Promoting Professional Development Opportunities for Teaching Faculty

Jane S. Halonen, PhD, Dean, College of Arts and Science, University of West Florida, facilitated discussion on the topic of professional development for teaching faculty. Dr. Halonen began by asking participants to reflect on how to promote and encourage faculty to participate in lifelong learning.

Barriers to lifelong learning

Dr. Halonen talked about faculty who do not appear to have much interest in lifelong learning, and the need to understand why this is so. Some of the key factors may be an artifact of teachers' busy lives, since professional development takes both time and motivation. Faculty may also be influenced by messages they receive on campus that the endpoint is achieving tenure. In addition, institutional missions are now heavily focused on vocationalism. In this culture, faculty are seen as facilitators to occupations and careers, rather than "educators."

Dr. Halonen spoke about the difficulty of measuring evidence of lifelong learning because the concept is about individual flexibility, growth, and change. Dr. Halonen added that Psychology could make some very important contributions to the higher education community through convening a group to address the measurement issue. In terms of promoting lifelong learning to faculty, there is no evidence that lifelong learning has an impact on good instruction. Moreover, good teaching does not tend to result in tangible rewards.

Encouraging lifelong learning

Participants suggested that faculty be encouraged to be more reflective about lifelong learning, New faculty members should be encouraged to think about the longevity of their career. Faculty should also be asked to think *intentionally* about their career through setting 5-year goals. As a part of this process, faculty should also be asked to reflect on what they accomplished during each year. Faculty could also be asked to think about how they have contributed to the college. For new faculty, mid-term assessments can be important opportunities for feedback and professional growth.

Participants commented on the importance of fostering a climate of lifelong learning. First, faculty need to promote the philosophy that higher education is about *education*, rather than vocational training. Institutions need to develop tenure and promotion systems that acknowledge and reward opportunities for their faculty to experience continued professional development. Expectations about the importance of lifelong learning must be clear and an orientation to this perspective should begin on the first day so that faculty understand that they have a responsibility to enhance their skills.

Discussion group members shared the following recommendations to promote an orientation to lifelong learning:

- develop mechanisms to invest value and recognize good teaching.
- hire faculty who demonstrate curiosity and a commitment to continuous learning.
- develop individualized professional development plans for faculty.
- encourage professional goal-setting that includes adaptation goals.
- promote working from strength
- produce clear tenure and promotion guidelines and follow them.
- explicitly reward lifelong learning and individuals who model this best.
- encourage faculty members to share successful teaching experiences (e.g., teaching brown bag lunches, teaching enhancement committees).
- facilitate bottom-up faculty sharing "difficult dialogues."
- promote team teaching for seminars to foster interdisciplinary collaborations.
- provide official mentors and opportunities for feedback.
- recognize that sabbatical can be a rich opportunity for learning and growth.

Potential topics for professional development

Participants shared some ideas about issues and topics for professional development that might interest faculty, including:

- Teaching enhancement workshops for faculty, particularly graduate students who are new to teaching.
- Diversity training for faculty.
- Ethical issues in teaching. (Faculty need guidance on educational issues, boundary issues, social networking concerns, etc. One specific recommendation was for a BEA-sponsored project to elaborate anticipated dilemmas in "just in time" format.)
- Technology training. (This is an important professional development need for faculty, and can include training in using technology to teach, and for online teaching.)
- Research updates. (Faculty can benefit from professional development related to new ways to conduct research.)

Questions for the Plenary Session

1. In general, what impact does tenure have on lifelong learning for faculty?
   a) Positive impact.
   b) Negative impact.
   c) Neutral.

2. In general, what impact do teaching and learning centers have on lifelong learning for faculty?
   a) Positive impact.
   b) Negative impact.
   c) Neutral.

3. At the point at which you began teaching, how well prepared were you to deal with diversity issues (both visible and hidden differences)?
   a) Very well prepared.
   b) Well prepared.
   c) Moderately well prepared.
   d) A little prepared.
   e) Not at all prepared.

4. What is the best way to discourage lifelong learning in psychology faculty?
   a) Require CE evidence
   b) Discount lifelong learning experience as part of tenure/promotion
   c) Assign a lifelong learning mentor
   d) Abandon sabbatical opportunities
   e) Develop a Lifelong Learning Award in each APA Division