8 + 12 = 20 Steps to Successful Faculty Development

For faculty developers: 8 principles for supporting an institution’s strategic priorities:

1. Be aware of institutional issues: Read daily campus news reports. Stay abreast of institutional strategic plans, accreditation reports, board of trustees meetings, faculty senate meetings, etc. Read reports and communiqués from administrators. Maintain open and frequent communication with administrators across campus.

2. Be aware of national and global higher education issues: Stay abreast of external trends that can help situate local challenges in a broader context for administrators and other campus stakeholders.

3. Explain the implications of institutional initiatives from a faculty development perspective, i.e., what professional development might faculty need to implement the proposed initiatives. Frame the issues in terms of faculty development, and suggest ways to address these issues.

4. Use regular faculty development activities to support new institutional initiatives. For example, if workshops, grants or consultations are already typical faculty development activities, use these to further the priorities of the institutional leaders.

5. Offer expertise to support institutional strategic priorities. Write white papers or proposals that move the institution toward its goals.

6. Volunteer to serve on key campus committees and task forces that affect teaching, learning, professional development, and faculty work issues. Having a seat at the table enables you to better understand issues as well as shape the conversation, decisions, and actions.

7. Pool resources and collaborate with other offices to meet campus goals and priorities. Not only does collaborating build relationships and stretch thin resources, it also gives an intimate opportunity for others to understand faculty developers’ perspectives and expertise.

8. Regularly revisit and prioritize faculty development commitments. Doing so is important not only to ensure alignment between faculty development work and institutional goals, but also to guard against the overextension and diminishing returns that can result when resources are overextended.
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For academic leaders: 12 principles for supporting faculty development:

1. Be clear about the mission and charge for the faculty development staff.
2. Provide attractive and accessible space (space says a lot of the importance of teaching on campus), a well-respected faculty development director, and resources adequate to the job the center is expected to do.
3. Assure that the faculty developer (or teaching center) reports to a senior member of the academic affairs hierarchy on campus.
4. Make sure the person to whom the faculty developer reports is available, accessible, knowledgeable, and interested in their work. The faculty developer will rely on this supervisor for support, direction, and feedback.
5. Maintain open and frequent communication with faculty developers. In order to support strategic priorities, faculty developers need to be aware of institutional issues.
6. Speak publicly about the importance of teaching on campus and the value of using the help of faculty developers to support faculty as they engage in innovative pedagogical strategies. In this way, you openly recognize the work of faculty development as vital rather than remedial, validate and encourage those who use innovative approaches to teaching, and facilitate faculty access to support.
7. Utilize the expertise of faculty developers by appointing them to serve on key campus committees and task forces. Many faculty development professionals have expertise in areas such as organizational development, assessment, or leadership development in addition to instructional or faculty development.
8. Seek the perspective and input of faculty developers by inviting them to meetings that explore or formulate solutions to a campus issue. As institutional colleagues situated between faculty and administration, faculty developers often have insights that can help bridge institutional divides, identify effective responses, and identify faculty leaders for the institutional solutions.
9. Recognize that the professional ethical standards for faculty developers require them to maintain confidentiality about teaching consultations. Respecting the need for this privacy helps ensure that developers can work effectively with faculty members and thus build on those alliances for pursuing institutional goals.
10. Be aware, especially at small institutions or institutions with few faculty development personnel, that human resources are easily stretched to capacity and beyond. Being judicious and strategic in making requests of faculty developers to engage in institutional initiatives—or recognizing the need to more appropriately support them with human or other resources—can help make it more likely their work can succeed.
11. Meet periodically with faculty developers to compare perceptions of teaching/scholarship/service issues and faculty quality of life.
12. Publicly recognize the work of faculty developers!

Constance E. Cook, Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan
Kathleen T. Brinko, Director, Faculty and Academic Development, Appalachian State University
Leslie Ortquist-Ahrens, Director, Center for Transformative Learning, Berea College