

## **Supporting Organization Development by Linking Systems Implementation and Faculty Orientation**

Dr. Alan McCord  
Lawrence Technological University  
Southfield, MI 48075 USA  
[amccord@ltu.edu](mailto:amccord@ltu.edu)

Dr. Marija Franetovic  
Lawrence Technological University  
Southfield, MI 48075 USA  
[mfranetov@ltu.edu](mailto:mfranetov@ltu.edu)

**Abstract:** Orientation programs are commonly used to introduce new faculty members to institutional expectations and practices, establish relationships with their new colleagues, and integrate new hires with institutional culture. Various faculty development programs provide opportunities for faculty to learn and apply new skills, technologies, and techniques. Faculty development programs can also be linked to systems implementation projects, which can be an important component of organization development initiatives. This paper summarizes best practices regarding systems implementation and faculty development found in the academic literature. Principles of systems implementation and organization development are discussed, and a brief case study of one university's new faculty orientation program is presented. Four specific examples are provided where the faculty orientation is linked with systems implementation initiatives. These examples include implementation of learning technologies as well as systems to enhance faculty performance. Lessons learned from supporting organization development via systems implementation within the context of a new faculty orientation program are discussed, focusing on discovering and mitigating barriers to change. The paper concludes with recommendations for further evolving new faculty orientation programs and areas for future academic study.

### **Introduction**

Organization development is an intentionally designed program of change linked to strategy. Organization development is carried out from a long-term perspective designed to deliver “complex, deep, and lasting change” (Rothwell, Stavros, & Sullivan, 2010). Organization development is typically supported by top organizational leadership, and is carried out primarily via educational initiatives. Further, organizational change is best accomplished when employees are involved in its design and take responsibility for outcomes. Organization development is, therefore, inextricably linked to the culture of the organization: its values, the nature of the relationships between participants, in how work is planned and accomplished, and in how the organization learns from its

experiences and improves itself over time. Organization development strategies can include information systems implementations, employee training and professional development programs, employee and management incentive programs, and process redesign initiatives. This brief case study explores ways in which a new faculty orientation program can support a broader organization development initiative to change institutional culture through implementation of new information systems, learning technologies, and faculty evaluation processes.

Cullen and Harris (2008) observe that colleges and universities do not necessarily behave as learning organizations but rather sustain more authoritarian behaviors through their traditional faculty training and development programs. Authoritarian cultures can be sustained when new faculty orientation programs focus on rules and regulations rather than on the opportunities provided to faculty to ensure their success. Such programs emphasize the current culture of the campus versus the possibilities available for evolution of the campus culture through new learning and new practices. Similar to the adage that “professors teach as they were taught,” academic administrators responsible for designing new faculty orientation programs might not intentionally propagate authoritarian cultures, but may simply reflect how they themselves were acclimated to the institution, thereby preserving the existing culture by presenting an expectation of compliance with existing practices.

Organization development is a relatively new phenomenon in higher education, emerging in the 1990s as an adaptation of the quality movement established earlier in industry (Torraco & Hoover, 2005). Continuous improvement, a form of organization development, has been adopted as a cornerstone of regional and professional accreditation standards. Institutions can benefit from implementing organization development initiatives via training and development programs that focus on faculty learning, agency, professional relationships, and personal commitments (O’Meara & Terosky, 2010). Latta (2009) notes the influence of organizational culture on organization development initiatives. Organization development initiatives are in some cases limited and in other cases advantaged by culture, thus reinforcing or changing the existing culture. The interplay between organization development and culture provides institutions with opportunities to experiment with various techniques to drive change.

Information Systems (IS) implementation projects can be viewed as one form of organization development. Existing organizational practices need to be thoughtfully improved over time to use new processes that are defined and embedded within new information systems. Once broadly adopted, these new or improved practices can become part of the institutional culture. Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson (2009) define systems adoption “as a process of information diffusion, culminating in a rational choice to use (or not to use) the new technology” (page 24). They articulate several dimensions of successful IS implementation projects including organizational support, leadership, training and development, and resources. Xu and Meyer (2007) identify a linkage between faculty productivity and the use of technology, which supports the inclusion of technology implementations in the context of a faculty orientation focused on teaching, scholarship, and service productivity.

The new faculty orientation program is generally the first professional development experience for new faculty members, and is the first exposure to faculty members of their new institution's culture and practices. Boyden (2000) notes that successful orientation programs focus on teaching effectiveness, faculty support services, professional development opportunities, and programs to promote teaching and research. Institutions design new faculty orientation programs to maximize the chances for faculty success, set cultural and academic expectations for new faculty members, initiate early relationships among faculty and administrative colleagues, and link new faculty with academic service units.

Additional faculty development programs occur following the new faculty orientation program, but these efforts are often focused at the level of the academic department. A number of resources are available for department chairs which emphasize faculty professional development (Chu, 2006; Wheeler et al., 2008). One representative example of a faculty development program is described by Bendickson and Griffin (2010), where new faculty members receive in-depth instruction in college-level teaching expectations. This program is designed to counter the traditional informal approach of inferring teaching expectations based on isolated classroom experiences, informal conversations with faculty colleagues, or via written policies developed without broad faculty input. There is little academic literature regarding the linkage between department-level faculty development programs and institutional organization development initiatives.

### **Evolution of a New Faculty Orientation Program**

Organization development initiatives can be thoughtfully designed to “unfreeze” an existing culture, apply new paradigms and practices, and evolve the culture to a new and improved state. Implementing organization development in a campus setting is somewhat easier when faculty behaviors have not yet been informally “frozen” through indoctrination into existing cultural expectations and practices. An example of framing new cultural norms is described by Welch (2003), where a new faculty orientation program included an expectation for continuing professional growth and development. This program recognized the opportunity for institutions to leverage the hiring and orientation of new faculty members to evolve its culture over time.

This brief case study traces the evolution of one institution's new faculty orientation program in light of related organization development initiatives. The main focus of the new faculty orientation program up to 2010 centered on the university's history, current organizational structure, academic programs, and enrollment. Introductory hands-on training for the Blackboard Learning Management System was added as an orientation component, however with a focus on “how to” skills rather than instructional design and pedagogy. A session on academic advising was then added, but with a focus on the details of the university's general education program. Human resources and benefits reviews were handled separately under the guidance of administrative staff.

The focus of the new faculty orientation program began to evolve in 2010 with the migration from a printed faculty guide to posting information on the university's website. This was done to provide new faculty members with up-to-date access to important

information as well as to provide the same information to current faculty members. More information and resources were provided about digital library services, campus safety, student life, academic honor code, and teaching. The establishment of a new e-learning services unit further enabled the extension of the formal orientation program. Detailed information about Blackboard was replaced with more emphasis on instructional design services and support services provided to faculty members as well as scheduled one-on-one and small workshops following the orientation program.

At the same time, a more formal approach was created to deliver professional development workshops for deans and department chairs. These workshops were used in part to reinforce new processes and techniques covered during the new faculty orientation program. In the past, only one such workshop was provided each academic year. Starting in 2010, several workshops were provided: a major day-long workshop during the summer semester followed by several shorter and highly focused workshops during the academic year. In addition to workshops, online webinars were provided on a range of leadership and academic topics. Materials and information provided during these workshops were posted on the university website for access by department chairs and faculty members.

In the past, separate orientation programs were provided for new full-time and adjunct faculty members. Integrating new adjunct faculty members into the full-time faculty orientation program addressed some of the feelings of isolation expressed by adjunct faculty members in the past. The combined new faculty orientation program now consists of two components. An opening session for full-time faculty members focuses on evaluation, tenure, and promotion processes and the services available to full-time faculty to maximize their success. Full-time faculty are then joined by new adjunct faculty members for a focus on teaching expectations, academic services, and teaching and learning support services. The combined dinner and evening program provides opportunities for full-time and adjunct faculty to interact. This approach is similar to that described by Forbes, Hickey, & White (2010).

### **Incorporating Systems Implementation into New Faculty Orientation**

The university started to use principles of organizational development over the past three years by involving new full-time and adjunct faculty members in intentionally changing the culture of the institution through the new faculty orientation program. Four examples are discussed below, all of which are designed to drive change, and three of which involve systems implementation projects.

**Evaluation, tenure, and promotion procedures.** The university adopted new procedures for evaluation, tenure, and promotion in the 2011-2012 academic year. The new procedures added significant clarity to these important institutional processes by integrating evaluation, promotion, and tenure requirements. A significant portion of the new faculty orientation program has been devoted to a discussion of these processes so new full-time faculty members understand both university and college requirements for evaluation, tenure and promotion. The university's faculty mentorship program is discussed, and new faculty members are introduced to their mentors. Attention is paid to

developing research and scholarship agendas, with emphasis on the university's research seed grant program and release time provided to new faculty to establish their research agendas. Other topics emphasized during the new faculty orientation program include interdisciplinary research, the scholarship of teaching and learning, as well as instructional design, teaching tools and strategies for quality instruction.

The new faculty orientation program is being used to establish new cultural norms for all faculty regarding evaluation, tenure, and promotion. The discussions held with new faculty members are reinforced by the systems implementation projects described below. Since implementing this new focus in Fall 2011, over 30 new full-time faculty members have been introduced to the university's new expectations and processes. The first of the new full-time faculty members will soon be experiencing their mid-term tenure reviews, which were defined and discussed during the new faculty orientation program.

**Faculty activity reporting system.** The university adopted a Web-based faculty activity reporting system during the 2012-2013 academic year as a repository for official faculty curricula vitae and transcripts, and as a system for faculty members to maintain a personalized record of their teaching, scholarship, and service. The new activity reporting system replaced a number of manual processes that were error-prone and did not support the revised evaluation, tenure, and promotion process. The first annual faculty evaluation using the system was conducted in fall 2013. Tenure decisions will be supported via the system beginning in fall 2014.

The university decided to introduce all new tenure-track faculty to the activity reporting system during the Fall 2012 new faculty orientation program, as opposed to instruction being provided by their academic departments. In addition, hands-on instruction was provided to all current faculty and department chairs throughout the 2012-2013 academic year. New faculty members were asked to use the activity reporting system to store their prior academic accomplishments and to use the system as their formal portfolio for mid-term and final tenure reviews. Some colleges have required faculty members to document even earlier accomplishments in the system to support professional accreditation requirements. The university also uses the activity reporting system to prepare recurring and impromptu reports regarding scholarship, grants, and teaching loads.

Since Fall 2012, over 20 new full-time faculty and all 120 existing full-time faculty have been extensively trained in the use of the faculty activity reporting system. Faculty members entered almost 4,000 scholarship and service entries into the system during its first year of operation. All department chairs and deans were trained in the new online performance evaluation process, and all full-time faculty members were evaluated by their department chair and dean using the system in Fall 2013.

**Teaching and learning symposia.** The introduction of technology to support improvements in teaching and learning can enhance faculty productivity as well as institutional organization development goals. The university's e-learning services and center for teaching and learning units each support faculty members in creating and delivering classroom, blended and online instruction using leading-edge instructional

strategies and technologies. The university has a strong program of online and hybrid course development, and has received US News & World Report recognition for the quality of its undergraduate and graduate online degree programs ("Best online", 2013).

The university established a summer symposium in 2012 to encourage and incentivize faculty to use leading-edge technological tools and instructional strategies toward quality instruction. The design of the symposium mirrors findings by Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson (2009) and Georgina and Hosford (2009), who reported that faculty members identified preferences for participating in small-group experiences facilitated by trainers, and where interaction among peer faculty members is encouraged. Ramsey (2006) described similar successful programs incorporating hands-on instruction, access to technology tools and support, and establishing clear criteria for integrating technology and pedagogy.

All of the technology tools introduced during the symposium are mobile, accessible from anywhere at any time, which eliminates being tied to a particular computer and time. Through the symposium, faculty members are trained on supported enterprise technology tools such as the Blackboard Learning Management System, social media tools built into the Blackboard environment, virtual collaboration tools such as Google Hangouts, and the Panopto lecture capture system. A financial stipend is provided for all participants, consistent with recommendations made by Georgina and Hosford (2009). Participating faculty members are required to apply their learning to a classroom project and report on their findings during a campus-wide presentation held in the following academic year.

The symposium concept was incorporated as part of the university's new faculty orientation program for the fall 2012 semester. New full-time and adjunct faculty members were introduced to the symposium during the orientation program, and participation in an abbreviated symposium was then scheduled for four Friday afternoons during the semester. Topics covered and practiced included development of goals and objectives, content sequencing, instructional strategies for student engagement, assessment and use of technology tools for enhanced course delivery and management.

Participation in the post-orientation symposium program is strongly encouraged for all new faculty members, and over 20 new full-time and adjunct faculty members have participated in the post-orientation symposium program since its inception. Current faculty members are still nominated for participation in the longer summer symposium program. The university recognizes the need for quality of instruction and that the rapid rate of technological change requires ongoing instruction in future years for all faculty members. This approach ensures that virtually all faculty members will participate and receive comparable professional development opportunities in instructional design and the use of leading-edge technologies within four to five years.

**Grant search and proposal collaboration system.** The university adopted the a grant search and collaboration system in the spring 2011 semester. The grant system provides advanced search capabilities for identifying grants, and supports collaboration among on-campus and external faculty members to prepare grant proposals. Additionally, the grant system has aspects similar to social media sites, facilitating collaborative

proposal development between on-campus and distant colleagues. The use of the grant system is not required as most faculty members already use their own personalized and/or discipline-specific approaches to identifying grants. Training and support is provided by the faculty-led Research Support Services Committee and by the vendor via on-site training sessions and webinars. Approximately 40 faculty members have been trained in workshops and one-on-one training sessions since adoption of the system.

Use of the grant search and collaboration system was incorporated into the new faculty orientation program for the fall 2013 semester as part of the dialog on developing a scholarship and research agenda. Follow-up with these new faculty members was undertaken by members of the Research Support Services Committee in the context of administering the university's faculty research seed grant program.

### **Observations**

Differing levels of impact have been noted as a result of incorporating these four organization development initiatives - including three systems implementation projects - into the university's new faculty orientation program. From the perspective of early stage faculty success, we have observed that new faculty members take greater advantage of the university's research seed grant program since incorporating evaluation, tenure, and promotion content into the new faculty orientation program. We note that many new faculty members submitted presentations at our first campus Research Day held in the spring 2013 semester.

We also receive fewer questions from new faculty members and department chairs regarding expectations for teaching, scholarship, and service. We have observed that new faculty are generating higher levels of scholarship and grant applications than observed prior to incorporating these initiatives into the new faculty orientation program, as measured by the university's faculty activity reporting system. We believe that the campus culture surrounding faculty expectations has been changed as a result of integrating this organization development initiative into our new faculty orientation program.

New faculty members have quickly adopted the faculty activity reporting system as their official portfolio for academic accomplishments. This is due in part to the mandated use of the system for annual performance evaluations and tenure review, and may also be related to the fact that the university's implementation was designed to mirror its new evaluation, tenure, and promotion processes. Faculty new to the university during the 2012-2013 academic year added approximately ten percent more entries per person than their more senior colleagues. We have also observed that newer full-time faculty members are entering more detailed information into the activity reporting system than their more experienced colleagues. These observations imply that that less ongoing faculty development will be required as more faculty members adopt use of the activity reporting system as part of the institutional culture when they first arrive at the university.

The teaching and learning symposium has fostered development of long-term relationships between faculty members and professionals in the e-learning services and

center for teaching and learning units. These observations mirror the results observed by Cullen and Harris (2008) who used a similar orientation program. We observe that more faculty members are focusing on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) as part of their scholarly and research agendas, with some faculty members collaborating with professional staff from e-learning services. Furthermore, we have now seen over 30 examples of improvements to classroom instruction at the university resulting from faculty participation in the symposium series. We observe that incorporating learning technologies and instructional strategies into our new faculty orientation program has helped change perceptions of how faculty are expected to deliver quality instruction and explore SoTL in their role at the university.

The grant search and collaboration system has made the least impact of the four organization development initiatives which we attribute to several factors. The first three initiatives were institutionally mandated, whereas the grant system was conceived as a fully grassroots initiative. We chose not to require faculty to use the grant system as we did not want to risk a fall-off in research productivity from experienced faculty members by expectations to change their personal research practices. As the grant system extracts and presents grant opportunities from a range of grant agency databases, it can appear to present too broad of a picture of opportunities to faculty members who typically solicit support from a small number of grant agencies. The limited local administration capability of the product has resulted in some confusion about how and through whom to access the grants system. Finally, the faculty activity reporting system provides opportunities for faculty to enter updates about grants in progress, and integration between the grant system and the activity reporting system has not yet been determined. All of these issues can be addressed over time with appropriate institutional attention and investment.

## **Conclusion**

In this brief case study, we note that our approach evolved informally with several different organization development initiatives incorporated over time into our new faculty orientation program. Three of these initiatives were part of systems implementation projects. We did not intentionally set out to use the faculty orientation program to improve the success of systems implementations, nor did we at first realize the relationship between new faculty orientation and broader organization development efforts. Rather, connections between organization development goals, systems implementations, and the new faculty orientation program naturally emerged over time and upon reflection.

Integrating faculty orientation programs within the context of organization development can be explored through action research (Rothwell & Sullivan, 2010). In their cited case study, needs for change were identified and interventions were then planned and carried out. The evaluation of the change process was conducted through reflection about what has changed, with adoption being the primary measure of success.

This experience could serve as the basis for constructing a conceptual framework against which formal action research could be undertaken. For example, questions may be asked



regarding the longitudinal impact of organization development initiatives using early versus later interventions. Questions may also be asked about the effectiveness of using a new faculty orientation program to support systems implementation projects versus process improvement initiatives. Inquires may also be about how faculty perceive the information presented during new faculty orientation programs from either compliance or developmental perspectives.

As noted by Torracco (2005), change in universities cannot be explained exclusively by either top-down mandates or organization development initiatives. Some organization development initiatives are likely to be more successful when introduced to new faculty members so they can take root and grow over the long run while being tracked as part of a project plan. Short-term change initiatives are likely better addressed via traditional implementation projects and top-down mandates. Implementing a blend of grassroots and top-down change via both new faculty orientation and organization development programs may be more effective than using only one approach.

Changing the focus of a new faculty orientation program to support organization development initiatives requires significantly more planning and design than used in a traditional orientation program. The organization development objectives incorporated into new faculty orientation program must be carefully chosen as they need to be reinforced through ongoing faculty development programs for both faculty members and academic administrators. Identifying ways of establishing communities of practice and supportive relationships between faculty members could further enhance the success of organization development initiatives and foster cultural change within institutions.

## References

- Bendickson, M., & Griffin, K. (December 14, 2010). An approach to a faculty professional development seminar. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2010, 152, 25-32.
- Boyden, K. M. (March 01, 2000). Development of New Faculty in Higher Education. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 16, 2, 104-11.
- Chu, D. (2006). *The department chair primer: Leading and managing academic departments*. Bolton, Mass: Anker Pub. Co.
- Cullen, R., & Harris, M. (December 07, 2008). Supporting New Scholars: A Learner-Centered Approach to New Faculty Orientation. *Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy*, 2, 1, 17-28.
- Forbes, M. O., Hickey, M. T., & White, J. (January 01, 2010). Adjunct faculty development: reported needs and innovative solutions. *Journal of Professional Nursing : Official Journal of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing*, 26, 2, 116-24.

## TCC 2014 Proceedings

- Georgina, D. A., & Hosford, C. C. (July 01, 2009). Higher education faculty perceptions on technology integration and training. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 5, 690-696.
- Keengwe, J., Kidd, T., & Kyei-Blankson, L. (February 01, 2009). Faculty and Technology: Implications for Faculty Training and Technology Leadership. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 18, 1, 23-28.
- Latta, G. (January 01, 2009). A Process Model of Organizational Change in Cultural Context (OC3 Model). *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 16, 1, 19-37.
- O'Meara, K. A., & Terosky, A. L. P. (November 01, 2010). Engendering Faculty Professional Growth. *Change: the Magazine of Higher Learning*, 42, 6, 44-51.
- Ramsey, E. C. (January 01, 2006). Multimedia Bootcamp: a health sciences library provides basic training to promote faculty technology integration. *Biomedical Digital Libraries*, 3.
- Rothwell, W.J., Stavros, J.M., & Sullivan, R.L. (2010), *Organization Development and Change*. In Rothwell, W.J, Stavros, J.M, Sullivan, R.L, & Sullivan, A. (Eds.), *Practicing organization development: A guide for leading change*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Rothwell, W.J., & Sullivan, R.L. (2010), *Change Process and Models*. In Rothwell, W.J, Stavros, J.M, Sullivan, R.L, & Sullivan, A. (Eds.), *Practicing organization development: A guide for leading change*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.
- Torraco, R. (January 01, 2005). *Organization Development: A Question of Fit for Universities*. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7, 3, 303-310.
- Torraco, R., & Hoover, R. (January 01, 2005). *Organization Development and Change in Universities: Implications for Research and Practice*. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7, 3, 422-437.
- Best online bachelor's programs. (2013, January 14). U.S. News and World Report, Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/bachelors/rankings?int=851316>
- Welch, G. F. (March 08, 2003). A New Faculty Orientation Program: Building a Core of New Faculty To Shape the Future of the College. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 120, 120, 11-16.

Wheeler, D.W., Seagren, A.T., Becker, L.W., Kinley, E.R., Mlinek, D.D., & Robson, R.J. (2008). *The Academic Chair's Handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Xu, Y., & Meyer, K. A. (January 01, 2007). Factors Explaining Faculty Technology Use and Productivity. *Internet and Higher Education*, 10, 1, 41-52.