# Exploring Faculty Preferences for Mode of Delivery for Professional Development Initiatives

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**Abstract**

As online learning is becoming more deeply entrenched in higher education, many institutions are designing professional development activities aimed at helping faculty improve their online teaching. The focus of this descriptive study was on identifying the preferences faculty who teach online have regarding how they want to learn about new technology, how to complete tasks in the online environment, and strategies they can use to enhance instruction. Additionally, the study sought to gauge faculty members' interest in working with other faculty to investigate online teaching issues. Results from a survey instrument administered to faculty who teach online at an institution in the mid-south indicate that faculty members prefer one-on-one meetings with instructional design experts, online resources, and informal interaction with colleagues. The authors recommend including faculty members' input in the design of professional development initiatives.

## Introduction

Online education, once considered a novel element of higher education, is now embedded in the universal landscape. According to Allen and Seaman (2015) the growth in online enrollment (3.7%) between 2012 and 2013 exceeded that of overall higher education (1.2%) during the same years. Current IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) data and data from the Babson Survey Research Group illustrate this in their annual report detailing the status of online education in the United States. Their report indicates that of degree-granting institutions open to the public, 70.7% offer some type of distance education. The larger the institution, the greater the amount of distance offerings. Their report also states that almost 71% of institutions claim that online education is a crucial piece in their long-term strategy (Allen & Seaman, 2015).

The Babson Survey Research Group has been collecting data related to online education for

several years. Findings from their surveys indicate that institutions look to distance learning as a resolution to funding issues and concerns about access, and administrators are open to expanding this delivery system. Online education has allowed millions of students across the United States and beyond to access higher education. Despite the evidence that students are embracing this approach, the less-than-positive mindset of faculty toward online learning remains unchanged. Academic leaders report that faculty still question its worth, both in terms of value and legitimacy. Data collected from 2002-2014 reveals that leaders' perceptions of these factors hit a high point in 2007 when 33.5% of academic leaders reported that faculty accept online education, but that percentage has since declined to 28%, almost exactly where it started in 2002. Regardless, research indicates that chief academic officers are circumventing the issue of faculty acceptance and are growing programs in spite of negative or ambivalent attitudes (Allen & Seaman, 2015).

The sustainability of such programs is questionable, however, without faculty buy-in and their willingness to design and teach online courses. Research supports the notion that faculty are more inclined to adopt online technology if they believe instructional support is in place, both technical support and encouragement to teach using alternative learning channels (Huang, Deggs, Jabor, & Machtmes, 2011; Lescht, & Windes, 2011). Windes & Lescht (2014) maintain that if administration wants to motivate faculty to teach online they will need to include instructional design support as part of their strategic plan.

Betts (2014) found that factors that motivate faculty to participate in online education include personal motivation to use technology, greater course flexibility for students, greater course flexibility for faculty, ability to reach students who cannot come to campus, and overall job satisfaction. Factors that inhibit faculty from participating in online education include a lack of adequate equipment (computer software), concern about faculty workload, lack of release time, concerns about the quality of courses, and a lack of technical support provided by the university. Faculty expressed a high interest in attending faculty development for fully and partially online courses, as well as for hybrid courses. Results of the study "also revealed that faculty involvement is quintessential in the development and expansion of online and blended programs as well as in the design of faculty development initiatives" (para. 1).

Faculty learning in terms of teaching strategies is part of the evolution of online course delivery (Hoskins, 2011), and one of the challenges associated with this mode of delivery is how to ensure course quality. This particular challenge can in many cases be addressed by faculty professional development initiatives. Faculty development programs are typically designed for scale rather than to accommodate the needs of a diverse group of adult learners; however, faculty members are more likely to participate in professional development programs that acknowledge the unique characteristics of adult learners and their experiences (McQuiggan, 2012). Lancaster, Stein, MacLean, Van Amburgh, and Persky (2014) recommended identifying a target audience for faculty development, identifying faculty leaders, and emphasizing faculty ownership. Recent studies have focused on very specific faculty populations such as those designing mobile learning initiatives (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012), or adjunct faculty (Dailey-Hebert, Norris, Mandernach, & Donnelli-Sallee, 2014). Other studies have reported on formats widely used, but not necessarily preferred, by faculty (Herman, 2013; Meyer & Murrell, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore faculty preferences, including those of full-time and part-time instructors, and assistant, associate and full professors, for mode of delivery for faculty development initiatives and to gauge interest in participation in a professional learning community.

**Background of the Study**

Research on faculty development programs designed to improve teaching emerged in the 1960's (Aleamoni, 1997). At that time, most faculty development was centered on subject matter expertise, but the emphasis soon changed to teaching techniques, precipitated by globalization and the demand for a workforce with complex problem solving capabilities (Estepp, Roberts, & Carter, 2012). Increasing access to technology in the classroom and the growth of distance education also created a need for technology training. In their recent review of the literature, de Noyelles, Cobb, and Lowe (2012) found three trends related to faculty development in higher education: "(1) shift from individual to community, (2) shift to blended format, and (3) emphasis on adult learning theory principles" (p. 86).

Most faculty are experts in their respective fields, but have no formal background in teaching (Estepp, Roberts, & Carter, 2012) and typically follow the same method of teaching they experienced as students (McKee & Tew, 2013). Institutions ameliorate the absence of pedagogical training through faculty development programs. Three of the most comprehensive models for the administration of faculty development programs are faculty development centers, faculty development committees, and faculty learning communities (Lancaster, et al., 2014). Centers, typically staffed with instructional designers and academic technology support staff, promote effective teaching through classroom observation, course design, peer mentoring, and workshops addressing current issues in teaching (Schwartz & Haynie, 2013). Faculty development committees, comprised of faculty members from across a department, college, or university, are charged with identifying needs and designing opportunities for faculty to advance their teaching (Lancaster, et al., 2014). The faculty learning community model encourages engagement with others and participant reflection, a familiar paradigm for faculty engaged in research (Sicat et al., 2014). The essential components of a faculty learning community are shared values and vision, individual and collective learning, reflection, respectful and supportive conditions, collaboration, and inclusive membership (Roth, 2014).

University faculty and staff working under any of the models responsible for creating and maintaining faculty development programs must find ways to efficiently and effectively facilitate and support instruction. Herman (2013) surveyed faculty development centers offering faculty development programs for online teaching. The most widely offered activities were websites with online resources (90.4%), technical service without content or pedagogical design (89.0%), printed materials (87.8%), video instruction (85.7%), and consultation with instructional design experts (84.2%). In a descriptive study of the content and activities of faculty development for online teaching offered at higher education institutions, Meyer and Murrell (2014) found the most widely-used formats were workshops lasting 2-5 hours (100%), short one-on-one training sessions (97.7%), hands-on training (95.5%), and online course development (93.2%). In terms of the value placed on various modes of professional development activities, faculty developers consistently rated traditional formats such as workshops and one-on-one training higher than newer types of activities such as webinars and online courses (Meyer & Murrell, 2014).

When asked directly about preferred learning formats, faculty have indicated a desire for more personalized attention. For example, faculty engaged in a mobile learning initiative at Open University responded most positively to one-on-one help (87.5%) and case studies (87.5%), and least positively to a formal course (41.7%) (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012). In a qualitative study of six faculty who teach online, Lackey (2011) also found faculty perceived one-on-one training most beneficial; however, they added that knowledge gained from experience, how-to videos, and an online course focused on pedagogy were also helpful

sources of information. Adjunct faculty preferred asynchronous activities that they could complete individually such as self-paced online courses, best practices examples, and multimedia presentations designed to fulfill an immediate teaching need (Dailey-Hebert, Norris, Mandernach, & Donnelli-Sallee, 2014).

In a study of university research faculty, Bouwma-Gearhart (2012) found participants were looking for opportunities to connect with others who have a vested interest in elevating the level of their teaching. Presentations from technical staff alone will not meet the need for a sense of community in what can be a very isolating experience. Peer support may serve as an alternative to more traditional forms of professional development. Faculty have strong positive attitudes toward interaction and collaboration among peers teaching online (Kyei-Blankson, 2010). One strategy for establishing a culture of collaboration is incorporating peer review of courses using standards established by organizations such as Quality Matters™ (Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009). Faculty find moral support, new ideas, and affirmation through peer interaction and feedback (Kyei-Blankson, 2010).

Professional development programs can also encourage informal spaces or times for faculty discourse. In a study of 117 faculty at a large university, researchers found less than 40% were likely to participate in online or face-to-face professional development opportunities; however, 91% believe looking for peer support opportunities would be "a little useful" to "very useful" (Kyei-Blankson, 2010). Faculty responded that they look to colleagues for resources and encouragement for teaching online courses in a less formal manner than a mentor/mentee relationship (Thompson, 2006). Instructors build confidence through connections with other faculty (Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005). After creating opportunities for faculty to build relationships through a junior faculty mentoring program, department chairs reported retention and performance of new instructors rose (Thorndyke, Gusic, George, Quillen, & Miller, 2006). Puzziferro and Shelton (2009) encourage administrators to provide multiple opportunities for faculty to communicate with peers to keep them motivated and engaged. Peer relationships also benefit more experienced faculty members by allowing them to challenge previously held ideas on teaching and allowing them to contribute to the development of junior faculty in developing more advanced questions about teaching philosophy (Huston & Weaver, 2008). Faculty reflect on their own teaching practices and learn from others when they engage in conversation about what goes on in the classroom during peer observation and review (Blauvelt, Erickson, Davenport, & Spath, 2012).

One of the most important aspects of a professional development program is to find how to motivate faculty to attend despite increasing demands for their time. Time and competing interests can be an obstacle to participation in faculty development activities (Lowenthal, Wray, Bates, Switzer, & Stevens, 2014). The scheduling of synchronous professional development activities is also a barrier to participation (Dailey-Hebert, et. al., 2014; Lowenthal, et al., 2014). Additionally, programs have adjunct faculty who are located across the country, making scheduling professional development offerings difficult (Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005). Institutions must create faculty development experiences that can be delivered in synchronous and asynchronous settings to develop an effective program for faculty designing and delivering online courses.

This study explored the modes of delivery faculty prefer when they are engaged in professional development initiatives related to online teaching and learning. Additionally, the study gauged their interest in being part of a formal professional learning community. Questions guiding the study included: 1) What types of learning formats are preferred for professional development about technologies and completing course tasks in an online course

environment, 2) What learning formats are preferred for professional development with instructional strategies and assignment ideas, 3) Are there differences in preferences by faculty rank, and 4) Are faculty interested in working with other faculty to investigate online teaching related issues.

**Research Methods**

The population for this descriptive study included 314 faculty members who taught at least one online course at a mid-southern university during the 2014-2015 academic year. Of the 314 invited, 107 responded, resulting in a 34% response rate. Participants were asked to complete a 72-item questionnaire designed as part of a larger study to measure faculty experiences with teaching online. For the current study, analysis focused on responses related to questions about faculty preferences regarding use of 10 types of instructional learning delivery formats, a set of seven demographic questions, and one set of questions asking faculty about their interest in participating in a professional learning community.

Participants reported an average of 12.9 years teaching experience at the university and an average of 4.92 years online teaching experience. The average number of online courses developed by faculty was 2.83 and 72.63% had developed between 1 and 3 online courses. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents to the survey were instructors (32.04% part time; 27.18% full time), 11.65% were assistant professors, 16.5% were associate professors, and 12.62% were full professors (including university and distinguished professors). The majority of respondents teach at least one undergraduate course per year (60.75%) with 31.78% teaching four or more undergraduate courses annually. A similar percentage teaches at least one graduate level course per year (59.81%) with only 18.69% teaching four or more graduate courses annually.

**Findings**

Faculty respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in professional development for online courses. A total of 84.91% indicated willingness to participate in professional development to improve online teaching. Of that total 50% strongly agreed and 34.91% agreed that they would be willing to participate in professional development to improve their online course. None of the faculty indicated strong disagreement. To determine the mode of learning that is most preferred by the faculty, they were asked to rate ten formats for instructional delivery in regard to two types of learning areas: learning about technologies or accomplishing tasks in an online environment, and receiving information about instructional strategies or assignment ideas. In regard to learning about technologies or completing instructional tasks, the most strongly preferred learning format was a one-on-one meeting with instructional design experts (see Table 1) with the next most preferred format being online resources such as “how-to” instructions, pdf’s, and support websites. Other formats strongly preferred by approximately 25% of the participants were informal interactions with colleagues, face-to-face workshops, peer review of courses, and short videos or podcasts (5-20 minutes). The types of learning formats with the largest proportion of faculty indicating that they would not use were webinars and podcasts from 1-3 hours, books and other printed materials, online courses or seminars, and small group discussion. However, what is apparent from table 1 is that faculty preference for learning about technologies or accomplishing tasks in an online environment are extremely diverse with different faculty strongly preferring (or indicating an unwillingness to use) all of the different types of learning formats.

Table 1

*Instructional Format Preference for Learning about Technologies or Accomplishing Tasks in an Online Environment*

| | Will not use | I might use; Do not prefer | Helpful; I would probably use | Helpful; I strongly prefer | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | f (%) | f (%) | f (%) | f (%) | f (M) |
| One-on-one meeting with instructional design experts | 2 (1.87) | 17 (15.89) | 37 (34.58) | 51 (47.66) | 107 (3.28) |
| Online resources (How-to instructions, pdf, support website) | 1 (0.95) | 15 (14.29) | 50 (47.62) | 39 (37.14) | 105 (3.21) |
| Informal interaction with colleagues | 3 (2.83) | 20 (18.87) | 59 (55.66) | 24 (22.64) | 106 (2.98) |
| Short videos/podcasts (5-20 min) | 6 (5.66) | 24 (22.64) | 46 (43.40) | 30 (28.30) | 106 (2.94) |
| Face-to-face workshops | 8 (7.48) | 26 (24.30) | 42 (39.25) | 31 (28.97) | 107 (2.90) |
| Feedback from peer review of course | 7 (6.67) | 31 (29.52) | 43 (40.95) | 24 (22.86) | 105 (2.80) |
| Small group discussion | 10 (9.35) | 37 (34.58) | 44 (41.12) | 16 (14.95) | 107 (2.62) |
| Online courses / seminars | 10 (9.35) | 50 (46.73) | 35 (32.71) | 12 (11.21) | 107 (2.46) |
| Webinars / podcasts (1-3 hours) | 17 (16.04) | 47 (44.34) | 23 (21.70) | 19 (17.92) | 106 (2.42) |
| Books, journals, printed resources | 18 (16.98) | 40 (37.74) | 36 (33.96) | 12 (11.32) | 106 (2.40) |

Overall, there was a similar diversity in learning format preferences for learning about instructional strategies or assignment ideas (see Table 2). As with the technology learning preferences, the two most strongly preferred learning formats were one-on-one meetings with an instructional designer (47.17%) and online resources (37.50%). There was a larger proportion of faculty indicating the strong preference toward the one-on-one meetings with an instructional designer for learning about instructional strategies (as compared to technology usage). Face-to-face workshops and short videos/podcasts had the next highest preference rating in terms of strong preferences. The printed resources and webinars/podcasts that are from 1 to 3 hours were the learning formats that the largest number of people indicated they would not use, similar to the learning preferences for technology and course task activities.

Table 2

*Instructional Format Preference for Learning about Instructional Strategies or Assignment Ideas*

| | Will not use | I might use; Do not prefer | Helpful; I would probably use | Helpful; I strongly prefer | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | f (%) | f (%) | f (%) | f (%) | f (M) |
| One-on-one meeting with instructional design experts | 2 (1.87) | 16 (14.95) | 42 (39.25) | 47 (43.93) | 107 (3.25) |
| Online resources (How-to instructions, pdf, support website) | 4 (3.74) | 17 (15.89) | 52 (48.60) | 34 (31.78) | 107 (3.08) |
| Informal interaction with colleagues | 5 (4.67) | 16 (14.95) | 59 (55.14) | 27 (25.23) | 107 (3.01) |
| Short videos/podcasts (5-20 min) | 3 (2.83) | 27 (25.47) | 50 (47.17) | 26 (24.53) | 106 (2.93) |
| Feedback from peer review of course | 6 (5.61) | 23 (21.50) | 52 (48.60) | 26 (24.30) | 107 (2.92) |
| Face-to-face workshops | 4 (3.74) | 31 (28.97) | 45 (42.06) | 27 (25.23) | 107 (2.89) |
| Small group discussion | 8 (7.48) | 40 (37.38) | 45 (42.06) | 14 (13.08) | 107 (2.61) |
| Online courses / seminars | 8 (7.48) | 50 (46.73) | 35 (32.71) | 14 (13.08) | 107 (2.51) |
| Books, journals, printed resources | 10 (9.35) | 46 (43.00) | 40 (37.38) | 11 (10.28) | 107 (2.49) |
| Webinars / podcasts (1-3 hours) | 17 (15.89) | 46 (43.00) | 32 (29.91) | 12 (11.21) | 107 (2.36) |

When responses are separated by faculty rank, full professors, associate professors, and full-time instructors rated one-on-one meetings with instructional design experts as the most preferred format for learning about technologies or accomplishing tasks in an online environment (see Table 3). The next highest preferred format was online resources such as how-to instructions and support websites. Assistant professors and part-time instructors ranked online resources higher than other formats. Full professors ranked webinars and podcasts lasting 1 to 3 hours as the least preferred format for learning about technologies or accomplishing tasks in an online environment. Assistant and associate professors ranked online courses and seminars as the least preferred format and instructors, both full and part-time, ranked books, journals, and print resources lowest.

Table 3
*Instructional Format Preference for Learning about Technologies or Accomplishing Tasks in an Online Environment by Faculty Rank*

| | Total | Instructor (Part-time) | Instructor (Full-time) | Assistant Professor | Associate Professor | Full Professor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) |
| One-on-one meeting with instructional design experts | 107 (3.28) | 33 (3.06) | 28 (3.43) | 12 (3.00) | 17 (3.53) | 13 (3.23) |
| Online resources (How-to instructions, pdf, support website) | 105 (3.21) | 33 (3.33) | 27 (3.22) | 12 (3.08) | 16 (3.13) | 13 (3.08) |
| Informal interaction with colleagues | 106 (2.98) | 32 (3.03) | 28 (3.25) | 12 (2.92) | 17 (2.71) | 13 (2.69) |
| Short videos/podcasts (5-20 min) | 106 (2.94) | 33 (3.00) | 27 (3.00) | 12 (2.83) | 17 (2.82) | 13 (2.77) |
| Face-to-face workshops | 107 (2.90) | 33 (2.58) | 28 (3.04) | 12 (3.08) | 17 (3.00) | 13 (2.92) |
| Feedback from peer review of course | 105 (2.80) | 31 (2.94) | 28 (2.96) | 12 (2.83) | 17 (2.47) | 13 (2.54) |
| Small group discussion | 107 (2.62) | 33 (2.52) | 28 (2.86) | 12 (2.50) | 17 (2.53) | 13 (2.38) |
| Online courses / seminars | 107 (2.46) | 33 (2.55) | 28 (2.54) | 12 (2.42) | 17 (2.06) | 13 (2.38) |
| Webinars / podcasts (1-3 hours) | 106 (2.42) | 32 (2.59) | 28 (2.46) | 12 (2.50) | 17 (2.12) | 13 (2.00) |
| Books, journals, printed resources | 106 (2.40) | 33 (2.39) | 28 (2.43) | 12 (2.75) | 17 (2.18) | 12 (2.25) |

As with learning about technologies or accomplishing tasks, full-time instructors, associate, and full professors all wanted one-on-one meetings to learn about instructional strategies or assignment ideas, as did assistant professors (see Table 4). Part-time instructors preferred online resources for learning about instructional strategies or assignment ideas, just as they did with technologies or accomplishing tasks. Full-time instructors along with associate and full professors all ranked webinars and podcasts lowest. Assistant professors least preferred small group discussion as a mode for learning about instructional strategies or assignment ideas.

Table 4
*Instructional Format Preference for Learning about Instructional Strategies or Assignment Ideas by Faculty Rank*

| | Total | Instructor (Part-time) | Instructor (Full-time) | Assistant Professor | Associate Professor | Full Professor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) | f (M) |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| One-on-one meeting with instructional design experts | 107 (3.25) | 33 (3.03) | 28 (3.36) | 12 (3.25) | 17 (3.47) | 13 (3.23) |
| Online resources (How-to instructions, pdf, support website) | 107 (3.08) | 33 (3.21) | 28 (3.04) | 12 (3.00) | 17 (3.12) | 13 (2.85) |
| Informal interaction with colleagues | 107 (3.01) | 33 (3.03) | 28 (3.29) | 12 (3.00) | 17 (2.76) | 13 (2.69) |
| Short videos/podcasts (5-20 min) | 106 (2.93) | 33 (2.94) | 28 (2.93) | 12 (2.83) | 16 (3.00) | 13 (2.77) |
| Feedback from peer review of course | 107 (2.92) | 33 (3.00) | 28 (3.11) | 12 (2.83) | 17 (2.71) | 13 (2.69) |
| Face-to-face workshops | 107 (2.89) | 33 (2.67) | 28 (2.93) | 12 (3.00) | 17 (3.18) | 13 (2.77) |
| Small group discussion | 107 (2.61) | 33 (2.48) | 28 (2.75) | 12 (2.58) | 17 (2.65) | 13 (2.38) |
| Online courses / seminars | 107 (2.51) | 33 (2.55) | 28 (2.54) | 12 (2.67) | 17 (2.35) | 13 (2.38) |
| Books, journals, printed resources | 107 (2.49) | 33 (2.45) | 28 (2.46) | 12 (3.00) | 17 (2.47) | 13 (2.15) |
| Webinars / podcasts (1-3 hours) | 107 (2.36) | 33 (2.52) | 28 (2.21) | 12 (2.67) | 17 (2.29) | 13 (2.00) |

There were four questions faculty participants were asked in regard to participating in a learning community related to online teaching. The first question asked about interest in working with other faculty to identify solutions to pedagogical difficulties associated with online teaching. The second addressed interest in working with faculty to investigate new teaching technologies. The third addressed interest in exploring effective online teaching practices with other faculty, and the last was a general response to their willingness to participate in a learning community group that meets once a month to investigate these issues. Overall, more than one third of the faculty respondents indicated a strong interest and willingness to commit to regularly meeting in a faculty learning community related to online teaching (see Table 5). Of the three subareas, exploring the use of effective online teaching strategies had the greatest interest; however, almost as many faculty were interested in investigating new online technologies and identifying solutions to online pedagogical difficulties.

Table 5

*Interest in Working with Other Faculty to Investigate Online Teaching-Related Issues*

| | Not | Possibly | Very Interested and |
|---|---|---|---|

| | Interested | Interested | Willing to Commit |
|---|---|---|---|
| | f (%) | f (%) | f (%) |
| Identify solutions to pedagogical difficulties | 12 | 58 | 36 |
| Investigate new teaching technologies | 13 | 52 | 41 |
| Exploring use of effective online teaching practices | 8 | 51 | 46 |
| Interest in participating in faculty online learning community | 24 | 41 | 41 |

**Discussion**

Participants in this study indicated a strong willingness to participate in professional development to improve their online teaching. However, willingness to participate is not always reflected in attendance, perhaps indicating a lack of alignment between what is offered and what faculty need. To create meaningful professional development experiences, faculty must be involved in the decision-making about how they want to learn. The purpose of this study was to investigate the preferences for modes of delivery for professional development of faculty who teach online and gauge interest in participation in a professional learning community.

Results indicate that faculty strongly prefer working one-on-one with instructional design experts for learning about technologies and how to accomplish tasks in the online environment, as well as learning about instructional strategies and assignment ideas. This preference for one-on-one interaction supports the findings of Kukulska-Hume (2012) and Lackey (2011) who also found that faculty appreciate individual attention from professional staff. Faculty may see this as a way to focus directly on their own needs and find solutions for specific challenges they face. At some institutions, instructional designers have an ongoing relationship with faculty, understand their teaching style, and are familiar with their course content. Support staff is aware of the faculty member's familiarity with course design and comfort with instructional technology, allowing them to meet faculty where they are developmentally. The needs of a faculty member new to online teaching may be very different from those of a seasoned online instructor. Additionally, it may simply be easier to schedule an appointment with an instructional designer than to fit a workshop or seminar into an already full schedule.

Another preferred mode for receiving information was through online resources. In particular, part-time instructors prefer online resources, which can be accessed on demand, to other modes of delivery. This may be because the instructors are geographically dispersed or because they are employed full-time elsewhere, making it difficult to attend professional development programs during the traditional workday. Online resources are also especially valuable when an instructor needs step-by-step instructions or when viewing multimedia presentations related to online teaching.

Bouwma-Gearhart (2012) and Kyei-Blankson (2010) both found that faculty seek opportunities for interaction with colleagues who teach online. Similarly, faculty in this study indicated a preference for informal interaction with colleagues, in this case over other modes of professional development. Teaching online can be an isolating experience, especially for those who do not have ample opportunity for interaction through, for example, service on committees and departmental meetings. While working with an instructional designer may be

extremely valuable, brainstorming or sharing experiences with other faculty who teach online or who teach the same subject matter might be even more beneficial. Collaboration with faculty members from other disciplines could also lead to innovative solutions to pedagogical challenges facing online instructors.

In addition to the popularity of informal interaction with colleagues, faculty also expressed an interest in working cooperatively, especially in exploring the use of effective online teaching practices. While Dailey-Hebert, et al., (2014) and Lowenthal, et al., (2014) found one barrier to participation in professional development is scheduling conflicts with synchronous activities, results from the current study revealed that over one third of faculty respondents were willing to commit to ongoing meetings as part of a faculty learning community. This was an interesting finding given that faculty did not express interest in small group discussions.

The structure of faculty support and professional development is not necessarily consistent from institution to institution; faculty development units and available resources for faculty development initiatives vary widely. One of the limitations of this study is that data was collected from faculty at only one institution. Despite the significant differences between development units and available resources, future research should explore preferences of faculty from multiple institutions.

It is important to consider the most effective ways to deliver professional development for online teaching. In this study, questions focused on preferences for modes of delivery; future research might explore whether or not faculty behaviors match preferences by asking respondents to indicate the nature of activities in which they actually participated. Implications for future research include the need to examine if and how various institutions are incorporating faculty input into their development initiatives and to take a closer look at the outcomes associated with faculty having a voice in the services that are offered. Including faculty input in the design and delivery of professional development initiatives could increase participation rates, potentially resulting in enhanced quality of online courses, and ultimately, student performance and satisfaction with the online learning experience.

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