

Investing, Inspiring, Invigorating:
A Case Study of the Effectiveness of Faculty Development Programs
at the University of New Hampshire

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Abstract

With the increased number of changes seen recently within higher education, faculty need now more than ever meaningful professional development resources in order to become reinvigorated within their fields, at their institutions, and for their students. Oftentimes with budget cuts, increased online course offerings, and an increased number of adjuncts, the faculty are often forgotten and are not the first on the list for funding and training. Many institutions remain unaware of just how crucial their faculty are for the betterment of their school, and are blind to the necessary support and growth opportunities they truly need. However, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) does an exceptional job at providing multiple avenues to affect change and reinvigorate their professoriate for the future. UNH employs a number of opportunities, mainly including the Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP), the Professional Development for Academic Leaders Program (PDALP), the National Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) network, and the Inclusive Teaching Fellows (ITF) Program, all for the greater purpose of reinvesting in their faculty and preparing the newcomers to positively enhance learning at their institution.

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Traditionally, faculty have performed many roles in the functioning and operating of their respective institutions. They have long been the beacons of academic scholarship both in the classroom for their fellow faculty and students and outside the classroom in administrative roles while also pursuing research and service (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). In short, faculty have become vital players within higher education. Now, with higher education moving into an unchartered territory filled with new knowledge, technology, restructuring of academic appointments, reduced funding, and more (O'Meara, Kaufman, & Kuntz, 2003), faculty will especially need to be supported as they continue to face additional changes. As Laursen and Rocque aptly observe, “effective faculty members are a prerequisite to an effective institution” (2009, p. 20). Without having a prepared and inspired faculty, an institution would not survive. So what are some options for faculty support given the current conditions? “Faculty development programs have been shown to be especially relevant in a time of great transformation for education institutions and for faculty” (Pawlyshyn, 2013, p. 1). More particularly, strategies such as mentoring, leadership, and seminar opportunities would ensure that faculty, both new and old, are given the tools they require to remain knowledgeable in their fields and appropriately engage with their students, institution, and surrounding community.

One particular institution adheres to these propositions quite well. The University of New Hampshire (UNH) is a large, public, co-educational university with just under 15,000 students enrolled, 12,531 of which are undergraduates (Common Data Set, 2014; Undergraduate Profile,

2013). The university aims to incorporate teaching with research, among both faculty and students.

The University of New Hampshire is the state's public research university, providing comprehensive, high-quality undergraduate programs and graduate programs of distinction. Its primary purpose is learning: students collaborating with faculty in teaching, research, creative expression, and service. (Mission and Institutional Identity, 2014)

UNH prides itself on offering quality educational programs with distinguished faculty in a picturesque New England seacoast location. It is a land-, sea-, and space-grant-based university, with many students and faculty coming to study and teach there for that unique purpose. (Mission and Institutional Identity, 2014). Most notably, UNH offers over 100 academic majors embedded within nine different schools and colleges at the Durham main location. Among those 100 majors, business administration, biomedical science, and communication are among the top five most highly enrolled Bachelor's degree programs (Undergraduate Profile, 2013). Further statistics about the most recent four-year degree seeking freshmen include a 78% admittance rate and 21% enrollment rate out of 17,938 applicants; an average weighted GPA of 3.40 out of 4.0; and an average SAT score of 1640 and average ACT score of 24 (Undergraduate Profile, 2013). Interestingly, although UNH is a public state institution, only 52% of undergraduate students enrolled as of fall 2013 were from New Hampshire – the rest were a mix of other states with Massachusetts being the second most prevalent, and 142 international students representing 30 different countries (Undergraduate Profile, 2013). In terms of demographics, an overwhelming majority (79%) of undergraduate students identified themselves as White, whereas 11% did not report and 8% identified as a minority (Undergraduate Profile, 2013; UNH Ethnicity of Students, 2014).

Among students seeking undergraduate degrees, the retention rate remains around a steady 86%, and four-year graduation rates are on the rise from 61% among fall 2004 admitted students to 69% among fall 2007 admitted students (UNH-Durham Retention and Graduation Rates, 2013; Common Data Set, 2014; Undergraduate Profile, 2013). These positive statistics are likely due to a number of factors, one of which could be a result of the quality faculty that UNH employs. And while UNH is a large university, it still strives for, and indeed achieves, a relatively small student-to-faculty ratio of 19:1 (Undergraduate Profile, 2013). These moderately small class sizes allow the students and faculty to engage with one another; to build and maintain relationships to extend beyond the classroom into other activities, clubs, research, partnerships, initiatives, and more.

The UNH faculty themselves are a diverse bunch. Overall as of fall 2013, there were 588 full-time faculty and 414 part-time faculty teaching undergraduates (Undergraduate Profile, 2013). In particular, well over half of the full-time faculty as of fall 2012 were Asian, and about 20% were Hispanic/Latino (Faculty Counts by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2013). In terms of gender, it is interesting to note that among the full-time faculty, 349 are male and 239 are female whereas among part-time faculty, 167 are male and 247 are female. Clearly, the majority of full-time professors have a higher percentage of males than females and those part-time professors have a larger influx of females. This could be due to many factors including “that term faculty, especially women, are more satisfied with their capacity to manage their workload and their time” (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008, p. 230) for possible events such as motherhood or changing academic appointments. Regardless of gender, 87.5% of all full-time faculty as of fall 2013 had obtained a Doctorate or terminal degree (Undergraduate Profile, 2013), which indicates

that UNH is very selective of their faculty, wanting only the best and brightest to train and educate their student body.

As the Office of the President notes on their web page, UNH is committed to securing intelligent and passionate faculty that excel in education, research, and instruction. They note that “the dedication of our faculty to the highest academic standards infuses all we do with the excitement of discovery” (Mission and Institutional Identity, 2014). UNH is certainly focused on the faculty as an integral part in promoting learning and research. In order to fulfill its mission and identify itself as a premier research institution, UNH relies on the relationships forged between its faculty and student body. As Boyer (1990) aptly observes, “it is through ‘connectedness’ that research ultimately is made authentic” (p. 19). Without those engaging relationships, research would lose its meaningfulness and its primary purpose as a tool for further discovery and inquiry. Barry Fussell, a Mechanical Engineering professor in UNH’s College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, describes this phenomenon perfectly:

Relationships are really the fundamental of...good teaching... [which] evolves around having respect for the students, understanding that they’re adults...A lot of the stuff I do in research I try to bring into my class...I try to give them ideas about things that I’ve done and experiences I’ve had and I try to relate that to really what I’m teaching, and I think the students respond to that” (University of New Hampshire, 2014).

What happens in the classroom therefore is a product of the interaction between professor and student, or in essence, the ‘scholarship of teaching’, where “the work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others” (Boyer, 1990, p. 23). Relationships between the student body and the professoriate are crucial to the overall mission of the university where its primary purpose is learning. Therefore, it is vital that the faculty receive all the support, dedication, resources, and development opportunities they need in order to fully nurture those

relationships with their students and continue to build competent researchers, engaged and informed citizens, and future faculty members.

At UNH, the faculty are very much supported by the administration. They believe that “faculty are an essential resource...and if the institution is to grow and flourish, faculty must be supported, mentored, and retained” (Faculty Development, 2013). The idea that the administration must be involved is central to the success of faculty development programs, and as Pawlyshyn argues, “faculty must be considered core long-term assets of the institution” (2013, p. 102), which UNH does quite well here. As such, they are provided with multiple chances to take part in professional development programs to help achieve success and growth. These include the Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP), the Professional Development for Academic Leaders Program (PDALP), their membership in the National Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) network, and the Inclusive Teaching Fellows (ITF) Program. Each of these development opportunities offer ways for full-time, part-time, older and newer faculty and graduate students to gain knowledge, learn more about teaching and scholarship, and participate in preparing the future professoriate, all to better serve themselves and their students.

Faculty Mentoring Program

UNH’s Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) focuses on the particular need of pre-tenured faculty wishing to further their careers. Newer, more junior faculty are able to participate in a “dialogue with senior faculty, administrators, and peers about issues, to exchange ideas, pose questions, and to address concerns about navigating the promotion and tenure process at UNH, as well as, discuss challenges faced by faculty from under-represented groups” (Faculty Development, 2013). These discussion-based activities truly allow faculty to gain insight into different departments, pertinent issues, and learn more about each other. This socially

constructed learning group is very similar to Cox's idea of faculty learning communities, which "concentrate less on efficiency and more on the social aspects of building community... [placing] more emphasis on the team aspect of support" (2004, p. 9). Through building these social networks and using one another as a resource to grow and flourish, the junior faculty are able to better grasp important pedagogical ideas and better prepare themselves for their continuous flow of new students. This program focuses on the narrative aspect of learning and exemplifies what Case refers to as the "by faculty for faculty" approach to development (Case, 2013, p. 38). Meaning and learning is therefore created through discussion, collaboration, and reflection.

The specific goals for the program are as follows:

1. Help new faculty feel welcomed and part of the university community
2. Create a support system for junior faculty through networking
3. Encourage collegiality by sharing knowledge and expertise
4. Make junior faculty aware of professional and personal opportunities available to them at the University
5. Inform junior faculty of the promotion and tenure process and their role in the annual department evaluation process
(Faculty Mentoring Program, 2013)

In order to effectively retain their junior faculty, UNH's Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) does an exemplary job with making them feel welcomed, supported, and aware of all the avenues available to them for assistance and learning. Mentoring is an important step toward helping the junior faculty be successful in their current and future positions and goals. Among the many roles that mentors play, a significant "part of a mentor's role is to listen and identify a faculty member's goals and to help the person conceptualize the issue and offer a road map to achieve this goal" (Kezar & Lester, 2008, p. 722). FMP also includes various seminars throughout the academic year that serve to further assist pre-tenured junior faculty according to particular

subjects, such as “Dealing with Stress in the Tenure-Track World” (Faculty Mentoring Program, 2013). Overall, UNH’s Faculty Mentoring Program is designed for the purpose of preparing “junior faculty to become the next generation of successful tenured faculty” (Faculty Development, 2013). FMP can serve as a tutoring resource for new faculty, with older members using their wisdom and experiences to help guide the newcomers through the unexpected challenges, collegial processes such as tenure, and other potential road bumps they might encounter with open-communication and encouragement.

Professional Development for Academic Leaders Program (PDALP)

In addition to the Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP), UNH also has their Professional Development for Academic Leaders Program (PDALP) to target “senior faculty and department chairs for leadership skill enhancement” (Faculty Development, 2013). After obtaining the initial training and experience at the University, senior faculty are encouraged “to develop the executive and organizational [skills] required to run effective meetings, lead committees, and foster collaborations” (Laursen & Rocque, 2009, p. 21). These leadership training workshops are designed to “promote ongoing communication among academic administrators, provide leadership development opportunities, and support campus leaders...in their efforts to foster academic excellence and organizational change in their units” (Faculty Development, 2013). With so many changes going on in the world of higher education, it is imperative that older faculty are not forgotten, that they are reinvested with training and leadership skills with which to grow and learn. As Kezar and Lester so accurately puts it, “loss of faculty leadership could potentially be detrimental to the success and health of higher education institutions” (2008, p. 717).

The specific goals for PDALP are as follows:

1. Support the retention of current faculty talent through professional development opportunities and support to continuously build and expand professional skills
2. Offer resources and support for annual performance review process, climate and culture assessment and managing faculty searches, promotion and tenure process
3. Provide leadership development seminars and assessments
4. Provide faculty leadership development funding for regional and national academic leadership workshops

(Professional Development for Academic Leaders Program (PDALP), 2013)

As with the Faculty Mentoring Program, PDALP approaches leadership training through seminars and workshops throughout the academic year to offer leadership skills in a discussion-based forum. These trainings are aimed toward not only building leadership skills, but to build “social networks that [provide] ideas and reassurance, [help] solve problems, and [boost] morale” (Laursen & Rocque, 2009, p. 23), all vital qualities an effective leader should have.

With effective and communicative leaders at the helm of each department, the UNH community-at-large is better served and better prepared to meet challenges and adapt to changes.

National Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Network

UNH’s efforts to support faculty extend off campus as well through their membership within the National Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Network. This program in particular serves the needs of future faculty, an important resource that must be nurtured, supported, and retained just as the faculty already serving UNH’s community. The goal of the program is to have graduate students “visit our partner institutions (Howard University, St. Anselm College, and Keene State College) to learn first-hand the perspectives of different types of colleges and universities” (FYI – Teaching Excellence Program Report, 2001). Through this program, graduate students are able to learn to be “both ‘research-ready’ and ‘teaching ready’ when they enter the market for a faculty position” (2001). Since both teaching and research are main priorities at UNH, these students are more marketable and are subsequently better prepared for the role of both professor and researcher. “They gain experience in another institutional setting

and culture and learn to take responsibility for planning and conducting courses for students who are different from the ones at their doctoral institution...and analyze both their positive and negative teaching experiences" (Richlin & Essington, 2004, p. 151). It is similarly structured to the faculty development programs for new faculty in that both groups "can reflect on their work, broaden their understanding of faculty life, and meet their career goals" (p. 151). Without having the necessary tools for success and self-awareness that this program provides, students could find themselves as "new professors who lack appropriate preparation and experience...thereby jeopardizing their students' learning and disadvantaging themselves as they strive for tenure and promotion" (FYI – Teaching Excellence Program Report, 2001). Even faculty before they become faculty are in dire need of support, resources, and training to transform into effective professors and perhaps leaders of tomorrow. Appropriate preparation programs such as the PFF network have invaluable results and hold extraordinary promise for the future.

Inclusive Teaching Fellows (ITF) Program

In order to serve both new and older faculty, whether they are full-time or part-time, the Inclusive Teaching Fellows (ITF) Program allows all faculty to participate in development through seminars to forge "links among faculty, pedagogical transformation, scholarship, and community" (Inclusive Teaching Fellow Interviews, 2013). This program is unique in that it serves adjunct faculty that may not be able to partake in full-time-faculty-only activities and it provides "a format for inclusive teaching fellows to discuss exemplary teaching practices and showcase classroom environments most conducive for teaching excellence and exceptional student learning" (2013). As O'Meara et. al (2003) suggests, "faculty in all career stages need assistance from administrators and colleagues in identifying the ways to prepare themselves for new roles and responsibilities" (p. 5). As new changes take place in higher education, it is

helpful to have fellow professors relay their thoughts on what they believe have been invigorating and successful classroom learning experiences. Various professors from the different schools and colleges within the University offer their personal stories and perspectives as a learning tool and reflection opportunity. One such interview focuses on the diversity that Charlotte Witt, Professor of Philosophy, notes in her classrooms:

Attention to diversity in the curriculum, in turn, derives its primary impetus and significance from the intellectual interests and the unique intellectual contribution of a diverse population of students and faculty. In this manner a diverse campus provides opportunities for research and teaching that would not have existed without diversity in the campus population. (Inclusive Teaching Fellow Interviews, 2013)

Cox (2004) alludes to how faculty learning communities (in this case, the Fellows Program), can be valuable in teaching sensitivity to other points of view and perspectives, can provide a sense of deeper student learning, and is a continuous process of knowledge and reflection that is useful for all. It seems that Professor Witt's observations about the profound effects that diversity has had in her classes indeed reach across multiple disciplines and can be applied throughout the University. In another interview, Anne Broussard, Associate Professor of Social Work, shares her idea of faculty introspection: "Discrimination in my own life has made me aware of the issues on a deeper personal level and contributed to my personal and professional interest in equity and inclusion" (Inclusive Teaching Fellow Interviews, 2013). This is a perfect example of how "professional development provides opportunities for faculty to learn about learning, about teaching, about students, and about themselves" (Altany, 2012, p. 1). Finally, Monica Chiu, Associate Professor of English and Interim Director of the Honors Program, notes in her interview that "inclusive teaching asks that students bring to bear relevant ideas and material they discuss in other courses to mine; that is, I attempt to get them to think interdisciplinarily" (Inclusive Teaching Fellow Interviews, 2013). Once again, this perfectly aligns with Altany's

point that “professional faculty development connects faculty across disciplines and career stages, serving to create a pedagogical community within the college or university” (2012, p. 1). Professor Chiu’s teachings about cross-disciplinary ideas in her classrooms can be translated to other faculty through this Fellows program. The Fellows’ experiential insight is able to be shared with all faculty – young, old, full-time, and adjunct – so that they can reflect on those stories and use the suggested techniques to adapt to their own classroom environments, thus enhancing student learning.

The above examples are just a few of UNH’s select Faculty Development Programs. Other options include their Faculty Development Funding Program, their Faculty Research Workshops, and their own Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. UNH has made good on their mission of learning: “students collaborating with faculty in teaching, research, creative expression, and service” (Mission and Institutional Identity, 2014). With educated, prepared, supported, and engaged faculty of all ages and types, students are better able to learn, investigate, collaborate, and build lifelong relationships with which to shape their futures. UNH’s diverse selection of faculty development opportunities truly allows not only the faculty, but the entire university community, to create and sustain an environment of inclusive excellence.

Conclusion

In a rapidly changing higher education environment, faculty must be prepared for and be able to adapt to various changes. New skills, knowledge, technology, and other tools are constantly being introduced, and “faculty development now more than ever is necessary to an institution’s viability” (Kowalski, 2014, p. 1). Faculty development programs are essential to the continuing education of the faculty, and therefore, the student body and surrounding collegial

community. The University of New Hampshire successfully exemplifies this purpose through a number of initiatives as previously described. As Boyer concludes, “we need scholars who not only skillfully explore the frontiers of knowledge, but also integrate ideas, connect thought to action, and inspire students” (1990, p. 77). UNH’s numerous development programs provide the required forums for faculty growth and development with benefits for new faculty, older faculty, full-timers, part-timers, and graduate students hoping for a future position within the professoriate. Not only do these initiatives “enhance agency in multiple areas of faculty work-life, [but they also produce] rich dividends in increased organizational commitment, faculty retention and performance, and satisfaction” (O’Meara & Terosky, 2010, p. 48). The effects on both UNH students and faculty are positive, and there is hope that many other institutions still lacking in effective faculty development programs can learn from those featured at the University of New Hampshire. Of course, “there is no one-size-fits-all approach” (Kowalski, 2014, p. 2) as every institution is different, but without worthwhile, effective faculty development programs, there remains the risk of stunting learning, scholarship, growth, and passion among the higher education community, a loss that simply cannot be afforded.

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