagues, our center’s advisory group, and academic affairs administrators, I began to see myself as both director of the center and potential change agent. This case demonstrates the importance of balance and intentionality as well as the need to understand the role of a teaching and learning center in organizational development on a small college campus.

Our center was established by the faculty in 1992 and had always been run by a faculty member with the guidance of a college committee. Our provost and academic affairs office have a long history of supporting the center’s activities and recognizing the value of our work. This support had been demonstrated through consistent levels of annual funding for the center and ongoing engagement with the center regarding campus-wide planning and initiatives. My work as a faculty developer began in 2007, when I was appointed to direct the center while maintaining my faculty position in the Elementary Special Education Department. Although I felt very comfortable with the idea of working with faculty through a teaching and learning center, I did not fully understand the function of the center within the campus as a whole or my charge as the center’s director. After three years of offering programming that had already been established and adding some sessions in response to faculty needs, our center was required by the college to complete a process of self-evaluation that included consultation with a faculty development expert from another campus. As a result of our self-assessment, we channeled our resources into efforts that were closely aligned with the center’s mission of promoting effec-

tive pedagogy and positive student learning experiences. Guided by an advisory group comprising six invested faculty colleagues, we focused on developing or improving programs such as orientation and support for new faculty, presentations on teaching strategies, and midsemester assessments of teaching and learning. Workshops on course design and syllabus development were introduced, along with pedagogy-based book groups and a teacher-mentor program.

Each of these offerings attracted a range of approximately 10-15 faculty members, or 3-5% of our full time faculty. Initially, we wondered if we were having an effect on faculty and instructional development. While satisfaction ratings were consistently high and anecdotal reports indicated incremental changes in pedagogical approaches and curricular design, our numbers felt small. We did not know if we were reaching enough faculty. In the long run, it turned out that smaller, more focused sessions with fewer faculty participants resulted in more positive outcomes than a single large, well-attended session. One reason for this, which has been cited in recent research (Plank & Mares, 2013), is the level of engagement and follow-up that is possible when centers work with faculty in one-on-one or small-group contexts. Significant change in thinking about teaching, curriculum, and assessment becomes possible when the conversation focuses on specific faculty experiences. Over time, we realized that our ongoing support of faculty and instructional development ultimately raised the center's profile and enhanced our credibility, laying the groundwork for the center's involvement in several campus-wide initiatives.

As the center developed programming more intentionally focused on teaching and learning, our campus was undergoing a great deal of change not directly related to the center, including the adoption of a new core curriculum, implementation of a new strategic plan for the college, beginning of a diversity initiative, introduction of a freshman common reading program, and creation of a center for engaged learning. On a small college campus, where a single faculty member may run the center for teaching and learning, that individual is often called upon to participate in discussions about new initiatives. At first, I did not recognize the value of my involvement in campus-wide work and may not have sought participation in the early planning stages of these projects. In retrospect, my seat at the table was key to the center's eventual role in organizational development and institutional change. Moreover, if these campus-wide efforts had begun prior to our center's focused work on faculty and instructional development, we may not have been prepared to be involved. It turned out that our earlier faculty and instructional development work with smaller groups of faculty and academic leaders clarified our iden-

tity, improved our credibility, increased our visibility, and demonstrated our accessibility (Cook & Meizlish, 2011), all of which prepared us to be involved in larger-scale organizational development.

As Figure 2 shows, the range of programming offered by our center and the involvement of our director in campus-wide committees and projects resulted in a balance of faculty, instructional, and organizational development. In a scenario that is likely played out on other campuses, the faculty developer—while offering pedagogy, learning, assessment, and curricular programming—participates in committees, work groups, and projects that relate to the campus as a whole and often link directly to the college's strategic goals. This case also demonstrates the opportunities to "lead from the middle," where the faculty developer is involved in efforts from various perspectives and can address the strategic goals of the center while working toward improving the college as an organization.

An experience with syllabus guidelines demonstrates the ways in which a faculty developer on a small campus may have multiple connections to a single task. Syllabus construction is an essential topic in faculty and instructional development and is incorporated into new faculty orientation, midsemester assessment conversations, one-on-one consultations, and course design workshops. The development of syllabi is also a concern of academic leaders for a range of reasons, including enforcement of academic integrity policy, federal requirements regarding the calculation of credit hours, and assessment of learning outcomes. When I began as center director seven years ago, I asked whether the college had a syllabus template or required syllabus components. Although nothing relevant existed on the books, there was an interest in developing consistency across disciplines in the preparation of course syllabi. The center for teaching and learning created its own guidelines based on research and best practice that were provided to new faculty during orientation, but official guidelines would need faculty senate approval.

Several years after my initial inquiry, an opportunity for campus-wide consideration of a syllabus template resulted from the implementation of the new core curriculum. The senate-appointed faculty committee whose charge was to review proposals for new core courses felt the frustration of receiving syllabi in multiple formats, so that they were challenged to find all of the information they needed. While the proposal of developing college-wide criteria for syllabus components may have met resistance in the past, the stage was now set for change. With the creation of a syllabus task force, I was invited to participate as both faculty senator and center director. My prior experience had prepared me well to serve in multiple capacities on this task force, working where faculty, instructional, and organizational development come together in the conceptual model

(see Figure 2). Interactions with faculty during orientation and through consultations and workshops provided me with a view of various approaches to developing and utilizing a syllabus. Collaborative work with staff, administrators, and faculty colleagues gave me insight into the importance of the syllabus from their perspectives. As a member of the syllabus definition task force, I could share the center's resources and my experience as the work group moved toward the development of required and recommended syllabus components. Faculty senate approved the resulting syllabus guidelines, which now apply to all new course proposals.

Some things cannot be imposed top down, yet they won't grow from the bottom up, either. Somewhere in between administrators and faculty, where faculty developers may be located, is where much of the work of change can be done. In this case, the best place to advance the conversation about syllabi was from within all of the groups involved. This experience taught me that a center director who is aware of various dynamics, willing to speak up, and has credibility is uniquely positioned to effect change.

Discussion and Recommendations

Considering the work of faculty developers within a conceptual framework that includes faculty, instructional, and organizational development demonstrates the depth and breadth of our work. When we map our tasks onto this conceptual model, we see where our energies and resources are focused. For some faculty developers on small campuses, the majority of our time is spent on faculty and instructional development. This is reasonable. Faculty and instructional development are starting points for faculty developers whose choices may be limited by available resources, faculty needs, and campus climate. As my experience illustrates, though, emphasizing faculty and instructional development may be a very effective long-term approach that can have a positive impact on the organization as a whole.

Applying this conceptual framework helps us to visualize the potential of the faculty developer to influence the organization more directly. For example, many faculty developers on small campuses work alone or with a small staff and are expected to participate in pedagogical and curricular projects outside of the center for teaching and learning. Work with faculty in one-on-one and group situations, attention to pedagogy and curriculum, and interactions with various campus leaders fill out faculty developers' calendars. Although these activities amount to a heavy workload at times, our campus-wide involvement across faculty, instructional, and organizational development enhances the effectiveness of our centers for teaching and learning.

Successful faculty developers have found ways to channel their efforts to tasks that are most likely to produce meaningful results. As we delve into organizational development and assume more of a leadership role, we may need additional guidance. The following recommendations are based on my experience and are supported by the most recent research on teaching, learning, and organizational development in higher education. These five principles can help guide the faculty developer with limited time and resources:

1. Develop a working knowledge of current research, trends, and innovations in higher education teaching and learning. In addition to enabling faculty developers to advise faculty and provide necessary instructional support, such expertise prepares us for opportunities to engage in organizational development (Gillespie, 2010).
2. Strive to deliver quality programming and collaborative work with colleagues; this is the most effective way to establish credibility (Cook & Meizlish, 2011; Mooney & Reder, 2008).
3. Identify allies, collaborate frequently, and maintain positive relationships through authenticity, integrity, and professionalism (Gillespie, 2010; Mooney & Reder, 2008). Relationships, connections, and networking are essential in all aspects of our work, from welcoming new faculty to meeting with academic leaders.
4. Understand the organizational context, function of the center for teaching and learning, and the ways in which contributions to organizational development can be made (Gillespie, 2010). Recognize and value the work of faculty developer as one who can assume multiple roles and functions within the organization.
5. Participate, influence, and support campus activities that contribute to teaching, learning, and organizational growth without seeking recognition (Cook & Meizlish, 2011).

The small college campus is a complex setting, within which faculty developers need to establish themselves as reliable leaders who are willing to work collaboratively with members of the campus community involved in the enterprise of teaching and learning. In order to be engaged in and

possibly influence campus change, faculty developers need to be poised to participate and help lead that change. To do that, we need to understand and engage with all three aspects of our work: faculty development, instructional development, and organizational development. Finally, we should approach our work with vision, intentionality, and balance in order to “lead from the middle” and act as change agents within our institutions.

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