

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK AND NEEDS FOR FY2011

As state budgets continue to shrink and private university endowments and fundraising are affected by the national economy, many academic leaders and faculty have expressed concerns about the near term outlook for professional development. Such additional training historically has enabled colleges to recruit and retain new faculty as well as improve the capabilities of its current and emerging leaders.

In April-May 2010, the Academy for Academic Leadership surveyed a sample of dental educators from across the U.S. and Canada to determine the state of professional development budgets for the upcoming fiscal year and the topics most desired by those seeking training for themselves and/or their faculty. The following brief summarizes and analyzes the responses provided.

Question 1. Please identify the institution type at which you are employed.

Ninety-five percent of respondents (n=116) were affiliated with dental schools. Therefore, the analyses and conclusions that were derived from the final five questions will be given in this context.

Question 2. Professional assistance is available to enhance teaching at my institution.

Eighty percent of respondents (n=96) indicated they had access to professional assistance to help improve teaching skills. Twelve percent of survey participants responded that such assistance was not available, and eight percent did not know if professional assistance was available to help them or their faculty.

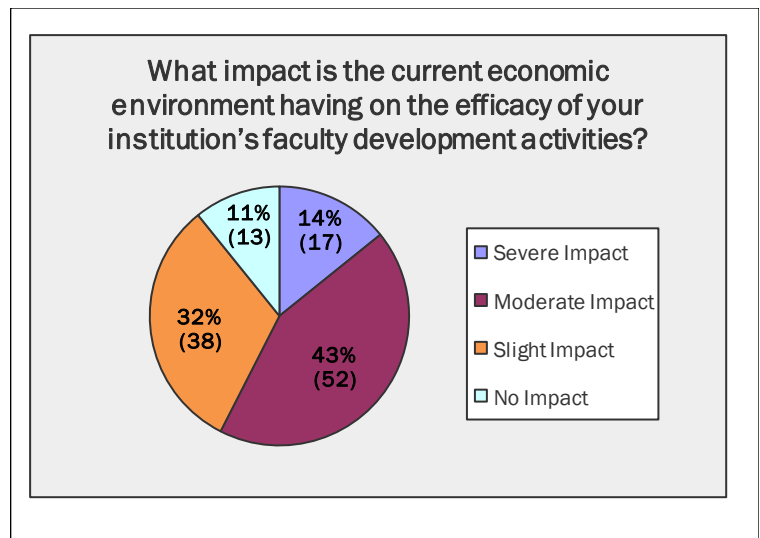


Figure 1. Impact of current economics on faculty development activity efficacy

Question 3. What impact is the current economic environment having on the efficacy of your institution's faculty development activities?

Figure 1 above depicts the breakdown of responses received. Nearly ninety percent of respondents identified some degree of impact to the means by which their institution can provide faculty development.

Question 4. How would you project financial resources available for faculty development in fiscal year 2011?

As shown on the next page in Figure 2, eighty-two percent of survey respondents are nearly evenly divided in their prediction that their FY2011 budget for faculty development will be either worse than or about the same as the budget in FY2010.

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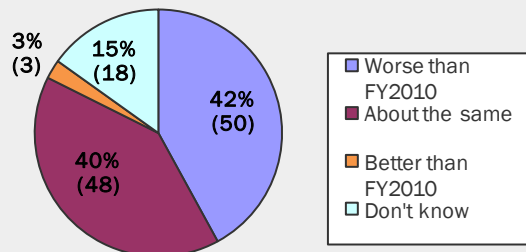


Figure 2. Projection of budget allocated for faculty development in FY2011

Question 5. In your opinion, what are the areas of greatest need for faculty development where teaching skills are concerned?

Twenty-one options were provided, with space made available for other topics to be specified if the twenty-one choices did not encompass the areas of greatest need in a respondent's opinion. The survey question asked participants to identify up to three of the topics listed, including use of the "Other" category.

One hundred twenty participants submitted opinions for this question. The following topics were cited more than 20% of the time:

Answers	Response %
Competency-based education and evaluation	36%
Evaluating students in the clinic	35%
Small group, case-based learning	33%
Giving constructive feedback to students	32%
Understanding students' learning styles	27%
Best practices for online (web-based) learning	26%
Preparing and presenting lectures	24%
Using questions to guide learners	23%
Curriculum development process	22%

Several respondents noted in this question and the final one, which asked for additional comments, that it was very difficult to identify *only three* areas that represented "greatest need."

Question 6. Please provide any additional comments you have about faculty development, its importance, areas of need, and future challenges and opportunities associated with it.

Thirty individuals supplied comments, which could be divided into eighteen categories. Despite this spread, half of all comments could be grouped into four common areas of concern, listed below with a representative comment under each:

1. Current and future faculty shortage
"Budget cuts to higher education are and will continue to have a major impact in recruiting the best faculty talent and retaining the good ones."
2. Clinical teaching improvement needed
"I find clinical teaching the largest hole in our system. There is still too much 'teach as I was taught.'"
3. Faculty development not valued by teachers or administrative leaders
"I believe that upper administration does not provide adequate time for faculty development. This is the last item to be addressed in a faculty career. It is expected that we absorb it through trial and error."
4. Alternative teaching methods needed
"Since most students no longer attend lectures we need to learn and become comfortable with alternative teaching methods."

Conclusion

A recent article in the *Journal of Dental Education* on curriculum change indicates that a large number of dental schools have recently undergone or are in the process of a comprehensive curriculum review (http://academicleaders.org/documents/online-resources/Cur_change_dental.pdf). In the same survey, when asked to identify resources necessary to support curriculum innovation at their schools, professional development for both new and established faculty members related to curriculum design, teaching strategies, and assessment methods was identified as "highly important" or "important" by approximately 90 percent of respondents. The data from the informal survey reflected in this AAL Brief are not encouraging about institutional resources available for needed faculty development. Yet, faculty development is not simply desirable, it is necessary for continued innovation and improvement of teaching, learning, and leadership. Dental schools will need to aggressively pursue opportunities such as the recent HRSA announcement to support pre-doctoral training in general, pediatric, and public health dentistry, and dental hygiene as well as innovative, cost effective approaches to faculty development.