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ABSTRACT

This paper recalibrates strategies for faculty recruitment, training, and compensation for distance education. The new options evolving from distance technologies create opportunities for innovative recruitment strategies. Whether the model is individually- or team-oriented, distance technologies mean that a more diverse, qualified, talented, and flexible pool of potential faculty become available to all institutions, resulting in more competition. A recruiting strategy which uncovers high quality faculty who are available, skilled, and willing to follow institutional policies is essential and must be carefully planned and executed. To achieve high performance solutions to faculty training, a systematic approach must be applied to the planning and development of distance learning materials, instructional methods, and communications infrastructure. Four possible categories of media include: videotape for asynchronous delivery, compressed video for synchronous delivery, World Wide Web-based text with graphics for asynchronous delivery, and computer-based conferencing for asynchronous delivery. In terms of faculty compensation, three basic institutional responses are to offer distance education through a division or school of continuing studies with a separate faculty or separate compensation structure, to pay faculty overload salaries, or to offer faculty a percentage of the revenue generated from the courses. The success of distance education requires a dynamic approach to problem solving and policy flexibility on the part of organizations. (AEF)

Faculty Recruitment, Training, and Compensation for Distance Education

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The Virtual Classroom is a metaphor that has been used to help reconceptualize the methods by which education and training is facilitated from kindergarten through graduate school and into the workplace. It suggests that the organization of learning need not occur in the traditional spaces that all of us have historically associated with educational activities. The metaphor is useful for many reasons; it enables us to think about classrooms, to think about organizational alternatives, and to think about how learning might occur when activities are actually separated from their traditional framework. The virtual metaphor fails us, however, when it conjures up a notion of things that are "not real." Education and training will always involve "real people" promoting and pursuing a "real activity" called learning. It is only the metaphor itself which is virtual.

Recognizing the "realness" of the people, the activities, and the outcomes of organized learning is important because it is on these "real" factors that our attention must be focused ever more intently. While there are many aspects that need to be addressed relative to the new roles of faculty and students for distance education, the purpose of this paper is to help recalibrate our strategies for faculty recruitment, training, and compensation.

Distance Education and Learning Defined

Although Distance Education has been defined in many ways, for the purposes of this paper, Distance Education should be understood as planned experiences which result in changes in a client's cognition, affect, and/or behavior when the learner is physically separated from the sources of knowledge and instruction. Distance Learning is the set of activities in which clients participate which results in changes in the client's cognition, affect, and/or behavior when the client is separated from the sources of knowledge and instruction. These definitions are important because they imply faculty roles which are not necessarily explicit in traditional faculty job descriptions, but are characteristic and desirable in distance education. The three major roles for faculty include: curriculum planning and design, instructional management, and evaluation.

Faculty Recruitment

Traditionally, faculty have been hired to come to a campus or school building. This often required a deep financial and logistical commitment on the part of the organization and the individual to develop and sustain a relationship. Universities and colleges have historically treated faculty hiring as a decision which would have significant and long term impact on the educational direction of the academic unit. Hiring a full-time faculty member was as much a philosophical decision about programmatic futures as it was a personnel action. Employment was not an action entered into lightly by either the institution or the individual. Adjunct professorial hiring added some flexibility to the activity of faculty recruitment, but the pool was usually limited to local talent. In non-metropolitan areas, finding qualified adjuncts was at least difficult, if not impossible.

Distance technologies and the paradigms of distance learning created new possibilities for staffing. Although universities have been hesitant to exploit these possibilities, a number of options are inherent. Distance technologies include media which makes it possible to "record and/or distribute" expert knowledge in ways which expand upon the use of traditional books and papers. Video and audio recording, computer based instruction, telephone based audioconferencing, compressed video, satellite transmission and other media make expert knowledge accessible to not only appropriately equipped classrooms, but thousands of remote sites, including home or office. Even when they are hired on a very limited basis these experts greatly enhance the expert content of any class. The same experts can also be hired to conduct an entire class as an adjunct faculty member even when they live hundreds or thousands of miles away. Full-time faculty also

benefit directly from greater flexibility when they need to be away from campus for field research, conferences, or other travel reasons. Additionally, these approaches can be combined in collaborative teaching models to permit faculty from multiple campuses to teach together to a group composed of representatives of each home campus and others. Whether these options will be explored will be decided by faculty themselves, and the demand of market forces (Denning, 1996).

The new options evolving from distance technologies create opportunities for innovative recruitment strategies and options. All institutions, even small remote ones, can advertise nationally for expert faculty to expand or complement their core faculty resources. Recruitment can be designed to attract faculty to teach entire courses or special modules, which only require modest time and effort, but special expertise. A more diverse faculty can be attracted to cover topics from a unique regional or cultural perspective. Retired faculty can continue to participate in the life of the university as they are needed, and as they desire, from wherever they may have relocated. Large numbers of students in one class can be managed by one regular faculty who manages the course and others who contribute their special expertise and share the load for interactivity and evaluation. Some faculty can be hired exclusively for course design, while others are hired for instruction. Whether the model is individually oriented or team oriented, distance technologies mean that a more diverse, better qualified, more talented, and flexible pool of potential faculty become available to all institutions.

The net result of more faculty and more institutions vying for their participation will be more competition. Institutional loyalty and proximity are still factors in faculty decision making, but incentives will become increasingly important especially as a professional group of free-market distance educators emerges. Institutions that wish to recruit the best and the brightest faculty will be well advised to follow traditional lessons in the context of a new reality. Faculty teaching at a distance will not be enticed by a move to a cultural center or research facilities, they are more likely to be enticed by situation which provides them a great deal of flexibility. They may be motivated by an institutional affiliation with an institution renowned for excellence in traditional and distance programs, but they will certainly be motivated by those institutions with the most interesting curriculum options, best support services, and most enticing compensation packages.

A recruiting strategy which uncovers high quality faculty who are available, skilled, and willing to follow institutional policies is essential and must be carefully planned and executed. Involved in this process is advertising, a review procedure for credentials and work products, a detailed list of performance specifications, and a work agreement.

Faculty Training

It is likely that the largest and best financially endowed institutions will have an advantage in recruiting not only the most knowledgeable faculty, but also the most skilled at distance education. Institutions of all kinds, however, will need to pay attention to faculty training. While some education and training can be delivered at a distance by even the uninitiated, normal communications skills are inadequate to achieve effective learning results across the diverse methods of distance education.

To achieve a high performance solution, it is imperative that a systematic approach be applied to the planning and development of distance learning materials, instructional methods, and communications infrastructure (Laney, 1996). Traditional course preparation ranges dramatically among higher education faculty. Many faculty prepare little more than a topical syllabus and allow lessons to emerge from classroom interaction coupled with the personal expertise of the faculty. Other faculty prepare learning objectives, activities, and materials, but few have training in these endeavors. It is precisely because clients and faculty are physically separated that course structure and materials must be developed in a systematic manner that reduces the possibilities of misinterpretation and confusion.

Adding to the complexity of the task is the fact that distance education is not one style of education, but a collection of styles dependent on diverse media and methods. Preparing faculty for teaching in variety of distance settings with a variety of communications media requires both common and unique methods. Obviously, the many media available to distance educators can be combined to provide a rich multiple source media learning environment. For the purposes of this paper, however, the media will be limited to four: videotape for asynchronous delivery, compressed video for synchronous delivery, World Wide Web based text with graphics for asynchronous delivery, and computer based conferencing for asynchronous delivery.

Before exploring these four categories is important to restate, that while traditional faculty roles have included course conceptualization, course preparation, course delivery, course management, and evaluation components; it is not necessary that one faculty perform all these tasks. Collaborative efforts focused on differentiated staffing emphasizing individual strengths may indeed be one of the sweet fruits of distance education. Too many expectations for faculty without appropriate training and support can create a significant barrier to faculty use of technology (Boettcher, 1995). Institutions should provide convenient and supportive faculty development opportunities aimed at high quality educational experiences.

In general, the best technique for learning to use distance education technologies is practice. Skill develop-

ment evolves over time in real life situations. It is a good idea to have faculty participate as learners or observers in settings which use distance education strategies, then have them contribute information or lessons to an existing class. Finally, allow new distance faculty to design and develop a lesson without the pressure of having to deliver the actual lesson. A great deal will be learned by actually going through "all" the step involved.

Generally, new faculty need to learn how to establish and maintain contact at a distance. They should attempt to create situations in which they reach out to the clients personally as though they were writing a letter. They should think about engaging the clients and communicating to them by anticipating their questions and confusion. Finally, new faculty should determine how they can best evaluate learning in a distance context. The signs are different, but the students needs are the same. Obviously, the institution should provide as much help and support as possible to these efforts on the part of faculty, but it is the individual that must do the thinking.

Videotape for asynchronous delivery involves some kind of studio or field production of a presentation, electronic field trip, or demonstration and variations on these themes for delivery to clients to view at their convenience. Faculty should watch several examples of high quality examples (within the production guidelines of the institutional producer) to begin conceptualizing the kind of production that can and should be accomplished. Next the faculty should work with a director to create several simple samples of on camera work, listening carefully to the director's advice. The samples should be reviewed with the director and redone for comparison purposes. Finally, some samples should be created and shared with colleagues and students for feedback. The production guidelines for each institution will dictate a good deal about what can and can't be done, but these should always be stretched in the interest of good quality instruction.

Compressed video for synchronous delivery is the use of a two way audio and video connection to a remote site or sites in real time. Compressed video has the advantage of seeing and hearing how students react to the faculty presentation, but because it is in real time more can go wrong and often faculty are in complete control of the process. As with videotape production, good planning and materials preparation are essential, and screen presence techniques are similar. In compressed video however, the instructional situation must be managed at the same time as content is delivered. Faculty should practice with different groups and to video tape for later study. Coaching during the initial learning phase is essential and faculty should be open to suggestion. As with videotape production, however, practice will deliver its reward.

World Wide Web based text with graphics for asynchronous delivery is the distribution of HTML documents through the Internet for remote viewing and reading. Skill development with the World Wide Web is different that with video production; most important for faculty is the ability to plan and design learning resources that work well within a hypertext and hypermedia environment. This is most efficiently accomplished through the use of an instructional designer or similar support person. Faculty may also want to develop skill in HTML coding, in order to quickly update documents and add resources. HTML knowledge is not essential, but should be provided as a support resources by the institution for document creation.

Computer based conferencing for asynchronous delivery is the use of a computer based system for communicating through the use of electronic mail, newsgroups, or web based conferencing. Almost all faculty now use some form of electronic communications for sharing information. There are techniques that need to be developed to make this work effectively. Most important is the development of a careful communication style that does not inadvertently offend. It is also essential that skills in file transfer and attachment be developed as well.

Faculty are not likely to seek out assistance in learning these techniques without some motivation and encouragement by the institution. It is imperative that institutions establish a comprehensive faculty development program and require those faculty who want to participate in distance learning to participate. Faculty with well developed skills and experience will work with confidence and effectively represent the institution.

Faculty Compensation

One of the most challenging questions to confront those familiar with traditional models for compensating faculty is how to convince faculty to engage in the extra work, responsibilities, and time required by the typical distance education project. While there is no single solution to this problem, a number of creative responses will be presented from which administrators and managers can construct fair and enticing methods for compensating faculty fairly.

Compensating faculty is and will continue to be a complex problem. There is no question that on a course to course comparison with the same number and same quality of students, a course formatted for distance education requires more time, thought, creativity, and effort, than a similar classroom based course. Issues of equity, measurement, quality, cost and revenue all come into play. There appear to be three basic institutional responses to the question. One model is to offer distance education through a division or school of continuing studies with a separate faculty or separate compensation structure, a second model is to pay faculty overload salaries, while a third approach offers faculty a percentage of the revenue generated from the courses. Each response has a strengths and weaknesses dependent on the institutional context in which they are implemented.

While aspects of these three models may work well for individual institutions, the position offered here is that of a differentiated staffing model. This simply means that an individual faculty member would become part of an instructional team comprised of specialists in different aspects of the distance education provider responsibilities. Each of these team members, (e.g. subject matter expert, course manager, video producer, instructional designer, evaluation designer, technical support personnel) would negotiate compensation based on their contribution to the project. Part of the negotiation on the part of the faculty would be a decision as to whether the tasks were part of their basic teaching load, an overload, or a form of service for supplemental compensation could be provided.

The team approach guarantees multiple inputs into the development process, does not infringe on academic freedom, reduces the burden of distance learning on the individual faculty, and creates a common practice from which a standard design quality emerges without inhibiting creativity. Unlike the traditional conception of classroom based instruction, approaches to distance education vary widely and each design ought to be treated separately to guard against the whole endeavor collapsing into a single standardized approach.

The success of Distance Education will require a dynamic approach to problem solving and policy flexibility on the part of organizations. The significance of the roles that faculty will play in this process cannot be underestimated and clear thinking in advance will avoid many problems in the future.

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