

Best Practices in Online Faculty Development

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Executive Summary

The rise in online learning means that classrooms now include students and faculty who may live thousands of miles apart, participate at different times of the day and represent a wide range of ages and experiences. Even without face-to-face interaction, good faculty members continue to impact students powerfully. However, quality online teaching may look different from traditional pedagogy. This white paper discusses how to develop a team of expert online faculty members, including recruitment, development and supervision processes. Key highlights include:

The Benefits of Part-time Faculty Members

Part-time teaching is increasingly common on campuses and particularly pronounced in online programs. This trend stems in part from the rise in the percentage of female faculty members; a higher percentage of women teach part-time in general, and since a higher percentage of women teach online, a higher percentage of online faculty members teach part-time.

Institutions should ensure part-time faculty members, who may live all over the country, feel included in the life of the institution.



The per-class faculty salary expense is typically lower for part-time faculty, especially when institutions factor in the cost of full-time benefits. Part-time employees also allow institutions to expand or contract the number of faculty members according to enrollment rates each term. Institutions can also more easily match faculty credentials and expertise to course subject matter when they hire faculty members on a part-time basis.

Although many institutions may worry about the quality of teaching, measurements such as supervisor ratings, student grades and surveys of student satisfaction show no significant differences in the teaching quality of part-time and full-time faculty members. Institutions should, however, make sure part-time online faculty members, who may live all over the country, feel included in the life of the institution. For example, institutions can include online faculty members on faculty committees.

Expectations for Faculty Members

Developing new online programs provides an opportunity for institutions to create clear, reasonable and effective expectations. The faculty handbook should state all expectations, and institutions should include them in faculty orientation performance reviews. When developing online faculty expectations, institutions should establish goals for:

- Orientation and ongoing professional development
- Load and compensation
- Responsibility for course features, such as creating a syllabus, plagiarism information, introduction, welcome and unit introductions and summaries
- Timeliness
- Tone and type of interaction with students

Orientation and Development

Once institutions have hired online faculty members, these new faculty members should participate in an orientation program. An orientation program helps familiarize faculty members with the institution's technology; connects them to the institution's mission, history and values; allows the institution to clearly define expectations; and allows faculty

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members to learn and practice the principles of quality online instruction.

As with face-to-face teaching, faculty members are responsible for pursuing best practices and striving to improve their teaching methods. Institutions should provide opportunities for ongoing faculty development, including:

- Providing membership to professional associations devoted to supporting online faculty members
- Creating a center for online faculty development
- Developing an advisory board for online faculty development
- Hosting a portal or Web site where faculty members can access institutional services, such as training programs, tutorials and documents

Supervision and Review

Although online faculty members are often geographically remote, a well-designed supervision and support system lays the groundwork for solid communication.

Institutions should assign new online faculty members mentors who are not their direct supervisor. Mentors should review their mentees' class prior to the start date; offer weekly meetings to provide feedback and answer questions; review discussion forum participation and reinforce best practices; and review grading and feedback to students to ensure consistency.

Supervisors should observe and review faculty performance regularly. New teachers should be observed two or three times in their first term and then once or twice in subsequent terms. The observation should be followed up with feedback about grading, response time to emails and the amount of class participation. Feedback should also be provided about the faculty member's leadership of the discussion forum, response to student assignments and other classroom interactions.

Finally, institutions should conduct performance reviews at least annually. Performance reviews should provide the above feedback and also include student satisfaction, achievement and performance data.

Differences in Online Teaching

Most people know who won last year's Heisman Trophy, Academy Award for Best Actress, Pulitzer Prize in Literature, or Nobel Peace Prize, but few people can remember who won any of those awards the year before. Fame is fleeting. However, almost everyone can name a teacher who had a positive impact on their lives, even if they had the teacher years ago. They can remember in great detail how that teacher affected them. Online faculty members also have the chance to impact their students in a way they will remember for years to come. This paper outlines some best practices for academic leaders who manage online programs to help them recruit, develop, and supervise faculty members who will provide outstanding student learning experiences.

In 1927, movie theaters showed *The Jazz Singer*, which was the first motion picture to have voice recording. Not long after, this new technology—the “talkies”—replaced movies with subtitles. Some silent movie stars, such as Greta Garbo and Charlie Chaplin, made the transition and retained their popularity. Others, however, soon faded, and people who had more pleasing, interesting voices took their places. Similarly, some faculty members who are highly skilled in face-to-face teaching methods may not be as effective online. Online teaching requires different skills and methods. Faculty members still must have subject expertise and excellent communication skills, but communication takes different forms in online classrooms.

With the advent of the Internet and online learning management systems, online classrooms now include students and faculty members who may live thousands of miles apart, participate at different times of the day, and span a wide range of ages. Online students may never see or hear one another or the faculty member. However, good faculty members continue to have a powerful impact on students. Quality online teaching differs in some ways from quality face-to-face teaching. Individual interaction typically takes the place of group activities. Faculty members “talk” in short bursts via written text rather than in hour-long verbal blocks as in face-to-face classes.

For example, most of the faculty-student interaction occurs in a discussion forum where the faculty member responds to individual student posts. He or she provides feedback, refers the student to other posts and readings, probes for additional insights, draws parallels and helps students connect concepts. Faculty members react and respond to student comments rather than give a lecture or demonstration. The skill of presenting a compelling lecture doesn't apply to the online classroom; there, it is replaced with the skill of stimulating student thinking and learning through multiple, short comments.

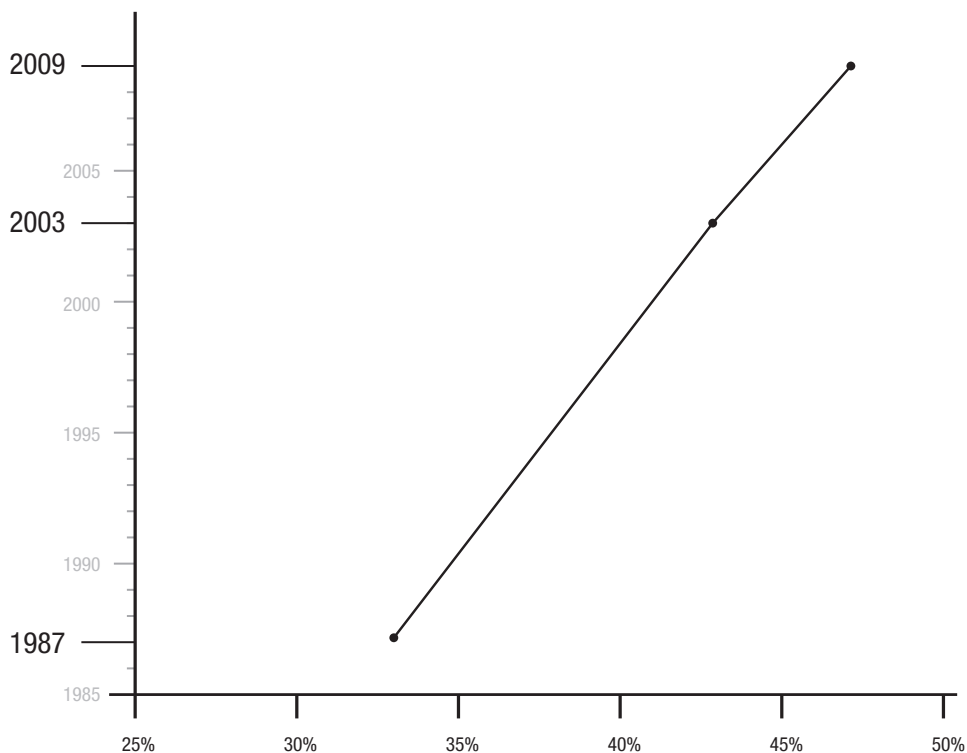
Some outstanding face-to-face teachers have difficulty transferring their skills to the online classroom, while other faculty members who may be ineffective in person are able to engage and motivate online students. Online classes enable both faculty members and students to overcome physical obstacles, as well. Poor public speaking skills or physical challenges do not hinder online faculty members as they might in face-to-face classrooms. Regardless of the delivery method, the faculty member is still the key ingredient for an effective class and meaningful student experience.

Laying the Foundation: Composition and Expectations

Pros and Cons of Full-time and Part-time Faculty Members

Full-time and part-time faculty members each bring their own strengths and challenges. Institution leaders need to find the optimum mix of full-time and part-time faculty members based on the institution's needs and preferences.

The percentage of full-time faculty members across all of U.S. higher education has declined steadily from 77.8% in 1970 to 50.7% in 2009 (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). These data describe all faculty members, not just online faculty members. Correspondingly, the percentage of female faculty members in general has steadily increased from 33.2% in 1987 to 43.4% in 2003 to 47.1% in 2009 (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). A higher percentage of part-time faculty are female. In 2003, 38.3% of full-time faculty members were female and 48% of part-time faculty members were female (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). In sum, the percentage of female faculty members and faculty members working part-time is increasing, and based on my experience in for-profit universities, these trends are more pronounced for faculty members teaching online classes.



**Growth in the
percentage of
female faculty
members**

Source: Snyder & Dillow, 2011

Compensation and Workload

From 2009 to 2010, the average full-time faculty salary in the United States was \$74,625, and salaries ranged from \$62,265 at public, two-year institutions to \$80,603 at private, four-year institutions (NCES, 2010). Part-time salaries generally range from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per class depending on the level of the class, discipline, and faculty members' experience and credentials. Given these numbers, the per-class faculty salary expense is typically lower with part-time faculty members, especially when factoring in full-time benefits. Some online institutions set the standard course load for full-time faculty members higher than traditional institutions, but the load would have to be very high before the cost per class would be comparable.

While part-time salaries are lower, the use of part-time faculty increases the workload on some departments. The use of part-time faculty members increases the workload on the human resources department, which typically screens potential employees and manages logistics, such as new employee orientation, employee records and payroll. Academic leaders also have more people with whom they must supervise and communicate. However, part-time employees provide more flexibility to expand or contract the number of faculty members in response to student enrollment patterns.

Faculty Expertise

Faculty members at baccalaureate teaching institutions typically teach four courses per term, and community college faculty members may teach four or five courses per term. In these cases, each faculty member frequently needs to teach courses in multiple disciplines or sub-disciplines, so faculty members must be generalists more than specialists. For example, a faculty member in the history department may need to teach courses in U.S. history, European history, and American government throughout the year.

For smaller institutions, the use of part-time faculty members enables a better match of faculty credentials and expertise to the course subject matter.



Some institutions may be large enough to have multiple sections of courses in the same field and thus employ faculty members from these fields full-time. However, for smaller institutions, the use of part-time faculty members enables a better match of faculty credentials and expertise to the course subject matter. In the example of the history department above, an institution could hire three part-time faculty members who each have an advanced degree in U.S. history, European history, or American government to provide better subject matter expertise. Online classes enable the history chair or academic leader to search for faculty members beyond the commuting range to the campus, thus improving their ability to recruit faculty members who have strong credentials in specific sub-disciplines.

Part-time Faculty Profiles

When using measures such as supervisor ratings, student grades, and surveys of student satisfaction, no significant difference exists in the teaching quality of part-time and full-time faculty members. Part-time faculty members have similar credentials, go through similar recruiting processes, receive similar orientation, training, and supervision, and have similar performance expectations in the classroom.

Part-time faculty members generally fall into four categories, each of which brings unique strengths to the online teaching assignment: retired faculty members, moonlighting faculty, practitioners, and professional adjuncts.

A number of part-time faculty members are retired professors who want to continue to teach at a reduced load and have the flexibility to travel or live in a particular place. Online faculty members have a degree of flexibility in selecting their work hours and almost total flexibility in choosing where to live. Online teaching often appeals to retired faculty, and the institution fortunate enough to hire them gets people who have strong experience. These veterans can also mentor new faculty members and share their wisdom in committee work, curriculum development, and other areas of institutional service.

A related category is current faculty members who enjoy online teaching and want additional income. They may work as full-time faculty members at one institution while teaching online part-time at another.

Practitioners who teach in addition to their regular jobs make up the third category of part-time faculty members. Often, these individuals enjoy teaching and sharing their experience with students. Teaching offers a refreshing change of pace and type of interaction. Practitioners often find online teaching attractive because it allows some flexibility in work hours, travel, and commuting. If the institution uses standard curricula designed by subject matter experts and people trained in instructional design and pedagogy, faculty members primarily respond to students, interact with them, and give feedback via grades. This level of responsibility suits people in this category well. They often have valuable professional experience to share with students, and they bring a type of expertise to the classroom that full-time faculty members may not.

A subset of this category includes people who have stepped out of the workforce to raise a family. They may find it difficult to work part-time in their company or industry, but online teaching allows them to stay current in their field and continue to earn income. Just as online students have the flexibility to plan their study time around family and job commitments, online faculty members can also plan their work time around family obligations.

In online programs, part-time faculty members can participate equally in the decision-making process and the life of the academic unit.



The final category of part-time faculty members is professional adjuncts. Professional adjuncts make their living teaching classes for one or more institutions. They may desire full-time positions but have to live in a certain place due to their spouse's employment or for other reasons, or their field may have an oversupply of candidates, making full-time jobs scarce. Others prefer the flexibility of full-time adjunct work and not dealing with institutional expectations for scholarship and service. Some prefer it because they can earn higher incomes due to their specialty or willingness to take on a large number of classes. Online teaching fits them well because they have access to multiple institutions without having to travel. Regardless of the reason for their status, these people are often excellent online instructors because they teach online often, can use several learning management systems, and know how to employ various technology tools.

Institutional Service

A final consideration when determining the desired mix of full-time and part-time faculty members is their ability to provide service to the college or university. Full-time faculty members are in a better position to serve on committees and perform related assignments, but part-time faculty members can also be effective in these roles. Institutions expect full-time faculty members to serve on standing committees and ad hoc task forces or project teams, and they are more readily available to serve in these roles. Part-time faculty members are often willing to take on short-term or minor assignments, but they expect payment for assignments that require significant amounts of time. Hiring part-timers for committee service or curriculum development often makes economic sense for institutions.

Part-time faculty members may have skills and experience that enable them to be strong contributors to institutional service. I have worked with part-time faculty members who have done excellent work serving in significant roles on the faculty senate and curriculum committee, for example.

Frequently, part-time faculty members on campus feel left out of faculty governance and service. Online programs can help overcome these feelings. For example, if the institution hosts faculty meetings online or via telephone, both full-time or part-time faculty members can participate equally, sharing their views in discussions and receiving important information. Institutions can distribute announcements, newsletters, and other forms of communication from chairs, deans, provosts, and others electronically so all faculty members have equal access. In online programs, part-time faculty members can participate equally in the decision-making process and the life of the academic unit. If academic leaders expect part-time faculty members to actively participate in the unit and then provide the vehicle for

that participation via electronic meetings and communications, the part-timers will respond well and the institution will tap a valuable resource.

In online institutions, part-time faculty members frequently have a long history of service and are considered “regular” members of the faculty. Often they teach only for that institution and are very loyal to it. Academic leaders depend on them to teach each term. Some institutions create an employee class to recognize this level of service, and qualifying part-time faculty members may receive some benefits.

To summarize, institutions must consider a variety of factors when deciding the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty members. These factors differ for online programs and face-to-face programs. Online programs typically have access to a much deeper and broader pool of potential full-time and part-time faculty members, and institutions can easily integrate all faculty members into the life of the academic unit. Financial considerations are important, but part-time faculty members can also increase the expertise of the unit faculty members in terms of credentials, teaching ability, and service to the institution.

What are the expectations for faculty members?

When college or university leaders decide to offer online programs, they have the opportunity to set different expectations for online faculty members than for faculty members who teach face-to-face classes. Does each faculty member design his or her own online version of the course? Does the format of the courses follow a standard template or model? How do online faculty members participate in the life of the academic unit? Do they need to participate in orientation programs? Institutions must create clear, reasonable, and effective expectations that lead to the best possible student experience. Following are areas where institutions may establish expectations. Institutions should state all expectations in the faculty handbook, explain them in the new faculty orientation program, and include them in supervisors’ performance reviews.

Training and Development

Institutions commonly require new faculty members and faculty members who are teaching online for the first time to go through an orientation program to familiarize them with the learning management system, institution policies, and best practices. A number of institutions also expect online faculty members to participate in ongoing faculty development programs so they can stay abreast of technology developments and evolving best practices for online andragogy. Some states require evidence of ongoing faculty development as part of the institutional licensure process. Institutions must publish and share the expectation for initial orientation and ongoing professional development with the faculty members affected.

Load and Compensation

One key factor to keep in mind when determining load and compensation policies is whether or not faculty members are required to design their own version of the course. Because institutions can easily duplicate an online course from one term to the next or across multiple sections, institutions can separate the functions of course design and course teaching. Using standard courses that one faculty member designs but others teach has distinct advantages, including the quality of the course and the ability to use student achievement data to drive course improvement. Using standard courses reduces the workload of faculty members who teach. They do not have to review and select textbooks, write course outcomes, design assignments and grading rubrics, and perform many other time-consuming tasks. Instead, their work consists primarily of communicating with students about the course, leading the conversation in the discussion forum, and grading student assignments with appropriate feedback. If standard courses are used and the faculty member isn’t expected to perform course design work, the normal load may increase for full-time faculty, and the compensation may be lower for part-time faculty and overload assignments.

Load for full-time faculty is set by university policy and online courses are typically treated the same as on-ground courses in calculating load and overload. When determining load for part-time faculty, it is important to understand the legal definition of “part time,” which may be determined by federal and state statutes. Generally, if a faculty member teaches more than three quarters of a normal load, they are considered full time and become eligible for the full range of employee benefits. Consequently, most institutions limit part-time faculty loads to below three-quarters time. Regardless of institutional limits, part-time faculty may teach for multiple institutions so their load may be much heavier. Academic leaders can’t control this, but they can ensure a high-quality student experience in their courses by setting expectations, providing training, and closely supervising their part-time faculty.

Institutions must decide whether to base compensation for part-time and full-time faculty and overloads on the number of students in the class or on a fixed rate for the class. Current common practice is to establish a fixed rate for a class defined by a range of students. For example, the fixed rate may apply to classes with 10 to 20 students. The range depends on the mission of the institution. Liberal arts colleges that pride themselves on small class sizes and high levels of student–faculty member interaction may set the range between 10 and 20 students. Other institutions may be comfortable with a range of 15 to 30. I have reviewed several internal studies on class size and have found no significant difference in student satisfaction, grades, or retention rates in classes ranging from 15 to 30 students. Faculty members report that classes that have too few students are undesirable because the discussion forums do not have enough different viewpoints.

Institutions must create clear, reasonable, and effective expectations that lead to the best possible student experience.



The base rate typically varies by level, with graduate courses having higher rates than undergraduate courses. Institutions may also factor in faculty credentials and experience, but these factors do not correlate with increased student performance or satisfaction.

Once a base rate is set, institutions should add a per-student compensation rate for classes outside the lower and upper limits. When programs first launch, sufficient numbers of students may not “fill” the classes, but institutions must offer the courses. Setting the compensation on a per-student basis makes offering the course cost-effective. For example, the class compensation may be \$2,000 for a class between 10 and 20 students and \$200 per student above and below this range. If only six students register for the class, the compensation would be \$1,200, which is reasonable because the workload is lighter. On the other hand, if 22 students register for the class, it would make more sense to pay the faculty member an

additional \$400 for the two extra students rather than splitting the class into two sections that have 11 students each. Setting a base rate for a course with an enrollment range and then a per-student rate for enrollments outside that range helps to manage instructional costs and to compensate faculty members fairly for the amount of work required.

Responsibility for Course Design

Institutions must decide how much responsibility to give faculty members in course design. Whether each faculty member develops his or her own version of the course or the institution uses a standard version, institutions should set and follow clear expectations for best practice in course design. If the institution uses standardized courses, it still needs to set expectations for each person who designs courses to include certain features. Following are some expectations to consider:

- **Syllabus:** Each faculty member may need to create his or her own version of the syllabus that lists items such as office hours and policies for late work. Some institutions have a standard format for the syllabus and expectations for the information in it.
- **Plagiarism:** Accrediting bodies are especially concerned about cheating and plagiarism in online classes. Some institutions have plagiarism policies that apply a uniform set of penalties, while others leave it to faculty members’ discretion. Either way, each online course should include information about the plagiarism policy and a link to information about plagiarism. Many institutions use a plagiarism detection service such

as Turnitin (www.turnitin.com). If institutions use a service, they should include information about it in the syllabus or class announcements.

- **Introduction and welcome:** Prior to the beginning of class, faculty members should add a welcome to students and information about themselves. People have different opinions about how much and what type of personal information faculty members should share. Because the online environment lacks nonverbal and face-to-face interaction, I favor more information to personalize the student experience. Knowledge about the faculty members' experience, professional qualifications, and personal interests helps put students at ease and encourages participation.
- **Unit introductions and summaries:** Faculty members should also introduce new units or modules, which typically occur each week, and summarize key conclusions or concepts from the previous unit. In an announcement or e-mail to the class, they can highlight key insights from the previous module and introduce important concepts and assignments for the upcoming module. It does not make sense to create these messages as part of the course design process, because they depend on the discussion forum activity and student work.

These four features of a course (the syllabus, plagiarism, introduction and welcome, and unit introductions and summaries) should be part of the expectations for all faculty members teaching online courses. As part of the supervision process, the chair or supervisor should review the course to check that faculty members have included these elements.

Timeliness

Timeliness is not an issue in face-to-face classes because faculty members obviously must attend classes, but online classes run continuously. What is the online equivalent of attending class? Institutions should set expectations in three areas: discussion forum participation, grading student assignments, and office hours. Students participate in discussion forums continuously, so faculty members must read discussion forum posts frequently and respond to students with encouragement, questions, and comments. Participating at least four or five days per week ensures a good student experience. If three or four days pass without input from faculty members, important teaching moments are often missed because the discussion has progressed too far. Students may misunderstand a concept, and faculty members should correct this as soon as possible. Also, student conflicts may occur, and the sooner faculty members can resolve them, the better.

Online classes typically have student assignments such as discussion forum participation, papers, and quizzes due regularly. Online courses are designed for student learning to build from week to week, unit to unit, or module to module. Therefore, faculty members need to provide timely grading of student assignments and feedback so students know how they are doing and if they need to correct something before they move on. Faculty members should grade assignments within a few days of the due date so students can use this feedback as they prepare for the next part of the course. If faculty members wait a week or more before grading assignments, the feedback will not be nearly as helpful to the student.

People debate the need for defined office hours in online classes. It is fairly easy to replace office hours with e-mail communication, and if students need to speak with faculty members, they can schedule a time that works for them both. E-mail can be more useful to students because the response time is quicker and they may never be available during scheduled office hours. If institutional policy requires office hours, faculty members need to post them in the syllabus and class announcements. If e-mail replaces office hours, the institution needs to set a standard response time similar to grading, such as 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on weekends.

Once the institution sets expectations for timeliness, faculty members and their supervisors can easily track performance. The institution's learning management system can sometimes report faculty member participation in the discussion forum and e-mail messaging. Similarly, the grade book feature shows when faculty members graded

student work. Supervisors can view weekly reports of faculty participation. Institutions can automate these reports fairly easily so supervisors can quickly review the record of faculty participation.

Quality Interaction

Institutions should set the most important expectation for faculty members — the tone and type of interaction with students. Faculty member–student interaction occurs in three basic ways: discussion forum participation, feedback on assignments, and e-mail exchanges. Generally, the tone of the interaction should be supportive and encouraging so students feel motivated to apply themselves. The type of interaction should be both penetrating and expansive. Students often need to think more deeply, consider alternative points of view, and gather more knowledge on a topic. Faculty members' comments and questions in grading and discussion forums can stimulate these practices in students.

Types of faculty member-student interaction:

- *Discussion forum participation*
- *Assignment feedback*
- *Email*



Developing online programs at a college or university allows academic leaders to create a culture and set of policies and practices to help online students succeed in their studies. Early on, institutions should set expectations for faculty members and then help the faculty members perform to those expectations. Occasionally, people argue that quality is more important than quantity and so it is inappropriate for academic leaders to set minimum expectations for faculty participation in the classroom. They make the point that high-quality feedback once or twice a week is better than minimal feedback four or five times a week. However, this issue should not be a question of frequency or quality. The participation should be both frequent and high quality for the optimal student experience. Both are important for a good learning experience.

Recruiting Online Faculty Members

Some people believe recruiting faculty members for online teaching assignments is difficult. However, my experience in large, online institutions suggests the opposite. A steady stream of applicants typically exceeds the number of openings. Because online faculty members have no geographic limitations, the candidate pool is larger. People do not have to relocate for full-time positions, and part-timers do not have to live within driving distance of the campus. Some fields, such as nursing, may have a general shortage of qualified faculty members, which makes recruiting difficult. In general, however, more people apply for online positions than for corresponding on-campus positions because online faculty members can live anywhere and maintain convenient schedules.

The process for hiring online faculty members parallels the process for hiring campus faculty members. Institutions can place advertisements in [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [Higher Ed Jobs](#), or professional association Web sites and newsletters. Some Web sites focus on adjunct positions, including [Adjunct Nation](#), [AdjunctWorld](#), and [Online Adjunct Jobs](#). The Sloan Consortium also hosts a service called the [Sloan C Adjunct Finder](#) that allows members to post curricula vitae and job vacancies.

Institutions can review and interview applicants for online positions the same way they do applicants for on-campus positions. Some institutions use demonstration teaching as part of the interview process for on-campus faculty members. For online faculty members, institutions can present examples of student discussion forum posts and assignments and ask applicants to respond. This compares to viewing a live teaching demonstration.

One difference in the recruiting and selection process for online faculty members is the new faculty orientation program, which institutions can require as part of their selection process. Academic leaders can then see how candidates perform in the orientation program. Orientation activities can include sample responses to discussion forum posts and grading of model student assignments. It is appropriate to require part-time faculty candidates to complete the orientation program prior to giving them a teaching assignment. Some institutions pay a small stipend to candidates for their participation in the orientation program.

Some institutions even extend the selection process into the first teaching term for part-time faculty members as a type of probationary period. The department chair can observe them during their first term to further assess candidates' strengths and suitability as continuing faculty members.

Orientation and Development of Online Faculty Members

Orientation

New faculty members and continuing faculty members who are teaching online for the first time need to participate in an orientation program prior to their first course. These orientation programs typically run for three to four weeks, and experienced online faculty members lead the programs using the institution's learning management system (LMS). Orientation programs accomplish several important goals.

1. Participants learn the features of the institution's LMS so they know how to post announcements, lead discussions, post grades, etc. Participants also have the chance to experience the LMS as students.
2. Faculty members learn and practice the principles of quality online instruction by responding to samples of student discussion forum posts and by providing feedback to sample student assignments.
3. These practice assignments can also help the assessment process for prospective faculty members.
4. Participants learn the institution's mission, history, organization, and values. Online faculty members do not have the benefit of visiting the campus and interacting with other employees in informal ways, so they need to know as much as they can about their new employer. In addition, they need to know general employee information such as how to contact the human resources department, payroll schedules, holidays, etc.
5. The orientation program offers a good opportunity to explain or reinforce the expectations for faculty performance. New faculty members need to know how often to participate in class activities, if they should post weekly summaries, and expectations for further education. If the institution uses observations to assess the quality of interaction with students, the orientation program should provide a copy of the observation form and rubric.

Continuous Faculty Development

Online teaching is fairly new compared to face-to-face teaching, and the field is evolving rapidly. As more institutions offer online classes, research is accumulating about effective methods of instruction. The technology for delivering online classes is becoming more sophisticated, and new tools are developing for features such as audio and video recordings, synchronous activities, writing assessments, and the use of social media in classrooms. Professional associations and organizations that are devoted to supporting online teaching, along with their associated conferences and journals, continue to grow. Consequently, online faculty members must keep learning and developing their expertise. Institutions can provide this ongoing faculty development through locally developed programs and through participation in professional organizations.

Center for Faculty Development

The most common way to ensure continuous faculty development is to create a unit or center specifically for that purpose. In many cases, this department or unit already exists within an institution, and the institution can expand its program offerings to include online teaching methods. Another alternative is to house the faculty development unit within the administration that manages online programs, if one exists. Staffing depends on the size of the institution and number of faculty members teaching online classes, but at minimum, someone needs to be responsible for leading the effort. Faculty members can develop and teach many of the program offerings, such as orientation, seminars, and classes, as part of their service to the institution, but someone needs to coordinate and organize their efforts.

An advisory board or committee of faculty members and leaders can identify program offerings and topics to be delivered from the center. Online faculty members often experiment with new tools and methods, so they can be a good resource for faculty development program ideas. They can also help determine relevant and useful techniques.

Tools for Faculty Development

Because online faculty members are dispersed geographically, institutions need to deliver faculty development programs online just like the online classes. Institutions need three technology tools to provide an ongoing faculty development program: a learning management system that has synchronous capabilities; a portal or Web site to coordinate services and communicate with faculty members; and a registration system so faculty members can sign up for seminars and classes and the institution can keep track of participation.

Just as students need a portal to access institutional services such as the library, bookstore, and financial aid office, faculty members benefit from a portal or Web site where they can access institutional services. This portal allows institutions to communicate with faculty members about program offerings, messages from leaders, and other important faculty news. Institutions can also highlight faculty accomplishments such as publications and presentations. The portal also serves an important function as an archive of recorded training programs, tutorials, and documents. For example, institutions can record live webinars and allow future faculty members or people who could not attend in person to access them through the portal.

Just as students need a portal to access institutional services such as the library, bookstore, and financial aid office, faculty members benefit from a portal or Web site where they can access institutional services.



While the portal serves a coordinating function, the institution needs an LMS to deliver faculty development programs. The institution can use its LMS for long-term programs such as an orientation program or faculty-led classes. Many of the faculty development programs will be shorter than student courses. The LMS must have a compatible feature for synchronous webinars, or the institution can use an alternative tool such as Adobe Connect.

People need to be able to register online and record their participation in both long courses and hour-long webinars. If the institution has expectations for ongoing participation in faculty development activities, then the institution must provide a way to track and document participation. Typical student information systems do not allow institutions to track registration and participation in short-term programs like this, but institutions can use other commercial options. If institutions have only a few online classes and faculty members, they can perform the registration function manually, but it does not take much volume for automated tools to become more cost effective than manual systems.

Types of Faculty Development Programs

The list below gives examples of the types of programs institutions commonly use for faculty development. Many variations of these exist depending on the need and creativity of the people leading them.

1. **Instructor-led courses** are effective for in-depth exploration of major topics that require interaction with other participants and the faculty member. Institutions typically use this format for new faculty orientation programs.
2. **Webinars and seminars** are live, synchronous events used to teach a simple topic or single tool. Institutions can record them for others to view at a later time. Institutions can also extend webinars by assigning readings in advance and using discussion forums before and after.
3. **Archived papers** are papers that faculty members and staff write about topics unique to the institution. Bibliographies can also provide links to published articles on topics of interest to online faculty members. A number of journals now focus on online teaching.
4. **Tutorials** are especially effective for learning about new technology tools and LMS features because they can include screenshots and step-by-step graphics with the opportunity to practice.

5. **Faculty meetings** can include discussions about online teaching. Center staff or academic department leaders can organize such meetings.
6. **Brown-bag discussions** via telephone with small groups permit a different type of interaction. Discussions of books or articles can educate and build community.
7. **Online conferences** are becoming more common. A good example is Kaplan University's [KU Village](#), an annual conference spanning several days in late September each year that includes a variety of speakers, webinars, and discussions. Advances in technology make it easier to organize conferences, and long-term events like this can be a good vehicle for building camaraderie among far-flung faculty members who rarely see each other in person.

Professional Organizations

A number of professional associations have subunits devoted to online teaching and learning, and a few of them focus on online teaching as their primary mission, such as those listed below. These organizations can serve as great resources for faculty development and can supplement local programming.

- Sloan C (www.sloanconsortium.org)
- WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (wcet.wiche.edu)
- Quality Matters (www.qmprogram.org)

A comprehensive program for continuous faculty development helps provide an outstanding learning experience for students. As online teaching evolves, new research, best practices, and technology tools are proliferating. Online faculty members experiment and look for ways to improve their teaching, so they are the primary source of content for professional development programs. Also, the opportunity to learn from colleagues connects faculty members to the institution and helps alleviate the loneliness of working remotely.

Supervision of Online Faculty Members

The move to online programs also allows academic leaders to implement a comprehensive system to supervise faculty members, including classroom observations, performance reviews, and support for professional development. Because online faculty members are often geographically remote, a well-designed supervision system lays the framework for communication among faculty members and their supervisors on important topics, and it also ensures they grow and develop professionally. Supervision shows a strong indication of faculty members' value to the institution and shows the institution's willingness to invest in their success and development. Three important components of a comprehensive system exist: mentors, classroom observations, and annual reviews.

Mentors

Just about everyone can benefit from a mentor, but first-time online faculty members find mentors especially helpful. Even though new faculty orientation programs may last four or five weeks, they present so much information that participants have difficulty mastering and internalizing everything. Mentors can reinforce and clarify the expectations and best practices and help their mentees apply this information. New faculty members have many questions about the technology, policies, and institutional services, and in many cases, they find it easier to ask a mentor than to ask their supervisor. Ideally, mentors would teach the same course as their mentees, but this may not be possible in smaller institutions. Someone from the same discipline is the next best alternative.

Institutions should set expectations for mentors. At a minimum, mentors should review their mentees' class prior to the start date to make sure it is set up according to the institution's expectations. Mentors should then set up a meeting to review any observations with their mentees. Weekly meetings during the first term provide a good structure for communication. Mentors should review their mentees' class regularly and share helpful feedback during the weekly calls. Early in the term, mentors should review discussion forum participation and reinforce best practices for their mentees. Similarly, when the first graded assignments are due, mentors should review mentees' grading and feedback to students to help them set appropriate standards and apply grading rubrics reliably. New faculty members often need help answering student questions about the institution's policies and procedures, and mentors are a good source of this information.

Another good practice is for mentees to have access to mentors' classes. Mentees can "observe" their mentors leading the discussion forum and providing student feedback. The opportunity to observe, reflect, apply, and then receive feedback is a powerful teaching sequence. Because mentors are peers and not in a position to evaluate mentees' performance, it is easier for new faculty members to seek help and advice and to try new methods in a safe, supportive environment. While the formal mentor–mentee process normally concludes at the end of the first term, the two often continue to share ideas and information as colleagues during their tenure at the institution.

Classroom Observations

Because online classes record all interactions, supervisors can easily observe and review faculty performance. Supervisors can check in regularly and even observe several weeks of instruction in one sitting. New online faculty members should establish good habits and effective methods early in their experience, so supervisors should observe new faculty members in the first week or two of the term and follow through on any issues. It is also good practice to set a schedule for how often and when the institution observes online faculty members. Typically, institutions perform observations two or three times in the first term for new faculty members and then once or twice in subsequent terms. For experienced faculty members, once every few terms is appropriate. It is good practice to inform faculty about the observation process and schedule so they know what to expect.

Classroom observations include both quantitative and qualitative feedback. Quantitative feedback includes the frequency and amount of participation in the class, primarily on the discussion forum, response time to e-mails, and response time for grading. The LMS provides reports of faculty members' participation, and institutions can generate these reports on a regular basis, typically weekly. Reports can easily identify people who may be struggling and need assistance. Depending on the LMS, reports may also be available for response time to e-mails. To check on timely submission of grades, supervisors usually must go into the classroom and compare dates. Quantitative feedback is not sufficient to ensure a high-quality student experience, but it is necessary. Students need and appreciate feedback and responses from their faculty members, and because students study at different times of the day and week, faculty members must participate regularly and give timely feedback.

Qualitative feedback involves reviewing faculty members' leadership of the discussion forum, e-mail communication, feedback on student assignments, and other classroom interactions such as synchronous presentations. It is good practice to develop a rubric for reviewing these behaviors. Included in Appendix A is an example of a rubric used for online class observations. Institutions should conference with faculty members to share the results of classroom observations and give appropriate feedback.

New online faculty members should establish good habits and effective methods early in their experience, so supervisors should observe new faculty members in the first week or two of the term and follow through on any issues.



Performance Reviews

Performance reviews usually involve a classroom observation followed by a conference. In addition to the scheduled observations, good supervisory practice also provides a more comprehensive performance review annually and potentially more often for new faculty members and faculty members who experience difficulties. This longer period of review evens out the effect of class personalities term to term. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative data outlined above from classroom observations, several other types of data are useful in the performance review.

End-of-term surveys assess student satisfaction. Institutions can administer surveys to students via the LMS near the end of the course. Many variations of student satisfaction surveys exist. They typically include questions about the course and faculty members' behavior. If faculty members are responsible for developing and teaching the course, they should receive all the data. If faculty members teach a standardized course in which they do not have much control of course design, only the data about their behavior is relevant. Institutions should focus on having a reasonable number of questions to facilitate high response rates. For the data to be most meaningful, institutions need to collect and store the data so they can compare it to

institution and course norms and to the same faculty member over time.

Student achievement data will be available if the college or university uses a standard course development process that includes embedded assessments of course outcomes. Like student satisfaction data, institutions need to collect and store assessment data so they can create reports by course and by faculty member. This enables comparison of faculty members' performance over time and against course norms.

Student performance data includes grade distributions and dropout rates. Again, institutions need to collect and store these data so they can make comparisons between faculty members who teach the same course and for any given faculty member over time. Institutions can use grade distributions to identify people who may be significantly easier or harder graders than the norm, which may be a fruitful topic for faculty meetings. Significantly low dropout rates in a course may be an indicator of important teaching behaviors that institutions can identify through classroom observations. This information is extremely valuable to share with other online faculty members through faculty development programs and faculty meetings.

Student satisfaction, achievement, and performance data is valuable information institutions should summarize and share with faculty members along with the data about classroom performance. Accumulated over time and combined in an annual review, these data present an integrated view of each faculty member and form the basis for development activities. A variety of external factors affect these types of data, and they may be subject to high levels of measurement error, so institutions should be cautious in forming conclusions. Institutions should have a number of data points and view trends over time so they can corroborate among various sources before forming conclusions.

The data (and the performance review based on it) is a powerful driver of continuous faculty development. Some faculty members may be ready to become mentors or presenters in the institution's formal faculty development program. Some faculty members may be excited to try a new teaching method in their class and track the impact on student performance as a piece of action research that they can present at a professional conference. Other faculty members may need practice and reinforcement of effective online teaching behaviors; they should access resources or programs in the faculty development center. The performance review creates the context to assess the performance level of each faculty member and to help set goals for further development. The chair or supervisor can then support and facilitate them.

Faculty members appreciate good supervision via a comprehensive system of mentors, observations, and performance reviews because it shows the institution's investment in them. Effective supervision requires time, but it results in continuous improvement and ongoing professional development. Supervision is not about identifying poor performers. Very few people perform poorly and need disciplinary action. The overwhelming majority of faculty members want to improve their teaching scholarship and appreciate helpful reviews and opportunities to grow and develop.

Summary

When college or university leaders make the decision to offer online programs, they have the opportunity to create a new faculty culture and a community of online scholars. First they need to decide the appropriate mix of full-time and part-time faculty. Part-time faculty have much to offer in terms of subject expertise, teaching quality and service to the institution, and they are less expensive. Second, academic leaders need to set the expectations for online teaching in the areas of required training, load, compensation, course features, participation, and the quality of communication with students.

With these elements in place, recruiting online faculty either for full- or part-time positions parallels the normal recruitment process. Online faculty can do “demonstration” teaching through written responses to scenarios and they can be assessed during the orientation program.

Ongoing faculty development is typically led by a center for teaching and learning with the faculty creating and delivering much of the training. A Web site or portal for faculty, a learning management system with synchronous capability, and an electronic registration system are all necessary tools for such as center.

Effective supervision of online faculty includes the use of mentors, classroom observations, and an annual performance review with the supervisor. A variety of data including student surveys, grade distributions, student achievement, and supervisor observations provide the basis for ongoing development activities for each faculty member.

Online faculty development programs have created strong communities of scholars. Online faculty members are pioneers. They try “new” ways of teaching using technology tools that change rapidly. They are open to new tools and methods and want to share their experiences. Online classes are more public than face-to-face classes because they are recorded and often created in tandem with subject matter experts and instructional designers. This public view fosters an open, sharing culture among online faculty members. Online teaching is a solitary experience, so online faculty members typically appreciate interaction with colleagues. Faculty development programs that tap into this pioneering spirit and sharing attitude create a synergistic community where people are anxious to learn new methods, share their best practices, and support each other.



Appendix: Course Delivery Rubric

OVERALL SCORE:

Exceed expectations: 30+
 Meets expectations: 15-29
 Needs improvement: <15

GROUP SCORE:

Exceed expectations: 3
 Meets expectations: 2
 Needs improvement: 1

SYNCHRONOUS SCORE:

Exceed expectations: 8+
 Meets expectations: 5-7
 Needs improvement: <5

COURSE DELIVERY RUBRIC: INSTRUCTOR	
Standard 1: Social Presence and Availability	Notes
<p><i>Select as many as apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor establishes credibility (e.g., <i>I am a practicing Certified Public Accountant...</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor includes one piece of personal information not directly related to his or her curriculum vitae (e.g., <i>I have a black lab.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor invites students to post information about themselves (e.g., <i>Lesson 1 assignment is an icebreaker activity to help you meet your classmates.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor participates in welcome/icebreaker activity. 	
<p><i>Select as many as apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor responds to student correspondence and voice messages within one business day. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor notes work phone, personal phone, and/or number student may actually reach the instructor (<i>NOTE: Solo email not applicable</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor gives specific times for availability, including office hours and/or flexibility for individual appointments. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor notes time zone. 	
Standard 2: Instructor Feedback	
<p><i>Select as many as apply:</i></p> <p>Overall, instructor forum postings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 points: Encourage or promote deeper reflection from students (e.g., Instructor identifies an area of disagreement, asks open-ended questions to further discussion, and tests or modifies a proposed synthesis.). <input type="checkbox"/> 3 points: Relate to course or supplemental materials so students know where to look for additional information (e.g., <i>Chapter 12 in your course textbook addresses cost balance sheets.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 3 points: Support and motivate students. 	
<p><i>Select as many as apply:</i></p> <p>Overall, instructor assignment feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 points: Suggests improvement or extends student knowledge base (e.g., <i>Instructor tells students what they did well and why, what was missing, and what was irrelevant and why.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 3 points: Relates to course material so students know where to look for further information (e.g., <i>Instructor references specific textbook chapter where students may find more information.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 3 points: Supports and motivates students. 	
<p><i>Select as many as apply:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor grades assignments within five days of due date. (<i>In absence of instructor due dates, use student assignment submission date.</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor grades assignments within seven days of due date. (<i>In absence of instructor due dates, use student assignment submission date.</i>) 	

Appendix: Course Delivery Rubric

Standard 3: Student Retention	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor contacts students who have not logged in for five consecutive days to encourage student participation and retention. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor uses learning management system features, not school e-mail, for student communication. 	
Standard 4: Forum Participation	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor exhibits 20% or greater total class forum posting response rate (total class forum responses divided by the total instructor forum posts; e.g., 21 instructor posts / 91 total posts = 23% response rate). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor exhibits 15% or greater total class forum posting response rate. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor exhibits 5% or greater total class forum posting response rate. 	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor actively participates in forums by posting at least four times every five days. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor actively participates in forums by posting at least two or three times every five days. 	
Standard 5: Communication of University and/or Course Policies	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor reinforces university or course policy for academic integrity in addition to notation in syllabus (e.g., <i>You must cite all references according to APA style.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor reinforces university or course netiquette policy in addition to notation in syllabus (e.g., <i>As noted in the course syllabus, you may use conversational writing and emoticons only in the introductory and off-topic forums.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor reinforces university policy for class attendance and participation in addition to notation in syllabus (e.g., <i>You are expected to log in at least three times per week to participate in class discussions and check for announcements.</i>). 	
Standard 6: Pacing	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor announces deadlines to regulate the amount of time students should spend on each task in another area besides the syllabus (e.g., <i>By the end of this week, please turn in your annotated bibliography for your final paper.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Grades for meeting deadlines are noted in another area besides the syllabus (e.g., <i>Your annotated bibliography is due Thursday and is worth 15% of the total paper's grade.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Overall, instructor adheres to due dates listed in syllabus. 	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Introductions, generally first person narrative, for upcoming coursework show how course content relates to future course material (e.g., <i>I want to call your attention to this lesson which begins with a discussion of various types of communication tools used in online courses.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: A summary, generally first person narrative, recaps overarching themes learned from lesson/module/unit (e.g., <i>I want to recap this lesson with research proving that asynchronous and synchronous online learning complement each other.</i>). 	

Appendix: Course Delivery Rubric

COURSE DELIVERY RUBRIC: GROUP WORK	
Standard 1: Group Monitoring and Feedback	Notes
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor observes the group two or more times during group work to verify individual member accountability and progression of group work. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor requires periodic progress reports from groups (e.g., <i>Each group recorder must use the following report to record their weekly group activities and progress.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor encourages team building and fosters group unity (e.g., <i>Each of you will take a role in the group work.</i>). 	
COURSE DELIVERY RUBRIC: SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS	
Standard 1: Behavior During Synchronous Session	Notes
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor greets students and communicates the session's format (e.g., <i>Welcome to our webinar on behavior in the workplace. For the next 30 minutes, we will...</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: The first session includes orientation to synchronous technology (e.g., <i>If you want to ask a question, click on the raised-hand icon.</i>). NOTE: Chat session will get automatic point since this feature is self-explanatory. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor restates questions submitted via text chat (ADA compliance) (e.g., <i>We have one other question in the chat text from...</i>). NOTE: Chat session will get automatic point since this feature is self-explanatory. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor addresses all student questions (written or verbal) or details how and when students may ask questions once the synchronous session time expires (e.g., <i>We are running out of time for further questions; however, I will answer additional questions on a discussion forum titled Workplace Behavior Webinar.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructors' comments support and motivate students. 	
<p>Select as many as apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor primarily asks attention-grabbing or open-ended questions to encourage interaction. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor redirects off-topic conversations. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Comments incorporate course material so students know where to look for further information (e.g., <i>Recall in lesson 3 how behaviorists note...</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Comments incorporate outside resources so students become familiar with quality resources in the discipline or field of study (e.g., <i>Students may find additional information in The Journal of Organizational Behavior Management available through the campus library databases.</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor polls audience for frequent feedback (e.g., <i>Using the hand-raising icon to respond, how many of you are aware of the work between Sigrid Glenn and Marvin Harris?</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> 1 point: Instructor summarizes the session to highlight the key points presented during the session (e.g., <i>We have just recapped the key elements of behavior analysis, which is a topic you will address in your research paper.</i>). 	

About the Author



Dr. David Clinefelter joined Learning House in October 2011 as Chief Academic Officer. With his extensive background in higher education, Dave seeks to improve the processes and services of the Learning House Curriculum and Professional Development departments.

Dave's career spans all levels of education, from K-12 to higher education. He currently serves as the Chief Academic Officer at Learning House. Prior to joining Learning House, he began his career at the postsecondary level as a professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha and a lecturer at the Ohio State University. Then he became the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Graceland University, a liberal arts institution in Iowa. From 1996 to 1997, Dr. Clinefelter was an ACE Fellow, and his host institution was Northwest Missouri State University. At the conclusion of his fellowship year, he became President of Graceland and served in that capacity for six years. Graceland is an entrepreneurial institution, having developed the first accredited distance learning program in nursing. The university also owns a subsidiary named SkillPath Seminars, a training company that provides one-day seminars throughout the United States. Dave served as Chair of the Board of Directors for SkillPath.

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