

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

# GUIDELINES for organizing staff development programs

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Staff development programs are designed to reflect institutional and personal needs and may differ dramatically from one institution to another. Political realities, for example, will affect the nature of a staff development program. Administrative support and available funds are factors that make programs different. A staff development program that relies primarily on internal resources will be very different from one that relies on external resources. Finally, the institutional climate and the state of readiness for the development of the staff will determine program activities.

Although a staff development program must and should reflect the special needs of the institution and the staff for whom it is designed, there is beginning to emerge a set of experiences for organizing a staff development program that may be helpful to most, if not all, community colleges. The following guidelines are basic and should be carefully considered by colleges planning to organize or reorganize a staff development program to make it really work.

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*Condensed from "Organizing Staff Development Programs That Work," Terry O'Banion, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Washington, D.C., 1978. O'Banion is vice chancellor of educational affairs, Dallas County Community College District, Dallas, Texas.*

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### Assessment

An assessment should be made of administrative views and support of the present level of staff development activities, of institutional and professional/personal needs, and of resources within and near the institution. For a successful institution-wide program, the support of the president is crucial. Once the commitment from the top is established, it is important to survey the informal staff development activities already in existence. Such surveys often reveal hidden resources, such as discretionary funds, that can be drawn on in building a formal program. Accomplishing institutional and individual needs assessments is the most important assignment facing a staff developer. The questionnaire and the personal interview are the two most popular methods for such assessment. Personal interviews take time but often build support; questionnaires reach larger numbers and bring uniformity to the process. And finally, an assessment of the resources both internal and external will provide the basic data for planning the program.

### A Statement of Philosophy

A statement of philosophy for the staff development program should be developed and approved by the members of the institution who are to be served. So that the program of staff development can have a focus, and in order that

staff members can participate in the process for establishing that focus, a statement of philosophy is necessary. It will deal with need and importance as well as basic guiding principles. Once the statement has been developed, usually by committee, it needs careful herding through institutional pastures. Approval from the staff members is absolutely necessary if a staff development program—designed for their needs—is going to be accepted.

### Organization and Staffing

Organization and staffing must be appropriately coordinated to fit the limitations and resources of the institution. The organization must include a competent staff to carry out the coordinating function. There is no consensus as to the ideal pattern, but it is clear that someone must be in charge if the program is to work. A strong union may push for a faculty committee, or administration may mandate a coordinator. In either event, an advisory committee, reflective of major interests, is helpful to a program seeking credibility. A program run by committee or decentralized into various divisions of the college often lacks focus, especially if released time is not given coordinators. The most feasible organization for a staff development program is one coordinated by a staff development person. A committee representing faculty, administrators, and non-contractual staff can provide direction and liaison but without a coordinator clearly in charge, the program is likely to flounder.

### Variety of Activities

A wide variety of activities must be designed to meet the various needs of all the constituents

represented in the institution. The program of activities is derived from the assessment of needs and interests of those for whom the program is planned and from the mission, needs, and priorities of the institution. The program format will depend upon institutional resources, expectations of participants, and the creativity of the staff development coordinator. Comprehensive programs for staff development may include:

1. Curriculum offerings managed much like a student curriculum, in which courses are taught for various segments of the staff, with credit sometimes applying to the salary schedule or toward promotion in academic rank.
2. Grants to staff for special projects that have potential for impacting the educational environment.
3. Activities designed to analyze teaching methods—videotaping, classroom visitation, and micro-teaching.
4. Team visits to other colleges to review innovative or exemplary programs.
5. Off-campus activities carefully coordinated with followup activities to share the information gained from conferences, retreats, and graduate study.
6. Exchange programs, sabbaticals, and internships within the institution to provide renewal for staff members who are weary or worn-out in their present jobs.
7. A professional development plan to help staff formalize objectives for professional and sometimes personal development.



Staff development programs must first and foremost take into account the end effect on the student.



An excited teacher will generate zest in colleagues and in the classroom.



*Committed teaching is what it's all about on the community college campus.*

### **Incentives and Rewards**

*Appropriate incentives and rewards* must be made clear and available to the participants. How should staff members be rewarded for participation? The possibilities include released time, promotions, direct stipends, salary increases, institutional recognition, and paid travel. The assessment process will uncover the kinds of incentives and rewards that will motivate the participants. Not to be overlooked is the very important incentive of personal and professional growth as an end in itself. Faculty and staff in today's community colleges want opportunities for renewal, and institutional opportunities for personal and professional growth are perhaps among the most important and inexpensive incentives that could be expected. The value of such opportunities has been confirmed by community college staff in recent studies in Florida and Illinois.

### **Funding**

*Adequate funding* must be made available to carry out the activities. Given the present fiscal constraints in education, the cost of staff development activity is a concern of all community colleges. At a time when programs are being curtailed and even eliminated, it is difficult for planners to think of adding new programs—

especially activities that do not result in direct services to students.

While funding is certainly a problem, board members can support the use of funds for staff development when the case is presented well. As noted in the 1973 report of the Assembly of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, titled *New Staff for New Students*: "The staff of a college is its single greatest resource. In economic terms, the staff is the college's most significant and largest capital investment. In these terms alone, we affirm that it is only good sense that the investment should be helped to appreciate in value and not be allowed to wear itself out or slide into obsolescence by inattention or neglect." Given that view, it is imperative that community colleges review their current operation regarding staff development and organize a program on a sound and appropriately funded basis. It may be the best investment the college can make; surely, the maintenance of staff is as important as the maintenance of buildings and grounds.

### **Program Evaluation**

*There must be an overall program evaluation*, including indications of improvement in the development of individual staff members. There are three levels of evaluation to consider in a program of staff development:

1. Immediate indicators, including attendance figures and direct feedback from participants.
2. Changes in staff members' behavior. These changes are difficult to determine because so many variables enter in. Methods include self-evaluation, follow-up interviews or questionnaires; and peer, student, and supervisor evaluation.
3. Improved student development. The thesis of evaluation at this level can be stated this way: staff development leads to improved program and organization development that lead to improved student development. This level of evaluation at present demands more measurement sophistication than most community colleges can manage, but it is an important goal for the future.

Close attention to these guidelines will help insure the organization of staff development programs that actually work. Staff development is one of the best opportunities community colleges have had in decades for meeting their overall aims and purposes. Student development is the major goal. Staff development is a promising means for reaching that goal. □