

Principles of Good Practice for Professional Development in the New Academy

These principles are drawn from a symposium on “Professional Development in and for a Changing Academy” held on March 16-17, 2006, and sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in partnership with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Based on the proceedings, but not officially endorsed by sponsors or participants, we offer this document in hopes of prompting a wider conversation about these important issues. For further information about the symposium, and to comment on this document, see http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/professional_development/.]

The academic profession is nearing a moment of great change. The large cohort of faculty hired during the late 1960s and early 1970s will retire during the next decade, and a new generation is coming in. Can colleges and universities attract and retain the diverse and talented professoriate they need for tomorrow? How will these new faculty be able to do and perform all that is necessary to help institutions fulfill their many missions? Higher education’s future depends on the creativity with which it can provide for the professional growth of *all* faculty and for flexibility in the shape and timing of their careers.

The academy that faculty are entering today is not the one their predecessors joined. The work involved in teaching, research and service to community and campus requires a new and larger set of abilities and skills. Teaching a more diverse population of students requires deeper knowledge of pedagogy than before, and advising now extends into new domains like service learning and undergraduate research. In most fields, scholarly work is becoming increasingly collaborative, interdisciplinary, and practically relevant at the same time that expectations for productivity (and in some cases even profitability) are on the rise. Public service involves greater reciprocity between academic and community partners, while academic decision-making in today’s complex educational, financial, and legal environment takes more time and thought. With heightened demands at work, faculty of all ages can expect to face growing tension between their professional and personal lives.

Concern about the future of the academic profession goes beyond the increasingly difficult balancing acts that individuals must perform to stay personally and professionally alive and afloat. With an eye on the growing proportion of part-time and non-tenure-track appointments, the widening scope of accountability, and the increasing managerialism of college and university administration, many prospective faculty members see the resultant scrutiny and insecurity as signs of the *deprofessionalization* of academic work. For higher education to remain vital, we urgently need policies and practices that affirm and ensure the dignity, humanity, and intellectual excitement of academic careers.

Professional development, considered broadly, is key to the future of the professoriate. The following six principles recognize the need to address both work and work-life issues throughout the full arc of the academic career, from graduate education through retirement, and serving both full- and part-time faculty, with and without tenure-track positions. As academic careers become more complex and more varied, and as faculty roles and responsibilities expand, a creative, sustained commitment to faculty members’ ongoing learning and growth becomes ever more important.

Principles of good practice for professional development in the new academy:

1. Begin in college and intensify in graduate school.

Preparation for the many roles involved in professional life should begin in college and intensify in graduate school. Because research, teaching, community service, and institutional governance have close analogues in all professions, all undergraduates can benefit from opportunities to learn, practice, and improve these activities. The undergraduate research movement is thriving, opportunities for community service are increasing, but are there sufficient occasions for undergraduates to teach and to participate in making decisions involving the intellectual life of their colleges and universities? Opportunities like these would be especially formative for undergraduates who move on to graduate school and a career in academe. In graduate school and postdoctoral training, professional development should intensify through opportunities to engage in research, teaching, community service and governance, coupled with mentorship, formal training, and structured reflection on the full range of professional roles. This preparation should be accompanied by education about the ethics of professional practice and about the variety of institutions and academic communities in which practitioners are likely to work.

2. Provide flexibility for work-and-life issues throughout the academic career.

In order to attract and retain a talented and diverse professoriate, flexible work-and-life policies should be seen as an essential part of professional development. There should be multiple points of entry and exit into academic careers, and increased permeability between academic and other settings for purposes of regeneration, family or community responsibilities, and further learning. The new academy is characterized by a variety of appointment types—full- and part-time, tenure- and non-tenure track. For these to be true alternatives, and to facilitate mobility among them, all should assure a living wage, benefits, and participation in the full range of academic decision-making and community life. Opportunities for housing near campus; quality, affordable child care; leaves of absence; and other family-friendly policies should be seen as key provisions of professional development throughout the span of the faculty career. Phased retirement policies should be available, along with attractive opportunities for continued affiliation for retired faculty, such as office space; affiliation with a department or institute; and opportunities to mentor and teach.

3. Recognize, develop, and reward multiple talents and contributions.

Colleges and universities should recognize, develop, and reward the full range of professional talents and contributions necessary for the fulfillment of their missions, including the decision-making work involved in shared governance, and the mentorship and advising that more senior members of the academic community provide for those more junior. This is a collective responsibility: no single academic can do everything well at the same time. Individualized development plans that balance the needs of the institution, the department,

and faculty member allow academics to focus on different interests over the course of their careers. However, the flexibility such plans promise will only be meaningful if faculty can count on the reward system to recognize the full range of their contributions. Expectations for retention, renewal, and advancement should be clear for faculty with all types of appointment and at all stages of the career. This is a goal that will require clear policy, strong leadership, and community-wide conversation about the importance and intellectual seriousness of different kinds of scholarship. It also requires ongoing opportunities for training, collaboration, and conversation to allow faculty to take risks, try things out, develop new projects, and explore different lines of work.

4. Foster long-term planning and preparation.

A broad view of professional development fosters long-term planning and preparation, and, where possible, builds opportunities to learn into the actual work, such as through team teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Of course, needs change as careers progress. Along with in-depth orientation, new faculty members should be supported in outlining a long-term development plan for the multiplicity of roles they will likely be taking on. Mid-career faculty often take on more responsibility for institutional management, and make important choices for future scholarly direction: they need opportunities to develop new work that will move them forward. Late-career faculty are often ready for new foci: new leadership roles, mentoring relationships, and stints at a research institute, another campus, or another country often serve their professional development needs. Planning for retirement should begin early, through financial systems that encourage early saving and flexible policies that enable faculty to develop interests that can sustain them later in life.

5. Cultivate leadership throughout faculty careers.

Professional development for the new academy should deliberately cultivate leadership throughout faculty careers. Academic work today requires facility in the skills of management, collaboration, and community organization, and it is no longer enough to let experience alone be the guide. New and seasoned faculty alike are developing multiple lines of inquiry as part of their research, teaching, and community service; most will participate in the committees that conduct departmental and institutional affairs; and many will work on teams with undergraduates, graduate students, faculty from different disciplines, and other professional staff. Training in the art and science of management can help them do these tasks well, and strengthen the skills and confidence faculty need to balance their busy work and personal lives. With so much at stake in forming and carrying out new policies, institutions must do all they can to attract talented people into administration and provide them with the necessary support and training, including opportunities for leadership for those in early-, mid-, and late-career. Chairs deserve special attention, because of their pivotal roles in translating new policies into practice and in setting the tone of professional life in their departments and programs.

6. Strengthen networks that encourage learning.

Flexibility in academic life is enhanced by participation in networks that encourage learning. Conversations around topics of shared interest across the campus—particular pedagogies, local community relations, public policy issues, scientific or scholarly breakthroughs—provide many of the most useful occasions for professional development. Cross-institutional collaborations involving faculty, administrators, students and academic staff in such offices as student affairs, technology, or institutional research build networks that support all members of the community. Connecting campus efforts with national initiatives brings additional resources, colleagues, and recognition for new work, while collaborations with local or regional community partners can enrich the quality of life and understanding for everyone involved. Finally, professional development for the new academy should include attention to improving communication with the public, whose understanding and support is essential to keeping the academic profession a vital and viable career.

We offer these principles of good practice as encouragement to the many colleges and universities, unions and professional associations, scholarly societies and foundations that have been doing such good work in this area for so long. Others have elaborated each point with far more subtlety and at far greater length. Our purpose here is to draw together the main ideas that have emerged from often separate conversations about faculty scholarship and about faculty work and life, and see what they add up to. It is our hope that campuses may find them useful in surveying strengths and weaknesses in their own arrangements. We hope, too, that these principles will help the academic community at large find strategic sites for new work.

Two issues that we have not addressed stand out. The first concerns the question of who is responsible for professional development in the new academy. With a broad agenda that crosscuts undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral programs; work-life policies that affect all staff; faculty appointment policies, special training programs, and more, everyone has a role. The danger, of course, is that when everyone is responsible, no one will act. Thus it is important that every group involved in higher education ask who is doing what now, who should be doing what tomorrow, and how they themselves can help to develop policies and practices necessary to ensure the future of the academic profession.

The second issue concerns the need for more research. Some areas have been more fully addressed than others, and clearly the answers are not all in. Further, many good ideas and promising experiments could be usefully triangulated and contextualized through comparative work on other professions and in other countries. Those foundations that have supported research on the condition of the academic profession, the changing nature of scholarly work, and the many difficult work and life issues that faculty face, deserve thanks from all who care about higher education: we applaud and encourage their continuing support.

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