Sustained Professional Development for VITAL Faculty:

Engagement & Benefits

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Introduction

This report provides insights into VITAL faculty members' engagement in sustained professional development (SPD) programs, such as faculty learning communities. We begin with a description of the larger research project that this report contributes to, including an overview of our earlier research and methodology for the current phase of research. We also describe the multilevel framework of influences on the success of sustained programs.

The report then examines four main topics:

1. A description of the VITAL faculty included in this report and the forms of professional development we examined,
2. Patterns of engagement in professional development among VITAL faculty,
3. Patterns in VITAL faculty's motivations for participating and perceptions of program activities and benefits, and
4. The relationship between SPD engagement and several behavioral and affective outcomes related to faculty work.

Throughout the report, we examine how differences in VITAL faculty's career characteristics (e.g., full-time or part-time, promotion opportunities and contract length, career role, discipline, years of experience at their current institution and in higher education) shaped their engagement, perspectives, and priorities, as well as the benefits associated with SPD programs.

By centering the perspectives of VITAL faculty, a population that is often overlooked in higher education, this report can be useful for educational developers and others who plan, lead, and evaluate professional development for faculty, as well as for institutional leaders who are interested in improving support for VITAL faculty on their campuses.

This report is the third in a series focused on designing professional development, and sustained professional development in particular, for VITAL faculty (Levy, 2019). We use the term VITAL faculty — an asset-based term — to refer to contingent or non-tenure track faculty (including visiting faculty, instructors, adjuncts, lecturers, research faculty, and clinical faculty) as a way to affirm what they are, rather than what they are not.

Section 1: Study Background

In this section, we provide an overview of our two-phase research project focused on professional development for VITAL faculty. We summarize the results of our earlier, phase one research and introduce the multilevel framework of influences on the success of sustained professional development and design for equity in higher education. We also overview several types of SPD programs being implemented for VITAL faculty at campuses across the U.S. and summarize the benefits of participating in such programs we identified in our earlier work. We conclude with a description of the methodology for our phase two research, from which this report stems.

Phase One Research

Our first report in this series, **Designing Accessible and Inclusive Intensive Professional Development** (Culver & Kezar, 2021), as well as the associated Toolkit (Culver et al., 2022), provided background about the growth of VITAL faculty on campus, as they now make up the majority of faculty in U.S. higher education across all institutional types and most disciplines. Our first report also detailed the suboptimal teaching and learning environment that VITAL faculty work within. These reports are part of **The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success**, which provides dozens of research reports, summaries, and resources about the changes in the faculty composition, the poor working conditions they face, and how this has led to a phenomenon called lack of opportunity to perform based on the accumulation of negative conditions (e.g. late hiring, job insecurity, poor pay, lack of evaluation

and professional development, lack of access to job materials). All these factors make it impossible for them to provide a quality education and perform to their ability (Finkelstein et al, 2016; Kezar et al., 2019; Kezar & Sam, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2016).

Our initial report on professional development for VITAL faculty, the first of its kind, focused on campuses that had already established professional development opportunities for this population and provided important case study research on the goals, designs, and experiences within such professional development offerings. This report was based on data from our first phase of study, where we identified campuses that have altered their professional development to specifically meet the needs of VITAL faculty. The literature illustrates that previous efforts to offer professional development to VITAL faculty typically expanded eligibility for participation in existing efforts focused on tenure-track faculty. However, because their schedules, needs, and inclusion on campus are so different, these professional development efforts have been documented as wanting and not meeting VITAL faculty needs (Kezar & Maxey, 2016). The overall methodology for our first phase of research was a qualitative research design utilizing interviews and document analysis. We identified 14 campuses for study based on recommendations from the POD Network, a national organization of professional and organizational development specialists. The 14 campuses represented a diverse set of institutions, including both public and private institutions; two-year and four-year institutions; institutions with research-focused, teaching-focused, and comprehensive missions; and institutions located in rural, suburban, and urban areas.

Multilevel Framework of Influences on the Success of Sustained Professional Development

Based on our initial research, we identified the multilevel framework of influences on the design and implementation of professional development for VITAL faculty shown in Figure 2, with a focus on helping designers be intentional with planning and evaluation of programs to create opportunities that are accessible and inclusive based on an assessment of VITAL faculty needs and various context considerations. At the broadest level of our framework are environmental factors, including external, institutional, and disciplinary policies, processes, and cultures. On the campuses we studied, these factors tended to present opportunities and constraints related to the role of professional development, the value that was placed on it, and the opportunities for VITAL faculty to participate.

Figure 1. Multilevel Framework of Infuences on Design and Implementation

The second level includes factors related to the design and sustainability of initiatives. Structural factors we identified through research included where initiatives were located, who led professional development efforts, and how programs were funded. The design of initiatives was also influenced by efforts to create strategic alignment, partnerships, and coordination with others within the institution and across institutions. Another influence on design was the types of knowledge from scholarship and professional networks of the people leading efforts. Other design-related influences included the purpose and objectives of initiatives, group composition, needs assessment, evaluation, and rewards and recognition of participants. Design-level factors affected the success and sustainability of initiatives.

Influences at the environmental and design levels also shaped key implementation decisions, including how participants were recruited and chosen, the role of facilitators, the type of content covered, the projects or other deliverables expected of participants, the mode of delivery, and the length and scheduling of program components. These implementation choices were crucial for engaging VITAL faculty, as they evaluated the benefits and costs of participating given their many other responsibilities.

This multilevel framework can help designers be more intentional in creating and revising programs through considering the influences at each level and designing offerings with all these factors in mind, rather than simply expanding access to existing programs that were not designed for VITAL faculty. A key example is that campus leaders will design a professional development opportunity based on assumptions that participation will contribute to evaluation and promotion, but as these assumptions do not hold for VITAL faculty, the lack of rewards and recognition disincentivizes these faculty from participating. If leaders consider the role of professional development in evaluation, contract renewal, and opportunities for more stable employment, then the professional development initiative can be much more successful, but this often does not occur. Our first report also documents the challenges that occur when trying to design in this more comprehensive way, whether it be access to resources or communicating with VITAL faculty, who may not have much of a connection to campus.
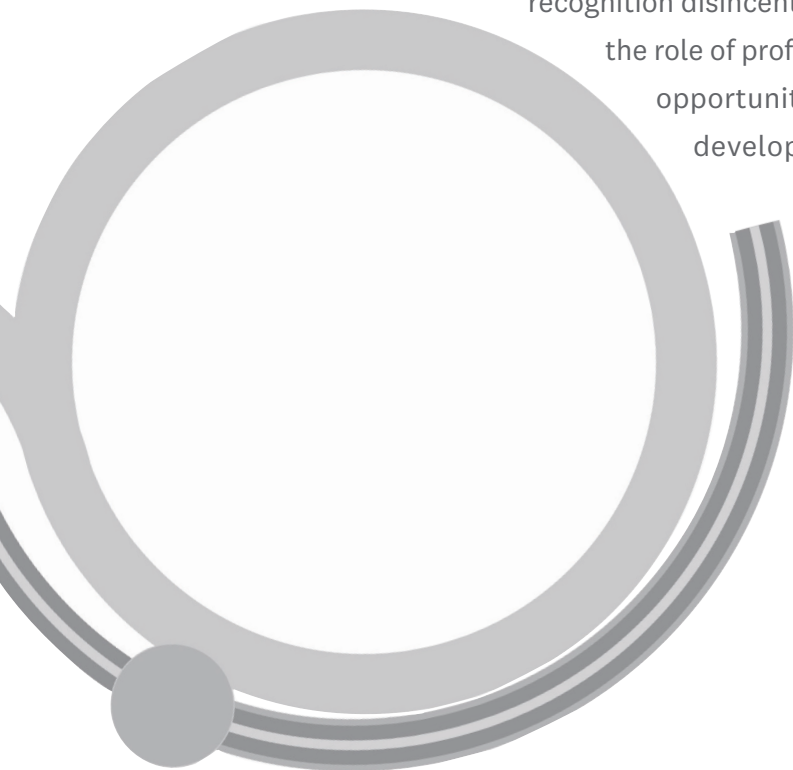
Types and Benefits of Professional Development Programs

Our first phase of this study allowed us to identify a range of offerings for VITAL faculty, from online workshops to sustained professional development (SPD) such as book groups and faculty learning communities. This included how each type of program we learned about has been redesigned using aspects of this framework. We were able to document a full range of professional development options that can enhance the repertoire of offerings for campuses to consider going forward.

From our interviews, we also garnered some of the first information about the wide range of benefits VITAL faculty get from participating in SPD. These benefits include a number of behavioral and affective dimensions that improve their work experiences. In addition to instructional improvement, which has repeatedly been documented as an outcome of SPD programs that focus on instruction (Cox, 2004; Glowacki-Dudka & Brown, 2007; Nugent et al., 2008; Kezar, 2015), we found a number of benefits related to VITAL faculty's sense of belonging; their institutional integration, including their knowledge of resources for their own careers and to support student success; their professional network of colleagues; opportunities for career development and advancement; ability to advocate for themselves within their departments; and leadership skills and opportunities.

Across campuses, we identified a number of good practices for the considerations needed to design professional development to meet the needs of VITAL faculty. However, we found none of the campuses were

engaged with using all of the design principles needed to make a robust learning experience for VITAL faculty.

Methodology for Phase Two

This report uses data from our second phase of research, building on the work conducted in phase one of the study. In order to understand how campuses can use more comprehensive approaches to designing programs, we recruited campuses for an action research project, utilizing a case study approach to understand the design processes used to create SPD for VITAL faculty, informed by the findings from our first-phase research. We had 10 campuses that expressed interest in participating in the second phase of research (see Appendix for tables listing participants), including five campuses from phase one. This study occurred in 2022-2023 during the global pandemic, and three campuses withdrew from participation during the study due to bandwidth and resource constraints. Even though these campuses dropped out, we do have early data that we report on from them.

This phase of research began with an orientation to the project for all of the campuses, including the Multilevel Framework, the Design for Higher Education framework that modifies liberatory design thinking for the higher education context, and our findings from the first research project; this orientation also allowed campuses to learn about each other. Our research for this phase of the study included a focus on both design teams' process and on the perspectives and outcomes of VITAL faculty on their campuses.

Design Team Process

We met individually with campus design teams over an eight-month period (January-August 2022) where they engaged in designing a new SPD experience or modifying an existing program. During these meetings, we collected data from them about their goals, observed team planning meetings, and offered insights into best practices. At the end of the planning period, we sent a survey to design team members to collect impressions about their planning process to complement our observations. This survey was based on our phase one research, the multi-level model, and our observations. Then the campuses implemented their new SPD program from September through May of 2022-23, depending on their format and schedule. Some took place just in fall, just in spring and some over the course of the whole year.

After the SPD programs concluded, we conducted focus group interviews with campus design teams (including as many design team members as possible). These interviews focused on their insights about design now that the experiences had been completed, changes in design in real time, implementation issues, and reflections and learnings. The qualitative data we collected served as the basis for our second report in this series, **Exploring New Horizons for Designing Intensive Professional Development for VITAL Faculty**, which focuses on the design processes that campuses used and highlights both challenges and opportunities for other campuses interested in engaging in this work. One main finding is that campus design teams found it challenging to engage all the aspects of the model and therefore did not use the full design frameworks to model the experiences offered. So ultimately, we do not have data from all institutions about the efficacy of the Multilevel Model. A few did use the model and our second report highlights their processes and outcomes, providing some insight into the efficacy of our multilevel model.

Data for This Report: Faculty Survey Data

During our first phase of research, most of our findings about motivations for participating and benefits of doing so came from those planning SPD programs (e.g., leaders of Centers for Teaching and Learning). Therefore, as part of our phase two research, we prioritized capturing VITAL faculty's perspectives directly through surveys. At three timepoints, we collected survey data from VITAL faculty at participating institutions related to their professional development needs, their professional development engagement and experiences, and the benefits of participating we had identified in our phase one research. The survey was designed by the research team and drew from a number of existing sources, including Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) perceived cohesion construct, the leadership efficacy scale from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) Survey Instrument (Dugan et al., 2013), and items related to teaching practices from the Postsecondary Teaching Practices Inventory (PIPS; Walters et. al., 2016) as well as the Teaching Practices Inventory (Weiman & Gilbert, 2014). The PIPS instrument is a rigorously-developed survey with an emphasis on eliciting specific teaching practices that can be analyzed in terms of student-centered practices and instructor-centered practices.

To collect baseline data, we asked campuses to determine their population of interest, as the survey results could be used to inform their planning processes. Some campuses included all of their VITAL faculty, while others limited their sample to previous SPD participants. Baseline survey data was collected in spring 2022; we had 621 responses across campuses and provided a report to each campus with the results specific to respondents at their institution.

Then we collected pre-participation and post-participation surveys from the VITAL faculty that were part of their new/revised SPD program. Pre-participation data was collected from 68 faculty between August 2022 and January 2023; one campus opted to use the baseline data collection as their pre-survey. Post-participation data was collected between January and June 2023, depending on the length and timing of the SPD program; there were 79 responses to our post-survey. At each timepoint, respondents could opt-in for a drawing to win one of five 9th generation iPads; winners were randomly selected and notified in August 2023.

The relatively small sample of VITAL faculty who completed both pre- and post-participation surveys limited our ability to conduct robust longitudinal analyses. Therefore, we created a cross-sectional dataset where each respondent was represented one time. This dataset provided us with information about VITAL faculty's engagement in SPD programs, their motivations for participating, and their perceptions of program activities, as well as including measures of the benefits of participating that we had identified in our phase one research. This dataset therefore allowed us to evaluate the SPD programs that campuses have implemented based on the design process we studied, informed by our multilevel model.

Section 2: Understanding VITAL Faculty

The multilevel framework identifies the needs of VITAL faculty as the central influence on the success of SPD, so it is critical to begin with an understanding of who VITAL faculty are. In this section, we describe the characteristics of the 690 VITAL faculty in our sample, including various individual and career characteristics that may shape their engagement in professional development and the benefits they derive from participating.
The guiding questions for this section are as follows:

- Who are they in terms of gender and race/ethnicity?
- What are their career characteristics?
- How do their career characteristics shape various behavioral and affective dimensions of their work experiences?

Identity Characteristics

Among the VITAL faculty in our sample, 64% were women, 35% men, and the remaining 1% individuals identified with another gender identity. Our survey respondents were predominantly White (81.5%), followed by faculty who were multiracial or another race/ethnicity (6.5%), Asian or Pacific Islander (6%), Black (5%), and Latinx/Hispanic (1%).

Career Characteristics

Our sample primarily featured individuals working at four-year institutions (87%), with the remaining 13% working at two-year institutions. These VITAL faculty represent a diverse mix of VITAL faculty roles, including part-time instructors at a two-year technical college, full-time research faculty at a state flagship university, VITAL faculty in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine) disciplines at a public regional institution, and mid-career VITAL faculty at a private research university.

Because these characteristics shape VITAL faculty's job responsibilities, opportunities for engagement in professional development, and individual goals and motivations, we looked at potential differences in their patterns of engagement, priorities for engaging, perceptions of program helpfulness, and the benefits of participating in SPD for several career characteristics. In each of the following sections, we report the differences we found.

Attending to these differences can be incredibly helpful for designing and revising SPD programs that meet the needs of different groups of VITAL faculty. Examining these differences can also allow for a better understanding of how the findings described in this report can be applied and adapted across different institutional contexts with different populations of VITAL faculty.

Full-Time and Part-Time Employment

Full-time vital faculty may have greater access to SPD opportunities based on institutional policies and practices; they may also be more willing to participate in programs that require a commitment of a semester, year, or longer. At the same time, part-time vital faculty may engage in professional development as one way of signaling their commitment to a faculty career in hopes of landing a full-time position. Our sample included 504 full-time faculty (73%) and 186 part-time faculty (27%).

Job Responsibilities (Teaching/Non-Teaching)

In the second report in this series, **Exploring New Horizons for Designing Intensive Professional Development for VITAL Faculty**, we noted that campuses are beginning to design SPD programs for populations of vital faculty whose responsibilities are not primarily related to course instruction, including research faculty, librarians, and academic professionals who direct centers. The primary job responsibilities that vital faculty have likely shape the types of professional development experiences they seek to participate in.

In our sample, roughly 63% of faculty indicated they had titles associated with teaching (e.g., teaching faculty, lecturer, instructor), with the remaining sample made up of clinical faculty (13%), research and public service faculty (15%), and academic staff (9%), including librarians, academic advisors, and others who have a faculty title. Because titles may not truly indicate job responsibilities, we also asked about the percentage of their current role dedicated to teaching. More than half the sample (57%) indicated that 75% or more of their role was dedicated to teaching. An additional 15% told us that teaching made up 50-75% of their role, leaving 28% whose job responsibilities were primarily non-teaching.

In order to best capture how VITAL faculty's roles and responsibilities shaped their engagement with and perceptions of professional development, we examined differences among faculty whose responsibilities were primarily teaching (more than 50%) or primarily non-teaching.

Years of Experience

VITAL faculty who are newer to the institution do not have the same networks, connections, or understanding of institutional resources and processes compared to many VITAL faculty who have been at an institution for many years. About one-third of our sample were new to their institution, having been at their current institution for three years or less (34%); just under one-third of our sample had been at their current institution for ten years or longer (31%), including 10% who had been working for their institution for 20 years or more.
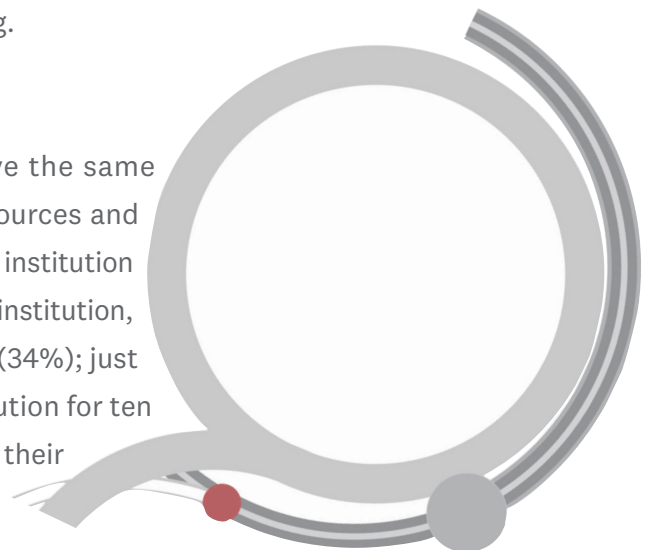
In addition to opportunities to learn about their institution and connect with colleagues, VITAL faculty who are newer to academia may prioritize opportunities to build teaching skills, whereas more experienced career faculty may be more interested in developing leadership skills. About 20% of our sample had three years of experience or less in higher education, while another 20% had been in higher education for 20 years or more, reflecting the reality of the VITAL faculty role as a career.

Promotion Opportunities

Given the reality that many VITAL faculty are in their roles for more than a decade, opportunities for promotion or a career track can support their ongoing professional growth and allow for clearly-defined trajectories toward increased leadership roles on campus. A career track can also motivate VITAL faculty to participate in sustained professional development programs.

Several of the campuses that participated in our second phase of research have made policy changes to create such opportunities for at least some of their VITAL faculty; about 69% of our sample said their current role allowed for promotion. About 20% stated that they did not have promotion opportunities, while the remaining 11% were unsure whether such opportunities existed in their current role. As our sample included faculty with and without promotion opportunities from each campus, this career characteristic can be analyzed separately from institutional affiliation.

Contract Length

Historically, most VITAL faculty have been on contracts limited to a term/semester or academic year. This degree of contingency can make it challenging for VITAL faculty to commit to sustained professional programs, especially if they require a multi-term commitment. For instance, part-time VITAL faculty may not know whether they will be rehired in a subsequent term. The lack of institutional commitment to VITAL faculty that such short contracts signal may also dissuade VITAL faculty from putting in extra effort to participate in professional development. We focus specifically on the most contingent faculty whose contracts are nine months or less (15%), a group that includes both part-time and full-time faculty from each campus in our study.

Discipline

Over the past ten years, there has been increased attention to the central role of faculty in student success in STEMM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine), and we learned about a number of STEMM-specific professional development initiatives in our first phase of research. About 41% of the VITAL faculty were in STEMM disciplines, while the remaining 59% were in the humanities, social sciences, education, business, and other professional disciplines.

How Faculty's Career Characteristics Shape Their Work Experiences

In our first phase of research, we learned that sustained professional development programs offer a number of benefits for VITAL faculty. Specifically, these dimensions included the following:

- Perceived cohesion (i.e., sense of belonging to a group, feelings of morale about group membership)
- Institutional integration (i.e., knowledge of institutional resources related to career and to student success)
- Professional network (i.e., people to ask questions, interactions)
- Career development and advancement (i.e., discussions, knowledge of policies)
- Professional identity (i.e., feeling valued and recognized within their department and outside of their department)
- Leadership self-efficacy and opportunities (i.e., general and higher education-specific leading)
- Use of effective teaching practices (i.e., active rather than passive)

Because we know that faculty's career characteristics shape their experiences, we began by comparing potential differences across these dimensions for the different groups we identified above to highlight important patterns in our data. This information provides a helpful snapshot of existing differences between faculty with different employment characteristics. Especially since these characteristics are potential benefits of SPD for VITAL faculty, differences identify potential opportunities for improving specific affective and behavioral dimensions of faculty work.

Full-Time and Part-Time

When compared to those who are employed full-time, part-time VITAL faculty exhibit distinctive differences on five of these dimensions. Specifically, part-time faculty have a lower sense of belonging, less knowledge of institutional resources related to their careers, a smaller professional network of colleagues, less knowledge of policies and conversations related to career development, and lower perceptions of being recognized and valued by others outside of their department.

Teaching and Non-Teaching

When compared to teaching faculty, faculty whose roles were primarily outside of teaching had somewhat lower feelings of morale. This finding may indicate that faculty whose roles primarily involve research, administration, and outreach do not derive the same pride in their campus membership as do faculty who are in the classroom working with students on a regular basis. On the other hand, non-teaching faculty had more discussions and knowledge related to career evaluation and promotion.

Years of Experience

Faculty who had been at their current institution for three years or less, as well as those who had been in higher education for three years or less, both had slightly higher feelings of morale about their workplace and felt more valued within their department. Inclusion in SPD and recognition for engagement in SPD may offer one lever to increase these perceptions among more experienced faculty. Additionally, newer VITAL faculty had less knowledge related to career resources available to them on their campuses. This finding suggests that SPD can be used as an extended orientation for newer faculty to help them learn about institutional resources, much like many campuses are using first-year seminars to help orient first-year students to their campus. VITAL faculty newer to higher education also had lower leadership self-efficacy when compared to those who had been in higher education for longer.

Promotion Opportunities and Longer Contracts

Perhaps unsurprisingly, having promotion opportunities and greater job security through longer contracts increases VITAL faculty's sense of belonging and perceptions of being valued outside of their department. These faculty also have more knowledge and conversations related to evaluation and promotion policies on their campuses. Interestingly, these faculty also have a wider professional network and feel comfortable asking questions to more types of people on their campus. Additionally, promotion opportunities increase VITAL faculty's professional identity within their department.

Discipline

When compared to their non-STEMM counterparts, VITAL faculty in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine/health-related disciplines demonstrated lower leadership self-efficacy. Additionally, STEMM faculty spent a lower percentage of class time using active teaching practices.

Takeaways Based on Career Characteristics

To summarize these differences, we have created a table that shows how each group compared to their counterpart on each dimension of faculty's work experiences. Campuses can consider how SPD can be used to decrease differences, for example by offering professional development to VITAL faculty who are newer in higher education to help them develop leadership skills, as well as to part-time faculty to help them develop stronger professional networks within the institution. We return to these dimensions of VITAL faculty's work experiences in Section 5 of this report.

	Part time faculty	Teaching Faculty	Newer Faculty at Institution	Newer Faculty in Higher Education	Faculty with Promotion Opportunities	Faculty with Longer Contracts	Faculty in STEMM
Sense of Belonging	Lower				Higher	Higher	
Feelings of Morale		Higher	Higher	Higher			
Knowledge of Work/Life Resources	Lower		Lower	Lower			
Knowledge of Student Success Resources							
Professional Network	Lower				HIgher	Higher	Higher
Career Development and Advancement	Lower	Lower			Higher	Higher	
Professional Identity Within Department			Higher	Higher	Higher		
Professional Identity Outside Department	Lower				Higher	Higher	
Leadership Self-Efficacy				Lower			Lower
% Time Active Teaching							Lower

Initial Takeaways

Based on these differences, we offer these takeaways for practice:

- Recognition of key differences between full-time and part-time VITAL faculty must occur at all phases of professional development, including seeking opportunities to explicitly build a sense of belonging and share knowledge with part-time faculty.

- Structural considerations of employment — especially promotion opportunities and longer contract terms — are associated with several key indicators of professional identity. Importantly, programmatic development at institutions where such opportunities and/or contract terms do not exist must be mindful of these realities and develop professional development programming well-aware of these conditions.

- Feelings of morale can be powerful drivers of overall faculty engagement with academic life. Consider programs and locations for sustaining higher morale among teaching faculty as well as among faculty as the transition beyond the initial years of their work at the institution.

- Consider targeted opportunities for faculty in STEMM disciplines concerning how, why, and through what pedagogies and/or technologies greater course time can be committed to active teaching strategies. Importantly, we encourage approaching this work through consideration for how such strategies might support student learning and success, not from the perspective of STEMM faculty exhibiting a deficit when compared to non-STEMM colleagues.
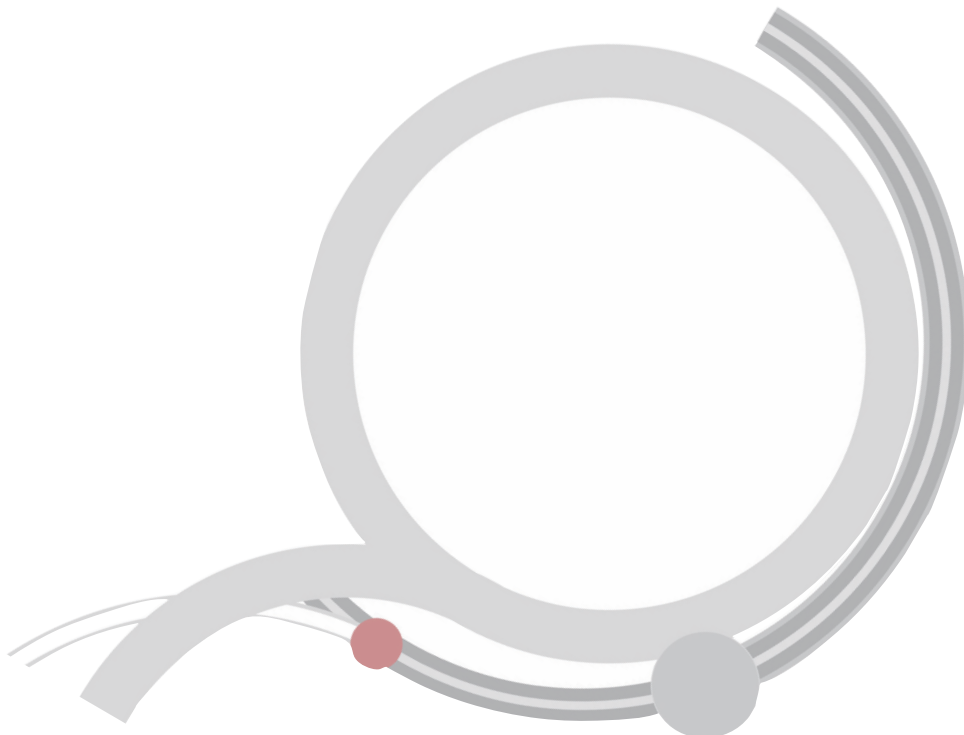
Section 3: Forms, Patterns, and Motivations for Engaging in Professional Development

Based on our phase one research, we were sure to ask faculty about the types of professional development programs they engaged in as part of our study. Importantly, these included more one-off forms of engagement as well as recurring forms that we call sustained professional development.
The guiding questions for this section are as follows:
- What are the differences between one-off professional development engagement and sustained professional development (SPD)?
- What are overall patterns and comparative differences (e.g., full-time/part-time) with respect to professional development engagement?
- What motivates faculty to participate in faculty engagement? How do these motivations differ by VITAL faculty career characteristics?

One-Off Engagement and Sustained Professional Development (SPD)

One-Off Engagement: These forms of engagement in professional development usually only occur once. They include engaging with internet resources, such as handouts and guides, that Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTL; a term we use to refer to these centers even when specific campuses have named them differently), usually provide. One-to-one consultations with instructional developers in the CTL and/or with career coaches offer targeted discussion related to specific areas where faculty have concerns or want to learn more. There are also workshops and programs like "lunch and learn" where faculty spend a few hours learning about a specific aspect of instructional effectiveness, such as providing feedback on assignments and understanding first-generation college students.

Sustained Professional Development (SPD): In phase one of our research, we identified five types of SPD programs that offer VITAL faculty sustained engagement over time, usually with a cohort of peers. Campuses modestly modified the traditional faculty learning community (FLC) model used by Miami University (Cox, 2004), for instance by shortening the program to a semester (rather than a year) and integrating a facilitator to guide discussions, assign readings, etc. Some FLCs also featured cohort-specific designs, such as an adjunct FLC specifically for part-time VITAL faculty. Action teams allow for a disciplinary focus within SPD, where faculty focus on issues such as course redesign or creating curricular alignment across courses. Certificate programs allow for VITAL faculty to engage in learning and discussion over time and offer an option for faculty to engage in a more asynchronous manner, as many times program components are offered on-demand. Finally, discussion groups, including teaching circles and special interest groups, were a more informal way for VITAL faculty to

connect with colleagues over time while discussing issues related to teaching and/or faculty careers. These programs tended to require the least commitment of time and energy from VITAL faculty, as attendance was usually optional, but also had less of an impact on VITAL faculty's development according to our interviewees.

Faculty Engagement in Different Types of Professional Development

About 88% of the VITAL faculty in our sample reported some engagement in professional development in the last year. As some campuses limited data collection to previous and current professional development participants, these levels of engagement are notably higher than we would expect from the entire population of VITAL faculty on any given campus. At the same time, 12% of our sample reported not participating in any form of professional development during the last year.

Given the benefits associated with engagement in sustained professional development, this report focuses on the 58% who reported engaging in at least one of the forms included in this category (compared to those who only engaged in one-off opportunities or did not engage in any professional development).

In terms of overall forms of engagement, faculty most frequently utilized internet resources such as handouts, videos, and white papers (59%) or attended one or more workshops (50%). Notably with respect to more sustained forms of development, almost one-third (31.5%) of the sample participated in a faculty learning community. Among the different types of sustained programs, teaching circles were the least frequent format , with only 5% of faculty participating.

⋯→ *Differences Based on Career Characteristics: Engagement*

With respect to differences based on career characteristics, we found similar rates of engagement in any professional development and in sustained programs based on (1) whether VITAL faculty's role was primarily teaching or not, (2) regardless of their years of experience, and (3) regardless of their discipline. These findings speak to the ways the campuses we worked with were thoughtful about engaging these different groups of VITAL faculty, especially in planning SPD programs that targeted specific groups (e.g., mid-career faculty, STEMM faculty). We did find some differences among part-time and full-time faculty, as well as among faculty who had promotion opportunities and longer contracts.

Full-Time and Part-Time

Full-time faculty engaged in professional development at notably higher rates than part-time faculty. About 90% of full-time faculty participated in some form of professional development, compared to 79% of part-timers. Similarly, 61% of full-time faculty reported participating in SPD, compared to 50% of part-time VITAL faculty. And part-time VITAL faculty were twice as likely to report not engaging in any professional development (18% compared to 9% of full-time).

Among our respondents who participated in SPD, 97% of part-time faculty participated in programs that were completed within one semester; only 3% participated in yearlong SPD. In comparison, 25% of full-time faculty participated in SPD that was completed within one semester, while 75% participated in yearlong programs.

These findings reflect the reality that, on some campuses, part-time VITAL faculty may not be eligible for SPD programs. Further, part-time faculty may be hesitant to commit to longer programs, especially as they may not be recognized or rewarded for such commitments.

Promotion Opportunities and Longer Contracts

VITAL faculty with promotion opportunities were, on average, about 12% more likely to participate in SPD (63% vs. 50% of faculty who did not have promotion opportunities). The same was true among VITAL faculty with contracts of a year or longer (60% vs. 47% who had contacts of nine months or less). Further, one in five VITAL faculty members without promotion opportunities had not participated in any professional development during the last year (20%), compared to one in ten faculty with promotion opportunities (10%).

Our multilevel framework identifies the important role of institutional policies and hiring practices as influences on the success of professional development initiates. And our report **Exploring New Horizons for Designing Intensive Professional Development for VITAL Faculty** identifies the importance for campuses to address larger

policies, such as promotion opportunities and longer contracts in order to promote VITAL faculty's engagement in professional development. These patterns in our faculty data underscore the importance of seeing professional development as inherently connected to other aspects of faculty's working conditions; taking this broader view can help campuses be successful in their efforts to use professional development to support VITAL faculty's effectiveness and growth.

Motivation for Engagement

Faculty reported the importance of several different factors in their decisions to engage in sustained professional development. Overall, the most salient factors driving faculty's decision to participate in such programs were these, beginning with the most important:

1. Knowing what the topic would be prior to signing up
2. Participation being linked to annual evaluation and/or promotion opportunities
3. Having a facilitator that guided the group work
4. Participation being linked to funding for technology and/or conference attendance
5. Receiving a stipend or other monetary compensation for attendance

Interestingly, we also found that being required to complete a project as part of the program was particularly unmotivating to VITAL faculty; however, not being required to complete a project as part of the program was also not a very important motivator for VITAL faculty.

┈➔ *Differences Based on Career Characteristics: Motivations*

While these patterns broadly held when examined across faculty in different roles and with different backgrounds, a few important differences emerged.

Full-Time and Part-Time

Part-time VITAL faculty ranked these attributes most highly:

1. Knowing what the topic would be prior to signing up.
2. Most of the program could be completed on their own time.
3. Receiving a stipend or other monetary compensation for attendance.
4. Program can be completed within a semester or less.
5. Having a facilitator that guided the group work.

Part-time instructors are generally compensated on a "per course" basis that does not account for extra efforts such as professional development engagement, mentoring students, and the like. These findings reflect the importance of compensating the time part-time VITAL faculty spend on professional development, providing information and guidance for them, and creating flexibility in the delivery mode and length of SPD.

Full-time VITAL faculty reported that the most important feature for this group was the linkage between professional development participation and evaluation/promotion opportunities. For many campuses, there is an opportunity to increase VITAL faculty's motivation to engage by more explicitly including a commitment to professional growth in evaluation criteria.

Teaching/Non-Teaching

Non-teaching faculty similarly rated that the most important priority for choosing to participate was when engaging in SPD contributed to their evaluation and/or promotion opportunities. As campuses expand their goals for SPD to include clinical, research, and public outreach faculty, they should also consider how to integrate such engagement into evaluation criteria for these roles.

Years of Experience

As a general pattern, faculty who were newer to their institution and/or to higher education tended to show a small but noticeable preference for opportunities that could be completed in a semester or less and opportunities that allowed meeting online when compared to their longer-serving peers. Learning about and adjusting to a new position in a new environment takes both time and effort, limiting the capacity and motivation for newer VITAL faculty to make additional commitments.

Takeaways Related to Engagement

- It is important to distinguish between one-off and sustained professional development rather than treat all professional development as being the same. Broadly, our work in phase one identified the value in both options, with greater benefits deriving from sustained opportunities.
- Part-time faculty are much more likely to engage in shorter-term programming with clearly defined topics and opportunities to complete portions of the program on their own time. These opportunities might also be more attractive to faculty who are newer to their institution and/or higher education.
- Promotion opportunities and longer-term contract length are associated with pursuing both one-off and sustained professional development. Careful consideration is required here; expecting faculty to participate in SPD without structural aspects of their career (promotion, contract) reinforcing sustainability will prove challenging.

Section 4: Program Activities and Perceived Benefits

In this section, we will share faculty's perceptions of the SPD activities that were found to be most useful, and the ways that they perceived that participating in professional development benefitted them. The findings in this section help to further nuance the ways that SPD can be designed and implemented by providing insight into what faculty tell us they are taking away from these experiences.

The guiding questions for this section are as follows:

- What sustained professional development (SPD) activities do VITAL faculty find most effective? How do these views on effectiveness differ by career characteristics (e.g., teaching/non-teaching)?
- What benefits do VITAL faculty derive from SPD engagement? How do these perceived benefits differ based on career characteristics (e.g., years of experience)?

Helpfulness of Specific Activities

VITAL faculty shared with us how effective they found certain SPD activities in helping them improve their teaching and professional practice. These activities included discussions, lectures, readings, and final projects. Three activities were considered to be particularly effective, in order beginning with most important:

- Discussions with peers about teaching during meetings
- Workshops on topics related to teaching
- Discussions with peers about work experiences during meetings

An additional set of five activities were moderately effective:

- Conversations or collaborations with peers that occurred outside of meetings
- Lectures and information provided by facilitators
- Presentations by peers
- Readings chosen and completed individually
- Discussions with peers about career development during meetings

Reflecting VITAL faculty's perceived usefulness of different activities, these were rated as least effective:

- Having a final project
- Use of a common reading

As with other teaching and learning contexts, SPD programs appear to be most helpful for VITAL faculty when they utilize active and collaborative pedagogies. Additionally, given that many VITAL faculty have a heavy workload, they did not find as much value in having to dedicate time and energy outside of meetings to complete a project or engage in reading that they may not have chosen.

⋯→ *Differences Based on Career Characteristics: Activities*

The above ratings held for faculty across disciplines and for faculty whose contracts were annual or longer. Below, we discuss the differences we found for other groups based on their career characteristics.

Full-Time and Part-Time

When looked at separately, part-time faculty found workshops on topics related to teaching to be most effective and common readings to be least effective; they were also more neutral in their outlook on including a project as part of their professional development experiences. Projects may help part-time faculty document their commitment to career effectiveness, for instance, that could be used in applying for full-time positions.

Full-time faculty, meanwhile, found discussing work experiences during meetings to be most effective. While these discussions may be beneficial in both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary spaces, SPD with interdisciplinary cohorts offer an opportunity for VITAL faculty to learn about how job expectations and departmental cultures vary across their institution, giving them a wider perspective.

Teaching/Non-Teaching

VITAL faculty whose primary responsibilities were not teaching indicated that the most effective activity was conversations or collaborations with peers that occurred outside of more formal professional development meetings. Teaching faculty, meanwhile, found workshops on teaching-related topics to be most effective. While these findings may seem obvious, on many campuses professional development conversations revolve around instructional effectiveness without consideration of VITAL faculty's varying responsibilities. For example, workshops about course management software could integrate their potential for research groups to share emerging findings or for extension faculty to communicate with the public.

Years of Experience

VITAL faculty who were newer to the institution had a strong preference for activities that helped them build teaching skills (e.g., discussions and workshops about teaching), whereas faculty who had been at the institution for more than three years gave higher value to talking about their work experiences.

Both faculty who were newer to their institution and to higher education also assigned higher value to conversations with SPD peers that occurred outside of meetings, which likely reflects their desire to connect with colleagues within the institution and create a professional network.

Promotion Opportunities and Contract Length

VITAL faculty with promotion opportunities rated readings chosen and completed individually much more highly than did faculty without promotion opportunities, which likely suggests that they see this activity as helpful for giving them agency to connect SPD engagement to their individual career development, even if it requires time outside of SPD meetings. In contrast, faculty without promotion opportunities rated all activities that required effort outside of meetings as particularly unmotivating, including collaborations outside of meetings, readings (both individual and common), and having to complete a project.

Faculty with contracts that were nine months or shorter rated workshops and lectures as the most helpful activities they engaged in, reflecting a desire to learn new information and skills without a lot of independent effort.

> **Importantly, the area that VITAL faculty reported as least beneficial was helping them advocate for themselves with their department chair and/or dean.**

Perceived Benefits

VITAL faculty were also asked about the extent to which engagement in sustained professional development helped them grow across a variety of areas. These reflected both teaching (e.g, in-class pedagogical practice) and non-teaching (e.g., professional identity and network) benefits. The five highest areas of growth were the following, beginning with the highest:

- Understanding institutional resources available to me and/or to students
- Understanding different instructional tools and resources
- Feeling confident about my ongoing growth and development as a faculty member
- Developing a network of colleagues with peers involved in professional development
- Creating an inclusive classroom community

Importantly, the area that VITAL faculty reported as least beneficial was helping them advocate for themselves with their department chair and/or dean. We also observed that VITAL faculty did not perceive leadership-related

benefits, which included developing leadership skills and having opportunities to be a leader, as a result of SPD engagement. Given that SPD facilitators and administrative leaders identified these as benefits of SPD participation for VITAL faculty in our first phase of research, it may be that these dimensions of faculty self-efficacy are less visible, or less important, to VITAL faculty participants compared to the benefits related to gaining knowledge, building skills, and widening professional networks.

While the purpose of the SPD programs we studied varied, these findings may help campuses integrate more of these potential benefits when planning SPD programs. For example, even if the program is focused on instructional effectiveness, meetings can include information about supporting students' mental health, academic achievement, and basic needs.

⇢ *Differences Based on Career Characteristics: Perceived Benefits*

Full-Time and Part-Time

Part-time faculty responded that using student-centered teaching in class was a particularly important growth area and also noted growing in their ability to support students' wellbeing and persistence. Full-time faculty, meanwhile, said they gained most through developing a network of colleagues with peers and also reported a moderate amount of growth in their overall sense of belonging to the institution.

Teaching/Non-Teaching

Faculty whose roles were primarily outside of teaching responded a bit differently than their teaching faculty peers, telling us that their greatest gains were in developing a network of colleagues and in feeling confident about their career progression.

Years of Experience

The growth areas listed above were both demonstrated by newer and more experienced faculty, though those newer to both their institution and to higher education indicated finding slightly more value in SPD participation as a means of strengthening their sense of belonging to their institution.

Promotion Opportunities and Contract Length

Faculty with promotion opportunities identified developing a network of colleagues and feeling confident about their ongoing growth as the areas of greatest growth they perceived from participating in SPD. Faculty without promotion opportunities instead perceived the greatest growth in areas related to teaching (e.g., knowledge of instructional tools, creating an inclusive classroom).

One major difference emerged among VITAL faculty based on contract length: whereas faculty with longer contracts rated network development and ongoing growth as important benefits they derived from engagement, faculty with short-term contracts gave very low ratings to these areas of growth. Campuses might consider how to better leverage SPD as a tool to help VITAL faculty on short-term contracts become connected within the institution and to consider engagement as part of their wider career trajectory.

Takeaways Related to Program Activities and Perceived Benefits

- Discussion-based activities with peers connected to teaching and work experience are particularly effective activities for VITAL faculty SPD programs. Including time outside of meetings can promote helpful connections, although may be off-putting to faculty with shorter-term contracts and no opportunities for promotion.

- Incorporating discussions, workshops, presentations, and/or facilitated lectures within SPD programming is preferable; including a final project, meanwhile, may be seen as burdensome.

- While gaining knowledge is a top benefit of SPD engagement, faculty also report gaining confidence and extending their network as important growth areas. Considering opportunities for VITAL faculty to learn new skills, meet new people, and gain new self-efficacy toward their careers over the course of an SPD program can generate comprehensive benefits.

- With respect to perceived benefits, it is necessary to align target audience(s) with programs and possible benefits — considering programs for all VITAL faculty as well as for specific subsets of this group (e.g., part-time, non-teaching, short-contract) might help connect preferred activities to desired benefits.

Section 5: Outcomes of Engaging in Sustained Professional Development

We now turn to outcomes associated with participating in sustained professional development. The guiding questions for this section are as follows:

- What outcomes are associated with engagement in sustained professional development (i.e., when comparing VITAL faculty who did engage to those who did not)?
- How do outcomes differ in relationship to SPD program structure (e.g., VITAL-specific cohort)?

We compared those who participated in sustained professional development (58%) to those who did not (42%) using outcomes identified through our previous work. Specifically, these outcomes included measures of the following:

- Perceived cohesion (i.e., sense of belonging to a group, feelings of morale about group membership)
- Institutional integration (i.e., knowledge of institutional resources related to career and to student success)
- Professional network (i.e., people to ask questions, interactions)
- Career development and advancement (i.e., discussions, knowledge of policies)
- Professional identity (i.e., feeling valued and recognized within their department and outside of their department)
- Leadership self-efficacy and opportunities (i.e., general and higher education-specific)
- Use of effective teaching practices (i.e., promoting active rather than passive learning).

Our report examines these outcomes in two parts. First, we analyze the relationship between engagement in sustained professional development and VITAL faculty's scores on these outcomes. Second, we examine differences in outcomes based on the design and implementation of SPD programs (e.g., VITAL-faculty specific cohorts vs. mixed faculty cohorts). The findings in this section deepen our understanding of these layers of the Multilevel Model introduced in Section I1 of this report.

Overall Findings

Perceived Cohesion

When asking faculty about their sense of belonging and feelings of morale, we tailored campus surveys to either the departmental or institutional level depending on the focus of their SPD program. Here, we report findings for perceived cohesion across levels, using combined data.
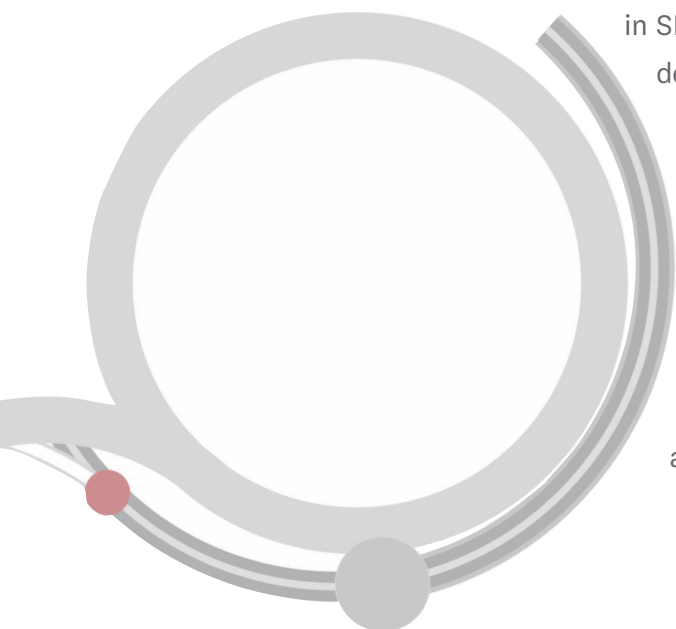
Faculty who engaged in sustained professional development demonstrated a stronger sense of belonging when compared to those who did not engage. This finding reflects greater enthusiasm about the department/institution, sense of fitting in, and general happiness in working for the department/institution.

In our first phase of research, many of the faculty members we interviewed described the isolation and loneliness that they experienced as a result of having little or no contact with any other faculty members, including those in their department. Certainly, participating in SPD may also help tenure-track faculty develop a sense of community with their colleagues, but interviewees identified a much more profound sense of community being created among VITAL faculty.

Intriguingly, while cultivating a sense of belonging might not always be an explicit outcome of sustained professional development, engagement in such programs is helpful along these dimensions. Additionally, our use of Bollen and Hoyle's (1990) measure allows us to look separately at VITAL faculty's sense of belonging (i.e., how I fit within the institution/department) and feelings of morale (i.e., how I feel about working for this institution or department). Overall, our findings suggest that participating in SPD benefits the individual belongingness aspect of our measure more than the morale aspect. In other words, participating in SPD generally helps VITAL faculty feel like they belong within their department/institution, but it does not particularly affect their feelings about being a member of a specific department/institution.

Institutional Integration and Knowledge of Resources

Related to perceived cohesion, faculty who engaged in sustained professional development demonstrated greater institutional integration and knowledge of resources than those who did not. These forms of integration reflected two areas: career management and student success.

With respect to career management, VITAL faculty who engaged in sustained professional development were more confident than their non-engaging peers in knowing who to contact with questions about day-to-day career matters. These included knowing whom to ask when they had questions about benefits, parking, classroom technology, and taking time off.

Additionally, VITAL faculty who engaged were also substantially more confident in their knowledge of supports available to students. These included resources for students' mental health, academic success, accommodations for disability, and cultural inclusion.

In our first phase of study, we found that SPD participation helped VITAL faculty connect to the institution, rather than just coming and going from it. Here, faculty confirm that the benefits of SPD participation include helping faculty manage their careers effectively and contribute to the institutional mission of student success.

Professional Network

Faculty who participated in sustained professional development also had a wider and more externally-located professional network within their institution. In the first phase of our study, VITAL faculty spoke about their desire to connect with and develop a set of colleagues, develop long-term relationships, and even find mentors. Having a professional network can help VITAL faculty know where to turn when they have questions about the institution and can help them feel a sense of collegiality at work.

In this study, we asked about the types of individuals

VITAL faculty felt connected to (e.g., peers, department chairs, staff members). VITAL faculty who participated have an average of three types of individuals they can ask when they do not know something about their institution; those who did not participate have an average closer to two.

About 77% of VITAL faculty said they could ask questions to a department colleague, and just more than half said they could ask questions to a department staff member, regardless of participation in professional development. Faculty who participated in SPD were slightly more likely to indicate they could ask questions to their department chair (77% of participants compared to 66% who did not engage in SPD).

Importantly, however, 42% of VITAL faculty who participated feel as though they can ask a faculty colleague in another department when they don't know something, while only 18% of those who did not engage say the same. Similarly, 23% of VITAL faculty who participated in sustained professional development feel they can ask questions to a staff member in another department compared to only 8.5% of those who did not engage.

These findings reveal that SPD widens VITAL faculty's networks beyond their own department, helping them create connections with others on campus, including likely within the CTL or other space where SPD occurs. As the culture of inclusion of VITAL faculty varies widely across departments on many campuses, this form of professional development offers an important opportunity for VITAL faculty to develop a network outside of their immediate context.

Career Development and Advancement

In the first phase of our study, one unexpected finding was that interviewees believed career development and advancement to be an important benefit to SPD for many VITAL faculty, as these spaces provided opportunities to discuss career options and opportunities.

In this phase of study, VITAL faculty who participated in SPD were more likely to have discussions about career development and advancement with mentors or supervisors, as well as having these discussions with faculty colleagues. VITAL faculty who participated in SPD also reported having a stronger understanding of policies related to evaluation and promotion, as well as a stronger understanding of faculty governance.

Thus, in addition to offering a space outside of their departments where VITAL faculty can discuss their careers, the information they glean may help them better advocate for having these discussions with supervisors and mentors.

Professional Identity

With respect to professional identity, faculty told us about the extent to which they felt valued, a subset of our broader inquiry into their career identity and development identified in the first phase of our research. Specifically, we asked faculty about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that their work was valued by colleagues and administrators, both within their department and outside their department.

To the first, faculty who participated in sustained professional development felt similarly valued within their department when compared to faculty who did not participate in this programming.

To the second, however, faculty who participated in sustained professional development felt substantially more valued outside of their department when compared to faculty who did not participate. Importantly, those who engaged in sustained programming told us they were more valued by fellow faculty outside of their department, and also that their work was more valued by leaders/administrators across the institution.

Leadership Self-Efficacy and Opportunities

Faculty who participated in sustained professional development demonstrated greater leadership self-efficacy when compared to VITAL faculty who did not participate. This included general leadership skills (e.g., organization, team leadership) as well as leadership abilities specific to higher education contexts (e.g., serving in a departmental administrative role, heading an institution-wide committee, etc.). VITAL faculty were also asked whether they had opportunities to serve as a leader in curriculum/course development within their department, as a department- or college-level administrator, and/or as a mentor or facilitator of professional development. Overall, 57% of VITAL faculty said they did not have any such opportunities. As the below table demonstrates, faculty who participated in SPD were much more likely to have such opportunities.

Specific Types of Leadership Opportunities	Participated in SPD	Did Not Participate in SPD
Administrative Role	43%	37%
Curriculum	77%	67%
Mentor/facilitator	72%	56%

Increased opportunities for leadership were especially prevalent in terms of being a mentor or facilitator for faculty development, with increased opportunities also found for curriculum development. SPD programs can benefit VITAL faculty both directly and indirectly, creating opportunities for leadership within CTLs as well as offering a vehicle for demonstrating commitment and developing expertise.

Instructional Effectiveness

Faculty were asked about their classroom practices, including lecturing, practical activities, and discussion. Faculty who participated in sustained professional development showed no discernible difference from those who did not in terms of the prevalence of using active teaching practices (e.g., whole class discussions, small-group work) compared to passive teaching practices (e.g., lecturing, videos). This finding may reflect that many of the SPD programs that campuses developed in phase two were not predominantly focused on instructional effectiveness.

Summary of Overall Findings

The summary table below provides a summary of our findings comparing faculty who participated in sustained professional development (SPD) and those who did not across the outcome areas we identified in our phase one report. All differences found indicated positive outcomes for faculty who did participate compared to those who did not.

Outcome	Difference: SPD/non-SPD
Perceived Cohesion	Yes
Sense of Belonging	Yes
Feelings of Morale	No
Knowledge of Work/Life Resources	Yes
Knowledge of Student Success Resources	Yes
Professional Network	Yes
Career Development and Advancement	Yes
Professional Identity Within Department	No
Professional Identity Outside Department	Yes
Leadership Self-Efficacy	Yes
Leadership Opportunities	Yes
% Time Active Teaching	No

⋯→ *Differences Based on the Design and Structure of SPD programs*

As the structure(s) of sustained professional development programs can vary, we also examined differences in outcomes based on two dimensions of design and implementation noted in our multilevel framework: group composition, delivery mode, and program length. Specifically, we examined being in an adjunct-specific cohort (among part-time VITAL faculty), a VITAL-specific cohort (vs. combined with tenure-line faculty), a disciplinary-focused cohort; and having an online delivery mode (note: all of the online SPD we studied were designed for faculty who conducted their faculty work exclusively online).

Adjunct-specific Cohort

Faculty who participated in sustained professional development featuring an adjunct-specific cohort demonstrated greater knowledge of career management resources (e.g., who to ask with specific questions about their work) when compared to colleagues who were not in an adjunct-specific cohort.

> **Specifically, faculty whose SPD participation involved a disciplinary-focused cohort felt more valued by their department but less valued outside the department.**

VITAL-specific Cohort

Faculty participating in one or more sustained professional development programs featuring a VITAL-specific cohort demonstrated notably higher overall sense of belonging as well as higher scores on feelings of morale when compared to colleagues whose experience(s) did not include a VITAL-specific cohort.

Disciplinary-focused Cohort

Faculty who participated in a disciplinary-focused cohort as part of their sustained professional development demonstrated a distinctive pattern when compared to those whose experiences did not include this cohort. Specifically, faculty whose SPD participation involved a disciplinary-focused cohort felt more valued by their department but less valued outside of the department. Additionally, those whose experiences involved a disciplinary-specific cohort responded that they had a substantially higher overall sense of belonging, inclusive of the belongingness and morale aspects of this area.

Online Delivery Mode

Faculty who engaged in an online-only program (who also taught only online) had a higher overall sense of belonging, including somewhat higher feelings of belongingness and substantially higher feelings of morale.

Program Length

Interestingly, we did not find any differences in outcomes based on whether programs were a semester or less in length or were held for an entire year. These findings provide evidence that the benefits of participating in SPD can be gleaned from shorter SPD programs that do not require a multi-semester commitment.

Takeaways Related to Outcomes of SPD

- There are many positive outcomes — including along affective dimensions such as sense of belonging and leadership self-efficacy — that are evidenced when comparing those who participate in SPD to those who do not. Some of these dimensions may be intentional learning objectives; others may be more indirect benefits emerging from participation in high-quality professional development endeavors.

- Program designers should especially consider the structure of SPD cohorts. VITAL faculty benefit more when they are in cohorts with peers who have similar employment characteristics, likely because the program offers a safe space where they can be vulnerable.

- We did not find that participating in SPD was related to more effective teaching; however, it may be that the emergence of improved teaching practices happens over time for several interconnected reasons rather than detectable when comparing across SPD engagement.

Section 6: Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

In this report, we sought to better understand VITAL faculty's engagement with sustained professional development programs and the benefits they derived from participating. Our study participants reflect a diverse cross-section of faculty across disciplines, institutions, demographics, job roles, and years of experience. Through our comprehensive survey instrument, we were able to learn about what attracted faculty to professional development opportunities, what activities they found helpful, the benefits they perceived, and how engagement was related to a number of outcomes.

Considering this presentation within the scope of our broader work, we provide the following implications for practice and action. We hope these will be widely employed in practice toward the sustained success of VITAL faculty and their institutions.

Leadership, Networks, and Self-Advocacy

We saw an interesting set of findings concerning leadership, networks, and advocacy. Sustained professional development is associated with gains in leadership self-efficacy, leadership opportunities, and in building wider, externally-located networks for support. Additionally, our interviewees in phase one research consistently identified advocacy as another benefit for VITAL faculty who participated in SPD. Integrating these findings, we speculate that activities which promote leadership and networking might also come to include advocacy, or at least the building of informal connections that can support VITAL faculty in addressing potentially difficult topics (e.g., course scheduling) with administrators.

Part-Time and Full-Time Differences

As a helpful and important point of difference, part-time and full-time faculty indicated that their motivations to pursue professional development, as well as their activities and benefits, were not entirely the same. We continue to encourage attention to these important differences in creating programming, perhaps seeking opportunities to develop distinctive programs only for part-time, only for full-time, and for both groups. Here, we suggest a comprehensive look at part-time specific programs, which may importantly include shorter-term (i.e., semester or less) sustained opportunities and ways to engage at least part of such programming on their own time.

Years of Experience Differences

We also recommend close attention to engaging faculty across differences in experience both at the institution and within higher education. Faculty who are newer to their institution and/or higher education told us they preferred programs that were shorter-term and teaching-focused; longer-serving VITAL faculty, meanwhile, tend to prefer opportunities to discuss work experiences and build upon their network within the institution.

Structuring Sustained Opportunities

When structuring sustained professional development opportunities for VITAL faculty, it is important that programs and their designers clearly communicate the topic(s) that will be covered in the program and, where possible and appropriate, intentionally incorporate facilitation. Rather than offer generic programs on 'teaching' or 'technology', we urge more specified opportunities that more directly speak to VITAL faculty interests. This is especially important when programs will only be loosely if at all linked to annual evaluation and/or funding streams.

Synergistic Look at Outcomes

While our data looked at differences in outcomes among faculty who engaged vs. did not engage sustained professional development, the wide scope of positive outcomes evidenced by those who engaged is quite notable. We consider: Are these outcomes distinct or, maybe, synergistic? Based on our work across phases, we see that there are, in fact, important synergies — for example, between an elevated sense of belonging and a professional network, as well as between institutional integration and leadership. As SPD engagement creates so many benefits for VITAL faculty, campuses should prioritize this form of support, as it truly is more than a sum of its parts.

Before turning to additional practical considerations, we remind those seeking to act on this report to consider our findings in concert with the Multilevel Framework appearing earlier in this presentation. In addition to carefully considering implementation features of professional development such as content, deliverables, facilitator roles, and delivery modality, the model provides a helpful approach for centering VITAL faculty within more expansive institutional ecosystems. As our findings demonstrate, there are important insights to be gained from considering VITAL faculty collectively as well as with respect to differences within this group. This includes careful consideration of differences based on structural conditions of employment (e.g., contract-length), institutional and disciplinary cultures (e.g., STEMM vs. non-STEMM experiences), rewards and recognition (e.g., opportunities for promotion), and institutional policies. With this framework in mind, we suggest the following strategies:

1. Develop and implement sustained professional development (SPD) that vary in length, format, and audience.

    - **Length:** Consider varying timeframes for sustained professional engagement. Does the work need to take place over the entire academic year? Can it take place in one semester or less? Are there opportunities for modularization? Considering such questions may invite wider audiences, especially when it is made clear as to why the program is occurring over the set timeframe.
    - **Format:** There are many formats for SPD work, inclusive of online-only, hybrid, and cohort-based models. If current SPD programs are only occurring in one format (e.g., place-based, fully synchronous, non-cohort) perhaps seek opportunities to experiment with other approaches.
    - **Audience:** Who is the audience for your program? If the answer is "all VITAL faculty" you may be missing out on important nuances with respect to motivation, preferred activities, and anticipated benefits. Think carefully through the audience(s) for specific programs and seek opportunities to target programming when and as possible.

    Certainly, planning SPD programming with careful consideration to all three — length, format, and audience — in consultation with our findings can be a helpful starting point to creating new programming and refreshing existing efforts.

2. Carefully consider and incorporate into future efforts faculty's motivations for engaging in professional development, remembering that important differences exist within VITAL faculty populations.

3. Seek opportunities to foster facilitated discussions and knowledge sharing; be mindful about having programs terminate in some larger-scale project.

4. Leverage sustained faculty development to help VITAL faculty connect to others — both peers and administrators — outside their department. One approach here is to be intentional — ensure all departments receive notice of SPD, that faculty are able to ask questions of each other such as "how does this work in your department?" and that best practices for working with students and administrators at the institution are shared.

5. Recognize important structural differences with respect to VITAL faculty contract-length and opportunities for promotion. Expecting VITAL faculty to fully commit to professional development when institutions have not fully committed to them as professionals will prove challenging.

6. Strive to consider faculty 'take-aways' that include both content-knowledge (e.g., How do I? Where do I? How can I use?) as well as affective growth (e.g., How confident am I?). Both can be done simultaneously and, as our multi-level model demonstrates, both are reflective of VITAL faculty needs and the career conditions in which these faculty work.

Conclusion

VITAL faculty — visiting faculty, instructors, adjuncts, lecturers, research faculty, clinical faculty, and others in contingent positions — are essential to fulfilling the mission, vision, and values of most higher education institutions in the United States.

Throughout this project, we have sought to better understand all facets of professional development for this core population, including motivations, activities, benefits, and outcomes. Our hope moving forward is that these recommendations provide decision-makers at all levels, including those who have a direct hand in creating professional development as well as senior-level leaders who allocate resources for such development, a more complete empirical picture of why this work matters and what it can accomplish when done well. In closing, we hope this report nuances thinking and catalyzes action to ensure that VITAL faculty are valued as core members of their learning organizations and are consistently provided high-quality opportunities to develop and thrive as professionals.

Appendix

Table 1. Institutions that Implemented New/Modified Programs

Institution	SPD Model	New/Revised SPD Progam Implemented	Primary Program Focus
Boise State University	FLC	"Localizing" CTL's Adjunct Faculty Learning Community in Social Work (online program) and Math Departments	Instructional effectiveness
Inver Hills Community College and Dakota County Technical College	FLC	Community of Practice for first-year and adjunct faculty	Institutional integration
Iowa State University	FLC	Term faculty learning community	Leadership development
Kennesaw State University (College of Science and Math)	Action Teams	Leadership development for course coordinators to lead action teams with course instructors	Leadership development; instructional effectiveness
University of Denver	FLC	Purpose and Pathways program for mid-career VITAL faculty	Leadership development
University of Georgia	FLC	VITAL faculty FLC with a focus on inventorying PD opportunities and awards available to VITAL faculty across campus	Advocacy for VITAL faculty

Table 2. Institutions That Faced Significant Challenges

Institution	SPD Model Proposed	Program Purpose Proposed	Reason New/Revised SPD Program Was Not Implmented
Embry-Riddle University —Worldwide	Certificate/badge	Certificate program	Organizational restructuring impacted design team's ability to plan
New School, Parsons School of Design	Certificate/badge	Badge program around DEI	Study timeline did not meet campus needs for program development
Sinclair College	Certificate/badge	Advanced certificate for adjuncts	CTL personnel changed; limited capacity and different priorities
University of North Carolina Charlotte	FLC	Advanced adjunct FLC for alumni of existing AFLC	CTL personnel changed; limited capacity and different priorities

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About the Pullias Center for Higher Education

USC's Pullias Center for Higher Education is the world's leading research center on student access and success in higher education. The Center is focused on advancing equity in higher education and providing innovative, scalable solutions to both improve college outcomes for underserved students and enhancing the performance of postsecondary institutions. Begun in 1995 as a University of Southern California Rossier research center focused on higher education policy and practice, the Earl and Pauline Pullias Center for Higher Education was established in 2012 with a generous bequest from the Pullias Family estate. For more information, please visit: https://pullias.usc.edu.

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