

Stakeholder Summary

College/University Collaboration Could Improve Quality of Teaching and Learning

While postsecondary teaching development programs continue to receive considerable investments of time and money, their impact has only rarely been studied or evaluated. The second of a two-part study commissioned by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQCO) on new faculty orientations and teaching development in Ontario's colleges and universities finds opportunities for increased collaboration and sharing of best practices between the two sectors and a need for more incentives to encourage and reward innovation in teaching and learning.

Project description

The Role of New Faculty Orientations in Improving the Effectiveness of Postsecondary Teaching: The College Sector builds on findings of the [university study](#), exploring how 24 Ontario colleges support their new faculty members. It examines the structure, content, strengths and drawbacks of these orientation programs as well as more general teaching development services. The study was conducted through a survey sent to representatives of teaching and learning units and, in some cases, provosts or heads of human resources at the colleges, with all but one college electing to participate.

Findings

All of the responding colleges said they offer centralized annual orientations for new faculty – almost 75% of them mandatory (as compared to 12% for Ontario universities), with the most common topic and/or session related to institutional missions, goals and strategic plans, closely followed by teaching with technology. Four survey respondents – or 20% of the college sample – said their orientation programs include panel discussions with students, as compared to 13% for universities.

The vast majority of responding colleges have a centralized teaching and learning unit. All offer teaching development throughout the year that may include individual consultations, scheduled workshops, curriculum design assistance and online modules. In contrast to their university peers, Ontario colleges offer more online modules for teaching; 16 colleges as compared with two universities. Ten colleges organize comprehensive teaching certificate programs, while 12 have mentorship programs for new faculty.

Most of the colleges regularly evaluate their sessions and programs by surveying participants, and feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

While almost all colleges said that funding for their orientation programs is renewed annually as part of the base budget allocated to their teaching and learning centres, they expressed concerns about limited faculty time and resources for staffing and funding of these centres. More than 80% said they have five or fewer full-time staff members working in their teaching centres, and more than half have between one and three full-time staff members. The study authors noted their concern that more than one-third of the Ontario colleges sampled don't offer orientation programming to new part-time faculty.

Further research/policy implications

The authors say that in both college and university sectors, research should be used to improve faculty teaching development. Toward a comprehensive overview and inventory of current practices at the provincial level, the authors call for increased collaboration within Ontario's postsecondary system as "a valuable way for respective teaching and learning units to learn from each other's successes... In particular, we suggest that those institutions that offer extensive new faculty orientation programming take a leadership role by documenting their institutional 'best practices' and sharing these with their colleagues at institutions that do not currently offer extensive [programs]." The authors also say that more provincially based incentives are needed to encourage and reward faculty experimentation in teaching and learning innovation across and between institutions.

*Authors of **The Role of New Faculty Orientations in Improving the Effectiveness of Postsecondary Teaching: The College Sector** - Julie Gregory with Maggie Cusson, Carleton University.*