The Professor as a Person: The Role of Faculty Well-Being in Faculty Development

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the rationale for an expanded definition of faculty development and reviews institutional structures and practices which support the personal and professional development of faculty through faculty and academic development, employee assistance, and health promotion programs.

Introduction

Consider for a moment the following scenarios within your college or university:

Professor X is 40. After 15 years of successful teaching and research, she is a full professor and has tenure. By all indices of achievement, she is a success. However, she has been teaching the same courses for 15 years and faces doing so perhaps another 25. She is facing college expenses for her three children and can no longer count on extra money from summer school to help with the "extras." She finds that despite her commitment to her discipline and to teaching, she no longer feels willing to invest her energies in the ways she once did.

Professor Y is 27. He is a bright, energetic, and well-trained researcher, but he is inexperienced and anxious about teaching. He has taken one of the few available openings in his field at a primarily, teaching institution. His department has limited financial resources and cannot hope to purchase the kind of scientific equipment which

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would allow him to continue his research. Moreover, his appointment is for one year only, and if student enrollment drops, his position could be cut. He and his wife are expecting their first child.

Department Z is troubled. Despite the fact that their faculty are noted scholars and good teachers, they are constantly involved in competition, in-fighting, and intellectual one-up-man-ship. Departmental meetings and professional colloquia are battlegrounds. Assertiveness and articulateness mask insecurity and mistrust. One faculty member is planning to leave the university. One is planning to leave the field. One has seriously contemplated suicide.

Such stories illustrate the complicated interaction of personal, professional, and organizational challenges faced by higher education faculty and administrators. They demonstrate that it is virtually impossible to separate the personal and professional from the institutional. As Nevitt Sanford (1980) points out, if institutions of higher education wish to improve the learning possibilities they offer to students, they must become vitally interested in the individual development—both personal and professional—of their faculty and in the culture of their institutions.

Enhancing Faculty Career Development

Early faculty development efforts of the 1970s attempted to improve institutional effectiveness primarily by addressing the disciplinary expertise or pedagogical skills of faculty members. Subsequent approaches focused on understanding the complexity of the teaching/learning process and expanding faculty awareness of new emerging information about cognition and development. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in both personal and organizational approaches that address issues of faculty vitality and renewal (Bland & Schmitz, 1988).

Faculty members experience a multitude of challenges at every stage of their professional lives (Baldwin, 1990). New faculty typically experience stress from several sources: a lack of anticipated collegiality, less than satisfactory student evaluations of their teaching, and anxiety about meeting minimal requirements of scholarly activity (Boice & Turner, 1989; Turner & Boice, 1987; van der Bogert, 1991). In addition, many new faculty express concerns about heavy workloads, incongruities between the demands of teaching and the aca-