



# **The Role of New Faculty Orientations in Improving the Effectiveness of University Teaching**

## Part 1: University Sector

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for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario



An agency of the Government of Ontario

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## Summary

The professional development of new university instructors has received considerable investments of resources at Canadian universities, but the impact of these efforts has only rarely been evaluated or studied. Universities in Ontario have witnessed and participated in the formation of teaching and learning units responsible for professional development of academics since the mid-1980s (Landolfi, 2007). These units have been responsible for the development of programs to address the pedagogical needs of university instructors, with the goal of making them more effective (Ibid.).

In situations of decreased availability of funding, individual university support for central teaching and learning units has oscillated. This has often required that they operate with inadequate financial support and a minimal number of full-time employees. Currently, the four smallest units in Ontario universities operate with only one to three staff members.

While the formal training of postsecondary educators and the issue of enforcing mandatory training of academic teaching staff has been broadly accepted in colleges for years (see volume 2 of this report which will follow in 2012), the same issue has recently been discussed more frequently among universities as well at the level of teaching professionals and policy makers, with intense controversy on either side of the debate.

New Faculty Orientations (NFOs) – an induction program for newly hired faculty members at the beginning of their teaching careers – vary widely in the content delivered across different Ontario universities. While some simply provide a general introduction to a particular university's settings, and/or a list of local resources for the new faculty members to choose and use as they see fit, others focus on specific teaching skills and organize a series of sessions, which explore a variety of teaching and learning issues and strategies.

Surprisingly, of the 20 institutions surveyed there are only two Ontario universities that still do not organize NFOs for new teaching staff even though they have established teaching and learning centres. In these instances, new faculty members receive a general orientation provided by the President's Office and Faculty Recruitment departments, as well as their faculties. Other findings from this study include the following:

- The majority of Ontario universities (72 per cent) include both contract instructors and full-time faculty members in their orientation sessions.
- Only in two Ontario universities is orientation mandatory for all newly hired faculty members. In other institutions where NFO attendance is voluntary, participation varies from 40 per cent to 85 per cent.
- In terms of the cost of new faculty orientation, data differ from institution to institution, with a few institutions spending a modest amount of \$1,000 and others (the minority) spending about \$35,000 on NFOs per annum.<sup>1</sup>

The top five separate sessions that are typically included for NFOs at Ontario universities are, in this order:

- a) greetings/conversation with VP Academic Provost,
- b) academic policies and procedures,
- c) classroom teaching management methods,
- d) teaching with technology, and
- e) a panel/discussion with experienced faculty members.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to total NFO costs. For data per faculty costs see Table 1 on page 12.

In addition to NFOs, all of the responding institutions organize programs for their new faculty members throughout the year. Seventeen of them organize formal, scheduled workshops, individual consultations, and conference-type workshops, as well as providing curriculum design/redesign assistance. The majority of the institutions (16) also offer teaching with technology sessions and consultations, seven institutions organize comprehensive teaching certificate programs, while nine have mentorship programs for new faculty. None of the institutions have sessions on designing and teaching fully online courses, which is somewhat surprising given the efforts at the provincial level to increase postsecondary online learning opportunities for students.

Among the most challenging issues for teaching and learning centres in supporting new faculty members with their teaching needs are time constraints on faculty members, limited resources available to teaching and learning centres, and the perceived lesser value within many universities of teaching and pedagogy when compared to research.

## I. Introduction

Globally, modern universities expect their faculty members to be not only capable researchers and active participants in academic life, but also to be effective teachers (Daniel, 2008). For example, the 2003 UK Government's White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, states that "teaching has for too long been the poor relation in higher education" and sets as one of its goals to "rebalance funding so that new resources come into the sector not only through research and student numbers, but through strength in teaching" (Ibid.). Similarly, in 2007 Harvard University produced its *Compact to Enhance Teaching and Learning at Harvard*, which contains "an ambitious set of reforms to raise the status and quality of teaching, including better preparation in classroom skills for graduate students and new junior faculty... and recognition for exceptional teaching and for innovations in pedagogy" (emphases added).

Even though most universities have recognized the need to have some type of orientation for new faculty, there are surprisingly few studies which evaluate the effectiveness of these new faculty programs, despite anecdotal evidence that new faculty members may gain important benefits from initial pedagogical training and often become leaders in teaching development in their departments (Brew & Ginns, 2010). Several studies (for example, Lueddeke, 2003; Gibbs & Coffey, 2004) "provide some evidence that engaging in initial training in university teaching leads to increased student satisfaction and an increase in the use of student-focused approaches to teaching" (Brew & Ginns, 2010), but overall the effectiveness of new faculty programs is clearly under-researched.

The province of Ontario has no data available on how many institutions have new faculty programs, or data regarding the composition, strengths, or challenges of the existing orientations. In addition there is a lack of data/research on the needs of new and future faculty members, which may be an important starting point in better understanding how new faculty programs can be improved to address these needs. The current research sponsored and published by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) suggests that "it is important for universities to develop appropriate teaching and learning programs to promote faculty development and support student learning" because the overwhelming number of faculty members "emphasized the need to continue to support the development of teaching" (Evers & Hall, 2010, pp. 2-3).

## II. About This Project

This project has collected data in order to establish a detailed database of the ways in which Ontario universities currently support their new faculty members at the beginning of their initial teaching appointments. The importance of exploring these programs has been accentuated in the light of the findings of Britnell, Brockerhoff-Macdonald, Carter, Dawson, Doucet, Evers, Hall, Kerr, Liboiron-Grenier, McIntyre, Mighty, Siddall, and Wilson, (2010), which show that "there is still a relatively abrupt transition from graduate student to faculty positions, with little or no support for learning how to teach" (p. 14). Furthering this, Britnell et al. report that more than 50 per cent of new faculty members engage in educational development for the first time through new faculty orientations at their respective institutions.

Faculty development services in Ontario universities are mostly provided by educational development (teaching and learning) units whose central role, according to Gosling (2009), is to promote the professional development of faculty – including new faculty members – in relation to their duties as teachers.

Prior to the formal launch of this study, HEQCO sponsored a meeting on October 22, 2010 with representatives of teaching and learning units from all Ontario universities. During that meeting, members of the research team had an opportunity to discuss the project, get valuable input, clarify terminology and



validate survey questions. All suggestions that the educational developers provided were then incorporated into the survey instrument for this project.

In early 2011 the invitation to complete the survey was sent to the directors/senior managers of teaching and learning units in 20 publicly funded universities in Ontario: in the end, all institutions completed the survey. Most questions had between 16 to 20 responses (a response rate of 80-100 per cent). Since the Royal Military College and St. Paul University have highly specialized programs and have no teaching and learning centres, no attempt was made to survey these two institutions.

### III. Survey Results

#### a) Teaching and Learning Units at Ontario Universities

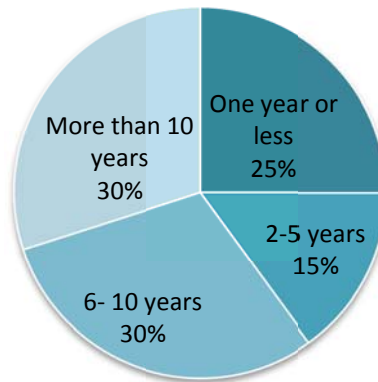
Teaching and learning units in Ontario universities work under a variety of names, as is also the case in other areas of the world (see for example Luzeckyj and Badger, 2010; Gosling, 2009). In our sample, the majority call themselves 'the teaching and learning centre.' One of our respondents uses the term 'teaching excellence' in its name, one uses the term 'innovation and design education,' and in one instance there is a reference to 'leadership in learning.'

Most centres are stand-alone organizational units, led by directors and reporting directly to a Vice President Academic and Provost. In two cases the unit itself is led by Associate Provosts (Teaching and Learning), and one of the centres is run by a Senate Committee.

Figure 1 below summarizes the present form of these teaching and learning centres. About half are relatively new – five have been in place in their current form for one year or less, and three have existed for 2-5 years – and the remainder have a longer history, having been in place for 6-10, or more than 10 years (12 respondents).

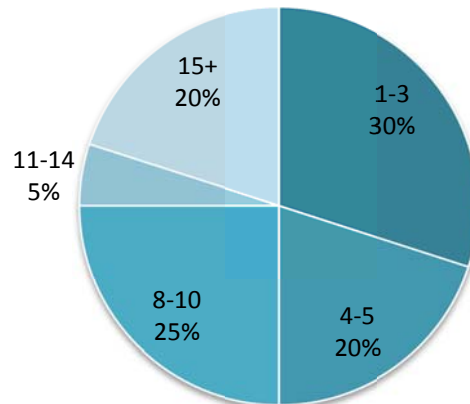
The four smallest centres have between one and three staff members, while the largest centre has more than 15 staff members (see Figure 2 below). The variation in size might partly be explained if there are substantial differences in goals and functions allocated to teaching and learning centres, but as this is not the case, explanations for the wide variations in staffing levels require further investigation. It may be hypothesized that the differences reflect the lack of accepted standards and guidance at universities and/or the provincial level, as well as institution size. Our data show that the approximate ratios of educational developer positions to number of full-time faculty members at Ontario universities have a range between 1:17 and 1:300 faculty members. The existing literature indicates that the same variations are to be found in the UK, Australia, and South Africa (for example Gosling, 2009; Dearn, Fraser, & Ryan, 2002).

**For how long has your teaching centre existed in its present form?**



**Figure 1: Years of Existence of Teaching and Learning Centres**

**How many full-time staff are employed by your teaching centre?**



**Figure 2: Staffing of Teaching and Learning Centres**

Even though the survey was not seeking to explore the characteristics, backgrounds and professional development of heads of teaching and learning centres, our sample shows that the majority are females (16 out of 20 surveyed centres) who hold a PhD and have many years of experience in educational development. Most are considered as senior managers within their institutions, as well as being active researchers who are publishing in the field. Many centres' staff members are also actively involved in research on teaching and learning in higher education, and have an expertise in different aspects of the higher education field, thus being qualified to conduct programming for new and senior faculty members.

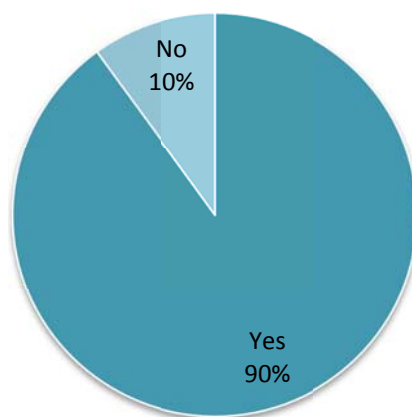
## b) New Faculty Orientations at Ontario Universities

In an atmosphere of increasing competition among postsecondary institutions, government accountability and performance-based funding, and growing requirements for university graduates to demonstrate the achievement of concrete, measurable skills, the quality of university teaching has become an issue of growing importance (Harrison, 2002). To respond to these external pressures, as well as the internal expectations of their students, many postsecondary institutions in Canada and the world have established New Faculty Orientations (NFO) and other programs for newly hired faculty members in order to equip them with at least some of the necessary pedagogical knowledge, institutional awareness, teaching skills and encouragement at the beginning of their academic careers (Boice, 1992; Fink, 1992).

To start exploring the different approaches to the preparation of academics as they commence their teaching career in Ontario universities, the survey asked not only about new faculty orientation events, but also about all other services and support that teaching and learning centres offer to new faculty. Some of the questions that we explored were: Is NFO a voluntary or mandatory event? Who is the intended audience: full-time faculty members, and/or part-time sessional or adjunct appointees as well? Is the program centralized (that is, is one program offered for all new faculty members in the university) or decentralized, with separate programs for new people in each college or department? What other resources exist for new faculty members?

Of the 20 institutions that completed the survey, only two do not organize an annual centralized NFO, while the vast majority host this event at the beginning of every academic year.

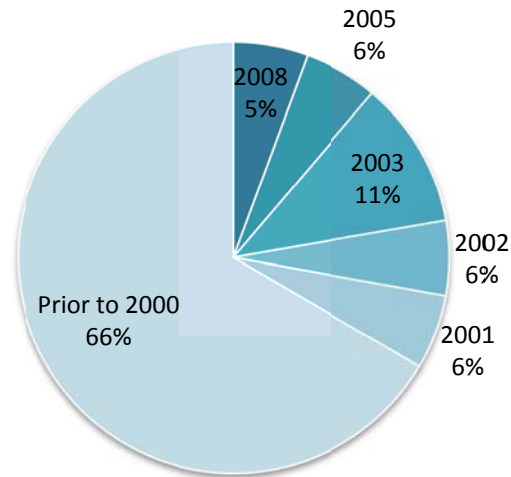
### Does your university host a centralized NFO event each year for new faculty members?



**Figure 3: Annual Hosting of NFO Events**

There were twelve institutions (66 per cent) that offered an NFO for the first time prior to the year 2000; the most recent was first offered in 2008 (one institution).

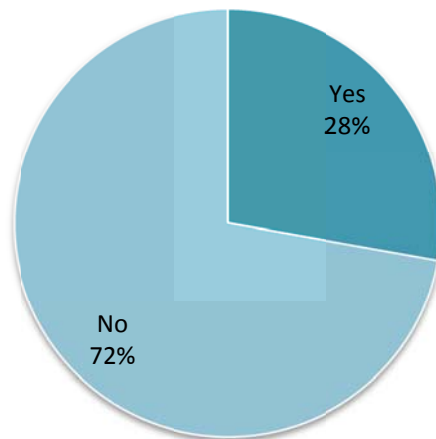
### In what year was NFO first offered?



**Figure 4: NFO – First time Offered**

The majority of institutions (72 per cent) do not have separate sessions for contract instructors, while five of them (28 per cent) offer more specialized, separate orientations for sessional faculty members and contract instructors (Figure 5). With the marked increase in the use of contract/sessional instructors by most Ontario universities, it is important to determine what types of orientation programming and teaching development opportunities are offered to these increasingly critical members of our postsecondary teaching community. While some are career academics, many others are newly graduated PhDs using these course-by-course contracts to build their teaching resumes; others are professionals who hold other positions, and whose real-world expertise is highly valued by the institutions where they also teach. Some have taught for many years on contracts, from one to several courses per year. For those who are recent PhD graduates or who hold other positions outside of academia, teaching development and orientation activities can often be critical to assuring that the quality of learning experience for Ontario students remains high across all classes.

**Do you have separate NFO for new full-time faculty members and new contract instructors?**



**Figure 5: NFO for Full-Time Faculty vs. Contract Instructors**

Four of the responding institutions also have a separate NFO for professional schools (Nursing, Social Work, Education Midwifery and Health Sciences). NFOs for professional schools are usually the responsibilities of the deans and chairs of corresponding departments; however, in those cases the teaching and learning centres have a seat on the planning committee.

NFOs are voluntary events in 88 per cent of cases; however, in the cases of two institutions the orientation is mandatory for all new faculty members. The percentage of new faculty members who attend voluntary NFOs varies from 40 per cent to 85 per cent, with one institution indicating that this percentage depends on new hiring, which differs from year to year.

The idea of mandatory training for novice university teachers is a highly contested one. As Luzeckyj and Badger (2010) point out, this may be because some educational developers and faculty members have concerns that academic autonomy may be threatened by such intervention and that generic ‘teaching’ programs cannot address disciplinary-specific issues in how to teach in universities. This is also articulated by Dearn et al. (2002) who report that “while all stakeholders supported the provision of Continuing Professional Education for the teaching role, there was real ambivalence about accreditation to a profession of university teaching” (p. 54). The proponents of mandatory training, and even accreditation, for university teaching argue that if we require “years of training for high school teachers,” we should have similar requirements for “those teaching students just a year older” (Alexi White, a former Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance executive director, as cited in the *Globe and Mail* editorial, 2011). According to Derek Bok,<sup>2</sup> the former President of Harvard University (cited in Bethune, 2006, p. 37), “It’s astonishing that [...] the universities do not teach their future teachers. Academia is the only professional system that doesn’t instruct newcomers in how to do what they will spend most of their time doing.”

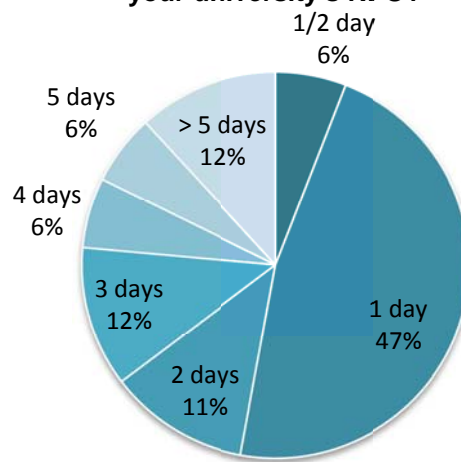
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<sup>2</sup> Derek Bok has written six books on higher education: *Beyond the Ivory Tower* (1982), *Higher Learning* (1986), *Universities and the Future of America*, *The Shape of the River* (1998), *Universities in the Marketplace* (2003), and *Our Underachieving Colleges* (2005).

Similarly, Dr. Tony Bates<sup>3</sup>, the former Director of Distance Education at University of British Columbia, and a Research Associate with Contact North, Ontario’s Distance Education and Training Network, argues that “developing skilled post-secondary teachers is as much an economic development as an educational issue” and those postsecondary teachers should have a “compulsory, comprehensive and systematic training for teaching, similar to formal training doctors and pilots undergo before starting their work” (Bates, 2011, p. 1).

The timing of a NFO normally corresponds to the beginning of the new academic year. Thus, the majority of respondents (90 per cent) organize a NFO at the end of August, while two institutions host it in early September, just before the start of classes. The length of a NFO varies somewhat from university to university, with the shortest length being one day (eight institutions) and the longest length being five or more days (three universities).

**From first event until last, including social events, how long is your university's NFO?**



**Figure 6: Duration of NFO**

Fifteen institutions also include a variety of social and networking events in their NFO, such as breakfast, lunch, and dean and university president receptions. A few universities (30 per cent) also organize a barbeque or dinner for new faculty members and their families, while one institution also has a family day which both new faculty and their family members are invited to attend for a tour of the city, etc.

According to the existing literature, all of these social events can contribute to faculty retention because “they are generally perceived as evidence of institutional concern and support for faculty welfare and professional development” (Fink, 1992, p. 6). Furthermore, they contribute to “establish lasting contacts with other faculty members around campus” and decrease the level of loneliness and isolation that newly appointed faculty members may feel, thus improving “one’s personal, social, and professional vitality” (Ibid.) Analyzing an orientation program for new dental faculty, Holyfield and Berry (2008) pointed out that one of the most important goals of the program is to promote “networking and collegiality among

<sup>3</sup> Tony Bates has worked as a consultant for UNESCO, different provincial ministries of education, as well as many universities and colleges in Canada. He is the author of eleven books, including his latest, *Managing Technology in Higher Education: Strategies for Transforming Teaching and Learning* (2011), *Technology, e-Learning and Distance Education* (2005), and *Managing Technological Change: Strategies for College and Universities Leaders* (1999).

participants and foster a heightened awareness among newly hired faculty members of the institution's commitment to and support for new faculty" (p. 1531). Another study conducted by Garrison (2004) surveyed new faculty on the strengths and weaknesses of university and department orientation programs, and concluded that the two most frequently selected strengths were interaction with their newly appointed colleagues followed by interaction with senior faculty members.

Indeed, the most recent (summer 2011) feedback given by newly appointed instructors at one of the universities confirms these findings:

- "[I liked best] meeting new faculty members."
- "[I liked best] meeting other new faculty, hearing about overall organization of the university, student body, faculty, resources."
- "I enjoyed the opportunity to get to know some of the other new faculty."
- "The event succeeded in making me feel welcome and special to [university]. I thought the dinner on the last day was a really nice touch."

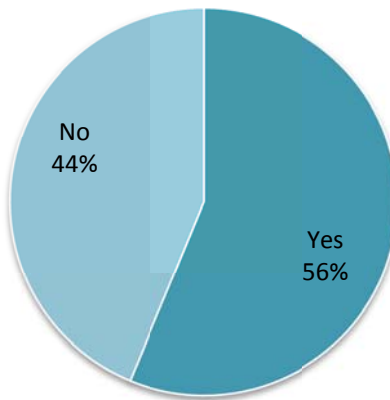
As we will see below, all other teaching and learning centres in Ontario universities have similar findings and experiences.

Sixteen out of 20 institutions answered the question about their spending on NFO. Data vary from institution to institution, with a few of them spending the modest amount of \$1,000, to those that spend about \$35,000 on NFOs per annum. Nine responding institutions (56 per cent) have funding for NFOs included in base budget funding for their teaching centre, which is automatically renewed every year, while seven institutions (44 per cent) do not have this funding (Figure 7). In these cases, funding for NFOs comes from a variety of sources – such as the Provost's Office, conference and events budgets, or the teaching and learning centre budget – that is not annually renewable or specifically allocated for that purpose. Ten out of 20 surveyed universities provided data on their annual spending on their NFOs as well as data about the average number of NFO attendees per year, enabling a per faculty member cost calculation. Costs per new faculty member vary significantly among institutions, ranging from \$1.50 to \$1,000. Based on the sample of 10 universities, we can conclude that an average cost per one new faculty member at the level of the Province is \$279.

**Table 1: NFO Cost per Faculty Member<sup>4</sup>**

University	NFO budget (average per annum)	NFO attendees (average per annum)	Average cost per attendee
University A	\$10,000	40	\$250
University B	\$350	10	\$35
University C	\$2,000	33	\$61
University D	\$5,000	70	\$71
University E	\$1,000	65	\$1.50
University F	\$1,350	25	\$54
University G	\$9,000	26	\$346
University H	\$35,000	35	\$1,000
University I	\$21,000	23	\$913
University J	\$12,000	20	\$600
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>\$96,700</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>\$279</b>

**Is the funding for NFO identified and included in the base budget funding?**



**Figure 7: NFO Funding**

We asked educational developers to choose a statement that best describes the content of their university’s NFO. Four institutions reported that their NFO primarily focuses on teaching skills. In eight cases NFO topics are spread among research and teaching, and include social networking events. Two

<sup>4</sup> These are the approximate values. If the respondent chose values \$1,200 to \$1,500 for their budget, an average of \$1,350 has been used in our calculation. Likewise, if the respondent indicated the attendees’ numbers to be between 30 and 50, an average of 40 has been used in our calculation.



institutions perceive NFOs as a general orientation to campus resources, while one university now offers two separate NFO events, one focusing on research and another on teaching skills.

The top five separate sessions that are part of NFOs at Ontario universities are:

- 1) greetings/conversation with VP Academic Provost,
- 2) academic policies and procedures,
- 3) classroom teaching management methods,
- 4) teaching with technology, and
- 5) panel/discussion with experienced faculty members (Figure 8).

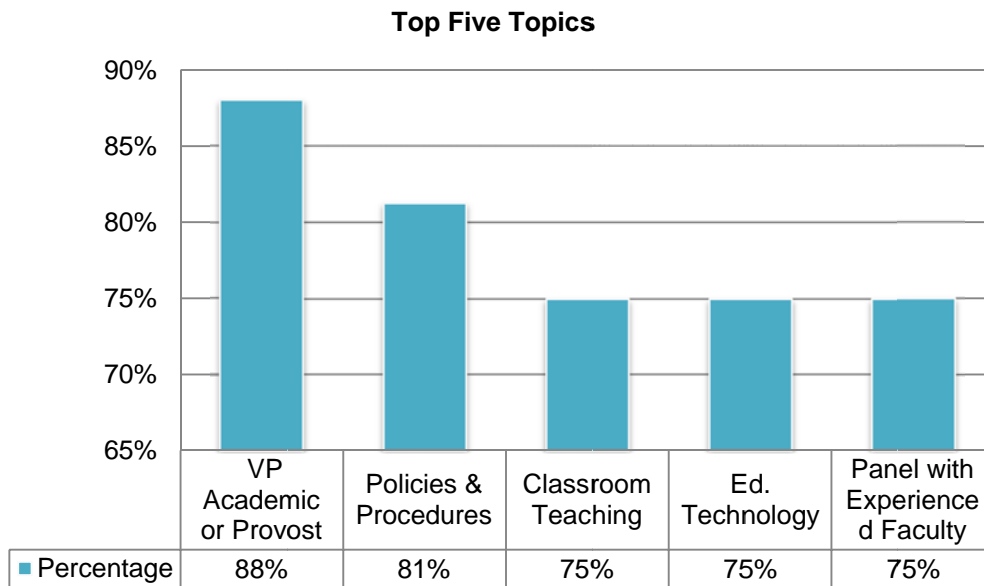
Less than 50 per cent of universities (seven of them) include separate topics about the assessment of students, and only 40 per cent introduce new faculty members to course design.

This information is even more significant if we know that all of the previous studies (Boice, 1992; Sorcinelli, 2002; Fink, 1990, among others) showed that “new faculty members *reported high levels of stress* by the end of their first year in part *due to heavy teaching loads*” (Fink, 1990). Fink continues:

However, stress was not due to time taken to engage in creative teaching; most new faculty were *lecturing almost all the time* [...] They were not [...] challenging students to engage in critical thinking; [...] or using small groups to encourage collaborative learning, etc. They were not doing these things because *no one had ever showed them how*, or told them that they could and should do more than lecture” (emphases added) (p. 2).

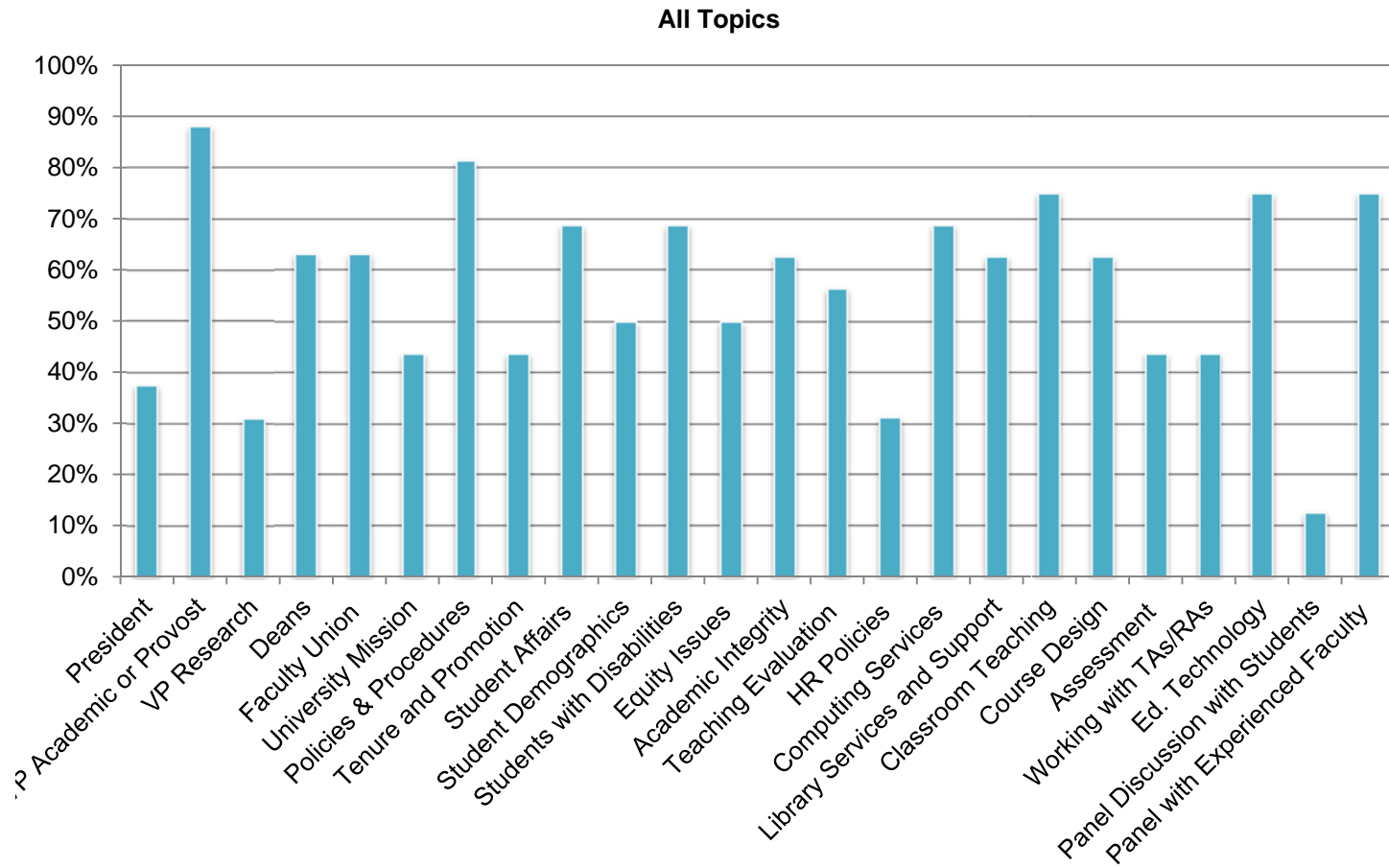
More recently, similar observations have been echoed in the words of Mark Zachary Taylor, an Assistant Professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology, who, talking about teaching certificate programs for graduate students in the article published in the October 2010 issues of *Inside Higher Ed*, states:

“Graduate students don’t learn how to teach [...] Our stereotype is that a teacher gets up there and hands you a lot of knowledge. You’re the empty glass, they’re the pitcher of water and they pour their knowledge into you. But that’s not how it works [...] To engage students in classes, pose interesting questions and draw them in [...] all those techniques I learned through the teaching certificate program” (*Inside Higher Ed*, October 15, 2010. *Preparing Professors to Teach*, an article by Allie Grasgreen).



**Figure 8: NFO - Top Five Topics**

Under comments (“other”), one institution added that they include sessions on graduate education and large class teaching. However, according to the responses, this is a rare practice in the majority of institutions in Ontario.



**Figure 9: NFO – All Topics**

John Murray (web resource, accessed September 2011) argues that higher education institutions tend to design their faculty development programs on perceptions of effectiveness rather than on a concrete metric of effectiveness, and that this practice cannot be tolerated.

This does not seem to be the case in Ontario. Out of the ten institutions that answered the question regarding motivations behind design, all of them regularly evaluate their sessions and programs by surveying NFO participants. In addition, one centre also organizes focus groups with new faculty members. Six institutions also collect informal feedback from faculty members, while one engages its own staff in critical reflective review.

In all cases but one,<sup>5</sup> the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Faculty members value networking and connecting with other faculty, an opportunity to get advice from their senior colleagues, and information on resources that are available to help them with their teaching. Some of the responses to the question: “How would you say new faculty members generally respond to the programming offered in your NFO?” are as follows:

- “Appreciation of learning and sharing from teaching community, navigating their path within the institution, thinking about what they need to do to prepare for the term.”
- “They respond well to the orientation--great way to put people at ease in their new institution.”
- “From the feedback on surveys, the response has been very positive. Earlier formats (pre-2003) were critical of the “talking heads” that presented general orientation topics every 15 mins. When the focus changed back to teaching and learning, attending faculty were more interested in discussing pedagogical strategies, particularly large class teaching and technology.”
- “Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Components commented on especially frequently include: networking with people from across campus, opportunity for family to be involved, collaboration between a number of university partners in the event (including upper administration), resources provided (many have commented that the e-book is especially useful).”
- “Generally very satisfied. Initially see a large time commitment that makes them wary, but then always want more at the end. They appreciate that their introduction to [university] is at times very specific and at other times more of an introduction to the culture. Overall, incredibly satisfied.”
- “High level of satisfaction - 92%.”

According to evaluation surveys, new faculty members found sessions on teaching policies, teaching with technology, networking with other units on campus, and making connections with other faculty and staff of teaching and learning centres extremely valuable.

Despite these positive comments, it should be noted that more needs to be done in assessing the longer term impact of the NFO and other programs on teaching and student learning and in trying to determine if the programs have any impact on faculty retention. From the point of view of educational developers, it would be desirable if more in-depth course design sessions, mentorship programs, inclusion of the

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<sup>5</sup> The only relatively negative feedback received from new faculty members after an NFO session is summarized by the survey respondent as follows: “overwhelming revolving door approach to orientation; they [faculty members] feel caught in a blur of faces.”

student voice, and more time and resources for establishing new faculty reflective communities would be included in NFO programs, but the lack of funding and time often prevent these from being realized.

When educational developers were asked what component(s) that are currently not offered in their university NFO program they feel would be most valuable, and that they would most like to include, they responded as follows:

- “A dinner with excellent teachers; reintroduce a learning community.”
- “We regularly revamp our programming to meet the needs of our new faculty and are quite satisfied with the current mode.”;
- “Teaching/ research support and academic career building (e.g. preparing for tenure, etc.); also need conflict resolution and Respectful Work Place policies orientation.”
- “More in depth 2-3 day course design workshop.”
- “We would love to be able to a program similar to Mary Deane Sorcinelli’s program at U Mass (Amherst) where faculty receive small grants for whatever they need to get established at their new university--such as the opportunity to take senior faculty to dinner--she also does peer mentoring in groups and we would love to be able to support such a venture.”
- “Assignment of new faculty mentors and establishing new faculty reflective communities for the longer term care of faculty teaching after the NFO event.”
- “Inclusion of the student voice.”

Among the most challenging issues for teaching and learning centres in supporting new faculty members with their teaching needs are:

1. Limited resources:

- “with no Educational Developer on staff, we rely on senior faculty volunteers to provide support.”
- “the fact that there is only one person in the IDC (the Director) to offer services.”

2. Lack of time:

- “time for us to run events, and for new faculty to attend sessions.”
- “timing, as they are just starting they have many things on their plate to juggle, like research and creating their course outlines, meetings...etc.”

3. The perceived value of teaching comparing with research:

- “The most challenging issue is altering some of the messages that are provided through departments about the investment of time in teaching;” “competing with the demands of research and publications for P&T [promotion & tenure] which looms large in the minds of new faculty. Many (but not all) tend to defer attention to teaching until they have established their research programs and publication record in anticipation of P&T. Persuading new faculty that teaching is

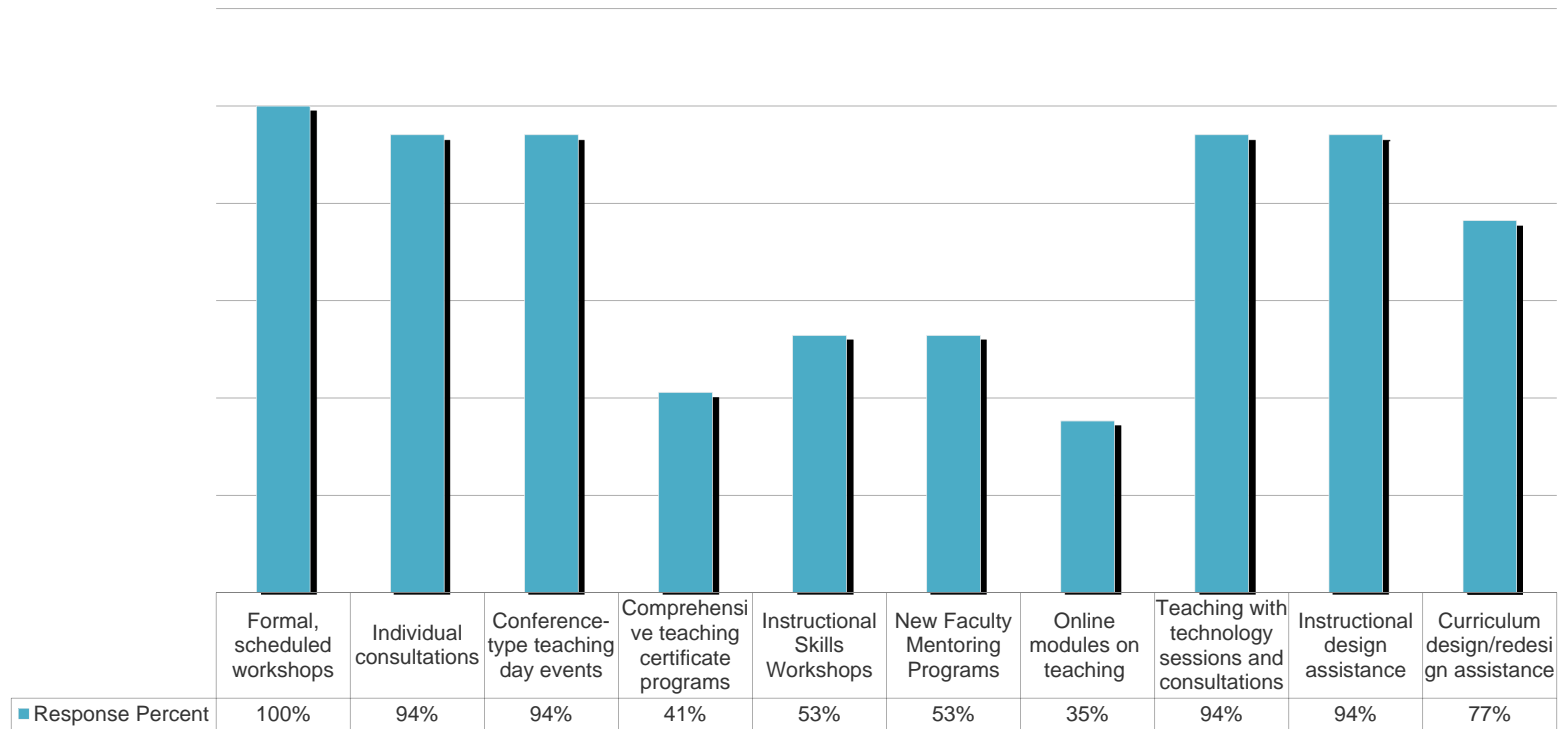
an equally important part of the P&T dossier is difficult, and like many other Centres I daresay, we deal with faculty putting together a teaching dossier the week before P&T dossiers are due.”

### **c) Other Services, Programs and Support for New Faculty**

In addition to NFOs, all of the responding institutions organize programs for their new faculty members throughout the year. Seventeen of them organize formal, scheduled workshops; individual consultations; conference-type workshops; and provide curriculum design/redesign assistance. The majority (16 institutions) also offer teaching with technology sessions and consultations, seven organize comprehensive teaching certificate programs, while nine have mentorship programs for new faculty. In general, it appeared that improvement is needed in offering more online modules on different teaching and learning topics that would provide flexible access to resources that faculty members can use to work on enhancing their teaching skills at a time and pace that is convenient to them. Only two institutions offer such online modules. Other support services that exist are multiple e-resources, roundtable discussions, assistance with course development, and evaluation of teaching with in-class visits (Figure 10).

Surprisingly, none of the institutions conduct sessions on teaching fully online courses. This is why some authors argue that the “current professional development model in postsecondary education is broken” (Bates, 2011, p. 1). Bearing in mind that currently, around 11 per cent of course registrations in Ontario’s postsecondary education system are in fully online courses (Ontario, 2011), one can agree with Bates (2011) who argues that “online teaching [...] is no longer a fringe activity, but is likely to be, if not already, a significant part of most instructors’ portfolio of teaching in the near future” and “moving to online learning requires a much higher standard of training for faculty and instructors” (Ibid.). Moreover, as Bates recommends, “online teaching should be seen as an integral component of professional development [...] and faculty development offices should be integrated with learning technology support units into Centres for Teaching and Learning” (Ibid.).

**What activities and services does your unit/centre provide for new faculty members that are designed to assist them in improving their teaching skills?**



**Figure 10: Services Designed to Help Improve Teaching Skills**

## IV. Discussion

In the seminal work on preparing new faculty for their academic role, L. Dee Fink (1992) proposes the following criteria that exemplary orientation programs should implement:

- 1) The program should inform the novice academics about institutional support services available for them and offer sound information on their new teaching, research and administrative roles and give them a sense of their university's values, goals and visions.
- 2) The program should provide opportunities for networking and meeting other faculty members, both newly appointed and experienced ones.
- 3) The program should reach as broad an audience as possible.
- 4) The program should provide ideas and tips about teaching, based on the best pedagogical theory and practices.
- 5) The program should not overload new faculty members with too much information; instead it should be organized in ways that would help ease their anxiety.

So, how do Ontario universities' programs aimed at novice faculty members compare to Fink's recommendations?

In terms of providing a variety of information on institutional support services, introducing institutional values and visions, and explaining the multiple roles that novice academics (as teachers, researchers, and administrators) need to play, one can argue that Ontario's teaching and learning centres have done a reasonably good job of offering induction orientation sessions to their newly hired faculty members. These sessions are broad in their scope, and balance pedagogical themes with general topics about institutional policies and procedures.

Ontario's new faculty orientation programs also score well in terms of networking opportunities and the establishing of long-lasting relationships with colleagues. According to both faculty members and educational developers, one of the most valued characteristics of these sessions is an opportunity for novice teachers to interact with their peers and experienced faculty members.

There is room for improvement regarding the attendance rate: on average, NFO orientations reach about 61 per cent of new faculty members, with some institutions reaching only 40 per cent, and only four institutions with voluntary attendance having better attendance rates (75 per cent and above). Out of 20 surveyed universities only two institutions were able to reach all newly hired faculty members because their orientation programs are mandatory, although even in these instances the actual impact is unclear.

In regards to Fink's recommendations on establishing a program in such a way that it provides best practices and tips on teaching based on sound pedagogical theories, we may say that some of Ontario's universities perform well. Even though the majority of respondents include sessions on teaching in their orientation programs, in eight instances this orientation is only one day long. Thus, it is questionable how deeply and extensively it is possible to cover and discuss a broad range of teaching issues in such a limited timeframe. What is encouraging, though, is that many of the centres offer a variety of teaching topics throughout the year, and especially that seven of them conduct a comprehensive teaching certificate program, while eight universities have established mentoring programs in which experienced faculty members offer their guidance to novice professors. While the mentoring program provides continuous collegial support for new faculty members and a non-threatening avenue to discuss and reflect on their teaching, and to explore innovative teaching methods within their discipline throughout the academic year, comprehensive teaching certificate programs usually last a few months. These sessions



encourage participants to focus on their own teaching as well as to examine a range of teaching-related topics, and very often include micro-teaching sessions. After finishing the program, a formal certificate is awarded.

## V. Conclusion

While there are some common understandings and shared values on the role of professional academic development for novice faculty members in Ontario universities, there are still no common guidelines and expectations about core induction programs that would introduce them to teaching and learning principles. Currently, induction programs are diverse in content, duration and process. Developing a set of common guidelines would benefit the sector and help better prepare academics to teach in higher education. More needs to be done by academic leaders, faculty members and educational developers in opening a discussion on the potential for establishing university teaching on a more professional basis. In addition, consideration should be given to the establishment of agreed standards for teaching quality.

It is also important to establish a better way of assessing the longer term impact of NFOs and other programs on teaching and student learning, and to try to determine whether these programs have any impact on positive changes in teaching practices. It would be important to develop a set of measures and conduct longitudinal studies – possibly even at the provincial level – in order to move beyond satisfaction surveys when evaluating NFOs and other programs and services aimed at new faculty members and the consequent improvement in teaching. The lack of appropriate measures and diversity of programs and services in Ontario universities make it difficult to compare them and determine their effectiveness.

Better resources need to be allocated to teaching and learning units in order for them to provide a comprehensive ongoing professional development program for their teaching staff as part of the overall quality assurance system for Ontario's higher education. As Fink (1992) said almost two decades ago, "the potential benefits are quite high; the costs, as an investment in the professional competence of the faculty, are low."

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## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

### I. INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR UNIVERSITY

1. Which university do you represent?

2. Approximately how many fulltime (equivalent) students are enrolled in your university?

3. Approximately how many fulltime faculty members are employed by your university?

4. Approximately how many part time (also known as sessional or contract instructors), teaching on a per course basis, are employed by your institution?

### II. ABOUT YOUR TEACHING CENTRE

1. Does your institution have a centralized unit/centre with the explicit mission of supporting teaching development and improvement of teaching skills?

Yes

No

2. What is the name of your teaching centre?

3. Who is the senior administrator of your teaching centre and what is their title?

4. To whom does this person report? (position)

5. For how long has your teaching centre existed in its present form?

One year or less

2-5 years

6-10 years

More than 10 years

6. How many fulltime staff are employed by your teaching centre?

1-3

4-5

6-7

8-10

11-14

15+

7. If your institution does not have a central unit that supports faculty members in their teaching, please identify any other units which may share this responsibility, and describe briefly how this is accomplished at your university.

### III. ABOUT YOUR NEW FACULTY ORIENTATION (NFO) ACTIVITIES

1. Does your university host a centralized New Faculty Orientation event each year for new faculty members?

- Yes
- No

2. In what year was this New Faculty Orientation first offered?

3. To whom is this New Faculty Orientation offered?

- New Full-Time Faculty Members
- Both New Full-Time Faculty Members and New Sessional Instructors
- Other (please specify)

4. Do you have separate orientations for new full-time faculty members and new sessional (per course contract) instructors? (If yes, please continue this survey considering only your orientation for new fulltime faculty members)

- Yes
- No

5. Does your university hold a separate NFO for professional schools (medicine, law, dentistry, pharmacy)?

- Yes
- No

6. Which professional programs at your university hold independent New Faculty Orientation Programs?

7. Please provide information on who is primarily responsible for the organization and presentation of each of these independent programs. Please also note whether or not your teaching centre is involved in the planning or presentation in any way.

8. When is your New Faculty Orientation scheduled during the year (please provide either dates or times relative to the beginning of term)? If you hold more than one NFO each year, please indicate the timing of each.

9. From first event until last, including social events, how long is your university's New Faculty Orientation?

- ½ day
- 1 day
- 2 days
- 3 days

- |          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 4 days   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 days   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| > 5 days | <input type="checkbox"/> |

10. Is your New Faculty Orientation voluntary or mandatory for newly hired faculty members?

- |           |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| Voluntary | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mandatory | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Approximately how many new faculty members generally attend your NFO events? (an average over the past few years would be most useful here).

12. Approximately what percentage of new faculty members attends your New Faculty Orientation, on average? (Again, acknowledging that this will likely change over the year, please indicate your best estimate here).

13. Approximately how much does your university spend on your New Faculty Orientation events annually?

14. Which university budget category(ies) are used to cover the expenses for your New Faculty Orientation?

15. Is the funding for your New Faculty Orientation program specifically identified and included in the base budget funding for your teaching centre (or some other university budget) that is, automatically renewed every year? (As compared to an amount that has to be reapplied for annually, or funds taken out of your general budget lines).

- |     |                          |
|-----|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. Which statement best describes the content of your university's New Faculty Orientation?

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| It is a general orientation to campus resources  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It covers campus resources, research, and teaching skills.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It covers campus resources, research, and teaching skills and includes social and networking events. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is primarily focused on teaching skills.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is primarily a socializing and networking event   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

17. Please indicate which of the following topics/activities are substantially included as separate sessions in your New Faculty Orientation Program (Please check all that apply, and indicate other topics through the "Other" box following this question).

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Greeting/Conversation with the President              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Greeting/Conversation with the VP Academic or Provost | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Greeting/Conversation with the VP Research            | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Greeting/Conversation with the Deans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greeting/Conversation with Faculty Union or Association	<input type="checkbox"/>
University Missions/Goals/Strategic Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Policies and Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies and/or advice on Tenure and Promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Affairs Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Detailed Discussion of Student Demographics on Campus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library Services and Support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation of Students with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equity Issues on Campus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies and Advice on Assuring Academic Integrity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Evaluation on Campus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Resources Policies and Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computing Services and Support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom Teaching/Management Methods	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course Design	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment of Students	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with TAs/RAs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching with Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>
Panel Discussion with Students	<input type="checkbox"/>
Panel Discussion with Experienced Faculty Members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. Please describe all social and/or networking events are included in your New Faculty Orientation.

19. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about the structure or content of your New Faculty Orientation Program?

20. How does your unit evaluate the effectiveness of your New Faculty Orientation program? (Please select all that apply).

Surveys distributed to participants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal feedback from participants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
No evaluation conducted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. According to the feedback that you have received from new faculty, how would you say they generally respond to the programming offered in your NFO? Please respond relating to their satisfaction with all aspects of your NFO relating to format as well as the applicability of the information provided.

22. What component(s) of your New Faculty Orientation programming do you believe your new faculty find most valuable?

---

23. What component(s) of a New Faculty Orientation program is currently NOT offered in your program, that you feel would be most valuable and that you would most like to include?

#### IV. ONGOING PROGRAMMING TARGETED AT NEW FACULTY MEMBERS

1. What activities and services does your unit/centre provide for new faculty members that are designed to assist them in improving their teaching skills? (Please check all that apply).

Formal, scheduled workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual consultations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conference type teaching day events	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comprehensive teaching certificate programs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructional Skills Workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Faculty Mentoring Programs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online modules on teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching with technology sessions and consultations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructional design assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum design/redesign assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching online sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Other than a formal New Faculty Orientation event, does your unit provide any other programming targeted exclusively for new faculty members throughout the year? Please provide details of this programming.

3. What other support or programming (in addition to that provided by your unit) exists at your university for new faculty members?

4. What are the most challenging issues for your unit in supporting new faculty members with their teaching needs?

#### V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Is there any further information regarding the support of new faculty members in beginning their teaching position at your university that you would like to offer for the purposes of this study?

2. With whom should we be in touch in order to further explore your responses, and discuss new faculty orientation activities at your university?

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**Thank you!**



