DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 514 CS 217 382

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TITLE Professional Development for English Faculty: Problems and Issues.
PUB DATE 2000-11-19
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English (90th, Milwaukee, WI, November 16-21, 2000).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *Diversity (Student); Educational Technology; *English Instruction; *English Teachers; *Faculty Development; Faculty Evaluation; Higher Education
IDENTIFIERS Ferris State University MI

ABSTRACT

This paper gives an overview, from an institutional point of view, of the problems and issues surrounding faculty development. The paper sketches out four main changes that are occurring in higher education that have defined the sense of what faculty development issues of the future will be: changes in academic disciplines; changes in students; changes in the teaching workforce; and changes in instructional technology. It also comments on two further phenomena that impact faculty development--assessment and post-tenure review. The paper discusses these changes primarily, although not exclusively, in terms of English Studies. One of the paper's main findings is that, collectively, the numbers and composition of today's student body require a level of understanding of the importance of the students' backgrounds, their extremely heterogeneous levels of preparation, and their varied attitudes toward education itself. The paper also notes that at the university in question, Ferris State University, affiliated with WebCT (a company that provides "integrated e-learning systems"), over a third of the faculty have Web-assisted courses. So regarding faculty development, the youngest and newest faculty is most adept at grasping the use of these new teaching technologies. It concludes that, upon entering the new millennium, higher education has a host of new faculty development challenges and opportunities. (NKA)

Professional Development for English Faculty: Problems and Issues.

by Douglas Haneline

"PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ENGLISH FACULTY: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES"

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SESSION INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon, and welcome to our session on professional development for English faculty. The four of us are with Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan, about 150 miles directly east of here, for those of you with wings. I am Dr. **Doug Haneline**, currently Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and a teacher of composition, literature, and professional writing for 29 years. With me today are three Ferris colleagues: Dr. **Henryk Marcinkiewicz**, the Director of Ferris' Timme Center for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development; Dr. **Roxanne Cullen**, Head of the Department of Languages and Literature; and Dr. **Sandy Balkema**, Coordinator of Ferris' program in Technical and Professional Communication

When the call for papers for this meeting came about this time last year, we realized that we had a unique opportunity to highlight Ferris' multi-faceted solution to a problem many institutions are facing today. Not that long ago, faculty development was something addressed in the form of professional travel money and release time for research and scholarship. The faculty member was assumed not only to be the content specialist, but also the instructional delivery expert. In

addition, and not incidentally, the faculty member was also thought to be the best judge not only of his or her own performance in the classroom, but also of the progress of his students. The problem, then is this—designing a faculty development program in the midst of changes in disciplines, in the composition of the professoriate, the nature of the student body, and in instructional technology. As I have suggested, changes affecting faculty development are also occurring as a result of the assessment movement and post-tenure review.

Our session today, then, will begin with me giving an overview, from an institutional point of view, of the problems and issues surrounding faculty development. Henryk will follow with a discussion of how the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development (CTLFD) meets faculty and student needs across the University in all disciplines, with emphasis on the needs of instructors and learners in English and literature courses. Roxanne will follow with a discussion of the "collegial model" developed within the Department of Languages and Literature to maximize the effectiveness of the energy and resources expended on faculty development. Finally, Sandy will talk about the use of internships by Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) faculty as a

means of professional self-renewal. Our plan is to leave time for questions and comments at the end of the session.

The title of my talk is as follows:

"Professional Development for English Faculty: Problems and Issues"

Every generation of higher education faculty faces its own unique set of challenges. To confine myself only to issues facing English professors, in the past we have faced the challenges of canonicity, the shifting relationship of literature and composition, and the rights of students to their own language. I don't mean to imply that these issues have been resolved. In fact, an entire session could be devoted to each one in terms of faculty development. But today I want to sketch out four main changes that are occurring that have defined our sense of what faculty development issues of the future will be: changes in academic disciplines, changes in students, changes in the teaching workforce, and changes in instructional technology. I also want to comment on two further phenomena that impact faculty development—assessment and post-tenure review. I want to discuss these changes primarily, although not exclusively, in terms of English Studies.

2. CHANGES IN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

It is, of course, a fiction that academic disciplines never change. But the illusion is especially strong in the humanities. In my professional lifetime, English has changed in several significant ways. When I entered the profession in 1970, the discipline was literature-centered. The literature with the most prestige had been written by white males, mostly of the dead variety, and its merit was evaluated on mostly aesthetic grounds. Composition and rhetoric, aside from a tiny minority of scholars who studied the subject as it manifested itself in classical, medieval, and Renaissance times, were largely the province of women and part-timers, and composition courses, following the lead of Harvard's Francis James Child in the 1890s, were literature-based.

As most of us know, all is changed utterly, and perhaps a terrible beauty is born. What constitutes literature is an open question, as are the bases on which we discuss its merit. Artistic criteria have been supplemented—some would say supplanted—by ideological and social considerations. The insights of other disciplines are constantly applied to literature. Rhetoric and composition, no longer marginal, are in the saddle, and have benefited from a generation of serious attention. And just as it seemed that television would de-emphasize the importance of print, the computer and Internet have raised it to a new centrality.

The faculty development challenges these changes impose are significant. Teaching writing at any level requires the mastery of sophisticated rhetorical approaches and an understanding of how people actually compose. As literature has expanded beyond the old canon, teachers find themselves having to teach material they do not know much about, or have even heard of, not unlike the experience of a church congregation with a new hymnal. The computer and the Internet between them have revolutionized our concept of writing and audience, and have made formerly manageable problems like plagiarism newly formidable.

2. CHANGES IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Just as what we study has changed, those who study it have also changed. The larger significance of what has happened in the past half century can be easily illustrated this way. In 1940, a tenth of high school graduates (only five percent of women) went on to college; in 1970, the figure was a fourth (55% men); in 1997, 63% of high school seniors said they planned to go to college (57% women). So, broadly, the trends are these—more students, more women, more minorities, more underprepared students.

The meaning of this for faculty development is that it has forced us as individuals to stretch our teaching resources. When my mother entered college in 1940, the typical college student was part of an educationally privileged minority. Until the 1960s, most students attended private institutions. Even state colleges had relatively manageable dropout rates because most of the students had been in college preparatory programs in private or public high schools and came with a relatively high—and, in retrospect, uniform—level of basic skills. After World War II, the country came to see higher education as the province of the many, not just the few. And after the civil rights movement, when it was no longer legal to discriminate on the basis of sex and race, women and minorities were able to enter higher education institutions in unparalleled numbers.

Collectively, then, the numbers and composition of today's student body require a level of understanding of the importance of the students' background, their extremely heterogeneous levels of preparation, and their varied attitudes toward education itself. English teachers, especially those who teach composition, face these challenges daily.

3. CHANGES IN THE TEACHING WORKFORCE

In the next ten years, the first Baby Boomers will begin to retire in large numbers. In teaching, this means that the huge numbers of faculty hired in the '60s and '70s will leave the classroom. At my home institution, of approximately 450 full-time faculty, 250—about 55%—will pass the age of 60 in the next ten years. Recall that since the early 1990s, there has been no mandatory retirement age for faculty members. So, like most institutions, Ferris is faced with two opposite trends—large numbers of faculty who retire in their fifties, beneficiaries of the thirty-years-and-out public school retirement systems to which they belong; and smaller, but significant numbers of faculty who continue to work past the age of 65. Right now, fifteen percent of Ferris faculty are 60 or older.

As these faculty retire, their lines are not automatically continued. For most of the past twenty years, state governments, faced with increases in the cost of Medicare, social services, and prisons, have allowed the level of their support for their institutions to slip. As our Vice President for Development likes to put it, we think we work at a "state-supported" university; in fact, we are "state-assisted." Since the regulatory grip of the states has increased even as their level of support has

receded, the necessary funds have had to be sought from either private (alumni and friends) support or student tuition increases. Each of these sources has its own limitations.

Add to this the unpredictability of enrollments ("Build it and they will come" doesn't work any more), and the collective result is the increased use of adjuncts. Ferris is mostly undergraduate and in a rural area, so comparatively, our use of adjuncts is small. But, this semester, for example, the institution has 140 adjuncts, 65 of whom are new. Neither Ferris nor any other institution can put its adjuncts—or its new faculty, many of whom have limited teaching experience or background in how learning occurs—into a classroom unprepared to teach.

4. CHANGES IN INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Teaching has been called "the last of the manual arts." Especially in the humanities, typical teaching technology used to involve mastery of the blackboard, and, if the department's budget permitted, handouts, including handouts of multi-colored paper. Those on the cutting-edge of technology used

transparencies and could even change the bulb if it burned out during class. Those were the days.

Nowadays, in-class instruction is supplemented by Power Point and other innovations, made possible by rewired classrooms. Student access to computers, their own or those found in a University computer lab, is essentially universal. At Ferris, a WebCT institution, over a third of the faculty have web-assisted courses, and we are grappling with the multiplicity of issues surrounding the introduction of web-based courses.

Not the least of these issues is faculty development. In a trend unparalleled in human history except during eras of rapid technological change, it is the youngest and newest faculty who are most adept at grasping the use of these new teaching technologies. So whatever advantage veteran faculty have in their understanding of what happens in a classroom, they—we—are technological novices.

5. ASSESSMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

I want to briefly discuss two other issues that impact faculty development. One is the assessment movement. Before assessment, faculty were considered the judges of their students' progress, except for faculty whose students' professions required an externally-administered exam to become licensed. The rise of assessment, catapulted by the twin forces of regional accrediting bodies and state legislatures, has meant that institutions must provide multiple measures of student achievement. This new reality takes class time, but it also requires much instructional design effort.

The other issue is post-tenure review. About 80% of Ferris' faculty is tenured, and we are fairly typical in the United States. This has led to the implementation of a four-year-cycle post-tenure review system, also fairly typical in the United States. Post-tenure review requires its own multiple measures—scholarship, service, and teaching. And one of those measures is student satisfaction, calculated by scores on a University-mandated Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI) instrument.

6. THE CONCLUSION, IN WHICH NOTHING IS CONCLUDED

Entering the new millenium, then, we in higher education have a host of new faculty development challenges and opportunities. My colleagues, starting with Dr. Henryk Marcinkiewicz, will discuss our response to those challenges and opportunities.

Thank you for your attention.

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