Objective. This descriptive study explored the reasons for occupational therapy faculty members selecting academia as a career, their use of faculty development practices, and the relationship of organizational culture to collegial support.

Method. Full-time faculty members (n = 191) from accredited occupational therapy professional programs in the United States completed a questionnaire about their early years in academia.

Results. Respondents indicated that their primary reason for selecting academia as a career was their love of teaching. The most helpful faculty development practice was frequent sharing of ideas with peer faculty members.

Conclusions. The findings support the following recommendations for program administrators and experienced faculty members to assist new faculty members in adapting to academia: (a) support and develop new avenues for sharing ideas in formal and informal settings; (b) develop mentoring programs, with new faculty members observing experienced teachers and receiving feedback and assistance for their own teaching; (c) encourage attendance at instructional seminars; (d) provide resource materials and texts on improving teaching and research skills; (e) allow time for research; and (f) encourage coauthoring of publications.

Occupational therapists entering the academic milieu as faculty members encounter many challenges. Like other new members of higher education faculty, they go through a period of learning, developing competence, and adjusting to the institution's organizational culture (Baldwin, 1990; Reynolds, 1992). Faculty members' impression of their capabilities, perspective on academia, and goals are formed during the first few years in academia (Boice, 1991; Fink, 1984; Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992). Early experiences influence the faculty member's career path, future attitude, and performance. Designing effective and efficient faculty development opportunities is essential to promoting positive attitudes toward self and academia (Baldwin, 1990; Boice, 1992).

In 1993, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Representative Assembly charged the Executive Board to "plan, implement, and fund a project management model to address the goal of recruitment, development, and retention of qualified faculty for [occupational therapy education]" (AOTA, 1993, p. 1123). The minimal amount of discussion on faculty development in the occupational therapy literature from 1990 to

Dale S. M. Vassantachart, EdD, OTR, CHT, is Faculty Consultant, Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Allied Health Professions—Nichol Hall, Room 903, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California 92350-0001.

Gail Taylor Rice, EdD, RN, CHES, is Professor, Department of Physical Therapy, School of Allied Health Professions, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

This article was accepted for publication May 22, 1996.
1995 necessitates investigations into the understanding of “knowledge and skills” that are required by faculty members in academia (Masagatani & Grant, 1986, p. 83). Studying the perceived effectiveness of faculty development practices that faculty members used as they became enculturated into the academic environment may be helpful to new faculty members for fostering a positive adjustment into academia as well as to administrators for formulating faculty development plans. This descriptive study was designed to provide information on the following areas: (a) What attracts occupational therapists to teaching? (b) How are occupational therapy faculty members helped to adapt to the demands of academia? (c) What factors in the academic environment facilitate or hinder the faculty member’s commitment to and enjoyment of teaching?

Method
Respondents

Respondents were recruited from the 83 accredited occupational therapy professional programs in the United States. Directors of 66 (79.5%) of these programs indicated that they had faculty members who met the study criteria, namely registered occupational therapists who have taught full time for a minimum of 4 years.

Instrument

The study questionnaire was adapted from Centra’s (1976) survey of the use and effectiveness of faculty development practices in the United States. It consisted of Likert scales, preselected response questions, demographic questions, rank order questions, and open-ended questions, for a total of 114 questions.

Respondents rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = unimportant, 5 = very important) six preselected responses for their selection of academia as a career. In addition, on a four-point Likert scale, respondents rated preselected responses regarding their use (0 = not used or not available, 3 = extensively used) and perceived effectiveness (0 = not effective, 5 = extremely effective) of specific faculty development practices in adjusting as new faculty members to the organizational culture of their institution, their development of teaching skills, and their performance of scholarly works.

Respondents also ranked extent of learning (during the first 4 years in academia) in four areas of organizational culture—knowledge of policies, understanding of expectations, awareness of available resources, awareness of support services—on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very well).

To check clarity of the questions and to ensure validity, an expert in the field of faculty development, a retired occupational therapy faculty member, three faculty members from a school of education, and one public health and six allied health faculty members from Loma Linda University in California reviewed the instrument. Reliability was assessed with the test–retest method. Of 18 randomly selected respondents in the current study, 12 responded to our request to complete the instrument a second time. Ninety-two percent of the second responses were identical to the original response or with a difference of no more than ±1.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from appropriate institutional review boards. The 66 program directors who agreed to participate in the study designated a contact person and indicated the number of registered occupational therapist faculty members in their program who met the study criteria. Questionnaires were sent to the contact person for distribution to the faculty members. Faculty members were informed that completing the questionnaire was voluntary and that their responses would be confidential.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through the use of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Mean values were calculated for the responses to the 32 Likert-scale questions. Spearman rank order correlations were used to determine the relationship of organizational culture to collegial support. In addition to looking at the responses of the total group, we subdivided the group by years of teaching experience (4–5 years, 6–16 years, 17–40 years). Kruskal–Wallis one-way analysis was used to compare academic experience with use and perceived effectiveness of faculty development practices.

Results

Demographics

Faculty members from 57 occupational therapy programs (representing 29 states) completed the questionnaire for a total of 191 respondents. Nine programs were not included in the study for reasons of nonresponse (n = 8) and responses received after the deadline (n = 1). Of the respondents, 165 were women, and 26 were men. Their ages ranged from 30 years to 67 years (M = 47 years). Respondents had served as full-time faculty members between 4 years and 40 years (M = 11.6 years, median = 10 years). Thirty-seven (19.4%) had 4 to 5 years of full-time faculty appointment, 112 (58.6%) had 6 to 16 years, and 42 (22.0%) had 17 to 40 years. Approximately 94% reported their initial academic rank to be instructor or assistant professor.
Using an interesting trend. The practice of
enced faculty member. An analysis of the three faculty
obtain funds for research, and coauthor with an experi­
Table 2-4). The faculty development practices deemed
effective were generally the things the respondents used.
Exceptions were in the areas of teaching improvement
and scholarly works development practices (see Tables 3
and 4). In teaching improvement practices, respondents
did not extensively attend instructional seminars, receive
assistance by a designated faculty member, visit other
teacher's classes, receive funds for teaching tools, or have
reduced teaching loads. In developing scholarly skills
practices, respondents did not extensively allow time to
perform scholarly works, attend seminars on research,
ent funds for research, and coauthor with an experi­
cenced faculty member. An analysis of the three faculty
groups by years of teaching experience revealed no signifi­
cant difference in the organizational culture faculty devel­
ment practices but significant differences (p < .05) in
the teaching and scholarly works faculty development
practices (see Table 5).

Relationship of Organizational Culture to Collegial Support
We found small, but significant (p < .05), correlations
among understanding of expectations, awareness of available
resources, and the total of the organizational culture
variables to collegial support (see Table 6). Years of teaching
experience appeared to affect the relationship between
organizational culture and collegial support. Respondents
with the least amount of teaching experience showed the
strongest relationship between the two variables (r = .36).
Respondents with 6 to 16 years of full-time teaching experience
showed significant relationships between understand­
ing of expectations (r = .22) and awareness of available
resources (r = .22) to collegial support.

Discussion
A purpose of this study was to ascertain reasons why clinicians chose to focus on academic careers. Respondents indicated that they selected a career in academia because they liked teaching. Before they committed to full-time teaching, they tested the waters by being a guest lecturer for classes, teaching at workshops, and attending graduate courses in education.

The results regarding the practice of instructional support suggested an interesting trend. The practice of visiting an experienced faculty member's class session was used significantly more by the respondent group with the fewest years of experience (i.e., 4–5 years), suggesting a higher use of the practice in recent years. Additionally, the practice of using funds for research and encouraging co-authorship in publishing has increased in recent years, as evidenced by the data from the respondent group with the fewest years of experience. This trend reflects the greater demands of allied health education programs to support clinical practice through publication.
Fink (1984) suggested that those faculty members who obtained collegial support adjusted more positively to academia. We did not find large correlations between respondents' perceived adjustment to the organizational culture and their perceived level of collegial support during the early years of teaching. The questions on our survey relating to organizational culture were lengthy, which may have affected the results. This difference might also be explained by the fact that positive adjustment to the academic environment may incorporate a variety of factors. In her description of enculturation, Reynolds (1992) stated that if the person's views of the academic culture's values, expectations, and behaviors were similar to that of the organization, enculturation occurs. Other factors that might affect a faculty member's adaptation to the demands of the academic environment include the administrator's goals and management style (Broski, 1987).

Limitations

In addition to the length of the questionnaire, this study was limited by the respondents' recall of past experience, particularly those who have been in academia for many years. The restriction of this study to occupational therapy faculty members who work full time limits the generalization to those who work part time or to faculty members of other disciplines. The study did not consider regional or cultural conditions that might influence the respondents' answers; however, the population included persons from various geographical regions and cultural backgrounds. Finally, no differentiation was made with regard to the expectations and reward structure of the institution.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The occupational therapy faculty members in this study selected academia as their career choice because they liked teaching. They developed their teaching skills, performed scholarly activities, and adjusted to the organizational culture by the use of several faculty development practices, the most helpful of which was frequent sharing of ideas with peer faculty members. Other helpful practices included the program director's encouragement, student and faculty interaction, and observation of teaching styles. Disparities between the faculty development practices used and the practices perceived to be effective were in programs that directly support improvement in teaching and scholarly works.

Much can be done to improve the adjustment of new occupational therapy faculty members into academia. On the basis of this study's findings, we recommend that program administrators and experienced faculty members assist new faculty members in adjusting to the academic milieu by:

- Supporting and developing new avenues for faculty members to share ideas in formal and informal settings. Regular meetings could allow sharing of concerns, ideas regarding solutions to problems, and awareness of how teaching and research in the discipline have emerged within the present setting.
- Developing mentoring programs to enable new faculty members to observe outstanding teachers. Team new faculty members with experienced faculty members who will observe the new member's teaching and provide suggestions and encouragement.
- Encouraging attendance at instructional seminars, providing resource materials and texts on improv-

---

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Use (M)</th>
<th>Effectiveness (M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing ideas with peer faculty members</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program director's encouragement</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks on research</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to resources at the institution</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of time to perform scholarly works</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars on research methods</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for research</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coauthor with an experienced faculty member</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean values based on four-point Likert scale: 0 = not used or not available and 3 = extremely used.

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Faculty Grouped by Years of Experience (M)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New faculty visits experienced faculty's class</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for teaching tools</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly works</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding for research</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coauthor with an experienced faculty member</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mean values based on four-point Likert scale: 0 = not used or not available and 3 = extremely used.

**Table 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Culture Variable</th>
<th>Faculty Grouped by Years of Experience (M)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of policies</td>
<td>.20/28</td>
<td>.06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of expectations</td>
<td>.33/07</td>
<td>.22/04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of resources</td>
<td>.27/14</td>
<td>.22/04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of support services</td>
<td>.30/10</td>
<td>.13/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.36/05*</td>
<td>.15/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlations are significantly different from zero.
ing teaching and research skills, and increasing budgets for teaching and research materials and supplies.

- Allowing time for research and encouraging co-authorship of publications with an experienced faculty member.

Further investigations into the complexities of the adjustment of new faculty members into occupational therapy education are needed. Descriptions of faculty development practices, current faculty development programs, and the adjustment of new faculty members to the organizational culture may provide information on the enculturation process of new faculty members. Exploration of faculty mentoring programs and the nature of institutional expectations of allied health faculty members are other areas ripe for research.

Acknowledgments

We thank the occupational therapy faculty members and personnel who participated in this study. We also appreciated the encouragement and advice from Edwinna Marshall, MA, OTR, FAOTA, Norman Powell, EdD, Greneth Zimmerman, PhD, Robert Boice, PhD, Gerald Shavlik, MA, MPH, Soomi Chang, and other faculty and staff members at La Sierra University, Loma Linda University, and the University of Southern California.

References


Practice Guidelines

These practice guidelines serve as a reference tool for health care facility managers, managed care organizations, health care regulators, third-party payers, and occupational therapy practitioners.

Each book defines the evaluation, frequency, and duration of treatment and includes patient care management and an explanation of billing codes. Also available in a one-page format for convenient distribution, the quick reference is laminated and provides a flow chart-at-a-glance, uniform terminologies, and suggested CPT codes for treatment techniques. 16 – 48 pages each, 1996.

Order #1151 - Traumatic Brain Injury
Order #1152 - Stroke
Order #1153 - Hip
Order #1154 - Spinal Cord
Order #1155 - Low Back
Order #1156 - Cerebral Palsy
Order #1157 - Tendon Injuries - NEW
Order #1158 - Delayed Development - NEW
Order #1159 - ADHD - NEW
Order #1188 - Carpal Tunnel Syndrome - NEW

Quick-Reference Version

Quick references can be purchased individually for:

- $4 AOTA member
- $5 nonmember

or in units of 5 for:

- $15 AOTA member
- $20 nonmember

To order, call 1-800-SAY-AOTA (AOTA members), 301-652-2682 (nonmembers), 1-800-377-8555 (TDD).

Shipping and handling additional.