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**ABSTRACT** 

Types of initiatives that colleges have implemented to foster continuing faculty career growth and the major attributes essential to success of the efforts are considered. The role of administrators in supporting faculty growth and vitality is also addressed. Several colleges and universities encourage career planning activities in which faculty members analyze their own interests, talents, and life goals. Some colleges have developed career planning workshops for their academic personnel; others have adopted elaborate growth-contract systems. Some colleges take a less structured approach. Faculty evaluations, tenure, and promotion deliberations, and annual academic planning discussions all provide opportunities for focusing attention on institutional needs and a professor's growth objectives. In addition, temporary opportunities for new learning and changes in work environment, such as off-campus internships and faculty exchanges, can be revitalizing experiences. Faculty retraining and respecialization are an increasingly common response to individual and institutional needs for adaptation and growth. The more comprehensive programs assume that optimum development begins with a process of career assessment and planning followed by experimentation with new roles, additional training when necessary, and finally transition to a new professional opportunity. Some colleges also have begun to revise personnel policies in an effort to promote faculty growth and flexibility. Administrators regulate the resources needed to facilitate faculty career growth and they are in a position to promote faculty efforts to branch out professionally. Nine guidelines for promoting faculty growth and vitality are presented, such as including faculty in planning programs. (SW)



UPDATE

### FOSTERING FACULTY VITALITY:

### OPTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND ADMINISTRATORS

by Roger G. Baldwin

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# Administrator's American Association of University Administrators Update ERIC

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## **Fostering Faculty Vitality: Options for Institutions and Administrators**

By Roger G. Baldwin

In a labor-intensive industry like higher education the character of worklife has a direct impact on the vitality of the enterprise and the quality of its services. Stephen Bailey writes that "the most important thing about a college is the quality of the lives of the people who staff it" (1974, p. 27). In recent years, however, a number of trends have begun to erode the working conditions of college and university professors. Declining enrollments in some fields prevent many professors from using their full range of knowledge and skills. The growing number of underprepared students makes the teaching function more difficult and, often, less rewarding. Limited funds to hire new faculty reduce the "ginger of newness" (Bailey 1974) that young academics bring to higher education institutions. Perhaps most significant, severely restricted opportunities to move to different institutions and challenging new positions have closed off a major route for academic career advancement.

Traditionally, individual professors and higher education institutions have used interinstitutional mobility as a way to promote career growth and to meet changing educational needs (Shulman 1979). Statistical projections, however, show virtually no growth in overall faculty employment through the year 2000, and hence, there will be far fewer opportunities for career movement (Shulman 1979, p. 3). Many professors face the prospect of teaching the same subjects in the same college for the remainder of their career.

Many institutions, encumbered with a large proportion of tenured faculty, may be unable to keep pace with advances in knowledge or reordered educational priorities.

Rosabeth Kanker (1979) describes the negative consequences of professional "stuckness." Persons who perceive little chance to grow in their careers tend to lower their aspirations, lose enthusiasm, and gradually disengage from their work. Demoralized faculty can have a disastrous impact on the atmosphere and productivity of a college or university.

Vitality has been defined as the power to change and grow (Miller 1981). To maintain vitality among professors, higher education institutions must offer new opportunities

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for growth and renewal. With a fairly fixed core of professionals, flexibility and growth will have to come from within colleges and universities. Institutions must use existing faculty more efficiently and creatively (Stordahl 1981). Otherwise, they will not be able to respond to enrollment vagaries and rapid shifts in students' educational demands.

The new rules imposed by "steadystate staffing" raise many questions about conventional academic personnel practices. Traditional tenure policies, reward systems, and sabbatical leaves may no longer be sufficient to maintain faculty vitality. Projections for the next two decades suggest that innovative opportunities and incentives for career growth will be necessary to ensure a dynamic, responsive professoriate.

A number of farsighted colleges and universities have taken steps to foster continuing faculty career growth in a conscious and systematic way. This article reviews the principal types of initiatives that colleges have implemented and considers the major attributes essential to their success. It also considers the role of administrators in supporting faculty growth and vitality.

#### Career Assessment and Planning Activities

In the current steady-state era, professors need to take a more active role in their personal career growth than was necessary during earlier periods of rapid growth in higher education. Several colleges and universities encourage career planning activities in which faculty members analyze their own interests, talents, and life goals. This process of selfassessment can help professors determine if their current career path provides the best opportunity for personal and professional satisfaction (Palmer and Patton 1980). This process also encourages professors to devise detailed plans for their future career growth.

Some colleges have developed career planning workshops for their academic personnel; others have



adopted elaborate growth-contract systems. The Pennsylvania State College system, for example, designed a career-planning program for faculty who wanted to change careers and for those who wished to renew their careers within higher education. Components of the program included a small library of career development literature, a faculty member prepared to discuss the career-renewal process on a one-to-one basis, and a series of workshops on life assessment and career planning.\*

Gordon College in Massachusetts has established the more individualized approach to career planning called growth contracting. Interested professors develop a personal profile that describes their roles, responsibilities, strengths, and weaknesses. This document provides the basis for a two- to five-year growth plan. The growth plan includes specific professional goals, means for achieving these goals, and a budget request for support funds. An advisory committee of colleagues, the dean of the faculty, and other interested persons help the professor draft the plan (Baldwin et al. 1981).

Some colleges take a less structured approach. Faculty evaluations, tenure and promotion deliberations, and annual academic planning discussions all provide opportunities for focusing attention on institutional needs and a professor's growth objectives. Whether faculty career planning takes place in a formal workshop or in a one-to-one conversation between a professor and a department chairperson, the principal objective is to make career planning a conscious and rational process.

### Experiential Learning Opportunities: Internships and Exchanges

Professors' career growth is not limited to achieving elevated professional status. Kanter (1979) sees opportunity as a broader concept than

\*For more complete descriptions of many of these career development programs, see Expanding Faculty Options: Career Development Projects at Colleges and Universities, by Roger Baldwin, Louis Brakeman, Russell Edgerton, Janet Hagberg, and Thomas Maher (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, 1981).

advancement in rank—it involves new challenges and increases in influence and skill also. Hence, temporary opportunities for new learning and changes in work environment, such as off-campus internships and faculty exchanges, can be revitalizing experiences.

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Programs to make it easier to move to other higher education institutions or to government and industry can help those professors whose work is "broadened and deepened" by a wide range of experiences (Toll 1980, p. 4). Faculty exchanges are an established but underused concept in higher education. Teaching at a different institution on a temporary basis introduces a professor to new colleagues, new ideas, and new teaching methods that he or she can take home at the end of the exchange. The intellectual interchange accompanying faculty exchanges benefits the cooperating institutions as well as the individuals involved.

Faculty internships in nonacademic organizations are a newer practice. Internships can expose professors to state-of-the-art knowledge and practice that they can carry back to the classroom. Nonacademic work experiences broaden professors' circle of colleagues, introduce them to the environment many of their students will enter after graduation, and, in many cases, identify potential areas of cooperation between the univer- ' sity and the agency or firm (Brodsky 1979). An internship also can provide professors with a bridge to permanent work in the nonacademic world by enabling them to experiment with alternative forms of employment.

In 1977, Birmingham-Southern College initiated a multi-faceted program to link the college with the non-academic employment sector. "Project Work-Learn" included a visiting professors' program that enabled faculty members to work in off-campus

organizations during the summer. Other schools that have experimented with nonacademic faculty internships include Cedar Crest and Muhlenberg in Pennsylvania and Furman University in South Carolina (Baldwin et al. 1981).

Professors do not necessarily have tò leave campus to benefit from a different work experience. Dallas County Community College, for example, offers internships in administration to its faculty members. Likewise, the University of Kansas has an Intra-University Visiting Scholar , Program. Faculty with 20 or more years of professional experience can spend a year teaching and taking courses in a different school or department of the university. This unique arrangement introduces professors to nearby colleagues and resources, and they can easily remain in contact after the formal exchange has ended.

### Respecialization/Retraining Projects

Faculty retraining and respecialization is an increasingly common response to individual and institutional needs for adaptation and growth. Retraining usually serves two principal purposes: It stimulates professional renewal by enabling faculty to develop new skills and expertise, and it permits efficient use of resources by moving underutilized professors to areas of greater need (Baldwin et al. 1981).

Wallerstein (1976) points out that many professors have an educational background that is much broader than the field in which they teach. Frequently, a few additional courses or a period of independent study can prepare a faculty member to teach in a related area.

The approach institutions have taken to faculty retraining depends on the scope of the situation they wish to alter. For example, California State University at Long Beach set up a formal program to prepare faculty for teaching in three areas of growing enrollment—English composition and technical writing, American studies, and religious studies. The program involved a mixture of seminars, writing assignments, class observation, and course design (Baldwin et al. 1981).



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Often, retraining seems to be an issue for only one or two faculty members. In this situation, professors usually work out an agreement with their institution to take summer courses or to pursue independent study to prepare them for a new assignment at the school. This was the approach taken by Mary College in North Dakota, which implemented new vocational programs by assisting several professors to retrain for different areas of specialization.

### Multidimensional/Comprehensive Career Services

Most authorities agree that career development is a complex process influenced by many variables. The concept of a developmental process implies differing experiences, motivations, and needs at successive career stages. Hence, it is probably safe to assume that providing a variety of opportunities and services is the most effective way to support the career growth of faculty from a range of backgrounds and levels of experience (Baldwin et al. 1981).

Some colleges—and universities offer several avenues for professors to diversify their careers, such as career planning activities, exchange programs, and funds for retraining. A few offer a set of integrated, often sequential, activities and services to support career development. These

These more comprehensive programs assume that optimum development begins with a process of career assessment and planning followed by experimentation with new roles, additional training when necessary, and finally transition to a new professional opportunity

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Perhaps the most comprehensive academic career development program now in operation is at Loyola University of Chicago. Loyola offers a series of workshops in career and life

planning plus other workshops to develop career-related skills such astime management and financial management. The program also distributes funds for retraining and other career development activities. Finally, it assists faculty members with arrangements for teaching exchanges and nonacademic internships (Baldwin et al. 1981).

### Personnel Policies to Promote Vitality

Some colleges also have begun to revise personnel policies in an effort to promote faculty growth and flexibility. Smith (1978) predicts radical changes in the academic personnel system in the years ahead. Already, Earlham College in Indiana has implemented an innovative evaluation cycle for tenured faculty in order to stimulate ongoing professional development ("Earlham College Teaching Faculty Handbook" 1980). Pomona College in California has adopted a study leave policy to fill learning needs not satisfied by its researchoriented sabbatical program. Study leaves give professors time to investigate subfields of their discipline or to branch out into new academic areas (Voelkel 1980). Early retirement and mid-career change incentive policies also seem to be be gaining momentum. The Mid-Career Change Program at Regis College in Colorado is one model. Tenured professors who have worked at Regis for 10 or more years can choose from two career change options. If they wish to prepare for a career outside higher education, they may leave the college with a full year's salary, fringe benefits, and a \$3,000 redirection grant. Alternatively, if they take a lower paying nonacademic job immediately after leaving Regis, the college will supplement their earnings to the level of their professorial salary for a period up to three years. The Regis program is another example of the new policies colleges are designing to encourage continued flow of faculty through the higher education system (Baldwin et al. 1981).

### Guidelines for Promoting Faculty Career Development

In order to preserve faculty vitality it is imperative that colleges and universities provide opportunities

for professors to experiment with new roles, acquire new areas of expertise, and assume new challenges. The most effective way for each institution to do so depends on the school's particular attributes and circumstances. For some colleges, formal career development programs are probably the most efficient and cost-effective approach. In other institutions sensitivity to individual career development needs; flexible personnel policies; and support from

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deans, department chairs, and colleagues may be the best way to encourage individual professors to remain enthusiastic and to continue growing professionally. Based on a study of faculty development programs in 20 liberal arts colleges, Nelsen (1980) concludes that in many cases careful individual counseling may be a more prudent way to stimulate faculty career development than large-scale programs. Whatever course an institution follows, conscious, systematic attention to professors' careers is bound to enhance faculty vitality.

The literature on professional development programs provide guidelines for promoting faculty growth and vitality:

- 1. Professors must be involved in planning programs and policies to encourage their career growth. It is essential that faculty and administrators have a mutual understanding of individual and institutional development needs. Any initiative designed solely by administrators or by faculty members probably will lack necessary interest and support from the other parties (Nelson 1980).
- 2. Participation in developmental activities should be voluntary. Faculty members will gain more from growth opportunities they pursue by choice (Carlberg 1980; Stordahl 1981).





- 3. Goals for faculty career development should be reasonable. Success is most likely when development objectives are modest and specific and relate to professors' established interests and skills (Bowen 1980).
- 4. Programs and policies supporting faculty career development should be flexible and adaptable to the needs of individual professors (Carlberg 1980; Stordahl 1981; Voelkel 1980).
- 5. Balance between individual and institutional development goals is essential. Development plans that ignore professors' needs or institutional priorities can be counterproductive. good communication between individual professors and institutional representatives is necessary to establish common objectives (Bedsole and Reddick 1978; Carlberg 1980).
- 6. The institutional reward sytem must recognize professors' efforts to diversify their careers. Professors will be reluctant to spend time learning new skills or to assume nontraditional responsibilities if their efforts are not adequately reinforced. Currently, many institutional rewards emphasize achievement in research and scholarship (Showalter 1978). Ideally, rewards should be sufficiently diverse and plentiful to stimulate growth in all faculty roles (Bedsole and Reddick 1978).
- 7. An effective campus communication network is necessary to keep professors informed of opportunities for career development and renewal. Nelsen (1991) found that many college teachers were unaware of the rich array of possibilities for career renewal available to them.
- 8. Adequate funding is necessary to achieve individual and institutional development goals. Fortunately, small expenditures often "contribute to the enhancement of faculty morale far out of proportion to the amounts" of the awards (Marker 1980, p. 11).
- 9. Nonmonetary support for professors who wish to branch out into new areas is critical. Faculty need to know that their colleagues and institution as a whole value their endeavors. An encouraging word from the dean or a departmental colleague can be a strong motivator (Stordahl 1981).

10. Policies and services to support faculty career development must complement the institution's existing personnel system. Development activities that are foreign to basic campus values and procedures are not likely to succeed (Bedsole and Reddick 1978).

### Administrative Support for Faculty Vitality

Administrators play an important role in maintaining faculty vitality. They regulate much of the machinery and resources needed to facilitate

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faculty career growth. In particular, the president and chief academic officers are central agents in promoting organizational change ("The Chief Executive's Role in Human Resource Development" 1976). Their support for flexible personnel policies and innovative faculty activities opens a wide array of growth possibilities by legitimizing a broader conception of the professorial role. When a college president or dean raises money for a faculty internship program or develops his or her own growth contract, these actions place a seal of approval on professors' efforts to diversify their careers.

Academic administrators are in a position to catalyze faculty efforts to branch out professionally (Sommers 1977). They possess a broad institutional perspective and can introduce professors to possibilities for renewal that extend beyond the needs of a single teaching position or department. Nelsen (1980) states that administrative leadership is especially needed to stimulate faculty interest in growth opportunities they might not automatically consider, such as interdisciplinary teaching or a part-time position in the dean's office.

Finally, administrators can play a nurturing or mentoring role in support of faculty vitality. They can offer support to professors who are wrestling with conflicting personal and career concerns. Miller (1981, p. 47)

writes that "successful people have at least one thing in common. Somewhere, sometime, someone cared about their growth and development." Deans and department chairpersons, in particular, can help professors sort out their professional priorities and development needs. A supportive administrator can help link professors with positions or assignments that will use their capabilities to the fullest and generate motivation for new learning and, career advancement (Miller 1981). Perhaps most significant, a dean or department chair can help a profes--sor identify growth opportunities that will benefit both the individual and the institution (Bedsole and Reddick 1978).

#### Conclusion

No matter what initiatives to support faculty vitality seem most appropriate for a given college, one principle is clear. Attention to faculty career development should be a conscious, systematic, and recurring process. It should pervade all aspects of institutional life. Programs at the periphery of the institution that regard faculty career concerns as a temporary issue unrelated to the central mission of the school will have limited impact. All policies and procedures affecting academic personnel should encourage, rather than inhibit, faculty to develop new skills, experiment with different roles, and adopt additional responsibilities.

A perceptive professor had described the best faculty development program as "preventative" (Nelsen 1981, p. 13). In its final report, Three Thousand Futures, the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1980) reflected that the future is not fully determined in advance. Rather, it is substantially affected by what individuals and institutions decide to do about it. Through careful efforts to promote career development, higher education institutions can prevent the consequences of professional "stuckness" and prepare faculty for satisfying, dynamic careers. By helping professors to continue growing, college and university administrators can both protect faculty vitality and enhance their institution's capacity to respond to a turbulent educational environment.

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