

# Expectations, Motivations, and Barriers to Professional Development: Perspectives from Adjunct Instructors Teaching Online

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*Adjunct instructors are the fastest growing population of faculty in the academy; and, given the current economic condition and its impact on institutions of higher learning, the proportion of adjunct faculty is likely to increase (Gappa, Austin & Trice, 2007; NCES, 2011). Yet the adjunct population continues to remain disconnected from the academy, as few institutions have yet to dedicate the time, resources, and communication channels necessary to support their work. Paradoxically, at the same time institutions are becoming more and more reliant on this contingent labor force (Bombardieri, 2006; Finder, 2007; NCES, 2010). Few researchers have investigated the motivations, preferences, and barriers that exist for adjunct instructors who wish to participate in professional growth opportunities. To usher in the paradigm shift needed to professionalize development opportunities for this critical population, adjunct instructor voices and perspectives must be a part of the research design. In this article, we offer strategies based on research involving over 600 online adjunct instructors and propose recommendations for institutionalizing faculty support based on these findings.*

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As a result of fiscal constraints (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007), the growth of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2009), and a call to lower the rising cost of an undergraduate education (Webber & Boehmer, 2008), institutions of higher education have become increasingly reliant on adjunct faculty (NCES, 2011). In 2011, the *Digest on Educational Statics* indicated that, of the 1.4 million faculty employed in the United States, half were part-time instructors. Further, with the enrollment of undergraduate students expected to increase by 15% by 2020, the use of a lower-cost adjunct faculty pool is likely to increase (NCES, 2011).

Discussion of adjunct faculty dependence, including the potential benefits and challenges, has occurred within the academic community through articles and commentaries in venues such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Glenn, 2008; June, 2008; Smallwood, 2002), *Community College Week* (Pedersen, 2005; Stephens & Wright, 1999), *Inside Higher Ed* (Capriccioso, 2005; Eisenberg, 2010; Wilson, 2006), *Academe* (Marshall, 2003), and in a variety of professional academic journals (Fagan-Wilen, Springer, Ambrosino, & White, 2006; Klein, 2003; Modarelli, 2006). The issue of adjunct faculty depen-

dence has even arisen in such popular newspapers as *The New York Times* (Finder, 2007) and *The Boston Globe* (Bombardieri, 2006).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of full-time instructional faculty in degree-granting institutions of higher education increased by over 190% between 1970 and 2007 (the last year statistics were available). During the same time period, the number of part-time faculty increased by over 676%. In 1970, full-time faculty represented 78% of all instructional faculty at degree-granting institutions; in 2007, this dropped to only 51%. The part-time faculty community rose from 22 % in 1970 to 49% in 2007 (NCES 2010, 2005).

Reductions in financial support for both state and private institutions and closer oversight of budgets are most often cited as the cause for the increased use of adjunct faculty (Dedman & Pearch, 2004; Finder, 2007; Grusin & Reed, 1994; Levin, 2005; Reichard, 2003; Wagoner, Metcalfe, & Olaore, 2005). The proportion of adjunct faculty is more likely to increase given current economic conditions and the impact of those conditions on institutions of higher learning (Finder, 2007).

Paradoxically, as institutional reliance on adjunct labor increases, the adjunct instructor population continues to remain somewhat disenfranchised and disconnected from the academy (Lane, 2002; Marshall, 2003); arguably institutions have yet to dedicate the proper time, resources, and communication channels necessary to support the important work of adjunct faculty.

In their rather extensive annotated bibliography, *Part-time Faculty in Higher Education*, Pankin and Weiss (n.d.) reported that most discussions regarding adjunct instructors could be arranged into “rough categories centered on four topics: the status of part-time faculty, exploitation or the lack of justice for part-time faculty, their morale or job satisfaction, and the educational problems that are created by using part-time faculty” (p. 2). However, research on the challenges and benefits of adjunct faculty – research that incorporates their voices – remains limited (Umbach, 2007). Perhaps as a result, a lack of proposed best practices for supporting adjunct faculty exists, even though this population remains the fastest growing in the academy (NCES, 2011, 2010, 2005).

The need for professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty is clear. Clark, Moore, Johnston, and Openshaw (2011) reported that departments often focus more on the availability of instructors than their teaching experience itself, indicating the importance of ongoing adjunct faculty development. Consequently, the content experts who are often hired as adjunct faculty may not possess expertise in teaching methods (Eddy, 2010; Vignare, 2009). Lester (2011) indicated concern among administrators of distance education programs to argue “the need to do more to assist in [adjunct and part-time faculty members’] development” (p. 230). Likewise, Kezar (2013) pointed out that these part-time, non-tenure-track faculty require professional development opportunities to meet the requirements often associated with managing large courses, teaching online, or utilizing emergent tools, often without any training or teaching assistants. They argue that professional development is an important indicator of full integration of contingent faculty into the life of the university (Kezar, 2013).

With this need, it is not surprising that the literature suggests a major focus for adjunct faculty development should include the knowledge and skills related to teaching – syllabi development, lesson planning, student engagement, classroom management, learning styles, learning activities, test creation, grading, academic integrity, and best practices (Ellis, 2013; Eney & Davidson, 2012; Jacobson, 2013; Meixner, Kruck & Madden, 2010; Plans, 2010). Other areas to consider in providing professional development for adjunct faculty

include the use of technology (Eney & Davidson, 2012; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden 2010; Plans, 2010); “policies and procedures of the institution [and] professional publication” (Eney & Davidson, 2012, p. 30); “meeting students’ growing needs on a part-time schedule ... [and] keeping up with changes in [one’s] field” (Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010, p. 145). Lyons (2007) acknowledged common needs of all adjunct faculty members, such as thorough orientations, professional development, assistance with pedagogical matters, while additional research also highlight the importance of recognition for quality work, and a sense of belonging to the institution (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gideon, 2007; Lyons, 2007). However, adjunct faculty members’ professional development preferences and barriers to involvement remain inadequately documented. Johnson and Stevens (2008) noted that adjunct faculty are divided in their preferences for online versus face-to-face training experiences. McLawhon and Cutright (2012) asserted that video tutorials are important for online faculty who are themselves largely aural learners. Such findings indicate a need to investigate the format (timing and modality) of professional development offerings. In looking at factors of motivation for (and obstacles to) adjunct faculty participation, McMartin, et al. (2008) identified “time” and “availability of useful materials” as barriers in the use of digital libraries as sources for personal faculty development. Indeed, a review of the literature on adjunct faculty engagement reveals a lack of research directly soliciting and addressing their perceptions, needs, motivations, and barriers, in particular those of *online* adjunct faculty members.

As adjunct faculty roles have grown more critical to the success of higher education institutions across the spectrum, the perspectives and preferences of adjunct faculty must be further investigated through quantitative and qualitative measures in order to better support their work (Fagan-Wilen, Spinger, Ambrosino, & White, 2006). The purpose of this study is to examine online adjunct faculty members’ preferences for faculty development initiatives. More specifically, researchers chose to investigate the following research question: *What do online adjunct faculty perceive as the greatest motivators and barriers to engagement in professional development?*

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample comprised 649 faculty members currently teaching an online course in an adjunct role at the post-secondary level. All faculty respondents indicated that they taught courses in an adjunct capacity; the majority identified adjunct teaching as their primary

academic role (84.5%), with the remaining respondents (15.5%) reporting primary academic roles in administrative or support capacities with a secondary role as an adjunct instructor. Data for all faculty respondents (those with both a primary or secondary role as an adjunct) was aggregated for analysis. The mean age of participants was 43.72 years with a range from 26 to 79 years; 38.7% were male and 61.3% female. Sixty-five percent of faculty respondents indicated a master's degree as their highest degree achieved, with the remaining 35% holding a doctorate. On average, participants had 6.82 years of college teaching experience with 3.98 years of experience teaching in an online environment.

## Procedures

Investigators emailed a request to complete an anonymous online survey to all adjunct faculty members teaching an online course at a large, private university; in addition, recipients were asked to forward the request for participation to other faculty within the target profile of online adjunct instructors. Per the nature of this snowball approach to participant solicitation, the response rate for this study is unknown, as there is no data on the number of faculty who ultimately received a request to participate. Potential participants had access to the online survey for six weeks. Within the six-week period of the active survey, 692 faculty members opened and/or started the survey with 649 participants submitting survey responses (93.8% completion rate).

Due to the nature of the participant solicitation process and the focus on the individual faculty member (rather than institution type), no data is available targeting institutional context (i.e., 2-year or 4-year; public, private, or for-profit; etc.), online program (i.e., enrollments, expectations, term length, etc.), or online course (i.e., discipline, class size, structure, etc.). Rather, the process allowed researchers to focus on aggregated data from a diverse pool of online adjunct instructors to ascertain their perspectives on faculty development. Respondents voluntarily participated in the study; informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the online survey in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval the investigators obtained prior to conducting the survey. Participants submitted the online survey upon completion and all data was coded for analysis.

## Materials

An online survey was created to measure faculty participants' perceptions about the value, relevance, and utility of various types of faculty development programming. Survey questions targeted personal demographics (age, ethnicity, comfort with computers);

academic history (academic rank, experience teaching/developing online courses); and five broad aspects of faculty development: 1) format, 2) importance, 3) timing, 4) motivation, and 5) barriers (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gideon, 2007; Johnson & Stevens, 2008; Lyons, 2007; McLawhon & Cutright, 2012; McMartin, et al., 2008).

**Format.** To examine preferences for the format of faculty development programming most desired, participants were asked "*Which of the following faculty development venues would you be most likely to utilize?*" A listing of possible formats (see Table 3) was provided; faculty rated each format on a 5-point scale from 1 ("would not use") to 5 ("definitely use").

**Importance.** To assess the relative importance of the structure underlying faculty development initiatives, participants were asked "*Rate the importance of each of the following items.*" Faculty rated the importance of five dimensions of structure: 1) collaborations and conversation with other faculty; 2) independent participation; 3) personal engagement; 4) engagement with faculty members from shared discipline; and 5) engagement with faculty members from other disciplines. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point scale from 1 ("not important") to 5 ("very important"). Additionally, to examine differences in the perceived value of professional development programming as a function of the sponsoring entity, faculty respondents were asked, "*Are you more likely to take advantage of faculty development resources offered through:*" with response choices of 1) distance learning area, 2) centralized teaching/learning center, or 3) academic department.

**Timing.** Online adjunct faculty members' preferences for the frequency of professional development initiatives were examined via the question, "*With what level of regularity would you take advantage of development opportunities at your institution?*" The following response options were provided: 1) 1-2 times during an academic year; 2) 3-5 times during an academic year; 3) 6+ times during an academic year; 4) when motivated by an instructional problem or opportunity; 5) per the policies put forth for retention or promotion; 6) depends on the format and venue of the faculty development initiative; 7 other (please specify).

**Motivation.** The motivation for online adjunct instructors' participation in faculty development initiatives was examined with three target questions. First, faculty respondents were asked to "*rate your motivation to participate in faculty development initiatives*" according to the level of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. For each of the two dimensions (intrinsic or extrinsic motivation), faculty participants responded on a 5-point scale from 1 ("none") to 5 ("very"). To follow up on this question, faculty members were asked to "*Rate the extent to which*

each of the following institutional and/or intrinsic rewards would motivate you to participate in faculty development opportunities.” For each of the potential motivators listed (see Table 9), faculty respondents rated their motivation on a 5-point scale from 1 (“not a source of motivation”) to 5 (“major source of motivation”). In addition, faculty respondents were provided a single open-ended question that stated, “What is your greatest motivation for participating in faculty development initiatives?”

**Barriers.** To examine barriers preventing or limiting online adjunct faculty participation in professional development initiatives, faculty participants were asked to “Rate the extent to which each of the following potential barriers interferes with your participation or engagement in faculty development initiatives.” A list of potential barriers was provided (see Table 11); faculty rated each on a 5-point scale from 1 (“not a barrier”) to 5 (“significant barrier”). Faculty respondents were also provided an open-ended question prompting, “What is your greatest barrier preventing participation in faculty development initiatives?”

## Results

Quantitative data was analyzed via aggregation of numerical Likert-ratings using frequency of responses and mean score comparisons. A qualitative content analysis was completed on the two open-ended survey responses to identify common themes in the data; following traditional exploratory content analysis guidelines (see Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003 for an overview of the content analysis process), responses were coded and categorized based on emerging trends.

### Format

Results examining faculty preferences for the format of faculty development programming reveal that online adjunct instructors prefer independent, static, multimedia resources over other forms of interaction. As seen in Table 1, the highest scoring initiatives (scored on a 5-point scale; 1 = “would not use”; 5 = “definitely use”) included: 1) self-paced, online modules with lectures and interactive components, 2) static best prac-

Table 1. Mean Preference for Faculty Development Initiatives

Mean Score	Faculty Development Initiative
3.94	Self-paced online modules (short courses) with lectures and interactive components but no threaded discussions
3.77	Static best practices examples
3.68	Static multimedia presentations
3.50	Archived recordings of webinars
3.49	Moderated threaded discussions you can participate in over a specified time period
3.49	Facilitator-led, asynchronous online modules with lectures, interactive components and threaded discussions for a cohort of faculty
3.49	Static web pages
3.46	Individual consultations on teaching via email or online communication
3.37	Static white papers
3.34	Moderated threaded discussions that are open with no specified beginning or ending time period
3.32	Peer review of teaching materials via email or online communication
3.28	Live webinars
3.23	Individual consultations on teaching via live interaction
3.18	Video-conferencing seminars
3.17	Peer review of teaching via observation
3.10	Conference calls with multiple participants
2.98	Virtual assistants (i.e. avatar-led webquests),
2.96	Live chat sessions
2.93	Professional communities networked via Facebook, Linkedin, etc.
2.77	Archived recordings of chats



tices examples, and 3) static multimedia presentations. In contrast, initiatives receiving the lowest preference rankings included chat sessions (live or archived) and social networking (i.e., Facebook or LinkedIn).

To examine trends in online adjuncts' preferred formats for professional development initiatives, each

listed initiative was classified according to timing (synchronous or asynchronous), interaction (interactive or non-interactive), collaboration (independent or collaborative), and multimedia (multimedia or non-multimedia). As shown in Table 2, the trend analysis revealed that online adjunct faculty members overwhelmingly prefer

**Table 2. Faculty Development Initiatives Categorized by Timing, Interaction, Collaboration and Multimedia**

Rank	Faculty Development Initiative	Timing		Interaction		Collaboration		Multimedia	
		Asynchronous	Synchronous	Interactive	Non-Interactive	Independent	Collaborative	Multimedia	Non-Multimedia
1	Self-paced online modules (short courses) with lectures and interactive components but no threaded discussions	X		X		X		X	
2	Static best practices examples	X			X	X			X
3	Static multimedia presentations	X			X	X		X	
4	Archived recordings of webinars	X			X	X		X	
6 (tie)	Moderated threaded discussions you can participate in over a specified time period	X		X			X		X
6 (tie)	Facilitator-led, asynchronous online modules with lectures, interactive components and threaded discussions for a cohort of faculty	X		X			X	X	
6 (tie)	Static web pages	X			X	X		X	
8	Individual consultations on teaching via email or online communication	X		X			X		X
9	Static white papers	X			X	X			X
10	Moderated threaded discussions that are open with no specified beginning or ending time period	X		X			X		X
11	Peer review of teaching materials via email or online communication	X		X			X		X
12	Live webinars		X	X			X	X	
13	Individual consultations on teaching via live interaction		X	X			X		X
14	Video-conferencing seminars		X	X			X	X	
15	Peer review of teaching via observation		X	X			X		X
16	Conference calls with multiple participants		X	X			X		X
17	Virtual assistants (i.e. avatar-led webquests),	X			X	X		X	
18	Live chat sessions		X	X			X		X
19	Professional communities networked via Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.	X		X			X		X
20	Archived recordings of chats	X			X	X			X

asynchronous opportunities, with 100% of the ten highest ranked initiatives being offered in an asynchronous format. In addition, there was a strong preference for independently completed initiatives over those requiring collaboration: Of the eight initiatives relying on independent participation, six were ranked in the top ten most desired professional development formats. In contrast, there was not a clear preference for collaboration (50% of top ten initiatives classified as independent; 50% collaborative) or multimedia (50% of top ten initiatives classified as multimedia; 50% non-multimedia).

As indicated in Table 3, when examining online adjuncts' preferences for professional development initiatives, it is important to note that while no aspects of programming were consistently deemed as useless or undesirable, there was also no single aspect of faculty development programming indicated to be universally utilized by online adjuncts. To examine the overall predicted faculty use of each initiative, those responses indicating "likely use" or "definitely use" were combined independent of the "neutral" or "would not use" and "might not use" responses. Serving as an indicator of

**Table 3. Distribution of Faculty Preference Scores for Faculty Development Programming Formats**

Faculty Development Format	Would not use	Might use	Neutral	Likely use	Definitely use	Overall Predicted Faculty Use
Self-paced online modules (short courses) with lectures and interactive components but no threaded discussions	3.90%	9.50%	12.20%	37.20%	37.20%	74.40%
Static best practices examples	3.50%	8.40%	22.30%	39.00%	26.90%	65.90%
Static multimedia presentations	3.40%	9.60%	25.60%	38.20%	23.20%	61.40%
Archived recordings of webinars	7.40%	17.70%	14.10%	39.30%	21.50%	60.80%
Facilitator-led, asynchronous online modules (short courses) with lectures, interactive components and threaded discussions for a cohort of faculty	8.40%	14.20%	17.80%	39.30%	20.30%	59.60%
Moderated threaded discussions you can participate in over a specified time period	7.30%	16.00%	17.00%	39.40%	20.20%	59.60%
Individual consultations on teaching via email or online communication	8.00%	14.40%	20.70%	37.80%	19.10%	56.90%
Moderated threaded discussions that are open with no specified beginning or ending time period	11.10%	16.60%	18.90%	34.40%	19.10%	53.50%
Live webinars	11.10%	22.50%	13.80%	32.40%	20.20%	52.60%
Static web pages	5.90%	9.70%	33.00%	32.70%	18.70%	51.40%
Peer review of teaching materials via email or online communication	9.30%	15.70%	24.30%	35.10%	15.70%	50.80%
Individual consultations on teaching via live interaction	12.10%	16.30%	24.20%	31.10%	16.30%	47.40%
Static white papers	7.70%	10.80%	34.50%	30.80%	16.20%	47.00%
Conference calls with multiple participants	14.20%	21.70%	18.60%	30.90%	14.60%	45.50%
Peer review of teaching via observation	12.50%	17.40%	25.70%	29.60%	14.90%	44.50%
Videoconferencing seminars	12.00%	15.70%	29.20%	28.80%	14.30%	43.10%
Live chat sessions	18.40%	22.50%	17.50%	28.10%	13.40%	41.50%
Professional communities networked via Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.	20.20%	17.60%	24.30%	25.00%	13.00%	38.00%
Virtual assistants (i.e. avatar-led webquests),	14.90%	16.90%	34.70%	22.30%	11.20%	33.50%
Archived recordings of chats	23.70%	19.70%	23.50%	22.50%	10.60%	33.10%
<i>Mean Percentage</i>	10.75%	15.65%	22.60%	32.70%	18.33%	

where programming may have the most impact, 11 of the 20 listed faculty development formats demonstrated an overall faculty use of over 50%.

### *Importance*

An examination of the relative importance of the structure underlying faculty development initiatives revealed that “independent completion” of faculty development programming initiatives was deemed the most important consideration for online adjunct instructors. As seen in Table 4, the highest scoring considerations (scored on a 5-point scale; 1 = “not important”; 5 = “very important”) were independent completion and personal engagement; of least importance was engagement with faculty from other disciplines.

Examining the distribution of importance ratings across all dimensions, Table 5 shows that online adjunct faculty consistently rate collaborations with other faculty, collaboration with departmental colleagues, independence, and personal engagement as having “major importance.” The only dimension receiving less consistent endorsement was engagement with colleagues from other departments; while this dimension

was not rated as highly as the others, it is worth noting that faculty did not rate this dimension as having low/minor importance but rather were more neutral on the potential value of this type of interaction. It is interesting to note that while faculty consistently indicated a preference for independent, self-paced faculty development opportunities, they also signaled that collaboration with other faculty and departmental colleagues was important. This apparent discrepancy may highlight a disconnect between departmental initiatives and university-wide professional development. Namely, faculty may view faculty development in isolation from the academic department. As such, adjunct faculty may not see professional development initiatives as a means to facilitate collaboration with departmental colleagues or as a gateway to increased interaction with other adjuncts or full-time faculty in their academic departments, but rather as a highly individualized pursuit for growth and development.

An analysis of the perceived value of professional development programming as a function of the sponsoring department, program, or organization found that online adjunct faculty are most likely to participate in

**Table 4. Mean Importance Score for Faculty Development Initiatives**

Importance Dimensions	Mean Score
How important is it to you to have access to faculty development resources or activities you can complete independently?	4.27
How important to you is your own ongoing engagement with faculty development materials?	4.04
How important is it to you to engage with other faculty from your discipline in faculty development activities?	3.89
How important is it to you that faculty development involves collaborations and conversation with other faculty?	3.77
How important is it to you to engage with faculty from other disciplines during faculty development activities?	3.22

**Table 5. Distribution of Importance Ratings**

Importance Dimensions	Not important	Minor importance	Neutral	Major importance	Very important
How important is it to you that faculty development involves collaborations and conversation with other faculty?	3.0%	8.7%	21.7%	42.1%	24.6%
How important is it to you to have access to faculty development resources or activities you can complete independently?	.9%	3.1%	9.4%	41.7%	44.9%
How important to you is your own ongoing engagement with faculty development materials?	1.4%	4.4%	16.7%	44.1%	33.4%
How important is it to you to engage with other faculty from your discipline in faculty development activities?	2.8%	6.1%	19.8%	41.4%	29.8%
How important is it to you to engage with faculty from other disciplines during faculty development activities?	10.0%	15.0%	33.5%	26.5%	15.1%

professional development opportunities offered through the distance learning area (46.5%). As shown in Table 6, online adjuncts also indicated a high likelihood of participating in programming sponsored by the academic department, but were considerably less likely to engage in activities coordinated through a centralized teaching and learning center. This preference for programming offered via the distance learning center or the academic department may highlight adjunct faculty members' focus on professional development activities that are directly relevant to teaching within a specific modality, in this case online. As such, adjunct faculty members may not be as interested in generalized professional development, but rather they prioritize those activities that are more immediate to their role and more visible to those responsible for the review and retention of adjunct faculty. In addition, this preference may be indicative of how adjunct faculty members identify themselves within the institution; rather than a broad affiliation with the university, those teaching in a part-time, online capacity may identify more strongly with their specific community of online counterparts. Analysis of the open-ended responses (indicated as "other") also showed a preference of adjunct instructors to attend workshops and seminars sponsored independent of the university, featuring experts on both online pedagogy and discipline-specific topics.

*Timing*

An examination of the frequency of faculty development programming revealed that online adjunct instructors seek regular, but limited, opportunities for professional development. As shown in Table 7, 62% of online adjunct faculty respondents would participate in 1-5 initiatives per year (31.7% indicated 3-5 programs; 30.6% indicated 1-2 programs), but less than 10% of faculty respondents were interested in 6 or more professional development opportunities per year. As highlighted by the response option and in the open-ended (other) analysis, online adjunct faculty communicated that format, topic and timing of professional development initiatives are key considerations in their attendance at these initiatives.

*Motivation*

A comparative examination of online adjunct faculty members' motivations in professional development activities, as a function of intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards, revealed that the faculty respondents were slightly more motivated (3.98 on a 5-point scale in which 1 = "none" and 5 = "very") by intrinsic rewards such as a desire for professional growth or enhanced teaching effectiveness than extrinsic rewards (3.66) offered by the institution such as retention, pay increases, or teaching awards. As shown in Table 8, faculty respondents indi-

**Table 6. Likelihood of Participating in Programming as a Function of Sponsoring Organization**

Are you more likely to take advantage of faculty development resources offered through:	Response Percent
your distance learning area	46.5%
your academic department	36.4%
a centralized teaching/learning center	12.1%
Other (please specify)	5.0%

**Table 7. Frequency of Desired Faculty Development Programming**

With what level of regularity would you take advantage of development opportunities at your institution?	Response Percent
3-5 times during an academic year	31.7%
1-2 times during an academic year	30.6%
Depends on the format and venue of the faculty development initiative.	18.2%
6+ times during an academic year	9.3%
When motivated by an instructional problem or opportunity.	4.9%
Per the policies put forth for retention or promotion.	3.1%
Other (please specify)	2.2%



cated that both intrinsic and institutional rewards serve as “considerable” or “very” motivating for encouraging online adjunct participation.

To more closely examine specific motivators for encouraging online adjunct faculty members’ participation in professional development, respondents rated potential motivators on a 5-point scale from 1 (“not a source of motivation”) to 5 (“major source of motivation”). As

shown in Table 9, four of the 17 incentive options were classified as primarily intrinsic motivation; all of these listed intrinsic motivators (e.g., desire to enhance teaching, professional growth, personal interest, and professional satisfaction) were rated as highly motivating for participation in faculty development initiatives (4 of the top 6 motivating factors were intrinsic incentives). In addition to the intrinsic factors, adjunct online faculty

**Table 8. Comparison of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation to Participate in Professional Development**

Rate your motivation to participate in faculty development initiatives.	Percentage of Faculty Motivations					Mean Score
	none	some	neutral	considerable	very	
To what extent is your involvement in faculty development activities motivated by intrinsic rewards (such as a desire for professional growth or enhanced teaching effectiveness)?	2.8%	8.2%	10.1%	45.4%	33.4%	3.98
To what extent is your involvement in faculty development activities motivated or enhanced by institutional rewards (such as retention, pay increases, awards or other forms of recognition)?	7.6%	11.5%	16.2%	36.4%	28.3%	3.66

**Table 9. Mean Score for Motivation/Incentive Rewards for Faculty Development**

Rate the extent to which each of the following institutional and/or intrinsic rewards would motivate you to participate in faculty development opportunities.	Motivation Source		Mean Score
	Intrinsic - Internal	Extrinsic – Institutional	
desire to enhance teaching	X		4.31
pay increases		X	4.27
professional growth	X		4.24
personal interest	X		4.13
monetary compensation for training		X	4.10
professional satisfaction	X		4.07
retention		X	4.03
scheduling priority		X	3.94
promotion		X	3.92
free professional membership		X	3.68
free trainings through professional organizations/associations		X	3.59
teaching awards		X	3.57
free publication (i.e., book, journal or video)		X	3.54
faculty recognition		X	3.53
funding for externally-sponsored events or conferences		X	3.47
professional development certificate		X	3.41
free online webinars		X	3.34

respondents also reported that monetary compensation (either in the form of pay increases or compensation for training) provided considerable incentive to engage in professional development.

An examination of the distribution of the incentive ratings for participation in faculty development (see Table 10), showed that, as a collective, online adjunct faculty are widely open to all avenues for motivating engagement in professional development initiatives. The mean percentage for all non-motivating ratings (combination of “not a source of motivation” and “minor motivation”) was 12.64%, while the mean percentage of motivating ratings (combination of “considerable motivation” and “major source of motivation”) was 69.09%. Thus, regardless of the specific type of incentive, online adjunct faculty indicated an increased motivation to participate in professional development as a function of the integration of explicit rewards or benefits.

An analysis of the open-ended question asking online adjunct faculty “*What is your greatest motivation for participating in faculty development initiatives?*”

revealed that faculty respondents overwhelmingly reported professional growth, competence, and personal development as the primary motivating factors. But, along with this emphasis on intrinsic rewards, a frequent theme included monetary compensation for the time investment required to participate in professional development activities. Thus, while the content analysis revealed a consistent emphasis on intrinsic motivation, it also highlighted that the limited, contractual nature of the adjunct position, with an exclusive focus on teaching, creates dissonance due to non-compensated time investment required for participating in professional development. As described by one respondent,

I attend the faculty development workshops because I am truly committed to being a better online instructor. Since teaching is not my primary job, I appreciate the opportunities to stay up-to-date on the latest pedagogies relevant to my online classroom. But, knowing that I may dedicate several hours towards becoming a more effective teacher, it would be nice to be compensated for my time. In the end, the university will benefit from

**Table 10. Distribution of Motivation Rewards for Online Adjunct Faculty Participation in Professional Development**

Rate the extent to which each of the following institutional and/or intrinsic rewards would motivate you to participate in faculty development opportunities.	Not a source of motivation	Minor motivation	Neutral	Considerable motivation	Major source of motivation
personal interest	1.6%	4.1%	8.9%	51.2%	34.3%
desire to enhance teaching	.8%	2.7%	5.6%	46.4%	44.5%
professional satisfaction	1.9%	4.1%	13.8%	45.8%	34.5%
professional growth	1.6%	3.1%	9.2%	42.3%	43.8%
monetary compensation for training	2.0%	5.8%	14.6%	34.9%	42.7%
pay increases	1.3%	4.4%	10.2%	34.1%	50.0%
teaching awards	7.6%	12.1%	22.0%	32.1%	26.1%
faculty recognition	8.2%	11.8%	23.6%	31.9%	24.5%
professional development certificate	11.7%	10.9%	25.0%	29.1%	23.3%
scheduling priority	4.1%	6.9%	15.8%	37.5%	35.7%
retention	3.9%	3.5%	17.0%	37.3%	38.3%
promotion	5.6%	4.2%	20.1%	33.1%	37.0%
funding for externally-sponsored events or conferences	10.5%	8.1%	29.0%	28.8%	23.6%
free online webinars	12.7%	9.4%	28.5%	29.9%	19.4%
free trainings through professional organizations/associations	10.0%	6.1%	23.2%	35.5%	25.1%
free publication (i.e., book, journal or video)	10.4%	8.0%	23.6%	33.2%	24.8%
free professional membership	9.0%	6.9%	20.2%	34.4%	29.5%
<i>Mean Percentage</i>	6.05%	6.59%	18.25%	36.32%	32.77%

my professional development, so it seems fair that I am paid for this aspect of my work.

## Barriers

An analysis of the barriers preventing participation with (or engagement in) professional development initiatives found that the greatest challenge for online adjunct faculty is the scheduling of programming ( $M = 3.34$  on a 5-point scale with 1 = “not a barrier” and 5 = “significant barrier”), followed by concerns that programming topics are not of interest ( $M = 3.02$ ). As shown in Table 11, the mean scores of all listed barriers were between 2.73 and 3.34; as such, the mean perception for all barriers hovered near “neutral.”

The neutrality of online adjunct faculty in relationship to barriers was echoed in an examination of the distribution of ratings (see Table 12). The most common response in all barrier categories (with the exception of “scheduling of programming”) was “neutral;” in addition, the highest mean percentage of responses (32.22%) was in the “neutral” category as well. An ex-

amination of the combined indicators (“major barrier” and “significant barrier”) showed that only 34.18% of respondents felt that there were significant barriers preventing participation or engagement in faculty development initiatives.

An examination of the open-ended responses asking online adjunct faculty “*What is your greatest barrier preventing participation in faculty development initiatives?*” found that a lack of time was consistently cited as the greatest barrier to participation. Thus, while related to the issue of scheduling, the primary concern was not when the initiatives were scheduled, but rather having the time available to participate. As one respondent stated,

I am strongly committed to being a better teacher, but the reality of working adjunct in addition to my fulltime job is that I rarely have the time available in my schedule to participate in professional development opportunities regardless of the topic, relevance or scheduling. Simply put, I do not have time to fit professional development activities into an already overwhelmed schedule.

**Table 11. Mean Score of Barriers to Participation in Professional Development**

Rate the extent to which each of the following potential barriers interferes with your participation or engagement in faculty development initiatives.	Mean Score
scheduling of programming	3.34
programming topics not relevant	3.02
programming initiatives not timely	2.93
not aware of initiatives	2.91
lack of interest in programming topics	2.81
dissatisfaction with the mode of programming delivery	2.73

**Table 12. Distribution of Online Adjunct Faculty’s Perceptions of Barriers to Professional Development**

Rate the extent to which each of the following potential barriers interferes with your participation or engagement in faculty development initiatives.	Not a barrier	Minor barrier	Neutral	Major barrier	Significant barrier
not aware of initiatives	18.0%	17.1%	32.1%	21.8%	10.9%
scheduling of programming	7.9%	17.8%	24.0%	33.2%	17.1%
lack of interest in programming topics	16.5%	21.7%	33.1%	22.2%	6.6%
dissatisfaction with the mode of programming delivery	19.2%	19.7%	36.6%	18.1%	6.5%
programming topics not relevant	14.7%	17.2%	32.1%	23.9%	12.1%
programming initiatives not timely	17.1%	14.7%	35.4%	22.9%	9.8%
Mean Percentage	15.57%	18.03%	32.22%	23.68%	10.50%

## Discussion

In revisiting the research question formulated at the beginning of this article, *“What do online adjunct faculty perceive as the greatest motivators and barriers to engagement in professional development?”*, the analysis reveals three main conclusions: 1) online adjunct faculty are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically by multiple factors, 2) primary barriers to professional development include a lack of time, program scheduling, or a lack of interest in programming, 3) opportunities perceived as optimal are asynchronous, allow for independent completion, and are regularly offered through the department or distance learning center.

While existing research may suggest both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to motivation to participate in professional development (Johnson & Stevens, 2008; McLawhom & Cutright, 2012), findings from this study revealed that the majority of participants (78.8%) were *intrinsically* motivated to engage in professional development. Such intrinsic motivation included the desire for professional growth and the opportunity to improve teaching effectiveness. Against the backdrop of these factors stands the strong motivation provided by economic incentives (64.7%), including pay increases, course scheduling priority, and retention. Hence, the findings suggest the dual importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, mitigated by practical considerations related to awareness of professional development opportunities and access. Respondents prioritized pragmatic features such as delivery format, modality, and scheduling alongside the desire for programs which respond to their personal interests, enhance their teaching and professional growth, and which foster collaboration and connection to a broader academic community.

Research has demonstrated the value of promoting self-directed learning among professionals (Knowles, 2005); similarly, the benefits of on-demand resources for online professional development were evident in our results. Not surprisingly, asynchronous, platform-independent development opportunities that can be accessed “on demand,” and to which adjunct faculty can return for reference, reflect the professional realities of adjunct faculty – many of whom teach at multiple institutions (44%) and balance full-time positions outside of academia. Self-paced online short courses, static multimedia presentations (McLawhon & Cutright, 2012) and self-paced online modules place the greatest amount of control and scheduling in the hands of the instructor and combat the highest reported barriers to participation: scheduling and time. Despite the popularity of call-in or web-based synchronous professional development workshops, adjunct faculty reported the least preference for these formats.

Such practical concerns, however, may not hold as much sway as faculty developers may assume. As the data showed, while the majority of respondents (74.4%) indicated preference for asynchronous faculty development formats, almost a quarter (22.6%) of online adjunct faculty respondents indicated no strong preference for or against the various faculty development venues. This high rate of non-committed perspectives suggests that devising innovative and accessible faculty development programs is matched in importance by attention to other motivational factors, such as offering topics of interest which engage participants in meaningful development of their teaching practice.

Compensation for training, salary increases, job security, and control over one’s schedule are tangible outcomes valued significantly above faculty development awards and other forms of institutional recognition, independent of type or platform of programming. This finding may place a check on the tendency of institutions to rely on teaching awards as a central mechanism for demonstrating recognition of adjunct faculty, and may highlight the disconnect between compensation decisions related to the importance of teaching (Fairweather, 1993). While teaching awards may hold significance in the promotion and tenure process for full-time faculty, such awards may hold little value beyond personal satisfaction for adjunct faculty. Further, regardless of the perceived accessibility of the program or its engaging design – arguably primary concerns of most faculty developers – the absence of tangible outcomes largely determines adjunct faculty involvement. While adjunct faculty pay certainly falls outside of the scope of authority of most teaching centers, these findings compel developers to advocate to their chief academic officers for the integration of faculty development programs into the scheduling and compensation schemes for adjunct faculty. Beyond extrinsic motivations in the form of compensation, it can be argued that the relevance of topics and the opportunity for immediate application of skills and knowledge should be examined as motivations for adjunct faculty involvement in professional development (Knowles, 2005; McMartin, et al., 2008).

### Barriers

As indicated in previous research (McMartin et al., 2008), two of the most significant barriers to participation in professional development are time and interest. This study confirmed the barriers of scheduling of programming, relevance of programming, and time to participate; however, respondents to the survey rated common barriers almost equally, with responses hovering near a “neutral” rating (only 34.18% of respondents reported that there exist significant barriers to their in-



volvement). This finding may suggest that, in reality, it is a combination of barriers that actually influences the participation of online adjunct faculty members in professional development opportunities – in other words, no particular ranking of barriers may exist – which further reinforces the importance of adjunct instructor input in professional development programming. With that said, the open-ended responses frequently cited time as a barrier, confirming the fact that many adjunct instructors are either balancing full-time work outside of their institution or are engaged in part-time teaching at several institution (Pankin & Weiss, n.d.). Here, the open-ended responses to a different survey question, the one regarding preferences related to the entities sponsoring faculty development initiatives, may come into focus. The stated preference for institution-independent resources (e.g., workshops or conferences sponsored by local or national professional development organizations) may reflect a lack of adjunct instructor identification with the institution or institutions s/he may be affiliated within in a given academic year (Kezar, 2013).

### Optimal Opportunities

Professional development programs for adjunct faculty must consider the importance of fostering identification with the institution and, in particular, the academic departments (Kezar, 2013). While adjunct faculty teaching day courses are often hired and mentored by full-time faculty in the academic department, adjunct instructors teaching online or at satellite campuses may report most directly to administrative personnel in distance learning or continuing education. Faculty development programs that involve academic departments can attract adjunct faculty involvement around course or program-specific themes. Inviting full-time faculty to facilitate time-delineated online discussions or to record and post virtual presentations brings the presence of academic departments into the professional development experiences of adjunct faculty. These programs help foster communities around topics, strategies, and content specific to their work as teachers. As adjunct faculty have the opportunity to learn not only about effective teaching but how effective teaching is defined institutionally by their departments, they can build identification and affiliation with their full-time faculty colleagues.

### Limitations and Future Research

The following limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. Per the nature of the snowball approach to participant engagement, and the

emphasis on individual preferences over contextual factors, no information was collected on institution type. It is possible that many of the preferences reported by adjunct faculty in this sample may be a function of the structure, format, and organizational setting inherent in their institution. Follow-up investigations should examine potential differences in the preferences and barriers of faculty development programming as constrained by institutional factors (i.e., small vs. large; private vs. public; nonprofit vs. profit; department-centric vs. mode-centric; etc.). In addition, the focus of this study is on those teaching in an online format; as such, generalizations cannot necessarily be made to campus-based adjunct instructors. Caution should be taken when generalizing the findings of this study related to the mode of instruction, as faculty member's physical proximity to campus may be an important factor in their preferences and barriers for professional development. Additional research would also benefit from an examination of the specific topics of interest for online adjunct faculties.

It is also important to note that in most research the "adjunct faculty population" is referred to as an aggregate body of instructors who are grouped according to their part-time status. However, when considering the motivations and preferences of adjunct faculty, it is equally important to understand the characteristics and circumstances that drive their behaviors as individuals. In their book, *The Invisible Faculty* (1993), Gappa and Leslie identified a typology of adjunct instructor lifestyles, motivation, and distinctions:

- *Specialists, experts, or professionals* have full-time employment outside their part-time teaching responsibilities and teach to share their expertise, to network with community members, and/or repay a psychological debt to an educator from their past.
- *Freelancers* are employed in two or more part-time jobs or even a regular full-time job at another college. This category often includes artists/musicians who supplement their income in this way.
- *Career enders* are professionals who are near or at the end of their work lives but want to maintain contact with the professional world. Previously a small part of the adjunct population, retiring baby boomers are contributing to the rapid growth of this group.
- *Aspiring academics* are usually at the outset of their academic careers and are using part-time teaching assignments as a way to earn income while exploring full-time job opportunities. (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gideon, 2007; Lyons, 2007)

Future research could utilize this framework to examine individual differences and motivating forces among adjunct instructors, which should also be consid-

ered in the development of professional programming to support their work.

Thus, in order to further validate and extend the results of this research, the measurement should be repeated across different institutional settings and should involve online adjunct and campus-based adjunct faculty. Furthermore, analyzing results via adjunct profile (i.e., freelancer, retired, etc.) would also be of interest to build literature in this domain. Finally, research is needed to identify, more specifically, which programs and faculty development initiatives are most successful for improving engagement and removing barriers.

## Conclusion

As institutions of higher education become increasingly reliant upon adjunct faculty (Bombardieri, 2006; Finder, 2007; NCES, 2010), it is vital to provide resources, access, and points of engagement that enable these instructors to build collegiality and participation in meaningful professional development opportunities. Such involvement will not only benefit the adjunct instructor but can also positively affect the institution and student learning. Research points toward the need to provide professional development opportunities for adjunct instructors (Kezar, 2013; Lester, 2011), yet does not clearly indicate the optimal strategies for doing so, nor the preferences and perspectives from adjunct instructors. In addition to confirming the need for adjunct engagement in professional development, this research taps into the voices and perspectives of online adjunct faculty, yielding insight into the professional growth priorities and development preferences of this unique population. Key findings include: increased adjunct communication practices, mobilizing on-demand resources to support online adjunct instructor work, and offering opportunities for professional development and career growth which institutionalize incentives for participation. While a single, generalizable model does not exist, research (Ellis, 2013; Eney & Davidson, 2012; Jacobson, 2013; Meixner, Kruck & Madden, 2010; Plans, 2010) points to the importance of both practical – timely, relevant content accessible on adjunct faculty's own terms – and philosophical concerns – opportunities to engage in community around discipline or program-specific topics, issues, and concerns. As suggested by this research, directly soliciting the perspectives and thereby honoring the experiences of adjunct faculty members produces knowledge that can aid faculty developers in designing relevant and accessible professional opportunities – ones that have the potential to influence pedagogical content knowledge, professional

growth, and degree of adjunct faculty identification with the institution.

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