FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

PURPOSE

One of the most striking characteristics of the professions is that they are, to a large degree, self-monitoring and self-regulating with regards to professional development. For example, doctors and lawyers organize their own ongoing training to stay on top of their specialties. As educators we also rely on our own sense of professionalism to determine what we need to do to hone our instructional skills and stay current in our field.

With a significant teaching load at BYU-Idaho, it is vital that instructors have a plan that allocates time for faculty development—otherwise it will not happen.

While the plan is self-initiated, it must be coordinated with one’s department and college. A professional development planning worksheet has been developed to assist conversations between instructors and their department chairs about the allocation of work load and funding for professional development.

DESCRIPTION

The faculty development worksheet provides a framework five years into the future. Undoubtedly specific plans will change over this time, but the longer time frame allows for planning more self-directed periods of focus.

In academics at BYU-Idaho, faculty development is discussed in four different categories:

- Content Knowledge and Academic Depth
- Scholarship of Learning and Teaching
- Technical Skills
- Campus Citizenship

Content Knowledge and Academic Depth refers to the discipline specific expertise of an instructor. Professional development in this area usually takes the form of attending or presenting at conferences, staying current in peer-reviewed literature, conducting research or mentoring student research, writing and publishing in the discipline, and in some cases, pursuing further formal training or a terminal degree in one’s chosen field.

Scholarship of Learning and Teaching refers to skills relevant to instruction and learning processes. Specific activities often include attendance or presentation at teaching conferences. Writing or revising course curricula, moving a course to an on-line format, conducting action research, attending a learning community or developing an assessment strategy are other common development activities. Observing a colleague’s classroom or attending campus sponsored development opportunities like brown bags or workshops are also common developmental pursuits. BYU-Idaho Learning Model was developed to discuss learning and teaching processes across disciplines on our campus.

Technical Skills as a category of professional development refers to gaining competence with specific tools and techniques that can aid an instructor either in their discipline specific abilities, or in more general instructional skills. Learning to use more advanced I-Learn features, experimenting with Clickers in the classroom, implementing multi-media or web-based activities in a course, developing specialized applications, examples, activities or software may fall into this category.

Campus Citizenship refers to those activities which seek to improve the overall campus capacity for quality learning and teaching. Participating on campus committees, mentoring peers, helping with student associations, contributing to task forces or college and department groups all help to create and support the kind of professionalism that we expect from ourselves and our colleagues.

EXAMPLE

The office of Instructional Development has developed a form to help simplify and standardize the professional development planning process across campus. A link to the template document is at the end of this tool under ‘Other Resources.’ The template tool has two main parts, an initial
description or introduction of the professional development plan, and a section where the five-year plan is broken down by semester and by the category of professional development activities. A graphic of the planning template is included below.

The first section is a space to provide a narrative of the overall plan. Here, the instructor identifies the emphasis and reasoning behind the more detailed information presented in the next section. It is very similar to a cover letter that provides context to a resume; this section frames and explains the semester-by-semester choices of development activities.

The second section has a space for each of the five years represented in the plan. Each year is broken into three semesters as well as the flexible weeks which instructors have under contract during the summer.

It is not intended that each box of the matrix be filled with development activities. Rather, each of the regular semesters or summer periods should have an area of focus. It is possible that professional activities for one semester might focus almost exclusively on discipline-specific development activities. The following semester, however, might change that focus to include development activities around the Learning Model or around certain technical skills.

The end part of the template provides a space for notes that are generated as each faculty member reviews the plan with their department chair at least once yearly. Such conversation helps the department chair set aside funds and time to support each faculty member in their pursuit of faculty development opportunities. It also aids the department chair to know when leave or course release is required as they schedule the course loads for each semester.

TIPS
- Not every box in the planning form need be filled. Find a focus for each semester.
- Rotate the focus so that none of the categories of professional development is over-represented or under-represented over the course of the year.
- Share your plan with your department chair.
- Be flexible and adapt your plan to accommodate departmental needs.

PITFALLS
- Don’t view filling out this template as the goal. It is a means to an end, which is planning your own professional development. Modify the template as necessary to meet your needs.
- Don’t overload the plan. Stay focused and realistic in your plans for the year. Usually, professional development activities should take about 5% of your time each week.

RESOURCES
- Professional Development Plan Template

http://www.byui.edu/learning-and-teaching/