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Systems Alignment for Comprehensive Faculty Development in Liberal Arts Colleges

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Abstract

Using an alignment framework, the authors explore faculty development initiatives in liberal arts colleges in order to understand the connection between organizational priorities and processes as connected to faculty members' stated needs. The study draws on mixed-methods data from The Initiative for Faculty Development in Liberal Arts Colleges (IFDLAC), including survey and interview data from the 13 member institutions of the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA). The authors offer future implications for faculty development practice.

Provide feedback or get help

The demands on the professoriate are changing dramatically as the higher education landscape evolves. Both the nature of faculty work and academic administration are influenced by institutional contexts marked by fewer resources and rapid changes in technology. Faculty development efforts have expanded from supporting faculty members in

their traditional teaching and research roles to also supporting them to become future deans, provosts, and presidents (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013). A quality educational experience relies on the use of well-prepared faculty, and institutions need explicit organizational development frameworks that guide faculty development efforts. Faculty development should be a strategic organizational imperative that benefits individual faculty members and the institution as a whole, while being rooted in faculty perspectives and needs. We call for careful attention to faculty development initiatives, including planning, implementation, and assessment.

There has been modest attention to faculty development in liberal arts colleges (LACs), but not at the level needed to effect real change across this critical institutional context. More than 30 years ago, Nelson (1981) wrote the *Renewal of the Teacher Scholar* based on interviews with over 500 administrators and faculty members from 20 LACs. His focus on the teacher-scholar reflected the changing roles of faculty at LACs at that time. Nearly 35 years later, faculty responsibilities in LACs continue to expand (Baker, Baldwin, & Makker, 2012). Yet, there has been little progress in meeting changing needs for faculty development, for example, budgeting, management, or planning and assessment, which has contributed to a leadership vacuum in higher education (Portney, 2011). Mooney and Reder (2008) noted a lack of work that specifically addresses “the professional experiences, programming goals, and other potentially distinctive issues and concerns of faculty development at liberal arts and other small colleges” (p. 159). Over the past five years, researchers have focused on faculty development in liberal arts and small colleges, but this work takes a programmatic or faculty developer perspective rather than a strategic organizational perspective (see, e.g., Felten, Little, Ortquist-Ahrens, & Reder, 2013; Reder, Mooney, Holmgren, & Kuerbis, 2009).

The aim of this study was to better understand faculty development initiatives in liberal arts colleges. Specifically, we explored how organizational priorities and processes align with faculty members’ stated needs. The study draws on data from *The Initiative for Faculty Development in Liberal Arts Colleges* (IFDLAC), including survey and interview data from the 13 member institutions of the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA). Our inquiry was guided by an alignment framework from the organizational/human resource development literature (Gratton & Truss, 2003). The research questions guiding our inquiry are listed below.

1. Are faculty development initiatives aligned *vertically*, that is, are planned initiatives meeting faculty members’ and organizational goals?
2. Are faculty development initiatives aligned *horizontally*, that is, are initiatives aligned with the institution’s human resource policies?
3. Are faculty development initiatives *implemented*, that is, are actions taken that support vertical and horizontal plans?

First, we present the framework of alignment (Gratton & Truss, 2003) as a useful perspective to study faculty development in liberal arts colleges because it provides insights into two sometimes-conflicting forces that influence faculty development initiatives—faculty interest and the priorities of senior-level administrators. We then present findings from our analysis of survey and interview data of faculty members and administrators within a consortium of 13 liberal arts colleges, which was driven by that framework. Finally, we

identify future directions for improving faculty development initiatives in the context of liberal arts colleges.

Literature Review

Liberal arts colleges are a distinct type in the American higher education landscape and attention to the faculty development needs within those institutions is warranted (Reder, 2010). Research about the liberal arts context is critical, given the centrality of institutional mission, size and resource allocation, student populations, and organizational setting and culture in faculty careers and professional development. Yet, only recently have scholars and practitioners begun to explore faculty development in the context of liberal arts and other small colleges (Mooney & Reder, 2008; Reder et al., 2009). Research by Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, and Beach (2006) suggests that faculty developers at liberal arts colleges perceive their top three challenges related to faculty support include balancing roles, integrating technology into their teaching, and adjusting to changing expectations.

Disconnects between academic preparation and development across the career stages and the realities of the liberal arts context also create challenges for faculty members. For example, early-career faculty members experience job stress and a steep learning curve as they move from a research focus to work that includes teaching, research, and service. Mid-career and senior colleagues must adapt to a changing model of a liberal arts college that is perhaps different from the one under which they earned tenure, and are expected to take on leadership and mentoring roles within these contexts, often with little preparation. Recent research emphasizes that faculty professional development initiatives should support faculty members across rank, rather than focus on an initial socialization period for early-career faculty exclusively (e.g., Austin, 2010; O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2008; Sorcinelli et al., 2006).

In addition to supporting faculty development across career stages within LACs, alignment of support across individual and organizational perspectives is also critical. Lewis (1996) argued that faculty development initiatives must address personal development (self-reflection and growth), instructional development (course and student-based initiatives), and organizational development (program, department, and institution). Reder et al. (2009) supported this notion by arguing that "It is impossible to overstate the importance of connecting small college faculty development to the needs and interests of the faculty and the institution as a whole" (p. 271). Our work builds on these important ideas by seeking to understand how, if at all, organizational priorities and processes align with faculty members' professional development needs across career stages.

Research highlights the importance of interconnectedness between faculty needs and administrative priorities (Sorcinelli et al., 2006). Yet, few frameworks provide the necessary details about how to ensure such a strategic connection is present. One example is Felten et al.'s (2013) heuristic to prompt reflection and discussions about faculty development, which accounts for the needs of key stakeholders in faculty development programming; the importance of culture, mission, opportunities, and constraints; and the need for evidence-based assessments of effectiveness. The framework provides a useful starting point, particularly the notion of making connections among the individual and organizational aspects most connected to faculty development. However, there is an opportunity to further

explore faculty development in liberal arts colleges specifically through consideration of alignment (Gratton & Truss, 2003) across faculty and administrator perspectives. In the next section, we explain the concept of alignment from the organization/human development literature and our application of it as a framework for our study.

Theoretical Framework

In her keynote address at the POD Network annual conference, Kezar (2013) discussed a concept she referred to as “leading from the middle” in which she argued for faculty developers to serve as organizational change agents given their unique positions connecting faculty members and administrators. She offered several frames with which “leading from the middle” could be accomplished, one of which was a human resources frame. A human resource frame is particularly salient in colleges and universities, given the longstanding focus on faculty members as the key resource within an institution charged with sharing the intellectual capital and supporting student learning. The faculty may be particularly important human resources in liberal arts colleges, which may have fewer resources and professional or support staff than other institution types. The human resource concept of alignment identifies the ways in which faculty development programming in liberal arts colleges can become a strategic advantage that serves both individual-level and institutional-level goals.

Alignment

Faculty development programs have been crucial for attracting and retaining faculty; however, we agree with Schroeder (2012) that institutions need to explicitly frame such programs as organizational development as much as faculty development. The notion of alignment offered by Gratton and Truss (2003) provides a conceptual tool for rethinking faculty development as both individual and institutional development by highlighting the connection of colleges and universities’ people strategies to organizational goals, and providing a process to link these critical areas. Scholars have discussed the importance of such interconnectedness (Lewis, 1996 ; Schroeder, 2012) and have offered insights into developing a comprehensive faculty development program.

Gratton and Truss (2003) posed the question, “Why is it that, despite their best efforts, organizations so often fail to develop and implement successful people strategies (p. 74)?” Successful people strategies in the context of higher education, or deliberate approaches to cultivating positive and effective experiences for organizational members, can result in the achievement of desired outcomes for both the individual faculty member and the institution. This goal of achieving interconnectedness between faculty needs and institutional priorities may be particularly important for liberal arts and small colleges given that they are more susceptible to external influences (reference omitted). Nelson (1981), in his research on LACs emphasized the need for institutional investments in faculty and warned against what will occur in the absence of such strategic approaches.

But the college, no matter how well defined its mission, cannot expect commitments from individual faculty unless it in turn is willing to make certain commitments to them.... Faculty are much more likely to remain loyal to an

institution which continually calls forth the best in its people, by encouraging them, supporting them, and rewarding them (p. 88).

In the following sections, we discuss each component of alignment in the context of faculty development programming at liberal arts colleges.

Vertical alignment

Vertical alignment is focused at the macro level and refers to the connection between an organization's people strategy and its goals. When situated in higher education, there is a greater need to understand organizational (institutional, departmental, programmatic) goals and how a stronger people strategy, such as faculty development programming, supports those goals. Embedded within the concept of vertical alignment is the need for clearly defined organizational goals that are accepted and evaluated. Nelson (1981) noted "Programs emphasizing individual development must be balanced by corporate [institutional] renewal activities.... Institutional commitment will have to be long and sincere, not short and doubtful" (p. 89) in order to realize maximum benefit at all levels.

An important component of vertical alignment is the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all people strategy because of the uniqueness of personnel groups or categories of employees in an organizational setting. Given that the role(s) of faculty members in LACs continue to expand when compared with their research university counterparts (Baker et al., 2012), we argue this is a critical point acknowledged by the alignment framework, as it suggests a need to develop targeted faculty development efforts to account for the unique challenges faculty members face across disciplines, appointment types, and career stages. Gratton and Truss (2003) noted the importance of a clear direction and goals at the organizational and personnel (faculty) levels in order to achieve vertical alignment.

Horizontal alignment

At the micro level, horizontal alignment focuses on the personnel policies that relate to individual performance. Horizontal alignment ensures that the right policies are in place at the right times, and that those policies are widely accepted, clearly communicated, equitable, and relevant. Applying this idea to higher education requires new thinking about faculty development and the ways in which faculty are supported in their roles of teaching, scholarship, and service across the career stages. We agree with Gappa, Austin, and Trice's (2007) assertion that "Many institutions have not seriously considered how support for faculty must evolve to better enable them to accomplish their work" (p. 4). At all times, questions of purpose, planning, communication, management, and program evaluation must accompany discussions of faculty development initiatives to ensure the policies are the right policies at the right time in order to cultivate success for liberal arts colleges and their faculty members across individual characteristics and goals.

Implementation

Lastly, the implementation dimension of alignment emphasizes that action is being taken to support vertical and horizontal alignment, and policy enactment. It is at this stage that institutions invest in fulfilling their alignment efforts as a way of enacting their people

strategies for faculty development through resource allocation, programming and support, and other actions. This implementation of strategic initiatives may occur through several different institutional structures and positions, such as faculty professional developers, committees charged with faculty development responsibilities, academic deans and provosts, and individual faculty members and campus leaders.

We applied the concept of alignment to understand faculty development in liberal arts colleges. Alignment accounts for both macrolevel and microlevel organizational considerations and provides the tools for identifying whether institutional and administrative priorities correspond with faculty needs and goals. Alignment also provides a foundation for building strong evaluative tools to ensure that people management strategies are used to help liberal arts colleges develop their faculty members as strong scholars and educators, as well as innovative and effective campus leaders.

In summary, we present Figure 1 to offer a visual illustration of the alignment framework as a means to promote thinking about how to conceptualize faculty development programming and to determine the degree to which faculty development serves as a strategic institutional imperative. Both vertical and horizontal alignment represents the diagram axes, which are rated on an ascending scale from weak to strong. Vertical alignment accounts both for the drivers of faculty development programming and to what degree it is accounted for in strategic planning. Horizontal alignment accounts for policy and the degree to which process supports institutional policy. Finally, the action component, implementation, is also on a scale from weak to strong and accounts for the degree to which institutions actually enact processes and procedures.

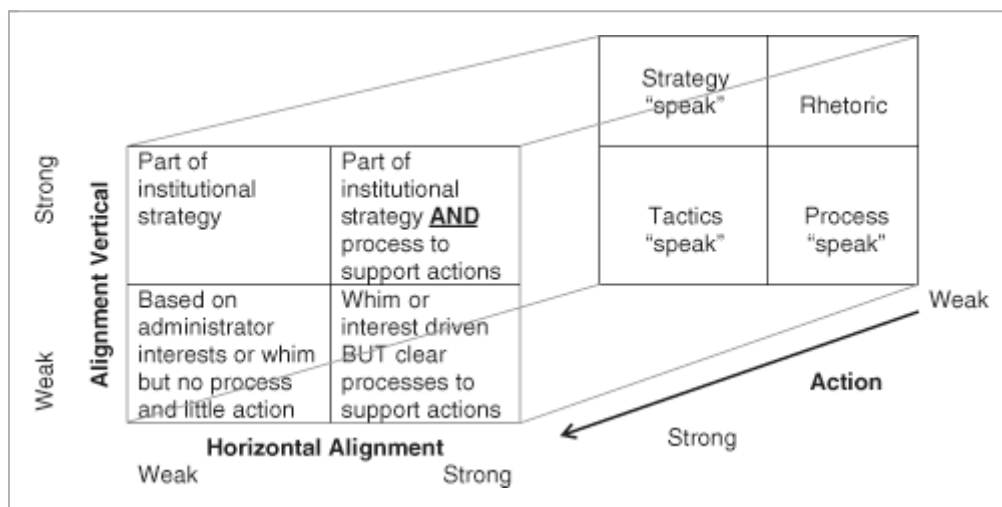


Figure 1.

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Alignment Framework for Faculty Development Initiatives

Methods

This study reports findings from the analysis of survey and interview data that is part of a larger research project, IFDLAC, which includes data from the 13 member institutions of the GLCA. Of the 13 member institutions, 12 are currently ranked by U.S. News & World Report in the Top 100 National Liberal Arts Colleges Rankings. Each institution meets the criteria to be defined as Liberal Arts I or Liberal Arts II, meaning at least 50% of all degrees are awarded in the arts and sciences (Baker et al., 2012).

Data Collection

We conducted interviews with academic deans at each of the GLCA institutions and five of the presidents during summer 2013. Of the 13, 6 academic deans are female. Five of the deans represent the humanities, four deans represent the social sciences, and four deans represent the sciences. The deans had an average tenure of five years in their position. Administrator interviews addressed three broad themes: *Institutional Priorities* (e.g., "How are institutional priorities communicated?"), *Faculty Socialization* (e.g., "In what ways are faculty supported in engaging in institutional priorities?"), and *Faculty Development* (e.g., "In what ways are faculty supported in the areas of teaching, research, and service?"). Interviews took place by phone, lasted approximately 40 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

A faculty development survey was administered to all 2,492 faculty members at the GLCA institutions, including full- and part-time faculty, as well as those in both tenure-line and nontenure-line positions. There were 541 completed surveys and 299 partially completed surveys; with a 20% response rate from tenured or tenure-eligible faculty. The survey included questions from five broad categories: faculty development opportunities, participation in faculty development, mentoring, overall satisfaction, and demographics. About half of the respondents (46%) were male; 8% chose not to indicate gender. About one third of the respondents (35%) were at the professor rank, one third (34%) were at the associate rank, and one fifth (20%) were at the assistant rank; the remainder included visiting professors or adjunct faculty. Most respondents (34%) were from the natural sciences, followed by the humanities (29%), social sciences (26%), and fine arts (7%). Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured for all stages of data collection.

Data Analysis

Relying on the theoretical framework of alignment, data analysis involved the identification of faculty development needs and priorities across the career stages from both faculty and administrative perspectives. Our data analysis efforts focused on questions related to key components of alignment: (a) *vertical alignment*, which focuses on institutional goals and faculty development policies and programming; (b) *horizontal alignment*, which focuses on programming tailored to target populations such as faculty members within particular career stages and academic ranks; and (c) *implementation*, or the connection among these components as observed in an institution's actual faculty development practices.

Survey data analysis focused on broad themes of faculty development from faculty members' perspectives, including structure, factors that influence faculty development, topic-specific needs and interests, delivery methods, and participation trends. Interviews were coded similarly in order to develop a baseline for administrators and to assess if, and to what degree, connections between administrator and faculty perspectives existed among the GLCA member institutions. Interview data also provided insights regarding academic deans'

perspectives about faculty development practices at their institutions. Transcripts were initially coded to identify descriptors of administrators' perspectives and were then cross-checked against survey data.

Findings

We organize the discussion of our findings around the three major elements of the framework—vertical alignment, horizontal alignment, and implementation.

Vertical Alignment

Vertical alignment takes a macro-organizational view and focuses on two primary components: people strategy and business goals. Thus, we first examined survey and interview data that focused on faculty development needs and interests (people strategy) and compared this information with institutional-level data about the primary influencers of faculty development programming (business goals). Table 1 provides a summary of the top (in order of priority) faculty development needs and interests by rank, including those of academic deans, across the GLCA institutions.

Table 1. Ranked Comparison of Faculty Development Priorities by Faculty Rank to Administrators

Assistant Professors	Associate Professors	Full Professors	Administrators
Developing students' critical thinking skills	Incorporating active learning strategies into my courses	Developing students' critical thinking skills	Department chair training/mentoring
Incorporating active learning strategies into my courses	Committee chair training	Incorporating active learning strategies into my courses	Faculty mentoring
Curriculum development	Post-tenure review	Faculty mentoring	Leadership development
Peer-review of teaching	Faculty mentoring	Department chair training	Support of mid-late career faculty (incentives beyond sabbatical)
Pre-tenure review	Increasing student motivation	Curriculum development	

As shown in Table 1, faculty development needs and interests vary by rank, particularly related to service and administrative roles, which become more salient in the later career stages. There are, however, similarities across ranks, related to teaching support and pedagogy. In terms of career stage differences, the needs of assistant professors align with the challenges faced on the quest for tenure, such as the need to engage in effective teaching and to have a clear understanding of the pre-tenure review process. The development needs

of associate professors also align with their evolving roles and responsibilities, with a focus on leadership development for roles such as chairing departments and mentoring junior colleagues. Full professors reported two priorities: finding ways to support students through course development and strategies for student engagement, and leadership development, which aligned with mid-career faculty members' needs.

In contrast to the needs expressed by faculty members across career stages, administrators focused on mid-to-late career faculty programming needs as priorities for faculty development. Administrators reported being most interested in leadership development, such as supporting faculty members as they assume increased service roles at their institutions, department chair training, and more comprehensive faculty mentoring programming with more defined training and evaluative components.

We explored vertical development by focusing on drivers of faculty development as indicators of institutional goals. Our goal was to identify who influences the identification and implementation of faculty development topics or initiatives, as well as faculty and administrative perspectives about those influences and whether there was alignment across those perspectives. We asked faculty members and academic deans to indicate what best described their institutions' faculty development structures. This was an important step in our data collection and analysis, as there is no common faculty development structure among liberal arts institutions. Based on interviews with academic deans, six of the institutions have devoted Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTL), while three have an Associate Dean or Faculty Development Coordinator responsible for initiating and implementing such programming. Eight academic deans reported that standing committees were present on their campuses responsible for faculty development independently, or in concert with administrative centers or coordinators. Note these figures do not add to 13 given some institutions have, for example, a CTL as well as an Associate Dean responsible for faculty development. Faculty members were able to indicate up to two primary drivers based on a list of possible options we provided (see Table 2).

Table 2. Faculty Perceptions of Primary Drivers of Faculty Development Programming

Drives Faculty Development Programming	Number ^a
** Faculty interests/concerns	9
** Priorities of senior-level administrators	5
Individual charged with faculty development (e.g., dean of faculty)	4
Faculty committee charged with faculty development responsibility	2
Immediate organizational issue or concern	2
<p>^a Sums to more than 13 as two choices were possible per institution.</p> <p>** Indicates the top two drivers of faculty development programming.</p>	

Drives Faculty Development Programming	Number ^a
Department chairs	1
<p>^a Sums to more than 13 as two choices were possible per institution.</p> <p>** Indicates the top two drivers of faculty development programming.</p>	

Survey results indicate that faculty members' perceptions of the primary drivers of faculty development programming across these LACs were: (a) faculty interests and concerns and (b) priorities of senior-level administrators. Faculty at only three of the institutions reported feeling that faculty development efforts were aligned with the institutional strategic planning processes. The interviews with academic deans/provosts also showed that strategic planning rarely was tied with faculty development efforts. Only three administrators specifically discussed faculty development or "faculty excellence" as part of their current or future strategic plans or development (e.g., donor) initiatives.

Horizontal Alignment

Horizontal alignment focuses on the microlevel by targeting personnel policy, with the intent of identifying faculty development programming as it relates to the needs of each particular career stage. We analyzed the interview data with academic deans/provosts to gain insight into faculty development programming by rank. Table 3 presents a summary of policies supporting rank-based faculty development initiatives across the GLCA institutions as reported by administrators and includes programs that were consistent across all institutions.

Table 3. Faculty Development Programming by Faculty Rank

Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Full Professor
New faculty orientation	Sabbatical	Sabbatical
New faculty mentoring program	Professional development funds	Professional development funds
Start-up funds	Faculty retreat	Faculty retreat
Faculty retreat		Endowed professorships (mostly in sciences)
No advising and reduced teaching loads first one to two years		
Professional development funds		
Reduced course load post interim tenure review		

According to the interview data, all institutions offer faculty orientation, a mentoring program (either formal or informal), and start-up funds that vary based on disciplinary needs. Additionally, early-career faculty members are protected from advising and service committee responsibilities in their first years on the tenure track.

The interviews also revealed the presence of unique programs that some institutions have established. For example, Kalamazoo College created a junior faculty member cohort model, to support assistant professors on the tenure track. Cohort members engage in writing groups and teaching and learning workshops. Earlham College supports a year-long orientation program for new faculty. As part of this program, faculty members are invited to attend monthly themed lunches with varying topics such as how to start a research agenda.

Very limited, targeted, faculty development programming occurs at the mid-career (associate professor) faculty level, according to administrators. As summarized in Table 3, the primary faculty development initiatives are sabbaticals, access to faculty development funds, and participation in the faculty retreat at the beginning of the academic year, which all institutions hosted. All institutions run sabbatical programs on a seven-year cycle; however, approximately half of the institutions were changing sabbatical policies to a more competitive model where faculty members are expected to submit a proposal that outlines the projects to be pursued, which is then reviewed by a committee and/or the academic dean/provost. As part of that proposal process, faculty members must illustrate how the project(s) supports their individual development (e.g., teaching and research) and the institution (e.g., students), and they must submit a post-sabbatical report.

Professional development funds for the programming noted in Table 3 were described by administrators as fairly generous for liberal arts colleges, and are available to all tenure-track faculty, with some institutions making funds available to visiting faculty members. Funds could support teaching, research, and travel to attend conferences while other institutions allow such funds to be used for summer support, especially if the project included undergraduate students in a research capacity. Finally, all early-career faculty members are expected to attend the faculty retreat that serves as a kickoff of the academic year. Most faculty retreats have themes such as teaching and learning or technology in the classroom.

There were examples of noteworthy programs for mid-career faculty. The College of Wooster started a program called Seasons. The sessions are open to all faculty members; however, the topics are specifically designed for faculty members at the mid- and late-career stages. The Dean of Faculty Development organizes six meetings a year over wine and cheese, where attendees discuss the seasons of a faculty member's career. Past topics include managing the tenure track, balancing work and life, and planning for retirement. According to the Dean of Faculty Development at Wooster, these events are very well attended by faculty at all career stages and have resulted in lively discussion and the identification of future session topics. Tenured faculty members at the Albion College created a Teaching Reflections group in which faculty members reflect on their positive and negative teaching experiences. They then write blogs about those experiences, which are shared with group members in the hope that colleagues can learn and benefit from each other's experiences.

Similar to mid-career faculty programming, not much targeted faculty development efforts are geared toward senior faculty members within the GLCA. Sabbaticals, faculty development funds, and participation in the faculty retreat were available to full professors. In addition, full professors were eligible for endowed professorships. While the majority of endowed

professorships existed in the natural sciences, some institutions offered them in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts. Targeted programs at the senior faculty member level include Allegheny College's phased early retirement program, which helps ease transitions into retirement for both individuals and departments.

The GLCA supported an important faculty development initiative aimed at mid-career and senior colleagues in the form of New Directions Grants, with supporting the goal of supporting faculty renewal. Grant funds helped faculty members pursue an idea (research or teaching) that takes them outside the familiar boundaries of their discipline or of typical faculty work. The goal was to enhance the quality of a liberal arts education. Several of the academic deans/provosts noted the importance of this program to their faculty and to their institutions. Many faculty members also noted the importance of such faculty development programming on the consortium level.

Implementation

Implementation focuses on the degree to which vertical and horizontal alignments are supported and enacted. We examined if vertical alignment was achieved by comparing the data from Table 1 (faculty needs and interests) with the data summarized in Table 3 (current practice/policy). This comparison highlights a disconnect between faculty needs and current practice, despite the fact that faculty needs and interests and the priorities of senior-level administrators were the two primary drivers of faculty development initiatives in the GLCA. None of the top five priorities reported by faculty members in each academic rank in Table 1 were reported by administrators as existing programming at their institutions in Table 3. Faculty needs and interests vary by rank, yet current practice outside of a few unique institution-specific programs do not account for these differences, particularly at the mid- and late-career stages. What faculty members indicated they need and want from faculty development programming was not being met by current practice. In fact, current practice at the mid-late career stages was not even meeting the stated needs or priorities of the academic deans/provosts.

In terms of horizontal alignment, we focused specifically on policy. Table 3 illustrates current faculty development practice. Gratton and Truss (2003) discussed the need to avoid a one-size-fits-all personnel strategy, yet there are some common needs for these liberal arts institutions that are not being met currently. Findings suggest that faculty development programming, at a minimum, needs to be more tailored, especially at the mid-late career stages.

We surveyed faculty members about their participation in current faculty development programming at their institutions and solicited the top three reasons for failure to participate. Faculty members were consistent across rank about obstacles to their participation in faculty development programs (Table 4). Of note is the finding that across all ranks, participants indicated a lack of participation in faculty development because the topics are not relevant to them.

Table 4. Obstacles to Participation by Faculty Rank

Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Full Professor

Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Full Professor
Workload	Workload	Workload
Timing of event	Timing of event	Timing of event
Relevance of topics	Relevance of topics	Relevance of topic

Summary

We found that within these institutions, there was a lack of vertical alignment between faculty needs and administrators' goals, yet there was partial horizontal alignment between administrators' goals and faculty development initiatives. For the final stage of alignment, implementation, we found that there is room for improvement in the ways in which institutional practice reflects the goals and needs of faculty members across career stages and the priorities set forth by academic deans and provosts.

Faculty members' needs (Table 1) were not met by most of the programs offered (Table 3) despite faculty members having a perception that their needs drive programming (Table 2). This point, along with the lack of relevant programming, suggests a mismatch between faculty need and interest within career stages and what was being offered to support faculty members in their primary roles of teaching, scholarship, and service through institutional faculty development efforts. Furthermore, the priorities of senior-level administrators, the second most frequently reported driver of faculty development programming (according to faculty responses), were also not being addressed by the current practice. While there was no complete alignment between faculty priorities and administrator priorities, there was an even wider gap between individual needs and institutional practices.

Discussion

The study drew on data from IFDLAC and drew on an organizational development concept of alignment developed by Gratton and Truss (2003). The study highlights that faculty development needs to be part of an organizational development strategy, an alignment perspective is a useful framework for aligning needs and development activities, and that there are specific gaps in faculty development for liberal arts colleges.

First, faculty development is too important to be neglected or left to the interests of the director of faculty development alone. Rather, the use of alignment reveals the need for a collaborative effort, given the culture and mission of LACs. Ouellett (2010) discussed the evolving role of faculty development in higher education and noted topics that are universal to educational developers: the increasingly complex roles of faculty members, a focus on assessment of student learning and curricular innovations, the use of technology in the classroom, and diversity. It is also time to align these universal needs with institutional priorities and strategies, as well as with individual needs within and across career stages. An alignment perspective places faculty development activities at the core of an overall human resource strategy for this core population within higher education institutions. Further, this perspective suggests that ensuring and assessing the enactment of policies and procedures is

just as important as developing them. Given the institutional focus and mission of liberal arts institutions, one would expect to see tenure and promotion policies that reflect scholarly activity broadly defined with an emphasis on teaching. The framework of alignment supports the review of such policies as a means of identifying, developing, and enacting faculty development activities that support the skills faculty need to develop to meet the institutional mission.

Second, the alignment perspective offers a simple framework that allows institutional leaders and those charged with developing, overseeing, and evaluating faculty development programming to identify gaps in their people strategies for faculty. Through this mixed-methods research, our data generated new knowledge about faculty development in liberal arts colleges by illustrating whether administrative and faculty perspectives align. Our analysis revealed a disconnect at the implementation level between institutional policies and their enactment. For example, faculty in all ranks indicated a lack of interest in topics for professional development as a reason for not attending. Better understanding of faculty interests and motivations are important in developing professional development activities. Even the senior administrators interviewed indicated that mid- and late-career faculty development needs were not being met.

Austin (2010) noted that faculty members are valuable assets to their institutions at each career stage. As such, effective faculty development programming needs to be relevant and specific to faculty across career stages. While our findings reveal some similarities in terms of needs and interests, particularly for mid- and late-career faculty, each stage brings specific challenges that need to be addressed in varying ways. Strong human resource policy accounts for the needs of different employee groups (Gratton & Truss, 2003). Faculty are perhaps the most important institutional human resource, given that they are on the front lines delivering the educational product. The first step to closing these gaps between policy and practice is to demonstrate their existence. A short survey of faculty or even archival analysis of the last year's faculty development activities can be compared with institutional goals. Our analysis demonstrates how institutions can better align their actions with their policies.

Third, our analysis highlights areas of focus for liberal arts colleges. Reder (2010) noted two important challenges smaller institutions face in relation to faculty development: cultivating faculty ownership and ensuring continuity in leadership. Data from this study revealed that the two primary drivers of faculty development are faculty needs and senior administrators' perspectives; however, current practice failed to account for the priorities of both constituents. As Ouellett (2010) pointed out, faculty roles are ever-evolving and the traditional tasks of teaching, scholarship, and service as previously conceived are only a portion of their responsibilities. Teaching now encompasses in- and out-of-classroom experiences, as well as advising, mentoring, supporting student engagement, and assessment. The notion of scholarship has expanded to include more than peer-reviewed publications; for example, the inclusion of undergraduate students in research experiences is critically important at liberal arts colleges. Service extends beyond mere committee work. It means taking on leadership roles on campus, recruiting prospective students, and engaging in development efforts. As faculty roles continue to change within institutional contexts, so too must the ways in which faculty work is supported. Yet, as evidenced in this research, practice and policy are not only lagging behind but also fail to serve as a strategic advantage

that supports the institutional mission and respond to faculty members' and administrator's articulated needs and priorities.

Implications for Practice

An alignment framework provides a useful tool to inform the identification, development, and assessment of faculty development programming in LACs. Further, an alignment framework may improve situations by aligning, communicating, and addressing stakeholder perspectives and institutional priorities. As such, we offer three suggestions to support institutions, faculty developers, and faculty members in their efforts to implement faculty development initiatives through an alignment framework. First, we encourage faculty developers and administrators to identify and document all the ways in which faculty are, or have been, supported within their institutions. Such an inventory serves as an important baseline. Second, faculty developers may review this information on a career stage basis and compare needs to extant programming to discern whether vertical and horizontal alignments, as well as implementation, are present or absent. Third, we strongly urge the dissemination of this information to faculty members, department chairs, and other stakeholders in order to be as transparent as possible about needs, current practice, and disconnects. Shared information may help facilitate a conversation of next steps related to prioritizing programming, such as development efforts and funding constraints. The goal is to include as many constituents as possible to secure buy-in and to develop short-term and long-term goals related to faculty development programming.

The implementation of an alignment strategy presumes that action is needed. There are three actions needed to ensure implementation. First, faculty development needs to be linked to the institutional mission through strategic planning. For example, in their mission statements, most institutions generically note that their goal is to provide an excellent educational experience for their students, to prepare global citizens, and to increase diversity. Faculty members are vital to achieving these goals, yet strategic plans may fail to explicitly create goals for supporting faculty through programming and funding efforts.

Second, a faculty-specific "people strategy" needs to be developed. Our findings support research that states faculty needs align with their career stage (Austin, 2010). Therefore, LACs need to develop a people, or faculty, strategy around specific career stage challenges. Faculty members and administrators were clear about what their needs and priorities were for faculty development. Yet, current faculty development programming failed to meet those needs on a career stage basis within the 13 member institutions included in this research study.

Third, horizontal alignment serves as an important reminder that policy must be clearly and consistently communicated. Leadership at both the faculty and administrator levels changes. Therefore, the re-evaluation and re-envisioning of faculty development policies and programming must be routine to ensure that institutions are meeting the needs of the faculty members seeking support, and thus better fulfilling their missions.

Conclusion

The conceptual tool of alignment can play a vital role in the development, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive faculty development program for liberal arts colleges. A conceptualization of faculty development as what is most important for institutions limits

knowledge of who decides what is important, based on what factors or goals, and how that affects faculty development. Alignment allows for consideration of whether and how faculty developers and institutional leaders connect their formal and informal knowledge of what faculty members need and want with their understanding of the goals and priorities of their institutions, as evidenced through budgets and resource allocation, strategic initiatives, mission statements, and programs and policies. This study demonstrates how to apply an alignment framework to consideration of faculty development within liberal arts colleges. Findings suggest that the framework will reveal key areas for improved practice. Furthermore, the framework has the potential to equip liberal arts colleges to be proactive in cultivating a refined and informed approach to faculty professional development across career stages, in ways that satisfy the goals and needs of faculty members, administrators, and the institutions themselves.

Biographies

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