

Getting Started With Online Faculty Development

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The Challenge

Online faculty development (OFD) enables faculty to advance their teaching skills while respecting time constraints. At the 2015 Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education workshop on this topic, 57% of participants indicated they have tried OFD, 85% felt that it can be an effective FD method, and 98% believed that it increasingly would be utilized in the future.^{1,2} Yet, gathering the initial capital and technological expertise needed to create OFD can be daunting. This Rip Out presents a number of low-cost resources and strategies that can be used to create an OFD program.

What Is Known

Teacher skill development initiatives have demonstrated measurable benefits in knowledge and skill acquisition, development of collegial networks, and enhanced learner satisfaction and accomplishments.³ The most beneficial faculty development strategies include explicitly establishing peer relationships, providing feedback, and incorporating methods that are experiential, diverse, and well designed.³ However, incorporating these high-yield instructional approaches into OFD may be challenging. Well-designed online or blended learning models contain 5 key elements (BOX) and can result in better outcomes compared to traditional face-to-face learning in adults.⁴ Attention to internal motivating factors (relevance, early successes); clear goals and objectives; materials that are well designed visually and use mixed teaching modes (textual, verbal, and auditory); and methods that prompt engagement, such as assessment, feedback, and opportunities for simulation, result in more effective faculty development programs.^{5,6}

What You Can Do TODAY

1. **Identify and explore existing educational materials (many are free).** Become familiar with existing OFD materials, including the Faculty Development Series on Assessment in Graduate Medical Education: The Milestone Project (www.medportal.org) or Creating Effective Clinical Teaching Environments—Basic Concepts (<http://fd4me.osu.edu>). Identify materials that fill a need in your existing faculty development program. Select resources that use different types of technology to gain an understanding of what works best for your faculty and what

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Editor's Note: The online version of this article contains a collection of online faculty development educational resources.

Rip Out Action Items

Do Something Simple TODAY

1. Search for existing online faculty development materials to meet your needs
2. Collect and share links to online faculty development resources
3. Use online materials as presupplements or postsupplements of your existing faculty development sessions

Pursue Something LONG TERM by using:

1. E-learning authoring tools to create modules
2. Social media to create an online network of faculty development participants
3. Video or web conferencing systems to support faculty development sessions

technologies may be supported (or restricted) at your institution. Pilot the materials with faculty members and seek feedback on the content and format. Have faculty (early adopters) volunteer to participate in online journal clubs or in a massive open online course, such as Coursera, and provide feedback on their experiences. (More resources can be found in the online supplemental material.)

2. **Curate a collection of OFD resources.** Use free online technologies to provide 24/7 unlimited access to a resource repository. Wikis (web applications that allow for collaborative modification and extension of content) can be used to allow faculty to post journal articles, presentations, web links, and videos as a content management system for OFD resources. Discussion boards, as a part of a wiki, or as a separate technology, allow participants to post questions and educational conundrums for asynchronous discussion and learning.
3. **Use online materials to supplement face-to-face sessions.** Once you have identified resources that work, create a “flipped classroom” faculty development session using existing online modules, videos, or podcasts. Alternatively, faculty can access online resources after a face-to-face session, and then participate in a group conference call to discuss educational materials in a longitudinal fashion.

What You Can Do LONG TERM

As you collect information on best practices for both content and delivery methods at your institution, you will be positioned to build on this knowledge and create your own customized faculty development materials.

Box Key Elements of Effective Online Faculty Development

1. Learner control over use of media
2. Prompts for reflection
3. Attention to motivating factors
4. Clear goals and objectives
5. Visually appealing and mixed modes
6. Engagement through assessment with feedback and simulation

1. **Use e-learning authoring tools to create modules.** Use existing lecture capture systems to create online e-modules. For example, record a live faculty development session or use a mobile device to create a brief training video. Identify topics where it would be helpful for the faculty to see the skill being demonstrated, hear insightful testimonials, or review information multiple times for clarity and enhanced retention in long-term memory, or for “just in time” use prior to teaching assignments.
2. **Create a network of OFD participants using social media.** Build in levels of engagement through the use of web technologies. Grow a network of faculty interested in medical education by encouraging membership in an online group (eg, LinkedIn). Members can post resources and announcements and form collaborative or mentoring relationships.
3. **Use video or web conferencing systems to support faculty development sessions.** Develop “communities of inquiry” (groups of individuals involved in a process of inquiry into problematic situations). Participants can discuss current literature as well as share resources and expertise. You can use free video conferencing tools (eg, Skype), collaborative workspaces (eg, Google Docs), cloud-based storage systems (eg, Dropbox), or web platforms (eg, WebEx). Several technological tools are available (often free of charge and easy to use) to support faculty development communities who work at a distance.

Resources

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