The Diffusion of Faculty Development: A Faculty Fellows Program

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The adventure will be in creation. To start with a rigid plan with all the details specified would be contrary to the philosophy behind the [program]: Faculty development is for faculty—not just as receptors, but as planners, choosers, and doers.

—Tony Carey, Former Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, Fellows Charge Letter

Abstract

This critical retrospective review describes the ideation, creation, and implementation of a faculty development fellows program at a regional comprehensive university. The authors share their perspectives as fellows regarding primary considerations for designing the program, including attention to the fellows selection process, required multilevel support, cultivation of communication and relationships, professional development of the fellows, development of unit programming, and lessons learned. Each section of the article concludes with critical questions institutions might consider when conceiving a faculty development fellows program.

Keywords: educational development, academic development, diffusion of innovation, faculty fellows, peer mentoring

Because few academic institutions' faculty development programs are abundantly funded, most institutions feel an urgent need to "do more

with less.” One response to shrinking resources is an emerging national interest in *embedded* faculty development (Sorcinelli et al., 2006), which re-allocates existing resources to support institutional needs by decentralizing faculty development and positioning faculty developers within units. Envisioning faculty development differently, the former vice provost for faculty affairs at Appalachian State University conceived of the Faculty Fellows Program, an embedded approach to inform and guide faculty development planning that would be uniquely responsive to the needs of our campus. Key to the success of such a model is the identification of key influencers within the institutional social system. To create the program, the vice provost asked the academic deans to support one faculty member in their colleges with reassigned time equivalent to one course for each semester of service as a fellow. The concept was piloted with a single fellow and within one year there were seven fellows representing all but one college.

The faculty fellows model described in this article is informed by Rogers’s (2003) diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory, which has been used as a framework in disciplines such as political science, public health, communications, history, economics, technology, and education (Dooley, 1999). The four elements of the DOI model include innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system and make the theory particularly applicable for developing a new approach to faculty development. Diffusion, as defined by Rogers (2003), is “the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” (p. 5). Rogers explains further that diffusion is a special type of communication, typically about a new idea and characterized as interactive rather than linear. Diffusion implies uncertainty, including a probable lack of predictability, structure, and information. Diffusion can create social change or alterations in the structure and function of a system. Building on the DOI theory, Kempe et al. (2005) studied the problem of maximizing the expected spread of an innovation within a social network and developed a general model of influence propagation. Central to their model is the identification of individuals (called nodes in

their model) who serve as initial innovators and who make recommendations that contribute to a cascade model of diffusion.

The DOI theory had two tiers of application in the fellows model described here. The scope of the first tier was institutional and involved the development of the initial design of the Faculty Fellows Program itself as the innovation. The program began with an effort to identify key influencers (nodes) within the various academic units of the university (social system). The second tier involved what Kempe et al. (2005) call contagion, or the spreading of innovation beyond the initial adopters. Within their respective units, the faculty fellows were free to explore potential needs and responsive programming and communicate those among faculty members in ways that made sense to them given their unit's particular contexts.

The initial set of innovators, or faculty fellows, would work within their colleges and units (nodes) while also collaborating with the other fellows and our center for teaching and learning (CTL) to assess faculty needs and share knowledge and resources to provide faculty development programming (contagion). In keeping with Rogers's (2003) view of communication, we imagined a network of interactive communication that would invite "mutual understandings" among those within the same academic unit as well as the collective understandings of the fellows. Embedded in their colleges, fellows represent and support their unit peers by developing programming to meet their particular faculty development needs. In addition, the fellows' interactions with unit peers and one another could inform the CTL and other service units within the institution about the needs of faculty.

Generally, fellows programs are not new to the educational development community. Recently, a member of the POD listserv developed and then crowdsourced a list of fellows programs, asking that those who reviewed the list continue to add to it. The list was not available when our program was conceived, but a review of programs included on the current list reveals that many fellows programs are focused on institutional priorities (Environmental Justice and Sustainability Fellows, Seattle University) and/or the interests of the person or

organization that has endowed the fellowship or for whom the fellowship was named (e.g., Margaret MacVicar Faculty Fellows Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Many fellows programs recognize or reward particular faculty for teaching or research excellence (e.g., Fellows of the Graduate School, University of Cincinnati), whereas others seek to cultivate teaching excellence in junior faculty (e.g., Wimmer Faculty Fellows, Carnegie Mellon University) or leadership capacity in more senior faculty (e.g., Illinois Leadership Center Faculty Fellows, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).

The Faculty Fellows Program described here was a bit more exploratory and was intended to be flexible and responsive to ongoing needs and feedback. The vice provost's original charge conveyed a spirit of venture—that the fellows' work to support excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service would not be prescribed. Instead, creative approaches would be encouraged and valued. Such flexibility is consistent with the DOI notion of uncertainty within innovation. This original vision for the program was consistent with findings and recommendations from a Norwegian research study focused on creating institutional cultures for quality enhancement (Kottmann et al., 2016). The researchers in the study defined a quality culture as an "organizational culture that intends to enhance quality permanently" (Kottmann et al., p. 7), one in which the institution and its constituents share a set of values and the desire to foster the culture. In our program, we began with administrators and a cohort of fellows who were developing shared values related to faculty development.

Although the DOI model and the exploratory nature of the program were well conceived, the program faltered because it did not initially have well-defined structures and processes that would serve to coordinate and communicate the work of individual fellows as well as assess their collective impact on the institution. Compounding this structural issue, only a few weeks after the vice provost convened the initial meeting with the fellows, he resigned his administrative position. While the unexpected vacancy left a gap (uncertainty) in leadership and executive administrative advocacy for the initiative, the fel-

lows, drawing on their shared commitment to quality enhancement for the university, persisted in their efforts to work within their units and to meet with one another.

Based on experimental implementation of the program (1–3 years for individual fellows) and subsequent retrospective reflection, this article offers a set of considerations for institutions developing a faculty fellows program. The reflections arose out of deliberate, extended discussions that included, for a time, all of the initial faculty fellows and the CTL director. Each section of the article concludes with critical questions institutions might consider when conceiving a faculty development fellows program. Our perspectives and therefore recommendations on the program are influenced by our collective hindsight, including our challenges, achievements, and remaining questions. In a short time, our group learned about the institutional value of the Faculty Fellows Program, and here we share our experiences with other institutions that might be considering a DOI-inspired faculty fellows model.

Selection of Fellows

Kezar and Lester (2009) provided characteristics for grassroots faculty leaders, and these ring true as desirable characteristics of fellows within a DOI approach: interest in organizational citizenship; skills in vision implementation, from planning to negotiation; ability to influence other colleagues and to be persuasive; political skills to help navigate resistance, if it emerges; and interest in creating a network of like-minded colleagues. McDonald et al. (2016) indicated that entry-level educational developers need foundational characteristics, knowledge, and skills. Building on McDonald et al.'s attention to foundational characteristics such as creativity, patience, persistence, and self-awareness, we found that several additional characteristics were beneficial in our particular faculty fellows model.

The fellow should have credibility with the faculty as well as respect

and support from administration. Credibility can be defined in many ways, such as recognition of excellence in teaching or interest and experience with faculty development within the institution—or on some campuses, longevity or faculty rank. Whatever the institutional context, the fellow needs to be comfortable and safe in taking risks that, in our case, involved pursuing new approaches to faculty development and mediating the varied needs, demands, and perspectives of faculty and administrators. Since the fellows have autonomy in selecting methods for assessing needs, planning, and implementing programming within their units, it is important that they be self-directed and have a sense of agency.

As with any position that deals with people primarily, and one's peers in particular, tolerance for ambiguity is a key component to a fellow's success. Especially as the program begins, fellows may chart their own courses and be responsible for the needs assessments, development of programs, and even their own professional development. All of the outcomes of these programs and the path forward may remain ambiguous for a time, so the fellows should have the ability to persist, especially if the model is one in which fellows are planning and coordinating their own efforts.

A faculty fellow should be a skilled, patient listener and a good communicator. Much of our time as fellows was spent in individual consultations with faculty members or administrators, in smaller group meetings, or in workshops. Patiently listening to faculty as well as building and maintaining different types of relationships were our best ways to understand faculty and institutional needs and expectations.

In our case, fellows were selected by the CTL director in consultation with the vice provost, who requested the reassignment from each respective dean. The fellows were selected based on their interest in faculty development as shown by previous participation in CTL workshops, committees, or events; however, fellows had differing levels of faculty development experience and knowledge of their units' needs.

Since our initial cohort was identified, we have considered other pos-

sible selection methods, including identification of fellows by the chairs and deans or an application process that would invite interested faculty to apply, followed by a vetting process for fellows selection. As with most other personnel decisions, specific institutional (or college) culture and context should guide the decision of the fellows selection process.

Questions to Consider—Selection of Fellows

- What criteria and process will be used to select fellows?
- How much influence will unit directors/administrators (deans, chairs, others) have in determining the criteria and/or selection?
- How will the characteristics of the institution (e.g., enrollment, number and/or size of academic units, demographics of students, focus of large campus initiatives) inform the selection of fellows?
- How will the institution recruit fellows and incentivize the opportunity to serve as a faculty fellow?
- Will the selection process be uniform across campus or determined by each unit/college within the university?
- How long is a fellow's appointment? How might terms of service be conceptualized to allow for mentoring subsequent fellows?

Multilevel Support for Faculty Fellows Program

So that a fellows program can become a part of the social system and institutional culture, the program should be sanctioned by the executive-level administrators, and their support should be communicated clearly and publicly to the campus community. Although there was executive administrative support for our program at the outset, there was never an official, public institutional "endorsement" of it by way of a campus announcement or large-scale communication with faculty. The communication was much more "organic," even word-of-mouth in some cases, and that was a reason, we believe, our effort

faltered. There was enthusiasm and commitment at the grassroots level, but support from administrative levels was uneven.

Differing levels of administrative support had a direct impact on fellows' ability to conduct faculty development in their specific colleges. Because institutional executive leadership had not publicly endorsed the program nor indicated that it was an important priority, support of the program at the college or unit level varied considerably. While some fellows were announced to their colleagues with information shared about the Faculty Fellows Program, some colleges or units never announced the appointment of a fellow. Some chairs had not been informed at all that there would be a faculty fellow in their college or even that a fellow from their department would be receiving a course release.

The original design of the program called for a one-course reduction in the fellow's teaching load each semester. However, support from academic deans varied widely. Deans and unit heads provided the release time at their discretion. In one college, the fellow received the recommended course release as well as some support for programming, materials (such as books for reading groups), graduate assistantship time, and refreshments. However, in some cases, deans decided that they had not had enough input into articulating the fellows program's goals and operations. Some wanted greater oversight, for example, to influence the process for identifying and selecting fellows or for the length of the appointments so they did not provide release time, or they withheld other resources and support. Other deans determined that, in difficult financial times, there were other priorities to support financially or were wary that the investment would not lead to the anticipated return.

Despite our embedded program design, the full complement of fellows for our campus was never completely realized. Without decisive, consistent institutional support, it was difficult for the fellows to gain traction.

Questions to Consider—Multilevel Support

- What resources might your institution allocate to support a faculty fellows program (e.g., course releases, stipends, materials)?
- What commitment will units make to support the program? What is the incentive to the units to support the program? Who will make the commitments?
- Which units will provide the course release or other support (e.g., CTL, Academic Affairs, college or department, grant funder)?
- How will the institution prioritize the fellows' efforts?
- How will the institution communicate its commitment to the program to academic heads and the broader faculty community?
- Who would provide the most meaningful endorsement? (i.e., would an announcement to faculty from the vice provost signal the institution's commitment more strongly than announcements in units from individual unit heads?)

Cultivating Institutional Relationships for Effective Communication

The relationships between administrators (e.g., deans, chairs, executive academic officers) and fellows are very important to the success of a fellows program. Fullan (1993) recognized the importance of negotiation in fostering and sustaining institutional change. In his paradigm of change for educational reform, Fullan asserts that, for reforms to work, simultaneous top-down and bottom-up influences are required. Otherwise, he asserts, "Individuals and groups who cannot manage this paradox become whipsawed by the cross-cutting forces of change" (p. 38). In addition, West et al. (2017) emphasized that rapport-building processes must be grounded in understanding roles and relationships within particular institutional contexts and cultures. In the implementation of our Faculty Fellows Program, relationships between administrators and fellows varied widely across the different

units on campus. A few deans encouraged considerable freedom and autonomy in their fellows' efforts. Other deans or unit heads preferred to have greater oversight and involvement in their fellows' activities and fully collaborated in imagining and offering programming. Administrative heads' availability and preferences influenced how often fellows met with them.

Relationships between fellows and their academic unit peers were equally important to support diffusion within the larger social system of the institution. Building trust, empathy, and mutual respect with other colleagues was a challenging yet rewarding endeavor for the fellows (West et al., 2017). Good rapport with colleagues was crucial to encouraging faculty involvement in programming. For some faculty, previous interactions with the fellow as a colleague made a difference in faculty members' decisions to participate in fellows' initiatives. Even more important, possibly, was cultivating a relationship in which colleagues felt they could disclose concerns or self-perceived areas for improvement.

The importance of establishing effective channels of communication was emphasized in the Faculty Fellows Program from the beginning, even in the initial plans and appointment letter. Communicating with constituents in various ways such as interviews, surveys, and online forums not only helped the fellow understand the needs of the faculty being served but also helped the campus community understand the fellows program and the potential ways the fellows might assist with individual and collective faculty development.

Fellows are likely to navigate a number of different roles, and they should be intentional in negotiating and carrying out these roles. Administrators and fellows should consider whether the fellow will serve as a listener, adviser, advocate, or some combination of these. Fellows might advise a dean; consult with departments; advocate for faculty funding and intangible support; or curate and offer faculty development opportunities. Additionally, they should build relationships by communicating to stakeholders and other administrators about the value of the fellows program.

Fellows need to consider what mode of communication will work best in a given social system to foster and support relationships. This includes weighing the benefits and challenges of face-to-face, online, social media, synchronous, and asynchronous formats. The type, location, and time of a discussion may impact how open individuals or groups may be, or how likely they are to participate. A conversation may be more free-flowing if the meeting occurs at a coffee shop or online in contrast to a more formal environment. In some contexts, a fellow may make more headway by offering to visit an individual's office or attend a department meeting to talk rather than asking an individual or group to come to the fellow.

Questions to Consider—Cultivating Institutional Relationships

- With whom, how often, and for what purposes do fellows communicate?
- How much autonomy do fellows have to assess, report, and address the needs of the faculty (and possibly the chairs)?
- How and to whom should requests for support or programming be communicated?
- What are the norms/expectations for communication in the unit between faculty and unit heads?
- What are the relationships that need to be cultivated individually and by the collective fellows program?
- How do fellows communicate in ways that meet the varying needs and priorities of faculty, programs, and administrators?
- What degree of confidentiality can the fellow guarantee to colleagues? Under what circumstances/policies would they be obligated to disclose information?

Development of Fellows, Individually and as a Group

Using the DOI model for faculty development necessitates that not only CTL staff but also fellows possess an understanding of faculty

development. At the outset, fellows likely need a general introduction to the relatively new, innovative, and constantly changing field of faculty development, particularly the role that it plays in institutional quality enhancement. In addition to a knowledge of the field, it is important to help fellows cultivate the skills needed in their new role of educational developer. Learning to support faculty development, and understanding it as a discipline, was initially a challenge for some fellows, especially in feeling knowledgeable and adequately prepared in their new roles to support their colleagues.

Within the DOI model, social systems are defined as interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem-solving to accomplish a common goal (Rogers, 2003). Understanding the specific mission of the institution's CTL and its particular areas of focus (e.g., enhancing teaching and improving student learning, conducting the scholarship of teaching and learning [SoTL] research, securing research funding, supporting tenure and promotion processes, or convening faculty learning communities) would help in identifying priorities that build on the strength of the CTL. If the institution has a faculty development expert or CTL director, that individual can introduce critical, initial information and support the fellows by creating or curating resources and providing an orientation, at least enough of an introduction to the fundamentals of faculty development to prepare fellows to start in their roles. Once the fellows have gotten started in their academic units, the director and fellows can work together to apply faculty development research and best practices in developing collaborations to support institutional as well as individual academic unit initiatives. Knowing the various types of faculty development activities that have been tried and how successful they had been would be beneficial to the new faculty fellow and might be included in the cohort's professional development.

As self-directed professionals, fellows can continue to educate themselves through reading; consultations with knowledgeable educational developers; site visits to other institutions/CTLs; and attendance at regional, national, and international conferences such as the

Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education Conference, the Lilly Conferences and International Summit on College Teaching, International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference, and the Teaching Professors Conference. One common resource that we found particularly useful in our initial meetings was *A Guide to Faculty Development* (Gillespie et al., 2010). Sometimes we participated in one another's programs to determine whether those initiatives might be appropriate or replicable in our own contexts. Since there was no formal training or release time prior to the beginning of fellows' work, these activities were our "on the job training." In retrospect, we believe that fellows needed more dedicated time prior to the launch of the program for their own development and planning.

Developing a camaraderie among the cohort of fellows is important. West et al. (2017) indicate that rapport-building is often best achieved through regular meetings that provide opportunities for peer-to-peer or group mentoring. In our experience, the relationships forged among the cohort of fellows were the most instructive and proved to be one of the greatest professional development successes of the program. The cohort meetings provided a space for sharing resources, ideas, and successes as well as concerns, advice, venting, feedback, and support. Certainly, given the single course release most received, fellows found it challenging to negotiate the requirements of their roles as faculty members in particular disciplines and their new role as fellows. The workload expectations were particularly challenging for those fellows who also had some administrative responsibilities in their units. It is, therefore, important for fellows and their institutions to consider competing demands on the fellows among their disciplinary professional organizations, unit expectations, and educational development opportunities. If the institution values faculty development, it needs to create a fair and balanced approach to rewarding the fellows' educational development. In selecting, supporting, and developing their fellows, institutions should acknowledge the tension between the fellows' content-discipline demands (e.g., obligations at

professional conferences) and regular workload and those demands related to the fellows' work.

Questions to Consider—Development of Fellows

- What preparation will the faculty fellows receive? What role will the CTL director have in the preparation of the fellows?
- How will the fellows develop professionally as individuals and as a cohort? How much time is needed for preparing fellows, building capacity, and carrying out faculty development successfully?
- What resources will be provided for the educational development of the fellows (e.g., time, financial support for educational development conferences outside of their specific discipline)?
- What time and financial resources will be allotted to fellows to allow for their simultaneous development in their discipline and in educational development?
- How should the fellows be recognized for their development work in their own departmental reviews?

Development of Programming

A DOI faculty development model should incorporate discussions of broad, institutional needs as well as the unique needs of colleges and units to help shape the development of programming. The fellows began their work by assessing the needs of the constituents within their colleges/units. Consistent with the model's individualistic approach, each fellow decided on an appropriate assessment method. Most fellows interviewed deans, chairs, program directors, faculty, and staff. Some fellows administered surveys to their constituents. Common queries for interviews and surveys included exploring what had been going well with faculty development and support, what could be improved, what people felt they needed, and what suggestions respondents had for faculty development. One fellow asked department

chairs about the status of faculty development support in each of the areas of instructional development, career development, research development, leadership development, and organizational development—areas broadly relevant to faculty needs (Schroeder, 2015). Some fellows encountered challenges with carrying out a needs assessment process. Some deans did not encourage department chairs to support the needs assessment process, thus failing to emphasize its importance. Collectively, it took nearly a year and a half for the fellows to gather data from their respective units.

The needs assessment revealed that fellows, executive administrators, chairs, and faculty often had different perceptions of faculty needs. For example, many faculty and chairs focused on emergent needs related to teaching and research (e.g., support for teaching online, securing grants, and course development), whereas some executive administrators focused on deficiencies they had noticed in student evaluations of teaching or research productivity data.

Fellows used a variety of methods in conducting and responding to needs assessments and in offering faculty development programming. The diffusion approach to faculty development was intended to provide an exploratory, customizable approach in which fellows could try various ideas to see what worked, and it was successful in that it allowed for individualized approaches to providing faculty development to fellows' constituents. For example, one fellow searched the literature for ideas and tested many of them to see how they worked in her college. Another fellow focused on using results from her unit needs assessment to advocate for institutional changes. In one college, the fellow primarily provided individual consultations to faculty members related to course design, teaching strategies, and materials used in teaching as well as assistance with developing a college-level mentoring program for new faculty.

In spite of many challenges, faculty development programming successes were realized. New and creative programs grew out of the individual needs assessments of each college/unit. For example, two colleges noted the need for an improved sense of community. For one

college, enhancing community meant more in-person gatherings; for the other unit—primarily comprised of adjuncts and affiliated faculty from across campus—it meant creating a social media group for sharing teaching ideas and resources. Other newly created means of communication included, for one college, a college-wide newsletter and, for another, interactive activities created on the university's learning management system. Various methods were used for disseminating ideas about pedagogy, sharing common readings, administering surveys, and announcing events. Examples of programs introduced at the college level included book groups, "Lunch and Learn" events, "Idea Exchanges" (sharing novel teaching ideas and receiving peer feedback to improve those ideas), and "Walking Wednesdays" (a brief walking discussion of particular educational readings or topics). One fellow had an opportunity to support a promising university-wide initiative on climate change. Programs in individual units complemented the more centralized activities of the CTL.

Our fellows had different approaches to creating and implementing programming, and all approaches were generally fluid and recursive. Two of the fellows simply launched initiatives based on both formal data collection and informal conversations with faculty and department chairs. Other fellows held back, desiring to share the needs assessment data and vet ideas through their deans. The difference in approaches was related to the fellows' experience and confidence levels as well as the expectations of various administrators and the culture of each unit or college.

Because the Faculty Fellows Program had few explicit roles and rules, the minimal structure was more amenable to some fellows than to others. Fellows who were more comfortable with prescribed duties and job descriptions struggled with direction and time management. Fellows who were more comfortable with experimentation welcomed having a great deal of freedom. This latter group viewed their faculty development work as an adaptive challenge (Heifetz et al., 2009) and felt more at liberty to pilot innovative programs and activities to see what resonated with their colleagues and what did not. The flexibility

the fellows were afforded was generally useful and advantageous, allowing them to provide more responsive, targeted programming. In some cases, fellows worked to advocate for existing programs, trying to raise faculty awareness of those offerings. Programs that were hosted in the colleges and units included single events such as teaching idea exchanges, webinars and workshops, scholar presentations, and symposia as well as ongoing initiatives such as book, study, discussion, and curriculum design groups.

Although there were programming successes, the fellows faced a host of challenges in their individual and collective work. Some of these challenges included a lack of funding for supplies; the ratio of fellows to faculty served in some of the large colleges or units; the diversity of disciplines within the units; and the physical distance among faculty served, as some colleges are not physically housed in a single building or complex. Another challenge was a lack of faculty participation—sometimes due to faculty time constraints and other times because a unit's culture did not value faculty development.

Questions to Consider—Development of Programming

- How and when should a needs assessment be conducted?
- What are the common questions in the needs assessment across all units? What additional questions might an individual unit add?
- How will the importance of a faculty development needs assessment process be communicated to administrators and faculty? Will unit heads be encouraged to support and facilitate the process?
- What educational development should be embedded within academic units (context-specific) and what should be general or centralized?
- If the institution has or will have a CTL, what will the relationship of fellows' programming be with the CTL?
- How will the fellows be integrated into institutional initiatives such as the strategic plan or quality enhancement plan?

Assessment of the Faculty Fellows Program

For us, one of the most challenging parts of this DOI model of faculty development was evaluating its success. Fink (2013) characterizes assessment as a series of decisions: *Why* are we assessing? Who is our intended *audience*, and what is their primary question? What is the *scope* of our assessment: a whole program, a signature activity, one particular event? What *information* do we need to collect, and how can we collect that information? How should we *use* or *present* the information? In part, our assessment process was complicated because each fellow had a different set of stakeholders within individual units, but the collective fellows had a set of common institutional administrators as stakeholders. These complexities made it difficult for us to make decisions related to intended audience and scope of our assessment and continue to do so.

Most fellows began their work by experimenting with initiatives and then using informal data to determine the impact of those initiatives on their “local” constituents. In addition, most fellows compiled only an annual report of activities to share with one or more stakeholders. Had the program continued longer, a logical next step might have been for the fellows to create a list of those experiments and analyze the common positive outcomes and then to articulate program goals for the next phase of the program’s implementation. If the initial experimental period had been longer, we could have answered more of Fink’s (2013) questions with better clarity and conviction. In the end, we did not get past that step before the program was “paused” while the administrative structure of the CTL was reorganized. Varied unit approaches to assessment meant that we did not have cohesive institutional data to compare outcomes, “generalize” findings, plan collective programming, or confidently assess the impact that the Faculty Fellows Program had on the institution.

In an educational context in which resources are shrinking and there is greater competition for those resources, it is crucial to provide evidence justifying the creation and maintenance of new programs

and expenditures. For institutions developing a faculty fellows program, we agree with Fink (2013) that considering the needs of stakeholders as well as the institutional mission is critical. In addition, it is important to consider the levels or scope of program assessment. Fellows should consider the needs of the faculty who are to be served by individual initiatives (e.g., workshops, development of resources, mentoring). In addition, fellows will want to consider the needs of their respective academic unit. They may consult with stakeholders such as department chairs, deans, and program directors as well as college documents such as strategic plans and conceptual frameworks.

In retrospect, a weakness in our fellows program's implementation was that, from the beginning, there was no plan for a systematic evaluation. However, planning a systematic assessment does pose challenges, though not insurmountable, for a program intended to have flexible and individualized outcomes across units. Ideally, a framework for evaluation would accommodate a systematic process for gathering data to provide evidence for program-level effectiveness as well as flexibility for approaches to assess the experimental aspects of a DOI approach in which unit outcomes are individualized. In some contexts, CTL directors, or institutional assessment units, could identify appropriate outcome measures and ensure there is a plan for evaluation, whereas in other contexts, evaluation may, itself, reflect a more decentralized approach. We would suggest that CTL directors, stakeholders, and fellows be familiar with the fundamentals of systematic, evidence-based program evaluation (Rossi et al., 2004; Royse et al., 2010; Wholey et al., 2007) and determine how best to evaluate their programs in ways that will provide evidence using sound evaluation methods.

In this article, our goal is to share our experience in the form of a critical retrospective review, but in regard to assessment, we believe it is important to say that our story is incomplete and ongoing. Other researchers (Brooks et al., 2011; Cilliers & Herman, 2010; Grabove et al., 2012; Gray & Radloff, 2011; Hines, 2009; Light et al., 2009; Stefani, 2011) have provided detailed recommendations and models for evalu-

ating faculty development programs. These models and studies provide better guidance than we can at this point in our short history.

Questions to Consider—Assessment of the Faculty Fellows Program

- In general, how will the institution judge whether the fellows program is successful? For example, should the program be deemed successful based on number of faculty or academic units reached or by deeper impact on a smaller number of faculty?
- What data would need to be collected from individual participants or academic units to determine the impact of the fellows program?
- How do fellows negotiate time spent assessing and planning with time spent implementing programming and working directly with faculty?
- What processes worked well and should be continued across the units?
- Should assessment focus on a common set of objectives or be tailored to particular activities or academic units?
- Who will be responsible for the fellows program evaluation—the CTL, the institutional research unit, or an external reviewer?

Conclusion

A faculty fellows program can enrich an institution's faculty development offerings by providing "extension agents" who understand context-specific faculty needs and who can offer different, individualized programs that are more responsive to those needs than would be possible with only a centralized CTL. Key considerations in developing a faculty fellows program include the DOI elements of effective communication, sufficient time, and intentional consideration of the institution's social systems. Even though we experienced challenges in fully implementing the Faculty Fellows Program, all of the initial faculty fel-

lows and the CTL director feel that this program is a worthy innovation. The fellows program has continued, and new leaders and fellows have implemented modified processes in response to the lessons learned from our initial cohort. We hope that our shared reflections might also support and encourage other institutions who are considering a faculty fellows program as a potential faculty development innovation.

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