Characteristics of an Effective Faculty Development Program

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In today's climate of career college performance outcomes and compliance, one question comes to mind - What effect does our instructors' planning abilities, teaching methods, classroom management techniques and student assessment tools have on institutional effectiveness?

Some of the major areas of institutional effectiveness include student retention, graduate placement, student and graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction and, of course, student performance outcomes. What our instructors do in the classroom or lab - the way they teach, the professional teaching/learning relationships they build with students, the motivational techniques they use, and the support they provide - all influence each of the institutional areas mentioned above. And if we are successfully teaching the skills that employers want, the overall end result is successful performance for our students, graduates and schools.

Our faculty and their classrooms/labs are the number one link to the daily success of our students. Institutional leaders must ensure that instructors are engaged in an effective faculty development program to maximize institutional effectiveness. So what are the characteristics of an effective faculty development program?

First, an effective faculty development program is an ongoing and communicative partnership among faculty, staff and school leadership where colleagues actively engage in their own development and are totally supported by their mentors.

Second, such a program is multifaceted, including not only the identification and accomplishment of teaching performance goals, but also attendance in discipline-specific activities and membership in professional organizations.

Third, an effective faculty development program is performance-based. Rather than simply completing a training module or attending a workshop, it provides opportunities for faculty at all levels of experience, through demonstration and observation, to apply newly learned or enhanced applications in the classroom.

Fourth, it is measurable. Teaching adult learners the necessary workplace skills for successful employment and promotion in their respective fields is built into our career college mission and guides our daily operations. We are measured by our performance in accomplishing that mission unlike any other postsecondary educational venue. It goes without saying that in such an outcomes-based environment, our faculty development programs should be outcome-based as well. Beyond the completion of training and the award of continuing education units, the real impact of an effective faculty development program can be measured by such success indicators as an increase in student
retention and faculty retention. Though these retention areas are influenced by many factors, an instructor's improved teaching performance can definitely lead to self-satisfaction, personal motivation and commitment, and, from the student's perspective, a more enhanced and supportive learning environment.

The Imagine America Foundation, a premier research and scholarship organization representing the career college sector, sponsored a comprehensive research study to measure the results of an effective faculty development program at five levels of assessment. To obtain a copy of the report, please email Jenny Faubert at jennyf@imagine-america.org.

Dr. Moghadam is the founder and CEO of MaxKnowledge, the leading employee training company for the career college sector of higher education. He has over 25 years of experience in career education, serving in many capacities including professor, director of education, academic dean, director of student affairs, campus director, college president and owner. Moghadam earned his PhD in Engineering from the University of Cambridge at the age of 22. He is a recognized leader in career education and has been selected as a Top Innovator by the Career College Central magazine. Moghadam can be reached at amirm@maxknowledge.com.