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Reaching Those Faculty Not Easily Reached: How CTLs Can Improve Participation in Faculty Programming Through Faculty Innovators and Online Instruction

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Though not often discussed in the field, a deep-seated problem exists in higher-education faculty development: the low percentage of discrete faculty participation (DFP). To raise the DFP, a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at a regional comprehensive university with severe personnel limitations developed two inter-related solutions, a Faculty Innovator program and an online system of phased professional development called Developing Excellence in Eastern's Professors (DEEP).

Introduction: The Undiscussed Problem

At the conclusion of *Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence: Current Practices, Future Imperatives* (2016), Beach, Sorcinelli, Austin, and Rivard present an appendix on "Top Issues Faculty Development Should Address in the Next Five Years," yet nowhere in their list of 39 issues (pp. 173-174) can the lack of faculty participation be found. Any faculty developer who has toiled in a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), however, realizes that raising the percentage of discrete faculty participation (DFP)—i.e., the number of individual participants in the Center's programming—can present major challenges. Strangely, in the literature—from books, articles, and even blogs—faculty developers don't seem to want to be pinned down to a DFP

percentage unless we count a rare, out-of-date 1993 study that California community colleges raised their DFP from 10% to 70% (Heeren & Mason, 1993) through “workshops, retreats, campus presentations, and participation in governance” (p. 7). Pesce (2015) noted, “faculty participation in professional development for teaching remains low (MacKinnon, 2003; Sorcinelli, 2006),” but doesn’t supply figures. In *Faculty Development and Student Learning: Assessing the Connections* (2016), Condon, Iverson, Manduca, Rutz, and Willett at least recognize the problem: “While faculty who participate at low levels in faculty development show evidence of campus based priorities creeping into their assignments, high-participating faculty capitalizing on professional development opportunities outperform low-participating faculty” (p. 70). Unfortunately, they don’t mention “non-participating faculty.” In short, a review of the literature on the DFP problem suggests either not much research has been done on the issue or faculty developers have been hesitant to release the results that demonstrate a lack of efficacy on the CTLs’ part (and with funding often tied to participation numbers, who can blame them?).

Our CTL’s Challenges

For us, as faculty developers at a regional comprehensive institution, one of the top two issues is how to raise the DFP (the other is, of course, adequate funding). This problem becomes more acute next year as the state’s coordinating board for higher education, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), begins collecting data on the DFP and factors that metric into its performance-based funding for each state institution. Like any CTL, we are constantly looking for new and updated ways to engage all faculty in educational development opportunities. While our CTL’s faculty engagement efforts are trending up, only a calculated and sustained effort will allow us to engage the “hard to reach” faculty.

Challenge #1 is our CTL’s need to grow the personnel necessary for effective faculty development programming. From 2006-2013, we operated as a stand-alone unit with one full-time position (which we were allowed to split into two half-time positions), one half-time administrative assistant position, and one graduate assistant. More recently, however, the opportunity to reorganize and align with a larger unit—the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity—provided new alliances and resources. Among the positive aspects of this reorganization was a higher-level Executive Director guiding the long-term planning of the program who also devoted approximately one-quarter

time to faculty development. In addition, the reorganization allowed for the use of the administrator's staff, including an Administrative Assistant, a Technology Coordinator, and a Media Producer.

Other environmental challenges pervade at our institution. Full-time faculty have heavy (four/four) teaching loads as well as heavy service expectations, and a new emphasis has been placed on scholarship. Moreover, an ideal time for educational development sessions does not exist. Many of our faculty now teach online or hybrid (in person and online) classes, so their on-campus time is limited. Still, in two of the last four years, our CTL's percentage of participating faculty has risen as the Provost's Professional Development Speaker Series (a campus-wide workshop series that we run) has brought in speakers with broadly applicable messages focused on the enhancement of teaching and learning, such as Sandra McGuire on metacognition and Dee Fink on backward design. These workshops have reached approximately 50% of the faculty each time.

Perhaps our greatest challenge involves learning and application. A higher DFP alone is not sufficient, for faculty must first learn at workshops and then implement that learning. For faculty learning to occur, time is a necessity. They must engage in the learning over long periods of time—what is called iteration or spaced intervals. As Lang (2016) explains, “the time that intervenes between spaced learning sessions also allows our minds to better organize and solidify what we are studying” (p. 67). Gormally, Evans, and Brickman (2014) summarize this principle another way: “We know that effective dissemination of evidence-based teaching practices requires more intensive training than a one-time workshop can offer” (Sunal et al., 2001; Dancy & Henderson, 2010; Singer et al., 2012)” (p. 188). Nonetheless, even though we have gone to theming a year's worth of programming through such fundamental and powerful concepts as deep learning and high-impact practices as well as creating a series of Milestone Events (major high-budget and well-publicized campus-wide events designed to attract large audiences), if we cannot attract a faculty member to even one event, then we certainly cannot begin the process of faculty learning.

More precisely, then, the problem can be stated as: How do CTLs reach that 85% of faculty—approximately 500 members in our case—who for one reason or another don't participate? Brownell and Tanner (2012) list the three major reasons for nonparticipation—reasons with which we strongly agree—as “lack of training, time, incentives” (p. 350). Any solution, then, must overcome these three obstacles.

Outreach Solution #1: Faculty Innovators

While the background of the Faculty Innovators (FIs) program seems simple—if they won't come to us, we'll go to them—the execution of this principle was more difficult. The three of us (Charlie, Rusty, and Hal) could not sufficiently cover five colleges, 39 departments, 600+ faculty, and over 100 adjuncts, so we had to swell the ranks of “us,” and we did so with a group we call the FI Executive Committee.

We started with a definition of what the FIs are. According to our website, “Faculty Innovators are a cadre of faculty members selected in consultation with deans and chairs who have been trained in the best practices of teaching & learning, high-impact classroom techniques, and up-to-date technologies. They have a strong desire to share that expertise with other faculty and with students” (Faculty Innovators, 2017).

For our rationale, we cited five Strategic Initiatives in our institution's strategic plan that directly focused on “enhanced professional development opportunities,” “innovative teaching,” “high-impact teaching strategies,” and increasing “the quality and capacity of pedagogical and technological support.” To guarantee alignment, every activity we undertake relates to one or more of these initiatives.

The alignment process began with our creating a list of FI responsibilities:

- Develop and use a new active-learning classroom;
- Lead demonstrations and workshops (e.g., New Faculty Orientation, requestable events) on best practices in pedagogy and technology;
- Consult one-on-one with faculty;
- Observe faculty in the classroom;
- Share pedagogical concepts and lessons learned in our Teaching & Learning Innovations Series;
- Facilitate Professional Learning Communities (PLCs);
- Collaborate with the QEP [Quality Enhancement Plan] Development Team;
- Aid in the creation of our institution's online faculty development system;
- Consult with students on learning strategies; and
- Offer workshops for students and faculty tailored to promoting innovative learning.

For our selection process, in order to draw from a diverse population, we contacted the deans and chairs, involved our Society of Foundation Professors (our institution has a fourth rank above professor for distinguished faculty), and analyzed our list of participants from the previous year for frequent attendees at CTL events. From this group, we selected one FI Coordinator and one FI from each of the five colleges. Later, the Library supported us with an FI from that area.

To give the FI program more structure, we added the FI Coordinator to the CTL's Executive Committee, which meets every Tuesday morning to work both on our future vision of the FIs and how best to implement that vision. The FI Coordinator's chief responsibility became developing the agenda and facilitating monthly meetings of the FIs. Some colleges supported the program by providing the FI with reassigned time (and one college, the largest, the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, by reassigning two FIs). All FIs were given stipends to their professional development accounts. FI terms were set at two-year intervals, but some FIs were asked to stay longer so that each year only a third of our FIs would be new. We also created the Faculty Innovator Network, a video archival site containing various tools, forms, videos, and other digital resources developed by the FIs in collaboration with the Technology Coordinator and Media Producer, as well as resources the three of us have invented for others to use.

As monthly Faculty Innovator meetings focused on updates and information, we developed a vehicle for training. Each semester we reserved half a day for progresses (not retreats, which suggest moving backward). The progresses focused on developing the FIs' responsibilities. One winter progress, for example, was devoted to the process of classroom observation, while a spring progress explained the process of the diffusion of innovation. In the beginning, the three of us served as trainers, but when we could, we brought in campus experts. Moreover, we discovered that our new FIs brought some expertise with them. One new FI this year, for instance, had experience in research on team-based learning, which is the primary subject of our next progress.

Two years into the FI program, we are pleased with the results as the FIs have helped us overcome the DFP deficiency while simultaneously providing us with iteration. At the beginning of each academic year we have introduced the FIs to the University's recent hires at New Faculty Orientation. In addition to meeting the new faculty in their respective colleges, the FIs provide immediate training for them. Also, at the beginning of the academic

year, each college holds a convocation where the FI(s) for that college preview the upcoming year in faculty development and offer their services to all faculty in each department and program. Throughout the academic year, the FIs not only visit the college constituents, but also facilitate PLCs, present events in our TLI Series, and facilitate or cofacilitate workshops. The iterative nature of this programming—providing multiple opportunities for faculty to access content—allows for maximum participation.

Our end-of-year assessment points out that the FIs have the potential to reach 100% of the faculty with these activities. As one of our new faculty just told us after meeting her FI, “I’ve been at other schools that pay lip service to teaching, but your FIs bring a new level of enthusiasm and knowledge to the profession.” That person was reflected in our survey of the FIs at New Faculty Orientation where 90% of the participants rated the FI session on an introduction to pedagogy as “Satisfied/Very Satisfied.”

As pleased as we are with the FI initiative, we realize its limitations. While iteration and learning occur as faculty encounter the FIs in department meetings and TLI series events, some faculty do not find participating in on-ground initiatives convenient given their teaching schedules. A year ago, we realized that we needed more one-to-one contacts with the faculty as well as greater iteration of topics. As Henry James had written his *Turn of the Screw* to catch those not easily caught, we realized we had to reach those not easily reached.

Outreach Solution #2: Developing Excellence in Eastern’s Professors (DEEP)

The background for DEEP began in the summer of 2015. The Executive Director of our parent program—the Noel Studio—was invited by the Provost to assemble highly engaged faculty and administrators from across campus to envision faculty development programming that would raise the profile of the institution. Thus, our CTL drew from deans and departments as well as distance education and an instructional designer to form a high-functioning committee, the Faculty Innovation Workgroup (FIW), and charged them with envisioning, creating, and implementing an online professional development mechanism. Importantly, we had our FI Executive Committee as well as two FIs on our workgroup. Our challenge was to devise a system that overcame Brownell and Tanner’s (2012) three major impediments (lack

of training, time, and incentive), provided iteration/spaced intervals for learning, and, as we say on the DEEP website, advanced professional development “through the integration of technology and resources that raise faculty teaching to the highest caliber in the Commonwealth” (DEEP, 2017).

The FIW arrived at a solution, providing a definition of what they called DEEP, a well-organized online system of phased instruction that could reach all full- and part-time faculty—any face in any place at any pace—thus *overcoming the lack of time* (problem #2). As Carpenter (2017) explained, DEEP developed through a collaborative process in which faculty provided input into the pedagogical topics contained within the system along with the structure and design of the system itself (p. 65). Moreover, the system was envisioned for use by any faculty member, regardless of time or location. By putting DEEP on our institute’s learning management system (LMS), Blackboard, we could manage access while integrating the system into an already familiar platform.

The DEEP process for faculty learners is simple. As our website notes, “Each DEEP course is organized in a similar way, with multiple progressive levels. Each level contains materials and assignments for successful completion. The four levels are Learner, Practitioner, Advocate, and Scholar” (Developing Excellence, 2017). Having four levels so that we could move from the simplest to the most complex ideas was one way to overcome *the lack of training issue* (problem #1).

As the motto of our CTL is “Helping Faculty Help Students Learn Deeply,” we based DEEP’s structure on the learner’s progression through a DEEP course on the levels of Bloom’s revised taxonomy, so that for faculty to ascend they must demonstrate a grasp of lower-order and then higher-order Bloom skills. And we *provided some incentives* (problem #3) for faculty to advance. The DEEP website explains that “Participants receive recognition with each level they complete within every course” (Developing Excellence, 2017). Since DEEP contains this record-keeping feature, faculty can benefit from the progress they make in each course in multiple ways, including documenting their work in the system for promotion and tenure, and evaluation portfolios. During our Scholars Week in April of 2018, we will present certificates to everyone completing all four levels of a course and recognize those who have advanced past level 1.

Since one of the FIs’ ten responsibilities is related to the DEEP system, we employed the FIs as course developers and mentors for each course. Our first course available, Metacognition, was, in fact, developed by our FI Coordinator, and another FI assumed the mentorship, acting as a contact person for

all progressing through the course who needed help and scoring. Likewise, our second course, Foundations of Pedagogy, was created by the FI Executive Committee. A third course, one on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, was developed by another FI. At this time, faculty can also take DEEP courses on Flipping the Classroom and Discussion Boards, and coming in the next academic year are Critical and Creative Thinking, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), and Critical Reading. Currently, FIs mentor all five active DEEP courses. FIs have also served in an advisory capacity, investigating and testing the courses before they are ready for release.

For training, our DEEP website invites all faculty to develop a course by providing an application form. After a committee of FIs evaluates the proposals and prioritizes them, we have a graduate assistant waiting at the gate with a DEEP course template (all the items necessary at each level) we have developed. We also provide access to an instructional developer and an FI to suggest resources as well as how to align with the template.

One early result of DEEP was that our provost became so impressed with the DEEP system that she provided us with a graduate assistant, who has become the person who enrolls each faculty participant in the program. Should faculty request additional courses or even wish to create one, we have placed the proper forms on our DEEP website. The FIW continues to meet on a monthly basis in order to evaluate new course proposals, to work on a marketing campaign for the system, to start devising longitudinal assessment instruments, and to plan a celebratory showcase of DEEP-related accomplishments and a rollout of new courses in the system, DEEP Week.

One other aspect of DEEP in turn strengthens future faculty development as well as scholarship. To pass the Advocate level, faculty members must facilitate a session in our TLI series. To reach the scholar level, the faculty member must present at a conference or publish a piece of scholarship on the course subject. Ultimately, the four-level ascension produces iteration on the subject. In this our beta year, when we have periodically rolled out only five courses, 89 faculty have already enrolled in four of the courses. We expect that number to climb quickly as the president and provost highlight the DEEP system in our opening fall convocation and emphasize its place in faculty development. When all the faculty complete at least level 1, we will be able to demonstrate to our accrediting agency 100% saturation.

Finally, among the participants in our DEEP program are faculty members who have never attended one of our CTL's live, in-person events. Moreover, this coming fall when our new faculty—both full and part-time—re-

port, they will automatically be enrolled in both the Foundations of Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy courses, which will allow us to demonstrate to the state's CPE the value the institution places on faculty development.

The greatest limitation of DEEP is its voluntary nature. While new faculty are enrolled in two pedagogical courses, as of yet they are not required to take them, which provides a challenge for leaders involved in DEEP's continued development. While the voluntary nature does present challenges, outstanding courses focused on central topics to the institution can ensure that participation numbers continue to rise.

Conclusion

These programs, combined, have allowed our CTL to place the best people and resources in the hands of our faculty. Providing in-person programming alone is not enough to meet the need of our campus community. With the support of Faculty Innovators and DEEP, our CTL has steadily grown faculty development programming without expanding costs. For example, in 2014-2015, faculty engaged in 6,118 professional development hours related to pedagogy. In 2015-2016, faculty engaged in 8,841 hours. In 2016-2017, it was 9,683.

Recently, we created a professional development program for the Psychology Department that included workshops by some FIs, using DEEP courses, and consulting with our CTL. At the same time, we designed and facilitated a six-week program focused on the enhancement of teaching, which culminated in enrolling these faculty in DEEP. In the future, creating individual professional plans for departments may help us reach those not easily reached.

We have drawn closer to a full DFP, but even if we don't attain it, the days of a 15% discrete faculty participation rate loom smaller and smaller in our rear-vision mirror.

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