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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultivating Continuing Education for Faculty: Using CLE and CME as Guides

Eric Lyerly

People in many professions are subject to continuing education requirements to maintain licensure or professional status. Law offers one example; medicine offers another. Faculty at postsecondary institutions are excluded from this list.

Without a license to maintain, faculty are not subject to continuing education requirements from a licensing board (like lawyers and physicians), although their institution or department may establish some faculty development obligations. But that doesn't mean that continuing education isn't important for faculty. In fact, **studies have shown** that faculty development can improve student retention rates and learning outcomes.

Faculty leaders have a unique role in fostering an atmosphere of continuing education and career-long learning within their departments. But where should you start if you want to promote faculty development for colleagues?

This article explores two models of continuing education—continuing legal education (CLE) and continuing medical education (CME)—and examines the insights and best practices they offer for faculty development programs.

CLE as a model for professional development

Lawyers are required to complete a certain number of CLE hours each year to maintain an active license to practice law. The American Bar Association **has described** the CLE requirement as a way of "maintain[ing] public confidence in the legal profession and the rule of law, and [of promoting] the fair administration of justice." The ABA maintains that such a requirement helps lawyers achieve competency "regarding the law, legal and practice-oriented skills, the standards and ethical obligations of the legal profession, and the management of their practices."

The ABA suggests that lawyers should take an average of 15 CLE credit hours per year, including (1) an average of one hour of ethics and professionalism credit per year, (2) one hour of mental health and substance abuse disorder credit every three years, and (3) one hour of diversity and inclusion training credit every three years. Most states impose an obligation on lawyers to take 12–15 CLE credit hours per year, with varying requirements for ethics and DEI credits.

Lawyers can fulfill their general CLE requirements with courses on nearly any

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Planning Community-Based Faculty Training and Professional Development at Your Institution

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How to Respond to Low Faculty Morale

Laura G. McGee

When you become department chair, you are likely to gain a new perspective on faculty morale in your unit. As a regular faculty member, you may not have known how deep the feelings ran or how pervasive the malaise was. The hard work of administration can seem even harder when faculty morale is low. Even normal operations seem burdensome to everyone. Creative thinking, investment in positive outcomes, and problem-solving may seem impossible in such a context. Your job as department chair is tough enough, so address faculty morale if you can. Do this early, before the new normal of your administration takes root.

Try to identify the cause

Engage in inquiry and deep listening to determine if there are causes you can address. For example, faculty may have been unhappy with the way your predecessor conducted faculty evaluations or awarded research funds. You may be able to implement a policy change that is more satisfactory. Low faculty morale may have its source in larger issues you can't address, such as state level funding, recent program cuts, the lack of raises, or general dissatisfaction with the university administration. If this is the case, you may want to find other ways to address morale, making the department a more rewarding and personable place to work. Change what you can and let go of the rest.

Don't take it personally

While you are addressing morale, try to refrain from taking the brunt of other people's unhappiness. Be mindful of when you are absorbing the anxiety and anger of the group. If specific people make you a target when you don't deserve it, call them out. Let them know that you are not the cause of the problem and don't deserve to be treated as if you are. Use your judgment about when and how to do this. Model the civil behavior you expect to see from faculty.

Create the departmental culture in which you want to work

While there may be a lot of things you can't control, there are some you can. Identify the type of departmental culture you want and implement it. Note that change may take years and may come by changing one mind at a time. It may require getting the wrong people off the bus and the right people on it. So be patient. What follow are some ideas to guide your efforts to set all eyes in your unit on community, mission, and outcomes.

Start the year with a common experience of learning or doing together

Create a tradition whereby the whole department learns something new together at the beginning of each academic year. Make it practical and social. What the unit learns together can vary each year depending on current needs. In a year when we had an especially large influx of new faculty and teaching assistants, I booked a day of low-ropes team-building and problem-solving exercises for our unit. Why this worked: all our faculty engaged with each other in small groups to apply creative think-

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ing to solve physical and logistical problems. There was a bit of friendly competition. The most senior and the most junior faculty worked together to complete the tasks. I saw strengths emerge and observed communicative patterns that I would not have expected—all extremely helpful to know for everyday work. People learned each other's names and helped each other as they pursued a common goal. We laughed together. In fall of another year, we completed DISC assessments together, and in yet another fall we brought in an outside consultant to help us review student learning outcomes from the previous spring. You can mix things up so faculty have a new experience of each other each time. You can solicit faculty input in collectively choosing a topic for the next fall learning experience.

Involve faculty in selecting departmental swag

You may have a budget line for purchasing smaller or larger items of swag to give prospective students at recruitment fairs or teachers at feeder schools. Offer faculty the opportunity to help select what the department purchases, and then also give each faculty member a swag gift. You can give the gift at the end of the departmental workshop each fall. One year we gave insulated lunch bags with the departmental logo; another year it was messenger bags.

Visit classes

Take the time to visit classes briefly in a random way. Spend a few minutes telling students how special their professor is—in the professor's presence. Tell them some of what you value professionally about their professor—things the students may not know through their regular coursework. Mention also to students that you want them to have a quality experience in the courses they take in the department. Stress that both you and the professor value that. Remind them that if their professor is doing things that are especially helpful to them (that truly contribute to their learning) they can and should let their professor know—and that you would love to hear from them as well.

Create a culture of valuing department health

To cultivate department health or program health means to be proactive in optimizing every aspect of operations rather than passively continuing to function as always. You want to have an environment in which every member of the unit has their eyes open for ways to do things better and their minds open to exchanging old approaches for new. It means faculty are doing what's best for students and best for the enrollment numbers that help maintain staffing and budgets. It means that problems are noticed and addressed with creative solutions.

You can begin to create a culture of valuing department health by mentioning it in context so faculty get a sense of what it is. Bring it up in meetings when you describe what needs to happen or what someone did as contributing to the health of the department.

You can develop this understanding further by giving immediate positive feedback when you see people taking actions that support department or program health. Say something to that person, write a short memo or email recognizing them, or mention it at a meeting. Even faculty evaluations can reference this as a contribution.

Finally, everyone likes their moment in the spotlight. Hold a year-end recognition event where you recognize each faculty member for a particular action, talent, or attitude that contributed to the health of their program or the department. Doing this has several benefits beyond recognizing the recipient. It lets everyone see who is particularly good at a certain thing and could therefore be a resource for his or her colleagues, for example "Dr. Smith created a spectacular one-page curriculum path showing the one-year, two-year, and three-year routes to completion of his program." Create for each faculty member a certificate that names their contribution. This should all happen in a spirit of kindness, generosity, and genuine appreciation of the talents each person brings to the success of the department.

Let people know you care

In an academic environment in which resources may be getting tighter and faculty feel like they are being asked to do more with less, there are ways you can help shift attention to the positive. Listen to concerns and take notes, then relay concerns appropriately. Let your faculty know you are serving as their advocate. Say it and do it. Even if the change faculty want to see is not possible, complete the communication, letting the faculty know why you are doing so.

Take the time to know your faculty a little beyond the purely professional. I kept a jumbo box of birthday cards in my desk and wrote a card to each faculty member on their birthday. Learn a little about their hobbies or their families so you can ask about their well-being and notice milestones in their lives.

Finally—and this sounds ridiculously simple and yet it is so important—slow down enough each day to truly say hello and to ask how folks are doing. Actually stop moving when you greet someone in the hallway. You may find this helps you stay on the pulse of morale so you can be more responsive.

This article first appeared in *Academic Leader* on February 14, 2022.

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topic. There is no requirement that these courses relate to the lawyer's area of practice. Lawyers who fail to fulfill their CLE hours are typically subject to disciplinary penalties from their state bar.

Criticisms of mandatory CLE

Many scholars and commenters have criticized the mandatory CLE process. For instance, in his article "**Mandatory Continuing Legal Education: Productive or Just PR?**" David D. Schein observes that the mandatory system has not reduced lawyer discipline, malpractice lawsuits, or the negative public perception of lawyers.

In her article "**Can Continuing Legal Education Pass the Test? Empirical Lessons from the Medical World**," law professor Rima Sorota notes that the mandatory CLE system directs lawyers away from practice-relevant courses and shows overreliance on lecture-based instruction that features minimal opportunity for interactivity among participants.

Schein notes, however, that there are forces that favor mandatory CLE, including the opportunity to network, an increasingly important practice given the increased competition and specialization among attorneys. Later in the article, I will discuss how faculty leaders can use these pros and cons of mandatory CLE to encourage meaningful continuing education and professional development for faculty.

CME as a model for professional development

Sorota compares the CLE structure for lawyers with the CME structure for physicians, who must also participate in continuing education to maintain their licensure. Medical licensing boards require anywhere from 15 to 50 CME credits per year, depending on the jurisdiction. Licensing boards generally allow physicians to fulfill their credits with courses on nearly any topic—similar to the process for CLE.

But board-certified physicians (who account for over 80 percent of physicians) are required to fulfill a portion of their credit requirements with practice-specific CME to keep their certification active. The maintenance of certification process incorporates self-assessment and peer review processes to identify areas for growth in the physician's practice. Physicians can use this data to form a learning plan and choose CME that improves their practice skills and maximizes their professional development.

Sorota observes that CME providers offer a well-rounded agenda with courses that incorporate "opportunities for multiple sessions, practice feedback, small group discussion, and other features [such as] simulations, reflection-based exercises, case-based self-assessments, reading modules, and opportunities to learn alongside" other medical professionals. Encouragingly, according to Sorota, research has found that online CME programs "produce knowledge benefits comparable to live presentations."

CLE, CME, and faculty

The creation of a uniform continuing education credit for faculty may be implausible. Most faculty do not have a certification or licensure to maintain, and there are no faculty boards or bar organizations to enforce a continuing education requirement. But faculty leaders can provide a similar (perhaps more informal and less intimidating) function in promoting a culture of faculty development.

Research from Harvard University has shown that for more than half of faculty, salary is a secondary consideration (or not a consideration at all) in their decision to stay at an institution. Incidentally, 67 percent of faculty cite the quality of their colleagues as a compelling factor. A commitment to continuing education from departmental leaders promotes the type of collegiality and professional growth that keeps faculty in their roles for longer. Happier faculty provide strong odds for happier faculty leaders.

A culture of continuing education may seem impractical, especially considering the niche areas of research and writing that many faculty occupy. But this is a reason for—not against—cultivating a departmental atmosphere that is friendly toward faculty development. As Schein observes about lawyers, professions with hyper-specialization (such as faculty in their areas of scholarship) benefit from the networking that accompanies faculty education opportunities.

Tips for maximizing faculty development

As Sorota observes of CME, the best model for professional training programs is one that has a well-rounded agenda. When faculty are encouraged to pursue continued learning, it is often in the areas of pedagogy, assessments, and instruction—worthwhile focus areas, to be sure. But CLE and CME systems both make room for practitioners to explore topics according to their interests and passions—even if they are not practice specific. Faculty leaders should do the same.

Deans, department chairs, and other leaders should encourage faculty to pursue development opportunities that they find interesting and stimulating, even if these don't relate to their areas of scholarship. Such courses may offer opportunities for making new associations that strengthen research, writing, and instruction. A professor of mathematics may well benefit from attending a course about the mating rituals of tropical birds, learning more about probability in the process.

To be sure, faculty leaders should also encourage professors to pursue development in their scholarship areas as well as in instruction and assessment. CME structures require certified physicians to take credits in their areas of practice to keep their certifications active. Faculty could use continuing edu-

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cation events as a way of keeping their research and scholarship "active" in nearly as literal a sense.

Improving faculty performance

In continuing education, faculty leaders hold a key to improving the performance of faculty and their departments generally. As part of the CME process, physicians participate in self-assessment and peer review to determine areas where further growth and skill is needed. Physicians then choose CMEs that enhance their practice skills and their professional development.

Incidentally, faculty leaders have a ready-made source of data in student and faculty reviews to help colleagues identify areas where continuing education could provide growth. Using this data, faculty leaders can help colleagues choose development courses that suit their needs. Of course, they should be wary of using such a process punitively as doing so may contradict the spirit of continuing education as an opportunity for professional growth.

Measuring the effectiveness of continued learning

In his book Evaluating Training Programs (1994), Donald L. Kirkpatrick offers a framework for evaluating professional training programs. Although such an analysis might be too rigorous for an informal promotion of faculty development, it can be helpful for assessing what courses, seminars, or other trainings resonate most with faculty and why.

The model has four metrics:

- **Reaction**—The extent to which participants find the training satisfying, engaging, and relevant to their jobs
- **Learning**—The extent to which participants acquire new knowledge or skills because of their participation in the training
- **Behavior**—The extent to which participants apply what they learned during training to their faculty role
- **Results**—The extent to which the training produces desired outcomes

As time allows, faculty leaders could review these metrics with faculty to see which courses offer the best development experiences.

The bottom line

There are many (legitimate) excuses for faculty to defer continuing education opportunities. For instance, faculty have busy work schedules, and colleges and universities may not always have the resources to build an effective professional training program. But with the availability of online training opportunities, faculty development has never been more accessible.

Faculty leaders can play a critical role in promoting continuing education within their departments. Such an endeavor can lead to more engaged students, more fulfilled faculty, and more retention in faculty departments.

Supporting Faculty and Staff and Well-Being: Community, Connection, and Balance

Rebecca Pope-Ruark

Earlier this year, I introduced the **U.S. Surgeon General's Framework for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being**. The framework was created to start deeper conversations about change and well-being in the workplace and to foster "research, strategic investment, and broader policy advancement" to create healthy, productive workplaces (p. 9). The framework is divided into five "essentials" for workplace mental health and well-being: protection from harm, connection and community, work-life harmony, mattering at work, and opportunity for growth (p. 10). Each of these five essentials can be applied to academia as a workplace writ large and by institutions individually to promote greater health and well-being for faculty and staff. And since faculty and staff working conditions are student learning conditions, we should take these essentials and this opportunity for conversation around these ideals seriously.

I covered the first essential, protection from harm, in my previous article; here I'll discuss the second and third essentials.

Essential 2: Connection and community with social support and belonging

The second essential listed in the framework covers the human need for connection and community, with social support and belonging bolstering that need. Institutions of higher education often pitch themselves as places where relationships flourish—between students and their peers, students and their instructors and mentors, faculty and their colleagues (see Peter Felten and Leo Lambert's work on relationship-rich education). Many institutions have belonging initiatives for students as social engagement is crucial to the learning experience, students' mental health, and their retention at the institution. Institutions also form relationships with their local communities in a variety of engaged ways.

But how often do institutions talk about belonging, connection, or community for faculty and staff? The framework report notes, "Given the amount of time people spend in the workplace, the relationships and connections we build there can have a variety of impacts" (p. 17). And faculty and staff at institutions of higher education often have high expectations for being on site for events, activities, and student needs beyond the traditional workday. This is complicated by the rhetoric that institutions are "**families**," which ratchets up expectations that you cut into your personal time to be there for students and colleagues outside normal working hours. This **family myth** can also be used to limit open conversations about fair pay, fair working hours, and "doing more with less." While most workplaces don't intend the idea of a workplace family to be malicious, it can create unfair practices and silence important discussions about working conditions.

The framework essential of connection and community, which in higher education calls for social support and belonging work to be done for faculty and staff, not just students, lists three ways forward:

1. **Create cultures of inclusion and belonging**. The framework reminds us to encourage "prosocial behavior" and recommends that "organizational leaders should cultivate environments and cultures where connection is encouraged, and workers of all backgrounds are included" (p. 18). This is especially tricky territory in a world where diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are being **demonized and eliminated** in states controlled by conservative politicians. But it nevertheless remains crucial to build environments where people thrive by meeting and working with others who share similar values, goals, and missions, whether personal or institutional, and where they feel like they **belong** to a collective. How leaders empower faculty and staff to build cultures of belonging will differ by campus and, unfortunately, state, but consider committees or work groups that focus on belonging for employees and creating other opportunities to lessen the gap between faculty and staff, for example.
2. **Cultivate trusted relationships**. Relationships are at the core of the work we do in higher education with students and colleagues, but in my work with faculty across the country, I continue to hear that many still harbor distrust of institutional leadership over the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. The framework argues that it is import-

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ant to promote "trust among leaders and workers," which "begins with listening to worker concerns and explaining why key decisions are made within an organization" (p. 18). Additionally, the framework advocates for creating "a structure and opportunities for workers to build trust and better understand one another as whole people and not just as skill sets. This mitigates loneliness and helps workers across all levels value and empathize with each other, while helping each other cope with stress and uncertainty" (p. 18). Leaders can create structures that empower resource groups of faculty and staff, create clear avenues to escalate cultural concerns, and provide opportunities for faculty and staff to work toward shared priorities.

3. **Foster collaboration and teamwork**. The neoliberal university prizes individual productivity, especially for faculty members in terms of research dollars and papers published, but higher ed works best when we collaborate and work toward shared goals and mission. The framework recommends that "organizational leaders, supervisors, and project managers . . . communicate the importance of teamwork, encourage regular communication, model authenticity, provide teams with effective collaboration tools, and include time for non-work connection such as community service" (p. 19).

Essential 3: Work-life harmony with autonomy and flexibility

As I do workshops for faculty around the country on burnout, work-life balance is a popular, and often frustrating, topic for participants. Even the terminology, "**balance**," leads many to question what that could possibly mean or look like in an always-on, always-productive higher ed landscape. The framework changes the terminology, using instead the term "work-life harmony," which it defines as "the ability to integrate work and non-work demands [that] rests on the human needs of autonomy and flexibility" (p. 20). The authors of the framework argue that leaders and organizations must do more than recognize employees as just their work functions and serve the whole person when each of us brings our authentic self to campus (20). They cite research that supports the idea that work-life conflict can lead to numerous adverse health outcomes, whereas "workers who feel they can better harmonize their professional and personal needs report greater satisfaction with their work and life and experience fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety" (p. 21).

The framework then provides four areas of policy and practice ripe for change initiatives:

1. **Provide more autonomy over how work is done**. Like most industries, higher ed has been trying to adapt to a post-pandemic new normal regarding where and when work gets done. Traditionally, work was done almost entirely on campus, where students are, but the pandemic changed that for all of us, even though faculty have historically had more autonomy than staff. Research shows that "organizations that increase opportunities for worker control over how, when, and where work is done can mitigate work and life conflicts, engender more trust in workplaces and coworkers, and improve health" (p. 21). Administrative leaders can work collaboratively with faculty and staff leaders, positional and grassroots, to develop work-from-home and working hours policies that meet faculty and staff needs for autonomy while still achieving the institutions' student-facing missions.
2. **Make schedules as flexible and predictable as possible**. While it might initially seem this point is better addressed to staff than faculty at colleges and universities, the framework acknowledges that "workers subject to irregular schedules are more likely to report a higher likelihood of psychological distress and poor sleep quality, which is linked to a host of negative health outcomes" (p. 22). Faculty often have irregular schedules too, when events and activities are scheduled outside traditional working hours and the ebb and flow of grant deadlines shifts priorities. Staff leaders and faculty chairs can work with their colleagues to manage these demands proactively and spread the tasks, especially those after hours, equitably across the workforce.
3. **Increase access to paid leave**. According to research the framework authors cite, "Unequal and limited

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Fostering Creativity in Departmental Faculty Meetings

Mary Dzindolet, Krystal Brue, Stephanie Boss, Shaun Calix, and Jennifer Dennis

Although students, faculty, and administrators have largely returned to pre-2020 campus operations, the effects of the pandemic still linger. Research confirms what many have suspected to be the case: the social isolation caused by the pandemic has left people feeling lonely (Ernst et al., 2022) and disconnected from colleagues (Chaker et al., 2021). Loneliness combined with Covid-19 worry is an especially bad combination, predicting depression and anxiety (Mayorga et al., 2022). The increase in the sheer number of people experiencing mental health issues is an indicator of the magnitude of its effects. Most everyone in higher education knows a student, a coworker, or an administrator who is suffering with a mental health issue. Despite faculty and administration suffering with these issues, providing safe, high-quality, and engaging educational experiences to students and collegial, supportive, and nurturing work environments for faculty members remains the expected norm.

But it is not always clear how to cultivate such environments. From deciding the best communication method and frequency to ensure transparency to balancing faculty workloads in response to enrollment changes, the pandemic has only exacerbated administrative challenges. Experts cannot even reach consensus on how the pandemic will continue to affect our world (Grossman et al., 2021). Uncertainty makes it challenging for leaders to know the "right" course of action with many competing perspectives and needs to consider. In this polarizing environment, chairs and deans still need to meet with faculty, students, administrators, and community members to accomplish all the tasks necessary to have a department or school run smoothly. They often work in multiple teams simultaneously with competing demands to balance priorities. Since the pandemic began, many of these teams have met remotely or virtually rather than face-to-face, creating challenges that did not exist before.

In addition, the stakes couldn't be higher with universities fighting for ever more dwindling resources. It is likely that only universities with innovative, creative, and flexible approaches will succeed. For universities to remain relevant, chairs and deans must prioritize the development of resilient departmental teams. Unfortunately, gathering a group of resilient individuals will not necessarily create a resilient team. Coordination breakdowns, miscommunication and misinterpretations, and technology disruptions are a few of the challenges that chairs and deans are currently facing. Using a model of team creativity (Paulus & Dzindolet, 2008; Dzindolet et al., 2012) and research on team and group performance, we offer the following suggestions to chairs and other administrators:

1. **Select and train faculty members**. Select members to enhance diversity and be united in a common group goal. Remember that job-relevant diversity *improves* team creativity. A broader array of expertise and knowledge, skills, and abilities leads to divergent perspectives and approaches that stimulate creative cognitive processes. In addition, diversity allows for communication with members outside the team, which can increase access to unique ideas and a more comprehensive approach. But too little in common can make communication difficult and increase conflict, which, if not well managed, can decrease trust and harm creativity and innovation. Therefore, make attempts to create pride in the discipline, encourage positive relations among team members, and most important, keep the faculty and students committed. The goal is to get instructors to use their innate strengths to support the department's, school's, or university's mission. Individual and small group listening sessions, team celebrations, and opportunities for faculty–faculty, faculty–student, and student–student connections are a few strategies to promote a strong team culture.
2. **Select the technology**. Virtuality is on a continuum; it is not helpful to think of it as a dichotomous variable. Greater use of virtual technology increases the risk that team members will have trouble focusing on the task (because some attention is focused on technology), have issues reading team members' social cues, and have problems getting in the "flow" due to delayed responses. All this can lead to increased misunderstandings and increased conflict. To make matters worse, it is also harder to repair relationships virtually. Therefore, be intentional in selecting how virtual you want your meetings to be. The specific decisions the team will make should determine both how media rich the technology should be and the extent to which the technology needs to allow for synchronous communication. When you choose to use virtual

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technology, ensure that team members have a common understanding of the technology for successful team coordination and performance.

3. **Set the stage**. Create an environment in which faculty feel psychologically safe. No matter the technology used (or not), brainstormers should feel encouraged to freely express crazy, new, novel ideas, trusting that the other faculty members will not evaluate them negatively. There should be enough conflict to expose faculty to varying ideas but not so much as to distract faculty members from the task at hand. Members need to be able to express dissimilar or unusual views without fear of retaliation. Remember that the correlation between trust and performance is even higher among virtual teams than among face-to-face teams. Therefore, it is imperative that you, as the team's leader, create an environment of trust within your group.
4. **Provide team training**. Faculty members may need team training as well as opportunities to form connections among their peers. Much of what faculty members do is solitary; therefore, they may need to develop their team skills. Team emotional management intervention (Holtz et al., 2020) can improve team synergy and motivation through the development of trust, identity, and efficacy (think EQ at the team or group level). For training to be effective, consider what objectives need covering, think about training as a process rather than an event, and balance faculty perspectives with larger institutional needs and goals.
5. **Provide mental health training**. For faculty to perform well in the current environment, they will need to have a basic understanding of common mental health issues. They must be able to notice symptoms of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and trauma and have enough knowledge of the resources available on campus and in the community to refer students, faculty, and administrators appropriately. It is imperative that chairs and deans make certain that faculty in their departments and schools have access to this training. In addition, faculty should know that their role is only to refer people to mental health services, not to attempt to provide those services themselves.
6. **Create carrots and sticks**. Provide enough individual and group rewards to encourage faculty to persist when the brainstorming becomes boring or difficult, being careful not to offer so many rewards as to undermine intrinsic motivation. What should you do if some faculty members seem to be sloughing? Remember that when some group members are allowed to work less hard, others will feel encouraged to do the same so as not to be taken advantage of. But when group members are given clear group goals and believe that low-performing members are trying their best, they often work even harder to ensure the group is successful. This is another reason that it is important that faculty have a basic understanding of common mental health issues. Group members who are committed to clear departmental goals and who attribute another faculty member's poor performance to a mental health issue are likely to pick up the slack to be sure the goals are met.
7. **Mix it up**. Alternate between working alone and working together. Divide tasks into smaller chunks. Be sure to take brief breaks. It might be counterintuitive, but groups that take brief breaks from the problems they are tackling are more creative than those that push through.

Following these steps will foster creativity in the groups you lead—whether they be faculty in a departmental meeting or a cross-disciplinary team convening community members and administrators for a particular project. Remember that psychological safety is necessary for creativity. Although creating a "safe" place for team members to be creative is especially challenging right now, it is essential that you do all you can to encourage trust. It can be in the most challenging of times that people and groups reach their highest levels of creativity. After all, necessity is the mother of invention.

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Conversations about Course Ratings: Encouraging Faculty to Make Changes

Maryellen Weimer

Talking with faculty about end-of-course ratings is generally a high-stakes conversation where merit raises, promotions, or permanent contracts are on the line or at least hovering in the background of the exchange. Most chairs, program coordinators, or division heads would like to use the conversation for more formative purposes—to engage the faculty member in an exploration of how their teaching is going and where it might be improved. Most faculty would like to use the exchange for more summative purposes—to create an overall favorable impression of their teaching.

For chairs, the challenge is having an honest, substantive discussion of teaching that may start with the rating results but moves beyond the numbers. The challenges these conversations present aren't always the same, but the likelihood of a productive exchange increases if some time has been spent thinking about what needs to be said and how to say it. What follows is the first article in a three-part series that outlines three different but fairly common conversation scenarios. There is no one right way to have these conversations. They can go in a number of different directions. But there is one desired outcome. The faculty member needs to leave the conversation motivated to continue working on teaching. Teaching excellence is a journey; not a destination.

Let's start with a scenario of a faculty member whose ratings have stayed the same for many semesters. The ratings are decidedly average.

It's important before the conversation begins to understand that a certain amount of stability is to be expected for mid-career faculty who routinely teach a lot of the same courses. Even so, with average, stable ratings, the concerns are two-fold; the ratings are average, meaning there's room for improvement, and stable ratings can be indicative of very little change occurring in the course. The worry here is that the longer the teaching approaches, activities and assignments stay the same, the greater the chance that the teaching (sometimes the teacher) starts to look and feel tired. How long before that happens? We don't have much in the way of guidelines, research-generated or otherwise, but one can assume it depends, at least to some degree, on the teacher, the teaching load, and the type of courses. So even though rating results don't say directly, "this teaching is tired", with stable ratings it's an issue that ought to be explored further. Plus, with average ratings, encouragement to change is appropriate and should be expected.

Sometimes faculty resist change because they think they've got to change everything . . . and that's a daunting task.

Having a bit of a spiel prepared about the value of change is good regardless of the ratings. Every teacher, even very good ones, can improve some aspect of their teaching. Growth and development should be something expected of all teachers and that involves change. Of course, what we're after are those changes that promote more and better learning for students. But even change that doesn't accomplish those goals has benefits. Doing something new and different energizes most teachers. It gets them back on their toes and anticipating possible scenarios. And if it doesn't work all that well or as expected, there are lessons to be learned from failure (what teachers routinely tell students applies to their learning as well). Change is the lifeblood of teaching. All teaching needs regular infusions of new instructional ideas, approaches, activities, techniques, and assignments. Change is something to recommend across the board.

Sometimes faculty resist change because they think they've got to change everything—essentially create an entirely new course—and that's a daunting task, especially if you have a heavy teaching load and are always feeling behind. Targeted change is more doable. The goal here is to make changes to an aspect of teaching, say the exams, or the written assignments, or the way participation is used and assessed in the course.

Too often faculty approach change in random fashion. They hear something that sounds good and they try it. That's fine, it accrues the benefits of change, but it still leaves open the possibility that some aspects of teaching are being missed and therefore get executed the same way semester after semester. There's always room for that new and intriguing technique but systematic change more effectively improves one's overall teaching. So, the conversation ought to focus on planned change. What aspects of the course might benefit from

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a strategic review and refresh?

A word of caution. If the faculty member aspires to make a favorable impression, they may be motivated to propose lots of changes, which raises a couple of interesting questions. How much change is enough to keep the teaching fresh and moving forward, and how much change can be sustained? Neither of these questions have been explored all that much either. Teaching, like many skills, can be changed significantly but implementing and sustaining multiple changes is the tougher part of the proposition. When listening to faculty, it's best not to be impressed with a long list of potential changes and be more positively responsive to detailed plans for relevant change in targeted areas.

It's also helpful if you can make specific recommendations. Would a change in teaching assignment move this faculty member forward? Is there a course they haven't taught before or haven't taught for a long time that they could be assigned to teach? Teaching a course for the first time or after not having taught it for some time often jump-starts teaching that's become routine.

Most department heads don't have time to develop a lot of pedagogical expertise or stay current on the latest scholarship, but a department's climate results from collective contributions. If conversations about teaching regularly occur with faculty throughout the department, then the faculty member who's been using multiple-choice exams and thinks they're the only viable testing option can be referred to a faculty member who's exploring some collaborative testing approaches. Actions that improve the climate for teaching and learning can and should be undertaken by everyone.

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access to paid sick, family, and medical leave can contribute to a higher percentage of individuals working while sick and the spread of infection at work, as well as decreased productivity, burnout, and labor shortages" (pp. 22–23). I frequently talk to faculty who lament that they cannot take time off, even if it's in their contracts to be able to do so, because of fear of getting behind or looking like they cannot handle their workload. Leaders can model taking leave or sick days to normalize these practices, and we can develop policies for how to handle workloads when faculty or staff need to take any time away for personal and health reasons.

4. **Respect boundaries between work and nonwork time**. I also spend a good deal of time discussing with faculty how to set and maintain healthy boundaries that allow for work-life balance and general well-being, but I often hear that boundaries are difficult to keep when students, colleagues, and leaders don't respect them. The framework argues that "when leaders and supervisors set, respect, and model clear boundaries between time on and off the job, without penalizing workers for this flexibility needed, workers report a greater sense of well-being. This also helps workers have the critical time needed for rest to optimize their health, productivity, and creativity, while alleviating anxiety or fears of missing work demands" (p. 23). I would argue that we need to do more work teaching faculty and staff how to both set boundaries and respect the boundaries that others set for our collective well-being and to model for students these healthy behaviors. It's a bigger ask than it seems on the surface given the way current neoliberal mentalities color our work.

As a leader, how do you support community, connection, and work-life harmony? How are these concepts and practices both crucial to and in some ways antithetical to the current higher ed landscape? What can you be doing to proactively support your faculty and staff in these areas?

In the final article in this series, I'll discuss the last two essentials in the surgeon general's framework: mattering at work and opportunity for growth.

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Co-creational Professional Development: Not Just Another Fad for Disempowered Employees

Heather Emerson-Young

When disempowered employees, like part-time professors, are told they need professional development, it often creates negative emotions that leadership does not address. To disempowered employees, professional development commonly seems like a time investment that does not address day-to-day job challenges.

My research aimed to find opportunities to use shared leadership to empower systemically disempowered employees. I chose part-time professors as the subset for the study as they are historically and systematically disempowered in their workplace. Co-creational professional development presents a unique opportunity for disempowered employees to have a stake in their learning while opening doors to leadership opportunities in a closed system.

This article presents the findings of a three-year action research project that created and tested a co-creational professional development framework (Emerson-Young, 2022). The study included 260 part-time professors in the California community college system, representing 17 institutions.

Professional development and the paradox it creates

On one side, you have disempowered employees who don't buy into professional development; on the other, you have leaders who need what professional development promises. This creates a paradox as leaders and learners often don't align.

Leaders have many challenges with assessing professional development results as they often need to know whether their attempts at professional development are working. Many continue for years, even decades, to promote learning that has little to no effect. When they ask participants for feedback, getting honest data on whether the program increased their employee's knowledge is a challenge as many employees don't want to speak out. Leaders may also not know how to adjust professional development to solve internal problems.

Paradoxically, the people who can help solve the leaders' problems with professional development are also the people they think need it. Leaders consistently ignore this fact as they are in positions of power and often do not want to share the power they have obtained (Green, 2007). When institutional norms are present, as they are in educational institutions, there are structural power dynamics in play. Those in leadership positions primarily retain decision-making power, and these people tend to feel they have rightfully earned it, so why share?

The paradox deepens as part-time professors are seen by administrators as temporary or less capable of creating inter- and-intradepartmental programs that affect the departments they work in. Because of this, part-time professors seldom have a say in departmental and institutional decision-making that affects them.

Leaders need to think about their employees the right way. Part-time professors have the ability and knowledge to inform leaders about what topics professional development should address and the best time and duration for delivering the learning.

The need for administrators to look at their biases and better understand their employees

To be successful, administrators need to better understand the people they are trying to teach. Low pay and job instability loom in the background for many disempowered employees. Part-time professors report working many additional unpaid hours to meet job responsibilities; they juggle such complex tasks as lecturing, grading, curriculum creation, and student communications while balancing feelings of instability about their job (Feldman & Turnley, 2004).

Once administrators better understand their employees, they must look at their biases. Why not let others share in the power? What stops administrators if their goal is to improve their department, improve student learning experiences, and have their employees learn authentically, passionately, and collaboratively? When disempowered employees are given the power to make decisions, they become authentic learners who feel welcomed to the table (Matherson & Windle, 2017). When they feel their leaders have faith in them, they choose topics that align with the problems they experience and do so without fear. Then something amazing happens: learning becomes more about growing. Who better to solve internal organizational issues than those experiencing them? Administrators need to have faith in their employees.

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Providing a flexible, adjustable framework

Once bias and egos are checked, then it is time to begin planning. Co-creation can take many forms, but researchers have found ways to make shared leadership, namely co-creation, more successful. When it comes to co-creation in professional development, I suggest providing a loose framework so the participants have a guide to follow. Employees have the knowledge to identify problems or innovations they would like to address. Once they choose a topic, the group can begin to plan their professional development meetings. The proposed co-creational professional development framework is cyclical and includes three main components: inspiration, reflection, and co-creation (Figure 1).

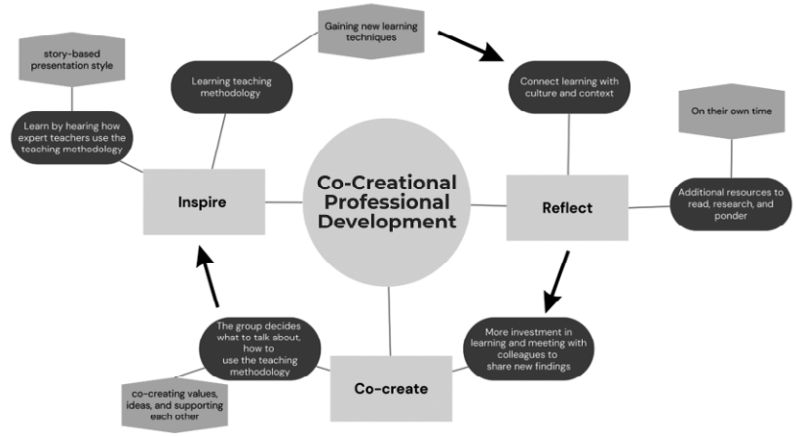

Figure 1. Co-creational professional development framework

Planning and inspiration

To achieve inspiration, the group chooses a topic for the professional development course. The topic should pertain to an internal teaching problem or a teaching methodology. Once the group selects a topic, it should choose a presenter. This may take a bit of research. For example, the action research study conducted a professional development session on experiential learning. Professor Perry Parks of Michigan State University was selected an expert to present as he used experiential learning in his classroom.

Reflection

Next, the group meets for the first

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session, where they learn from the presenter. Once the first session is over, the group takes time for reflection. Reflection is vital to learning and should have a planned time set aside for it as part of any professional development series. Reflection can be researching and writing about the topic, asking questions, and coming up with answers that are personal to each participant's work life. Reflection is when the participants can bring in their culture and think of ways to connect their new learning with past ideas or actions. Reflection aids in breaking through barriers that may prevent them from using new learning.

Co-creation

Lastly, the group plans and conducts a final meeting. This meeting is meant for participants to discuss how to use their new learning, to co-create new ideas, and to support each other socially as peers. The co-creational professional development study found that speaking about ideas helped the participants solidify their newly learned thought processes.

Summary

Co-creational professional development is an ongoing process that has the potential to bring more inclusivity to disenfranchised workers and deepen connections with other employees. It gives a voice to those with the knowledge and ability to co-design education for themselves which encourages happiness and belonging which will inherently bring positive changes on their campuses. When part-time professors are given the power in their professional development, they can learn from each other on how to build and implement meaningful professional development which naturally creates leadership positions. The next step is creating programs that support pay for professional development. Horn & Goldstein (2018) have found that giving teachers a professional development budget for the programs of their choice is the first step in giving the teachers the ability to make professional development decisions. They found that when teachers get a budget as opposed to leadership making the budgetary decisions for professional development, the teachers are further empowered.

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