Faculty members routinely change their courses from semester to semester, experimenting with both minor changes and major innovations, according to a national survey released Saturday by the Bringing Theory to Practice program. But while professors see curricular innovation as part of their jobs, they remain uncertain about whether pedagogical efforts are appropriately rewarded, the study found.

The survey -- of faculty members at all ranks at 20 four-year colleges and universities, including both public and private institutions -- found that 86.6 percent make some revision to courses at least once a year. Revisions could be relatively minor, with changes in the syllabus, readings or assignments qualifying. But about 37 percent reported adopting a significant new pedagogy in at least one of their courses at least once a year -- with new pedagogies being defined as such approaches as experiential learning, service learning and learning communities.

Only 3 percent of faculty members surveyed said that they never or "almost never" make changes in the courses they teach from year to year.

Female faculty members were more likely than male faculty members to make certain kinds of changes from year to year, including alterations in the syllabus and readings, and adopting either service learning or experiential learning.

The survey was discussed at the annual meeting of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, which is known as POD and focuses on issues of faculty development.

Ashley Finley, who conducted the study as national evaluator for the Bringing Theory to Practice program and who is also director of...
assessment and research at Association of American Colleges and Universities, said that the results did not surprise her and might not surprise faculty members -- but that they might surprise those who think that professors simply teach the same course year after year. "I think that this confirms that faculty do things to innovate and revise and challenge themselves to make courses better all the time," she said. She added that she worried that some people outside academe may not appreciate the extent or importance of such work.

Likewise, she said that the survey results point to a failure of higher education to communicate to the faculty the value placed on curricular innovation. The faculty members were asked a series of questions about how curricular and teaching innovation are valued and rewarded, and the results were mixed. Whereas a solid majority believe that such efforts are valued at the institutional level, only a minority believe this is the case within their disciplines, and as a result, most faculty members don’t appear to believe that these efforts will be rewarded in higher education as a whole.

Finley said that this finding suggests that a real cultural shift in academe about the value of teaching will come only when disciplines -- seen by faculty as more focused on research -- embrace the cause. That is because, to many faculty members, their professional identities are closely linked to their disciplines, not just their institutions, she said.

In addition, there is evidence that those who already have tenure (and who are judging those bidding for it) are more likely to think that teaching-related efforts are appropriately rewarded than are those going up for tenure. For instance, full professors are more likely than those without tenure to believe that teaching innovations and efforts are rewarded in the tenure process. Men (who are better represented than women at the senior ranks) are more likely to feel that teaching is appropriately rewarded. (Women, meanwhile, appear more likely than men to do the actual teaching innovations.)

Finley said that some of the data point to a communications problem -- with colleges relying on certain, possibly trite ways to reward teaching innovations (such as best teaching awards) without thinking about other ways to demonstrate meaningful appreciation.

For instance, asked if their colleges offered any rewards for faculty members who engage in innovative teaching or curricular practices, 44 percent said either no or that they didn’t know. But of those responding that way, 51 percent answered separate questions indicating that their colleges had teaching awards, suggesting that these faculty members don’t view these awards as a major motivator. Finley said that these figures suggest that if colleges believe their teaching awards are important, they haven't done a good job of explaining why -- and that the lack of communication may discourange teaching innovations.

Other results suggest that simple recognition may not be influencing faculty members -- given that the factors professors say would motivate them to focus more on curricular innovation are generally not present while most see some forms of "institutional recognition" at their colleges, but don't value it highly.

### Incentives for Faculty to Engage in Curricular Innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Faculty Who Say It Would Motivate</th>
<th>Faculty Who Say Institution Provides This</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Them</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course release</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipends</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration in tenure and promotion</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional recognition</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

— Scott Jaschik

© Copyright 2010 Inside Higher Ed
UNDERSTANDING FACULTY PRACTICE & PERSPECTIVE FOR A LEARNING-CENTERED CAMPUS

Findings from a National Study

Ashley Finley, Ph.D
Director of Assessment & Research, AAC&U
National Evaluator, Bringing Theory to Practice
POD Conference, November 6, 2010.
Research Questions:

1) To what degree and in what ways are faculty innovating (re-envisioning courses, implementing new pedagogies) on campus?

2) How do faculty view the culture of teaching and learning at their institutions & in academia?

3) What is the relevance of a learning-centered culture on faculty outcomes?

Survey Overview:

- 6 Major Sections:
  - Teaching Practice & Innovation
  - Institutional Reward Structures
  - Scholarship of Teaching & Learning
  - Promotion & Tenure
  - Job Satisfaction & Commitment
  - Mental Health and Stress

- Survey: Peer reviewed & revised
- Web-based
  - Anonymous
- 20 institutions: 13 private; 7 public
- Fall pilot (5 institutions) & Spring Administration (15)
Sample Characteristics

- Sample size = 1068
  - Fall Response Rate = 31%
  - Spring Response Rate = 25% (median)
  - Overall = 28%
- 52% Female, 48% Male
- Most respondents bet. 35-65
  - 35-44 (27.3%), 45-54 (26.8%), 55-65 (30.2%)
- Primarily white (88.1%)
- 5.6% = Two or more races/some other race
- Black/Afr. Amer. (2%), Asian (3.4%), Am. Ind./Alaska native (.9%)
- 3.5% Hispanic Origin

- Rank
  - Instructor (& other) = 11.4%
  - Adjunct/Visiting = 11.5%
  - Assistant = 22.2%
  - Associate = 31.8%
  - Full = 23.1%
- Discipline
  - 34.8% = Humanities
  - 23.5% = Social Sciences
  - 18.6% = Prof. & App. Sciences (agric., archit., health science, law, library science)
  - 13.4% = Natural Sciences
  - 5.8% = Formal Sciences (comp sc., logic, math)
  - 3.9% = Other
- Median years at instit. = 7-10 yrs
In what ways are faculty innovating?:
Frequency of Innovation & Revision

- Avg. 86.6% of faculty make some revision to course (syllabus, readings, or assignments) at least once a year
  - Vs. 3% who “Almost never” or “Never” do this
  - Over half (52%) change syllabus or revise assignments at least once a semester

- Avg. 37% implemented/adopted new pedagogy (service, experiential learning, learning community once a year)
  - 15.1% Almost never, 36.8% have NEVER done this (51.9%)
  - Least likely to have taught learning community course
  - 61.7% of faculty implemented experiential component at least once a year
    - 37.2% do this at least once a semester

- Women more likely to alter course & adopt service-learning or experiential learning than men

- No clear pattern of difference by rank
What limits innovation?

- Primary limitations (strongly/mostly agree)
  - Institutional Service (59.0%)
  - Research (36.2%)
  - Family (35.5%)
  - Not enough information from colleagues (33.4%)
  - Not sure what could do to be more innovative (16.0%)

- Differences by gender
  - Institutional service→ men more likely to suggest this as limitation than women

- Differences by rank:
  - Research (Asst vs Full)
  - Institutional service (Asst & Assoc vs. Full)
How do faculty view the culture of teaching & learning?: At Their Institution

- **Excellent in Teaching**: 56%
- **Innovative Teaching**: 50%
- **Scholarly Teaching**: 51%
- **New Opportunities for Teaching**: 47%
- **Information from College**: 41%

- **Strongly Agree**: Red
- **Mostly Agree**: Yellow
- **Mostly Disagree**: Grey
- **Strongly Disagree**: Black
Overall, undergraduate teaching efforts are valued for...
What types of incentives or rewards are offered for faculty to engage in innovative or enhanced pedagogies?

Of % No/Not sure (2/5): Teaching Award (43%), Consid. for P&T (23%), Tech. support(32%), Help w/ curr. (21%), Fac. Cult. that values teaching (43%)