

# A Strategy for Revitalization and Change

Coby Bunch Simerly

### Abstract

*The term "faculty development" has evolved from sabbatical leaves to programs designed to assist faculty and administrators gain a variety of skills which will enable them to be more effective teachers, scholars, and professionals. The movement, reflecting a host of creative solutions to faculty and institutional problems, has contributed significantly to the vitality of academia. There are several promising faculty development programs in agriculture and the action agenda set forth by Operation Change (1989) calls for all colleges of agriculture and natural resources to establish programs by 1993. A large body of literature is available for those designing projects to address their specific needs.*

As a part of a national study of faculty development needs in colleges of agriculture, a review of literature was undertaken for the purposes of (1) understanding how and why faculty development has emerged as an important concept, (2) identifying innovative approaches used in other fields which might be useful in colleges of agriculture, (3) determining the status of faculty development in colleges of agriculture, (4) identifying guidelines for effective faculty development programs, and (5) identifying potential funding sources to support faculty development programs. This article discusses the findings of the literature review, thus providing important background information for those contemplating faculty development programs.

### The Rise of Faculty Development

The beginning of the faculty development movement can be traced to 1890 when Harvard University initiated a sabbatical leave program for faculty. Today the majority of all universities and four year colleges provide sabbatical leave programs. Prior to 1960, however, faculty development through sabbatical leave programs focused almost exclusively on the improvement of subject matter competence of the academic scholar. Mastery of one's discipline was believed to be both the necessary and sufficient condition, and qualification for teaching. It was implicitly assumed that there was a direct, positive relationship between discipline competence and teaching proficiency. (Sullivan, 1983).

The 1960s and 1970s, however, brought about conditions that challenged the very foundations of this approach to faculty development and the assumptions on which it was

Simerly is associate dean for Resident Instruction and associate professor of Home Economics Education, University of Nebraska-Lincoln 68588. Co-investigator in the project were William L. George, associate dean for Resident Instruction, College of Agriculture, University of Illinois and Leszek Z. Chudzinski, reference librarian, Bridgeport Public Library and former research associate at the University of Illinois.

founded. Student activism of the 1960s and the accompanying demands for relevance and excellence in teaching, were subsequently followed by a fundamental shift in faculty development emphasis from the mastery of content toward the improvement of teaching.

Fiscal austerity and declining student enrollments at some institutions in the 1970s caused colleges and universities to again re-examine their view of faculty development. Many institutions realized that they could not effectively compete with business and industry for human resources. In addition, the high percentage of tenured faculty, coupled with the extended mandatory retirement age, meant that academia would need to develop more effective ways to assist faculty in staying abreast of new content and teaching developments.

During the boom period of new faculty development programs (1973-1978), the movement saw rapid growth and activity including the development of conceptual frameworks, the development of "how to" publications, the increased availability of private and federal funding, and a proliferation of writings and publications.

Two conceptual frameworks of faculty development were introduced in 1975. Bergquist and Phillips (1975) proposed an all-encompassing concept that included professional, instructional, and organizational development components. This model is predicated on the assumption that effective faculty development programs must address issues related to attitude, process, and structure. Gaff (1975), using a more restrictive context, introduced a framework which focused on acquiring knowledge, skills, sensitivities, and techniques that related to teaching and learning. These along with other conceptual frameworks developed in the 70s provided a base that helped the movement gain momentum and survive into the 1980s.

While the Bergquist and Phillips (1975) concept of faculty development is the one that has prevailed, the 80s have seen the movement go beyond the conceptual boundaries established in the 70s. Today, a comprehensive faculty development program is a program of planned activities designed to assist faculty members in gaining additional knowledge, skills, experiences, and personal insights which will enable them to be more effective teachers, scholars, and professionals. Programs address professional, instructional and organizational development needs. Recent dimensions to the faculty development movement include making provisions for early retirement, assisting with career changes, retraining of faculty, and forging links between business, industry, and higher education. Thus, today's comprehensive faculty development programs address a variety of faculty and institutional needs.

For U.S. agriculture to continue in its role as world leader, colleges of agriculture and their faculties must develop new skills and use more efficiently the skills and resources at their disposal in order to remain scientifically and technologically current, highly productive, and innovative in teaching and research. The need for comprehensive faculty development programs in colleges of agriculture has never been greater as institutions struggle to achieve and maintain a high level of excellence with limited resources in an increasingly complex and competitive environment.

### A Variety of Approaches

The literature reveals a variety of faculty development strategies which are being used to maximize the effectiveness of college faculties and administrators. Some examples include five year career development plans required for all faculty and administrators, grants to assist faculty in preparing to teach in areas other than their areas of expertise, five year reviews of all tenured faculty conducted by a faculty committee, and mid-career faculty development grants providing either full or partial support to supplement the sabbatical or regular salary to enable faculty members to conduct research.

Other strategies include summer research programs, faculty lectures, workshops on leadership development, proposal writing, and life and career planning. One institution makes competitive grants available to individual faculty members whose research suffers due to the institution's geographic isolation. In addition, it makes grants to once promising faculty members who need to be encouraged to re-enter the world of scholarship. Another institution has a faculty development committee that guides discussions, activities, and faculty thinking about their responsibility for their professional development and that of their colleagues. One college with declining enrollments assists tenured, mid-career faculty in seeking positions outside academia by providing a fully paid leave during which they can study or start a new job. Faculty receive the difference, if lower, between the salary of the new position and the salary that they would have received at the college. Several institutions encourage career faculty to return to an industrial setting for a short time to validate theory, study current practice, or apply problem solving techniques.

Programs for improving instruction include writing workshops to assist faculty in improving their writing skills and in learning to evaluate students' writing. In addition, workshops are provided on course development, class organization, in-class presentation skills, curriculum development, evaluation of teaching and learning, using computers as instructional tools, and the development of interdisciplinary programs.

Organizational development programs include efforts to integrate new, young faculty into the academic community and to provide for their ongoing professional development through workshops conducted by trained faculty teams on such topics as university orientation, management, small group communication and teaching techniques, and interpersonal communications. Administrative internships are used to provide young faculty with opportunities to gain experience in administration.

### Faculty Development Programs

To date few faculty development programs in colleges of agriculture have been reported in the literature. However, several are notable.

Project PROF (Professional Renewal of Faculty) is a program for teaching faculty in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University (Cooper, 1982). Program objectives include increased faculty self-assessment as related to teaching; faculty exposure to creative problem solving; faculty introduction to different environments, new concepts, and experts; promotion of professionalism in teaching within the discipline; and an opportunity for the implementation of what is learned. The program components include sessions focusing on a better self-understanding by learning to interpret the Myers-Briggs Personality Reference Indicator; identifying and coping with stress; microteaching; a retreat designed to develop group cohesiveness, which includes sessions on managerial leadership styles, creative problem solving, and learning and motivation; faculty exposure to new environment and growth experiences through the Creative Problem Solving Institute; and industrial education tours.

Cooperative Professional Renewal of Faculty (COPROF) is a program created by the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and College of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the College of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota (Povlacs, Hartung, & Wheeler, 1986). Supported in part by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), COPROF encourages participants to examine the paths of their careers in the context of the needs of their colleges and to plan a sequence of activities to guide their professional growth. The program consists of six chronologically arranged parts. During part one, prospective participants attend informational meetings, confer with department heads, submit applications, and seek admission to the program. In the second part, faculty attend a three-day retreat midway between the two campuses, for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of oneself and the nature of change, to initiate a search for alternatives, and to learn career planning methods. In part three, participants investigate professional careers and teaching alternatives. They consult with administrators, identify professional and personal needs, as well as those of students, department, and their discipline. Part four focuses on developing growth plans. After a work session on writing growth plans, faculty submit growth plans that address their immediate and long-term objectives. In the fifth stage of the program, participants begin to carry out their growth plan

For additional current reference material on faculty development refer to Simerly, Coby B., 1989, "Faculty Perceptions of Teaching in Colleges of Agriculture; Implications for Improving Instruction. *NACTA Journal* 33:9 pp. 26-29 and Simerly, Coby B., 1990, "A National Assessment: Faculty Development Needs in Colleges of Agriculture." *NACTA Journal* 34:1 pp. 11-13.

activities. Twelve to eighteen months after joining the program, faculty evaluate their achievements and plans for future activities as the sixth and final part of the program.

This model has proven to be very successful. By spring 1987, ninety faculty from the University of Minnesota and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln had benefitted from COPROF. While the two institutions are no longer jointly pursuing COPROF following the expiration of the funding grant, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and College of Agriculture continues with many elements of the program under the title NUPROF (Nebraska University Professional Renewal of Faculty) (Lunde & Hartung, 1990).

The University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (1987 & 1988) received a grant in 1986 from the Kellogg Foundation for a four year project to develop an integrative approach to curricular assessment and faculty development. A part of the strategy for the project is to revitalize and bring about change in the undergraduate curricula and to do it simultaneously with faculty development.

The faculty development portion of the project encompasses a wide range of topics -- computer literacy, stress management, adults who resume their higher education after years away from school, adapting computers to the educational needs of undergraduates, and effective communication skills.

To address these issues, faculty are learning to use computers and learning to adapt them to the educational needs of students. A series of audio tapes focusing on the older student in the classroom is being developed for use by faculty. The tapes will focus on such topics as who's coming back to school and for what reasons, various learning and teaching styles, the development of curricula with adult learners in mind, and techniques for teaching adults. The stress management project involves five video tapes with a focus on coping with changing priorities and competing demands; how to recognize and deal with certain types of people problems in academia; how to negotiate the tenure process; post tenure problems, stresses and strains; and balancing family and work life.

*Operation Change: An Action Agenda for Developing Human Capital to Secure American Agriculture* (1989) identifies faculty development as one of four action agenda items. The report says, "Given the rapid changes facing the U.S. food system, it is essential that the driving force for change, have a strategically designed faculty development program. A supportive climate for change must be provided." The action agenda calls for (1) the establishment of a national center for faculty and administrative development in the food, agriculture, and natural resources sciences for the purposes of conducting periodic assessments of faculty and administrative development needs, serving as a clearinghouse for opportunities and resources available, and conducting regional and national workshops and (2) the establishment and implementation by 1993 of faculty and administrative development plans by each institution. Operation Change is an outgrowth of a national task force of agriculture and natural resources higher education administrators working with industry and government representa-

tives. A national review of Operation Change resulted in the previously mentioned action agenda.

## Guidelines for Effective Programs

The following guideline are essential to developing and sustaining successful faculty development programs. Successful programs (1) have the full support of the administration; (2) are preceded by an incubation period in order to create faculty interest; (3) are developed locally, by faculty, to assure that the program will address their needs; (4) have instruction components that are designed and directed by teaching curriculum specialists, (5) provide financial assistance and released time to participants; (6) are evaluated for purposes of strengthening and improving the programs; (7) have voluntary participation and are non-punitive; and (8) are conducted in a supportive environment; are incorporated as a continuing and ongoing emphasis; and (10) have a permanent financial base.

## Potential Funding Sources

There are numerous public and private agencies, institutions, and foundations that have either supported faculty development programs or have the potential to do so. There are more than 500 private foundations and more than twenty-five federal and national agencies and associations with the potential to support faculty development programs. Generally foundations and agencies provide seed money and expect institutions to continue the programs following the funding period.

Information on potential funding sources is available through a variety of directories and electronic data bases at most public and university libraries and in university research and sponsored programs offices. In addition, *Faculty Development Programs: A Literature Review* (Chudzinski, Simerly & George, 1988), lists names and addresses of government agencies and private foundations that have the potential to support faculty development programs in agriculture.

## Summary

During the past three decades the interpretation of the term "faculty development" has evolved from sabbatical leaves to programs designed to assist faculty and administrators gain a variety of skills which will enable them to be more effective teachers, scholars, and professionals. The movement, reflecting a host of creative solutions to faculty and institutional problems, has contributed significantly to the vitality of academic institutions in recent years.

In comparison to other disciplines, colleges of agriculture have only recently pursued faculty development as a way of addressing the needs of agriculture and natural resources sciences. However, several promising faculty development programs are reported in the recent literature and the action agenda set forth by Operation Change calls for all colleges of agriculture and natural resources to establish and implement faculty and administrative development programs by 1993.

Those developing faculty development programs have the benefit of a large body of literature on which to draw as they design projects to address their specific needs.