

# HIGHER ED IMPACT

**DIAGNOSTIC**  
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## THE STATE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER ED

By Amit Mrig, Daniel Fusch, & Paul Cook

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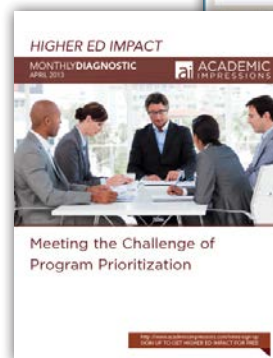
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Higher education is a unique industry dedicated to fostering the personal and professional growth of its clientele—students. Yet, colleges and universities don't have the same dedication when it comes to fostering the professional development of their own staff.

In a relatively stable operating environment, organizations can generally get away with this. In these environments, there is little risk to maintaining the status quo and conducting business the way it's always been done. But stability and constancy is not the way most experts would describe the current higher-ed environment.

Today's higher-ed managers and leaders are confronting a sea of changes from increased competition and cost pressures, new technologies to engage students inside and out of the classroom, shifting demographics, etc. Institutions that aren't investing in learning new skills are at risk of falling behind.

For twelve years, Academic Impressions has been assembling many of the leading experts in higher education to teach and facilitate webcasts, conferences, and workshops to develop critical skills and knowledge in the staff who are committed to helping change their institutions—to make higher education more sustainable for the future.

We believe passionately that professional development is key to helping higher-ed professionals prepare for both the threats and the opportunities of the years ahead.

Earlier this year, we surveyed higher-ed professionals to learn:

- Do institutions, on the whole, regard professional development as mission-critical, or is it mostly “talk” with little “walk”?
- Are investments in professional development proactive or reactive?
- Is professional development tied to performance appraisal?
- Who is responsible for identifying professional development opportunities—managers, or their employees?
- Are there differences in how managers and their employees regard professional development in higher education?

We surveyed a random sampling of higher-ed professionals; 501 responded. Of these, 52% (258) exercise direct control or influence over spending on professional development, and 48% (241) do not.

## 3 OVERALL FINDINGS

### 1. DIVIDED VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Asked how their institution views or talks about professional development (Figure 1), less than half of respondents (42%) said that professional development (PD) is *mission-critical*—seen as a way to *move the institution forward*.

Figure 1. Importance of PD



A larger group (55%) said that there was *limited actual support for PD (lots of talk, very little walk)*, a finding that suggests that even though most institutions say PD is important, many do not act in a way that is consistent with that claim.



Only a very small number of respondents (2.8%) believed that PD is actively discouraged at their institutions. That situation is certainly not typical, but it may suggest larger problems at their institutions. If, for example, an institution with severe budgetary troubles is curtailing professional development in order to reduce costs, such a strategy can really hinder a college’s ability to prepare for the future or identify new solutions to the challenges they are facing.

## 2. SLIGHTLY DECLINING RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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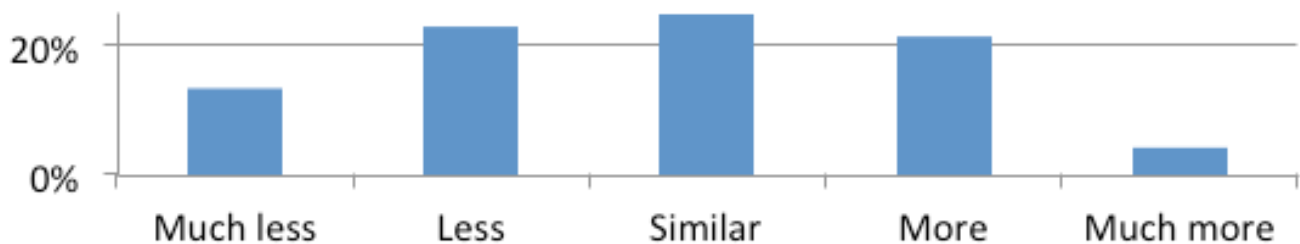
We asked respondents to compare the resources currently available to them for professional development to the resources that were available in 2006—a year we chose for reference, as a pre-recession year.

The responses were scattered (see Figure 2). More than a third said there were *less* or *much less* resources available, and almost a third said there were *more* or *much more*.

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**Figure 2. Current PD Resources vs. 2006**

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Overall, the distribution of responses on this question skewed to the left, suggesting slightly but not dramatically declining resources for PD across the industry.

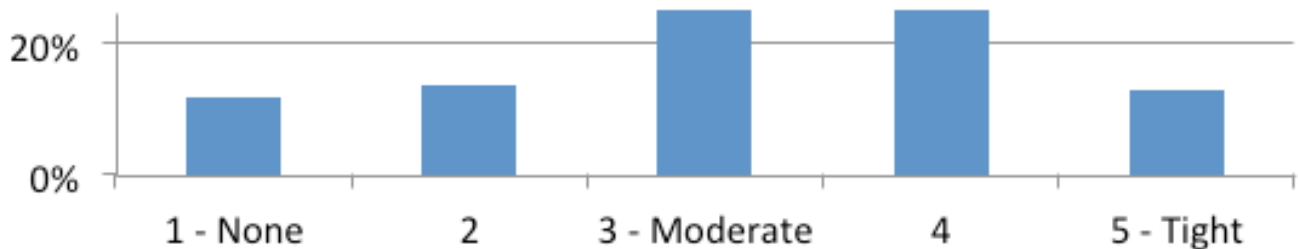


### 3. PD IS NOT TIGHTLY ALIGNED WITH INSTITUTIONAL GOALS

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This finding (see Figure 3) is very telling. Only 12% of respondents said that PD activities and institutional goals were tightly aligned. Most cited only moderate alignment. If investments in professional development are not being driven by the institution’s strategic initiatives, then it is unlikely that many colleges and universities are doing all they can to harness the brainpower and potential of their staff.

Figure 3. Alignment of PD with Institutional Goals



Similarly, when we asked “Who does your institution target for PD?” half the respondents said *It varies*, suggesting that institutions are using PD for a variety of purposes.

### INSTITUTIONS THAT VIEW PD AS MISSION-CRITICAL

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Higher-ed professionals who said their institutions regard PD as *mission-critical* differed in a number of ways from those who said their institutions only pay lip service to PD.

Both managers and non-managers at institutions that treat PD as *mission-critical*:

- Were more likely to say that PD was used proactively instead of reactively
- Said that PD activities were more tightly aligned with organizational goals
- Said that their institution did not target PD efforts to specific individuals, but instead had a fair process for offering PD to all employees equally

Managers at these institutions also:

- Were more able to use PD to address emerging needs
- Were more likely to say that they could use PD resources nimbly as needs changed
- Were less likely to target PD efforts to specific individuals; rather, they offered PD to all employees equally
- Were more likely to have formal PD plans, although these were not necessarily set down in writing

- Were no more or less likely to use PD as a criterion for performance appraisal; PD appears largely unaccounted for during performance appraisal, regardless of an institution's overall views on PD
- Had more resources available for PD and saw less risk for cuts to PD funding (*However*, it is not possible to say whether this is a cause or an effect, and we found that even some institutions with declining PD resources said they could respond nimbly and placed high importance on PD efforts.)

Non-managers also:

- Were much more likely to say that PD was easy to get approved by their manager, with a few saying that their institution had *excellent resources and support available* for PD
- Were likely to say that finding appropriate PD opportunities was a shared responsibility between them and their supervisor, and much less likely to say that finding appropriate PD was their responsibility alone

- Were more likely to say that their supervisors modeled involvement in PD
- Were more likely to say that their managers would disapprove if they did not receive any PD in a given year, although even at institutions with a mission-centric view of PD, they agreed with managers that PD had very little actual impact on performance evaluation results
- Were slightly more likely to say that their supervisor requested follow-up after PD

Another useful finding: non-managers at institutions that made PD opportunities available to everyone equally were more likely to regard PD as proactive and useful to their work. Conversely, in situations where access to PD varied, non-managers felt much less positively about professional development and their supervisors' commitment to it.

Are PD opportunities available to all of *your* staff?

## WHAT HOLDS INSTITUTIONS BACK

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When asked about the barriers to funding professional development, the #1 obstacle cited by managers is the fear of staff turnover—the fear of investing in PD for staff who may then leave the institution.

There is probably a self-fulfilling prophecy at work here. Besides salary, benefits, and work environment, two of the keys to employee satisfaction are the degree of investment they feel that their managers are making in their personal and professional development, and the degree to which they feel that their work is aligned with the strategic direction of the organization—the degree to which they feel their work is making a difference.

A PD plan that is intentional, clearly driven by strategic initiatives and goals, and available across your team is likely to have a positive impact on staff retention, whereas the lack of resourcing and intentionality behind PD is likely to be a contributing factor in staff turnover.

## BEST PRACTICES – MAKING THE MOST OF PD

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Besides asking how higher-ed professionals viewed PD at their institutions, we also asked about their own individual practices for getting the most out of PD. Our goal was to surface a few simple but highly effective practices that you can follow to maximize the value you gain from investing in PD; while these may seem simple, in our experience, most people don't follow them.

We recommend using the list of practices respondents provided to develop a checklist for your own attendance to events—or for sending your staff to events.

### PREPARING BEFORE THE EVENT

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Nearly one-third of respondents (159/501) volunteered information about activities they undertake prior to a conference or other PD event. We reviewed the responses they offered; to prep before an event, we recommend the following practices:

- Research the topics and speakers
- Speak with colleagues about the topic prior to attending the event
- Attend as a team or with colleagues, and in the case of a multi-track event, coordinate with colleagues so that they can cover different sessions and exchange information afterward.

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Figure 4. Word Cloud of Steps Taken *Before* Training

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## DURING THE EVENT

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Nearly one-third of respondents (160/501) also shared comments on what they do *during* a PD event to get the most out of the training (Figure 5). Most focused on note-taking, as we might expect; for some, this means jotting on a notepad or typing into a Word document. Some also tweet or email what they are learning back to colleagues on campus.

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Figure 5. Word Cloud of Steps Taken *During* Training

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We also recommend:

- Collecting handouts (including from sessions not attended due to time conflicts)
- Networking with both instructors and other attendees
- Starting a list of action items separate from their notes, to be followed up on after the training.





- Audit current practices within your department based on criteria or new findings from the event.
- Make a good faith effort to implement at least one new idea within the week after the event.

Also, as one of the survey respondents suggested, take the time to thank the person(s) who authorized the funding to send you to the event and to note how you think items learned from the event will make a difference on campus. Besides simple courtesy, this reinforces the interdependency between the individual trainee's PD learning experience and the needs of the institution that sponsored the PD.

## RETHINKING PD

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Professional development can be one of the keys to keeping your department or your institution competitive if training is pursued in an intentional and strategic way, following a clear plan that aligns performance metrics, incentives and rewards, and the selection of PD opportunities with your division's strategic objectives.

Or professional development can be pursued in a reactive and ad hoc manner, without mission and goal-driven criteria for what PD opportunities might be most worthy of your investment and without clarity around how learning from PD can be integrated into action after the event.

Academic Impressions managers and staff choose PD opportunities with great care, and we have frequently found that the ideas brought back to AI have revolutionized key processes or challenged our thinking about how better to serve the higher education industry in the years ahead.

Professional development can make the difference, if it is pursued proactively and if it becomes integral to how your department carries out its work.

In the pages ahead, we'll take a closer look at how managers and non-managers within higher education each view PD.

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# HOW MANAGERS AND NON-MANAGERS VIEW PD DIFFERENTLY

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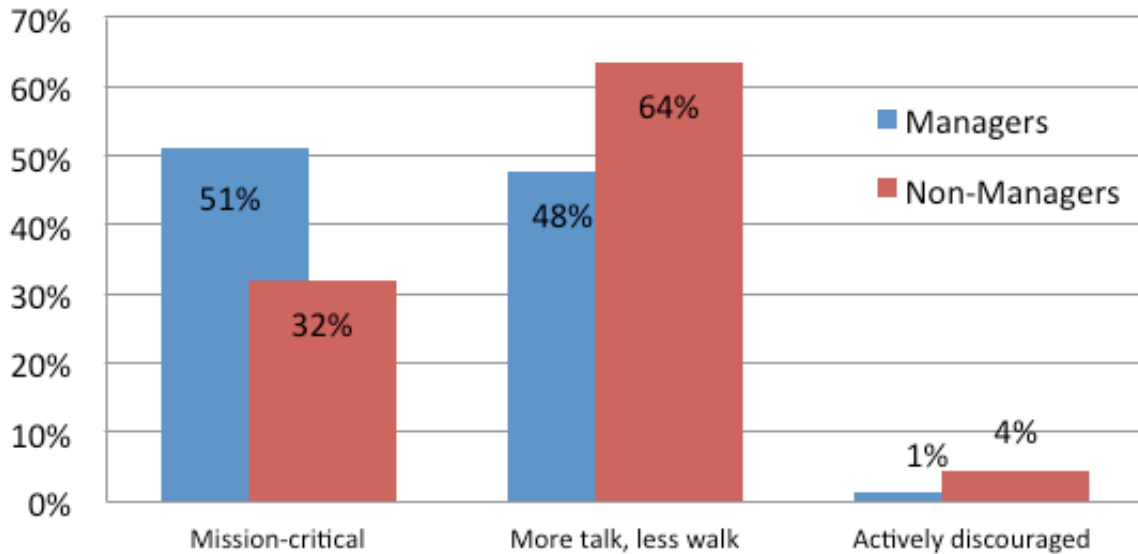
About half of the survey respondents (258) reported that they control spending on professional development for staff. We classify this group as “managers.” The other respondents said they did not control professional development spending and were classified as “non-managers.”

In general, managers were more likely to report that PD activities were seen as mission-critical by their institution.

Non-managers were more cynical about the role of PD, seeing “lots of talk, very little walk”—in other words, lip service to the importance of PD but limited *actual* support for PD activities (Figure 7). Also note that more non-managers than managers said that PD efforts were either implicitly or explicitly discouraged at their institutions.

**Figure 7. How Does Your Institution View Professional Development?**

*Managers rated as more mission-critical,  $t = 4.21, p < .001$*



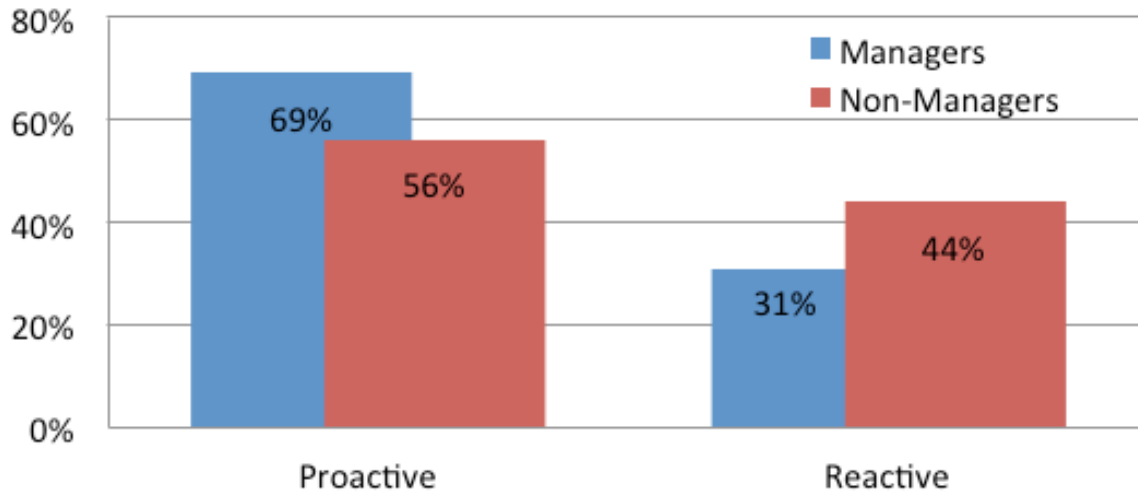
Also note that more non-managers than managers said that PD efforts were either implicitly or explicitly discouraged at their institutions.

Overall, managers have more positive views of how professional development is managed and invested in at their institutions.

For example, managers are more likely to say that PD efforts are proactive instead of reactive (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Are PD Efforts Proactive or Reactive?**

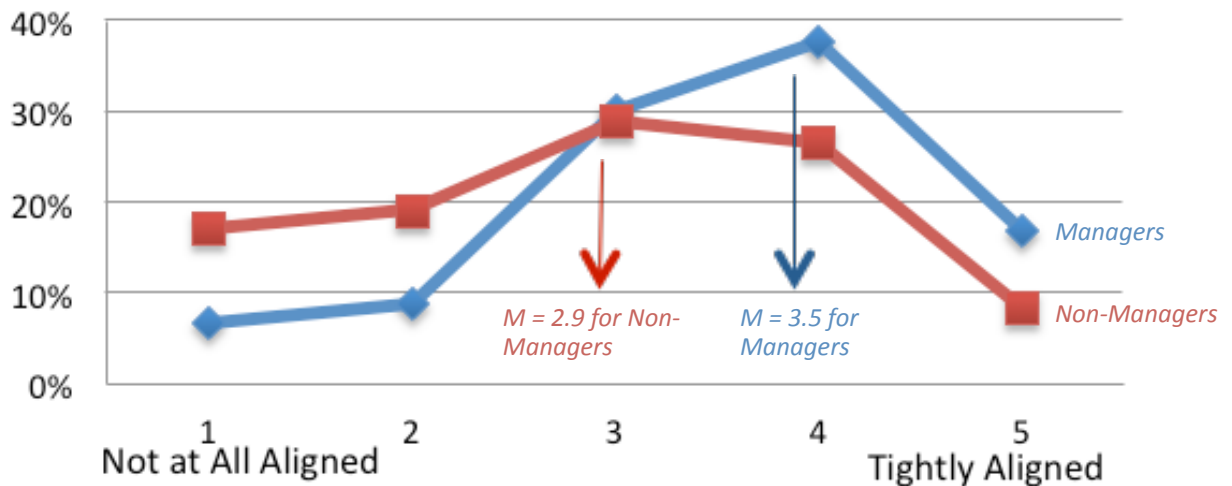
*Managers rated as more proactive,  $t = 2.80, p = .005$*



Similarly, managers are more likely to believe that PD activities are aligned with institutional goals (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. How Goal-Driven is Development?**

*Managers rated as more goal-driven,  $t = 5.44, p < .001$*



Finally, managers and non-managers have different things to say about who is targeted for PD at their institutions (Figure 10). Managers are more likely to see professional development as being available to every employee equally: 43% of managers suggest that this is the case, versus only 28% of non-managers. Non-managers are more likely to suggest that PD is targeted in ways that vary.

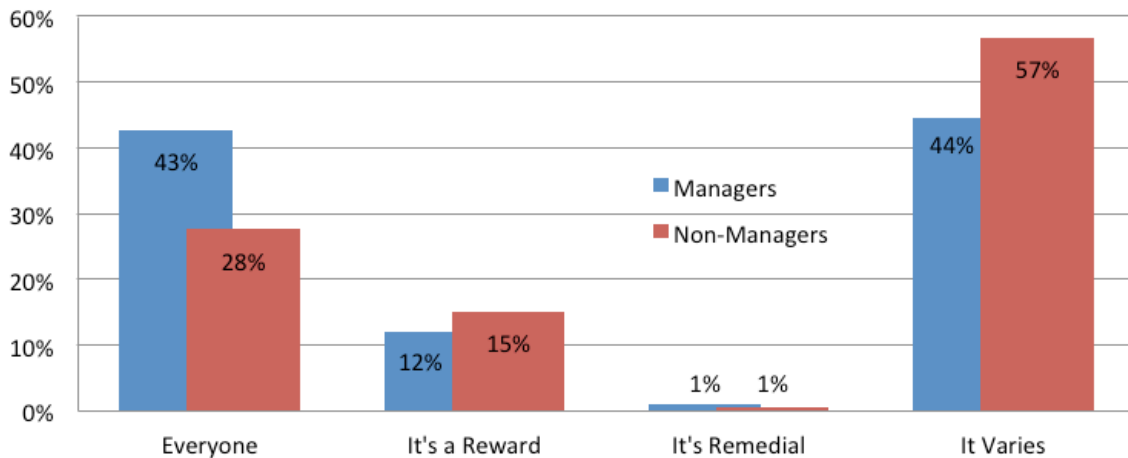
Notably, though:

- Only 1% of both groups see professional development as something used in remediation efforts to address perceived deficiencies in employees' performance.
- 15% of non-managers and 12% of managers say that professional development is mainly offered as a reward to high performers.

Many responded with, "It varies" when asked how PD is targeted.

**Figure 10. Who Is Targeted to Participate in PD?**

*Managers rated as more targeted to everyone,  $t = 3.04, p = .002$*



## SUMMARY

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Overall, non-managers do not believe that PD efforts are as focused and targeted as managers say they are.

Neither of these perspectives is necessarily more accurate than the other:

- It is possible that managers are out of touch with operational realities and that non-managers are giving a more accurate picture of PD efforts.
- But it is also possible that non-managers are less aware of the ways in which PD efforts support their institutions' mission, strategy, and goals.

In either case, one way to bridge the communication and perception gap between managers and non-managers—and at the same time ensure that PD dollars are being spent in the right places—is for each department at an institution to develop a professional development plan that sets explicit criteria for how PD opportunities will be selected and invested in. These criteria should be aligned with the department's key initiatives and with the strategic objectives of the institution.

### AN IMPORTANT CAVEAT

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We do not have data to confirm whether managers and non-managers in our sample are reporting their observations about the *same* institutions. Differences in responses between these two groups must be interpreted cautiously.



# A CLOSER LOOK: HOW MANAGERS LOOK AT PD

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Managers tend to regard PD efforts as more focused and targeted overall, but there was still a lot of variety among their responses. We analyzed these differences by cutting the data in two ways:

- We looked at how managers' views of PD differed depending on whether they saw PD as *mission-critical*, *more talk/less walk*, or *actively discouraged*.
- We also looked at how managers' views of PD differed depending on whether they saw PD efforts as *proactive* or *reactive*.

We saw a close correlation between these two variables (*mission-relatedness* and *proactive/reactive*). Managers who said that PD was mission-critical were 88% likely to also say that PD efforts were proactive. On the other hand, managers who said that PD was talked about but not actually supported (*more talk, less walk*) were more likely to say that PD was reactive, with only 49% of these managers indicating that PD efforts were designed proactively.

Statistically speaking, we saw a correlation of  $r = +.40$  between these two variables. For a full correlation matrix showing the relationship between each manager variable and every other, see Appendix 2.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR PD

Managers who characterize their institutions' PD efforts as *proactive* and as *mission-critical* are more likely to say that the resources available for PD are about the same as in 2006. We asked respondents to rate resources available for PD on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being *much less* and 5 being *much more* (see Figure 11).

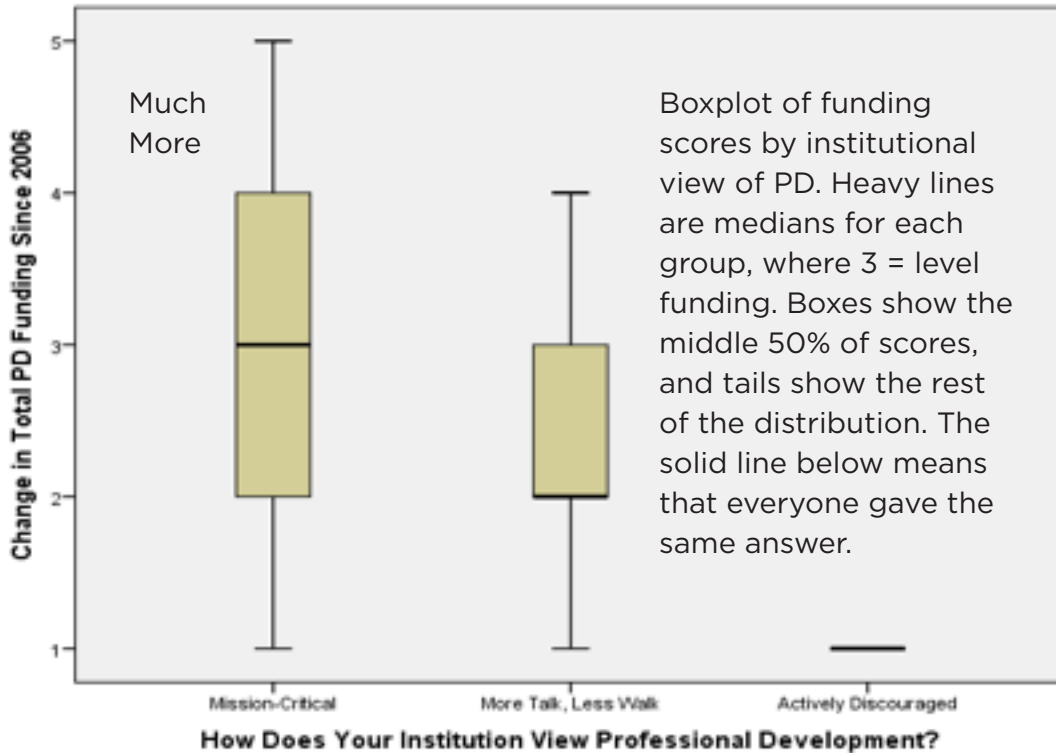
**Figure 11. Resources Available for PD**

	Resources available- Median	Resources available- Standard deviation
PD is proactive	3.01	1.15
PD is reactive	2.33	0.98

	Resources available- Median	Resources available- Standard deviation
PD is mission-critical	3.29	1.07
PD is more talk, less walk	2.30	0.94

Of the small number of managers who indicated that PD was actively discouraged at their institutions, all said that the resources available now were *much less* than those available in 2006. This is correlation, not causation. It might be that when institutions face diminishing resources, their investments in PD become more reactive, or it might be that when institutions take a proactive approach to investing in PD, staff are better able to justify and maintain resources for professional development. Or a third variable (such as enrollment) may independently explain both the *proactive/reactive* stance and the amount of resources available for PD.

Figure 12. Institutional View of PD Relates to Funding



## STATISTICAL NOTE

Of the two perception questions (*proactive/reactive* and *mission-critical/more talk, less walk*), there was a much stronger relationship between the mission-centrality of PD and funding available for PD,  $r = +.46$ , than between proactive vs. reactive uses of PD and funding available for PD,  $r = +.28$ . The relationship between mission-centrality and funding is shown in Figure 8.

## ALIGNMENT OF PD WITH INSTITUTIONAL GOALS

Managers who consider their institutions' PD investments to be mission-critical and reactive are far more likely to also see tight alignment of PD with institutional goals, while managers who regard PD as all talk or as mostly reactive see a much weaker alignment between PD and goals:

**Figure 13. Alignment with Goals**

	Alignment with goals-Median	Alignment with goals-Standard deviation
PD is proactive	3.78	0.85
PD is reactive	2.88	1.25

*Statistical correlation:  $r = +.39$*

	Alignment with goals-Median	Alignment with goals-Standard deviation
PD is mission-critical	3.92	0.79
PD is more talk, less walk	3.00	1.15

*Statistical correlation:  $r = +.37$*

Surprisingly, the few managers who say their institutions actively discourage PD actually rated their PD efforts as the most *highly* aligned with goals (with a median of 4.33). This might mean that while these institutions invest in less professional development, those few investments that are made are purposeful and driven by very specific objectives.

# RESPONSIVENESS OF PD TO EMERGING ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

In a very positive finding, 86% of managers said their PD program was at least “somewhat responsive” to changing needs at their institution. Looking at the extremes, though—those who say that PD is *very responsive* or *not at all responsive*—there is definitely a strong correlation ( $r = +.48$ ) between responsiveness and the degree to which managers see PD as mission-critical:

- 22% of managers who say their institution sees PD as mission-critical also say that the PD plan is *very responsive* to changing needs, but only 6% of managers who say PD is more talk than walk also say that the PD plan is *very responsive* to changing needs.
- 66% of managers who say PD is actively discouraged also say that PD is *not at all responsive* or minimally responsive to changing needs.

Similarly, PD efforts that are more proactive are also more responsive to changing needs, on a 1-5 scale (where 1 is *not at all responsive* and 5 is *very responsive*):

**Figure 14. Is the PD Program Responsive to Changing Needs?**

	Responsive to changing needs - Median	Responsive to changing needs - Standard deviation
PD is proactive	3.72	0.88
PD is reactive	2.80	1.07

Statistical correlation:  $r = +.42$

## ABILITY TO REALLOCATE RESOURCES TO PD AS NEEDED

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Wanting to drill deeper, we asked managers whether it was easy or difficult to reallocate PD resources in response to changing needs throughout the year. What we found:

- 57% of managers said they were either able to reallocate budgetary resources quickly or secure additional funds if needed
- 33% said that it is difficult to fund new PD needs or opportunities
- 25% said that they budget multiple PD opportunities six to twelve months in advance and stick with the plan
- 23% said that they attend the same events every year

Among managers who say that PD is more talk and less walk, only 16% are able to nimbly reallocate resources. However, even among managers who say that PD was mission-critical, still only 50% are able to allocate resources flexibly in response to changing needs.

### STATISTICAL NOTE

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There is a correlation of  $r = +.38$  between whether managers say they can nimbly respond to PD opportunities and whether they see their PD efforts as proactive rather than reactive. And there is a correlation of  $r = .40$  between whether managers say they could nimbly respond to new PD opportunities and whether they say PD is mission-critical for their institution.

## WHO HAS ACCESS TO PD

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We asked managers whether PD activities were available:

- Only to high performers, as a reward or perk
- Only to low performers, for remediation
- To everyone equally
- “It varies”

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## ***Are institutions simply more proactive/flexible with PD when they have more dollars?***

Institutions that are able to respond nimbly to changing needs, reallocating PD dollars as needed, also say they have a more proactive approach. This could simply mean that these institutions have more funding available for PD.

Though we didn't assess amounts of PD funding available in dollars, we did ask managers how PD funding had changed since 2006 (before the US economy went into recession). We found:

\* Of institutions that reported *much less* funding available for PD now than in 2006, 28% still said they were able to flexibly allocate those resources that are available.

\* Of institutions that reported *much more* funding now than in 2006, 20% still reported being unable to allocate funds flexibly in response to changing needs.

Although there is clearly some relationship between total PD funding and nimbleness of the PD response ( $r = +.36$ , statistically speaking), resource scarcity alone does not explain why some institutions are more flexible than others. Allocating PD resources proactively and being responsive to changing needs is a strategic choice, independent of budgetary surplus or constraint.

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We found that managers at institutions that regard PD as mission-critical were much more likely ( $r = +.34$ ) to say that PD is offered to all employees:

- At institutions where PD is mission-critical, 62% of managers say PD is offered to everyone equally and only 29% say "it varies"
- At institutions where PD is more talk, less walk, only 17% of managers say PD is available to everyone, while 66% say "it varies"

There is also a small but statistically significant relationship ( $r = +.23$ ) between proactive vs. reactive approaches to PD and whether PD is available to everyone:

- 47% of managers who say their institution takes a *proactive* approach to PD also say that PD is available to everyone equally
- 67% of managers who say their institution takes a *reactive* approach to PD also say "it varies" when asked who has access to PD varies

This is an interesting finding. We have seen that institutions with more mission-centered and proactive approaches to PD are also more targeted and focused in their PD investments, aligning PD



more tightly with the institution's goals and strategic initiatives and responding flexibly to changing needs. Yet, when these institutions decide *who* should be the recipient of PD resources, those same institutions are more likely to make PD widely available. This shows recognition of the value in developing your staff: be targeted in which PD opportunities you will fund, but make sure that any of your staff can access those opportunities.

## ROLE OF PD IN PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

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To really dig into how much an institution actually values and incentivizes professional development, you need to look at the impact of PD on staff performance appraisal. We asked managers to rate how they factor employees' participation in PD activities into appraisal on a scale from *1 = none* to *5 = key consideration in decisions related to promotion/compensation*.

Overall:

- 21% of managers rated PD activities as having *no* impact on performance appraisal
- 41% of managers said *we discuss it but it has only limited weight in these decisions*
- Overall, only 20% said PD activities have more than limited weight
- Only 3.5% said PD activities were a key consideration

A slightly more nuanced story appears when you look at how managers responded depending on whether they say that their institution regards PD as mission-critical ( $r = +.34$ ) and proactive ( $r = +.21$ ), but the correlation here is a weak one:

- Of those 8 managers who said PD was a *key consideration* in performance appraisal, 5 said PD was also seen as *mission-critical* while 3 said there was *more talk, less walk*
- Of those 3 managers who said PD was *actively discouraged* by their institutions, 2 said that PD had no importance in performance appraisals but the other rated its importance as 4 out of 5

What this means: even if an institution regards PD as mission-critical, this is unlikely to be reflected in performance appraisal. This raises some serious questions about follow-through and the degree to which PD activities are actually incentivized and rewarded.

## PD PLANS: AD HOC OR FORMAL AND DOCUMENTED?

Curiously, there isn't a connection between whether managers say that team members have individual, documented PD plans—and whether they say those plans are well-defined or strategic in nature:

- 25% of managers say *we write down our PD plans for each team member*
- Yet, only 10% say *we create formal and well-defined PD plans for each team member*
- Only half of those who create formal and well-defined PD plans *also write them down*
- 53% of managers say *we have discussions about PD but nothing formal or well-defined*

The answers here don't correspond to whether the managers were at institutions that regarded PD as mission-critical ( $r = .09$ ) or proactive ( $r = +.04$ ); as with performance appraisal, the majority of managers across *all* institutions cited a lack of formality when it came to planning, incentivizing, and rewarding PD.

## RISK FOR CUTS TO PD DOLLARS

48% of managers reported that PD is *one of the first things to get cut* when overall budgets shrink, with another 39% saying that PD budgets remain stable regardless of the overall budget. A minority of managers reported that *PD is one of the last things to get cut* (11.4%), with a few outliers reporting that when overall cuts occur *we allocate more funds to PD, recognizing that tougher times call for increased investment in training and development* (3 respondents, or 1.3% of the managers).

Managers who say PD is mission-critical also say PD is less likely to be cut ( $r = +.41$ ), and to a lesser extent, those who say PD is more proactive than reactive also say it is less likely to be cut ( $r = +.24$ ).

In short: those who regard PD as mission-critical protect their PD budgets. This reflects a privileging of long-term planning rather than short-term alarm, as targeted PD efforts can empower and inform your staff to help position the institution for recovery and success.

**Figure 15. Barriers to Success of Professional Development Efforts**

	<b>PD is Mission-Critical</b>	<b>More Talk, Less Walk</b>	<b>PD is Discouraged</b>
<b>#1 Barrier</b>	Staff turnover after training	Staff turnover after training	Lack of funds
<b>#2 Barrier</b>	Using what is learned	Lack of interest from staff	Using what is learned
<b>#3 Barrier</b>	Lack of funds	Using what is learned	Lack of interest from staff
<b>#4 Barrier</b>	Lack of interest from staff	Lack of time	Staff turnover after training
<b>#5 Barrier</b>	Lack of time	Lack of funds	Lack of time

Managers ranked the barriers against each other, and the order varied depending on the perceived mission centrality of PD. These findings stand out:

- For the majority of managers, time and money are not the principal barriers—although lack of funds is the prohibitive factor for institutions where PD is actively discouraged

- Lack of funds is cited as a more significant barrier for institutions that regard PD as mission-critical than for those that regard PD as more talk, less walk, even though we know that the *mission-critical* institutions are also more likely to have increased their PD budgets since 2006; this might suggest a desire to invest even more heavily in PD at such institutions because managers see it as important
- At institutions where managers said there was *more talk, less walk*, the second-most important barrier noted was *lack of interest or initiative from employees*, suggesting a systemic attitude that PD is not important or valued
- The majority of managers cite staff turnover as the #1 barrier to the success of PD—the fear that the institution will invest in developing staff who then leave for other positions.

What's interesting is that for most managers, the principal barriers to successful investment in PD are cultural, *not* financial.

# A CLOSER LOOK: HOW NON-MANAGER EMPLOYEES LOOK AT PD

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Overall, non-managers take less positive views of institutions' investments in PD than managers do. These employees' views provide a different window into the level of priority given to PD and the potential breakdowns between intent and practice.

As with our look at the managers' responses, we have correlated the non-managers' responses with two variables:

- Whether PD is seen as mission-critical, more talk and less walk, or actively discouraged
- Whether PD is seen as a proactive or a reactive activity

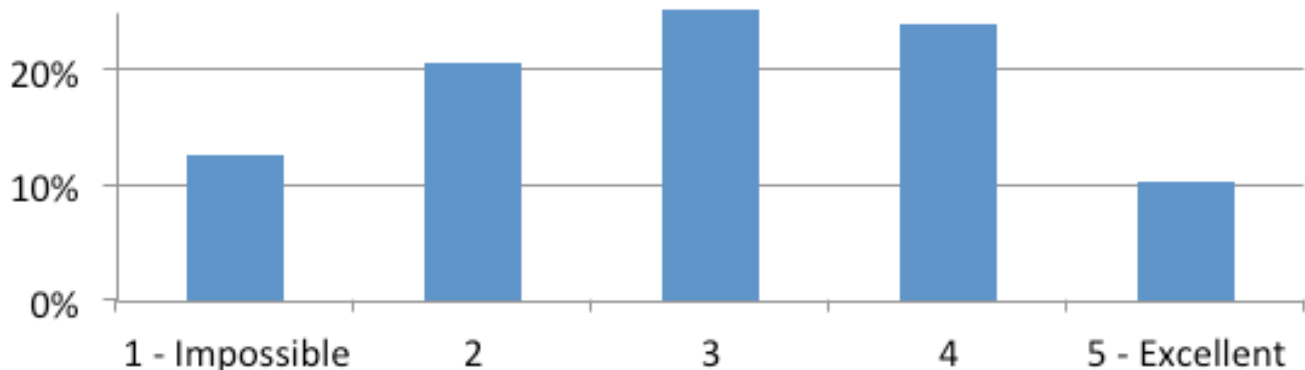
For a full correlation matrix showing the statistical relationship between each non-manager variable and every other, see Appendix 3.

## EASE OF ACCESS TO PD OPPORTUNITIES

We asked employees how difficult they find it getting their managers to approve and fund PD opportunities (Figure 16).

Two-thirds of employees find it at least moderately difficult (a score of 3 or below) to get their PD activities approved; only 10% find that there is excellent support and resources available. Whether an employee said access to PD was difficult was strongly correlated with his or her view of whether PD was seen as mission-critical ( $r = -.56$ ), and with the employee's view of whether PD was offered proactively rather than reactively at his or her institution ( $r = -.54$ ).

**Figure 16. Difficulty Getting PD Approved and Funded**



## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING APPROPRIATE PD?

- 77% of non-managers say it is either completely or primarily up to them to identify appropriate PD opportunities.
- 22% say that identifying appropriate PD opportunities is a shared responsibility

- Very few employees (less than 2%) say that PD is primarily their supervisor's responsibility
- None say that finding PD is exclusively their supervisor's responsibility.

Managers at institutions that view PD as mission-critical ( $r = -.35$ ) and proactive ( $r = -.31$ ) do a better job of partnering with their employees to identify appropriate PD opportunities, while managers at institutions where investment in PD is seen as more talk, less walk are more likely to let employees fend for themselves in identifying PD needs:

- Among non-managers who said PD was *mission-critical*, only 14% said that identifying appropriate PD efforts was exclusively their responsibility (although 40% said that it was *primarily* their responsibility). However, among non-managers who said PD was either *more talk and less walk* or *actively discouraged*, fully 42% said it was exclusively their responsibility to find their own PD opportunities.
- Among non-managers who said their institution's approach to PD is proactive, only 23% said it was exclusively their responsibility to find PD opportunities, while 46% of non-managers at reactive institutions said it was exclusively up to them to find PD.

Compare this to what we learned from the managers: that those at institutions that view PD as mission-critical are more likely to approach PD in a targeted, planful way that is aligned with goals and strategic initiatives.



# DO SUPERVISORS MODEL ACTIVE INVESTMENT IN PD?

Figure 17A. Does the Supervisor Model PD?

	Supervisor models PD - Median	Supervisor models PD - Standard deviation
PD is mission-critical	3.84	0.92
PD is more talk, less walk	2.88	1.15
PD is actively discouraged	3.11	1.69

Statistical correlation:  $r = +.33$

Only 40% of employees said that their supervisors *frequently* or *always* model active investment in PD, suggesting that supervisors overall might be able to do a better job in this area.

However, employees at institutions with a mission-critical view of PD were more likely to say that supervisors *frequently* modeled PD activities (a score of 4 on the 1-5 scale), while employees in the other two categories on average said that supervisors only *sometimes* modeled PD activities (a score of 3).

In fact, observing supervisors' actual behavior in terms of PD may be a crucial way that employees judge whether their institution is actually "walking the walk" of PD rather than just talking a good game.

The findings are very similar when you look at employees depending on whether their institutions take a *proactive* or *reactive* approach to PD:

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**Figure 17B. Does the Supervisor Model PD?**

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	Supervisor models PD - Median	Supervisor models PD - Standard deviation
PD is proactive	3.65	0.99
PD is reactive	2.66	1.18

Statistical correlation:  $r = +.42$

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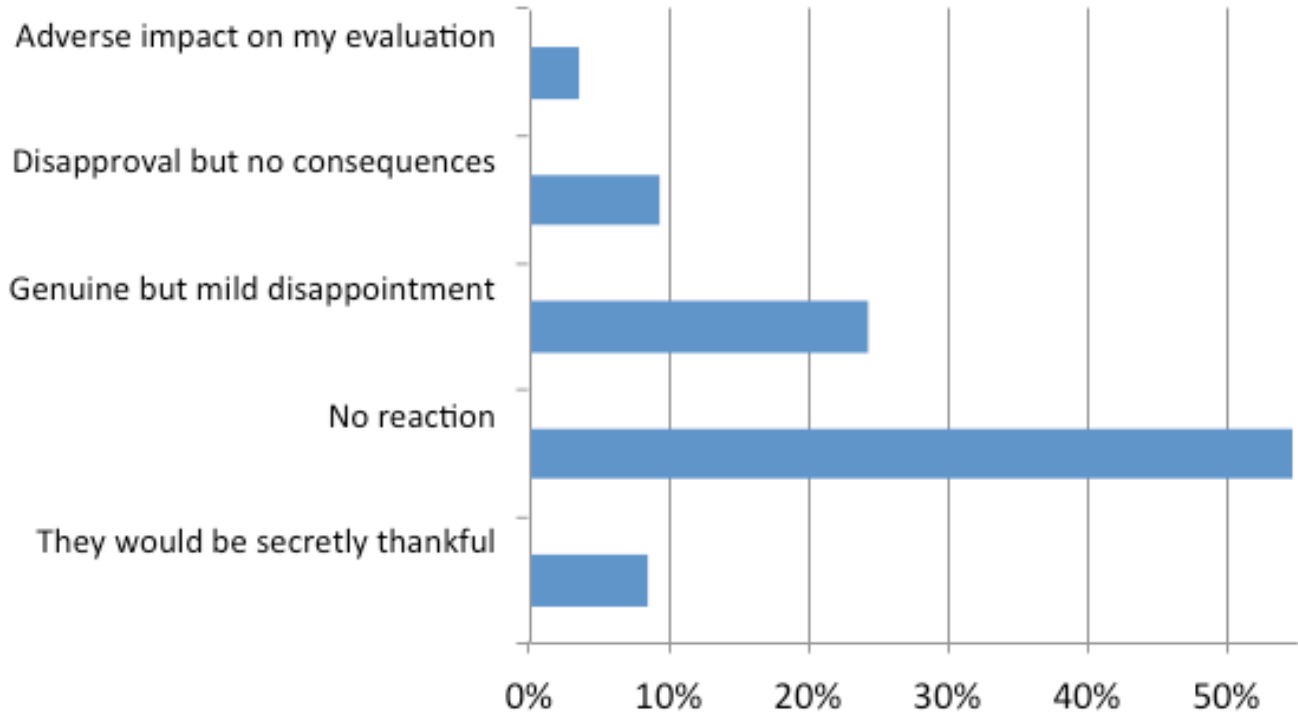
If professional development is going to become both strategic and integral to the institution's culture, that may have to begin at the manager level.

## HOW DO SUPERVISORS RESPOND TO PD?

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In one of our more disconcerting findings, we discovered that more than half of employees believe that if they did not undertake any professional development, their supervisors would show no reaction and would simply not care—and 8% believe that their supervisors would be secretly thankful. That is an alarming diagnostic of how effective institutions are at *actually* empowering and training their staff!

Figure 18. What Would Your Supervisor Do If You Didn't Receive Any PD?



Not surprisingly, 76% of the employees who said their supervisor would be secretly thankful if they didn't participate in PD also said that their institutions' approach to PD was *more talk, less walk*. This also supports what we learned in surveying the managers—that for most, PD has little impact on performance appraisal. It is clear that there is a disconnect between discussions of PD and actual use of PD.

## STATISTICAL NOTE

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We found correlation between both mission-centrality of PD and supervisors' expected reaction to a lack of PD ( $r = -.34$ ) and between proactive use of PD and supervisors' expected reaction to a lack of PD ( $r = -.27$ ). This suggests that supervisor reaction to employees' use of PD is a valid reflection of their institutions' overall attitude toward PD, and that employees use supervisor reactions as a way to gauge PD's true importance, regardless of the "talk" at their institutions.

## WHO HAS ACCESS TO PD?

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Is PD available to all staff equally?

- At institutions that regard PD as mission-critical, 61% of non-managers say "yes."
- At institutions that don't regard PD as mission-critical, only 11% of non-managers say "yes."

This dichotomy is even stronger than that observed among managers, suggesting that employees are more sensitive to the fairness or universality of the methods by which institutions distribute PD opportunities. This would also suggest that employees use the equal availability of PD to everyone as a criterion for judging whether their institution views PD as truly important or is just saying so and not following through on it.

## STATISTICAL NOTE

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Institutions' tendency to offer PD opportunities to everyone equally was correlated relatively strongly with both the mission-centeredness of PD,  $r = +.43$ , and whether PD opportunities were planned proactively instead of reactively,  $r = +.36$ .

## FOLLOW-UP AFTER RECEIVING PD

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Once staff have received professional development, what follow-up do they believe their supervisors expect from them?

- 46% of employees say they are expected to share training resources with their colleagues.
- Fully 40% say that their supervisor doesn't request *any* follow-up, so what sharing occurs may often be on the employee's own initiative.
- Only 16% say they do a formal presentation to their office or department after PD.
- Only 12% write a report on the training.

Of those who don't believe any follow-up is expected, 25% say their institution sees PD as mission-critical, while 75% say their institution's investment in PD is more talk, less walk—suggesting that managers at institutions that do see PD as mission-critical are more likely to expect follow-up, knowledge sharing, reporting, and steps toward implementation after a PD event.

Yet, the overall story here is the need for more follow-through. PD is an investment of time, money, and staff resources; it's important to ensure that your office or department gets a full return on that investment!

### STATISTICAL NOTE

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Having a supervisor request follow-up after PD was positively but weakly correlated with viewing PD as mission-critical,  $r = +.13$ , and with using PD in a proactive rather than a reactive way,  $r = +.06$ .

# ACADEMICS VS. ADMINISTRATORS: NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

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In deploying our survey, we expected to find that answers to some questions would vary depending on participants' roles and functional areas within the institution. (See Figure 19 for a breakdown of our respondents by job function.) We expected to find the greatest differences between faculty and staff in other divisions, because faculty have a different performance evaluation system through the tenure process, and because they might as educators themselves have either a more positive or more negative view toward receiving continuing education.

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**Figure 19. Managers/Non-Managers by Job Function**

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Job Role	Managers	Non-Managers
Faculty/Acad	70	62
Advancement	43	44
Student Affairs	30	41
Finance/Ops	18	19

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When we mined the data, we found no *significant differences* by job function on most questions, including funding available for PD, whether PD targets everyone equally or only a few, whether funds can be reallocated flexibly in response to changing needs, the degree of formality in PD planning, and the degree of risk to PD funding when overall budgets shrink. The only question that yielded differences by job function was the question of the impact of PD on performance appraisal:

- Among non-managers, there was no difference between faculty and non-faculty in answering this question. Just like respondents in other job roles (*median* = 2.44), faculty said their supervisor would have no reaction (*median* = 2.48) if they did not participate in PD activities.
- However, managers (chairs, deans, etc.) said that PD was slightly more important to performance appraisal (*median* = 3.11) than supervisors on the administrative side of the house said it was (*median* = 2.48). However, the most common response was still *we discuss it but it has only limited weight in these decisions*.

# APPENDIX 1: PREDICTORS OF FUNDING FOR PD

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In an exploratory analysis, we used stepwise regression to identify the best predictors of an institution's change in total PD funding since 2006. Because the question about change in total PD funding since 2006 was only asked of managers, we were only able to look at predictor variables on the managers' section of the survey.

We included in our analysis:

- An institution's overall attitude toward PD as reported by managers
- Whether PD efforts were proactive or reactive
- Whether PD efforts were goal-driven
- Whether PD was responsive to emerging needs
- Whether PD influenced performance appraisals
- Whether PD funds could be nimbly reallocated in response to changing goals (4 specific items)
- Whether PD plans are formalized and documented in some way (4 specific items).

Figure 20 shows the results.



**Figure 20. Predictors of Change in Total PD Funding Since 2006**

Step	Best Predictors	% of Variance Explained	Regression Weights	Statistical Significance
1	Institution's overall view of PD	22.1%	+.475	p < .001
2	Institution's overall view of PD	22.1%	+.350	p < .001
	Does PD address emerging needs	5.8%	+.278	p < .001
3	Institution's overall view of PD	22.1%	+.292	p < .001
	Does PD address emerging needs	5.8%	+.210	p < .001
	Are new PD needs hard to fund	2.4%	-.198	p = .006

As shown in the table, an institution's overall view of PD (mission-critical, more talk and less walk, or actively discouraged) was the best single predictor of their level of funding for PD, with the belief that PD is mission-critical explaining 22% of the variability in funding changes since 2006.

The second-best predictor was whether or not PD was responsive to emerging needs, which explained another 6% of the variability in funding changes.

Finally, a specific yes/no question about barriers to taking advantage of PD based on funding predicted 2.4% of the variability in overall funding changes, although the direction of this relationship could go either way (i.e. it seems logical that overall restriction of funds predicted difficulty funding new PD opportunities, rather than the other way around).

Each of these items explained variability in the total funding change, above and beyond the amount that could be accounted for by the perceived mission-centrality of PD alone.

# APPENDIX 2: CORRELATIONS AMONG SUPERVISOR PERCEPTION VARIABLES

	Institution View of PD	Does Institution Target PD?	Proactive vs. Reactive	PD is Goal Driven	PD is Need Driven	Able to Reallocate Quickly	Funding Change Since 2006	No Formal PD Plan	PD Used in Performance Appraisal
Institution View of PD	1	-.340**	.399**	.370**	.480**	.419**	.462**	-.088	.336**
Does Institution Target PD?	-.340**	1	-.232**	-.077	-.296**	-.166*	-.239**	.023	-.101
Proactive vs. Reactive	.399**	-.232**	1	.386**	.417**	.380**	.279**	-.039	.213**
PD is Goal Driven	.370**	-.077	.386**	1	.643**	.400**	.311**	.001	.382**
PD is Need Driven	.480**	-.296**	.417**	.643**	1	.481**	.443**	.045	.461**
Able to Reallocate Quickly	.419**	-.166*	.380**	.400**	.481**	1	.364**	.125*	.312**
Funding Change Since 2006	.462**	-.239**	.279**	.311**	.443**	.364**	1	-.107	.325**
No Formal PD Plan	-.088	.023	-.039	.001	.045	.125*	-.107	1	-.131
PD Used in Performance Appraisal	.336**	-.101	.213**	.382**	.461**	.312**	.325**	-.131	1

Note. \* significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$

# APPENDIX 3: CORRELATIONS AMONG EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION VARIABLES

	Institution View of PD	Proactive or Reactive	Does Institution Target PD?	PD is Goal Driven	PD is Difficult to Get Approved	Need to Find Your Own PD	Supervisor Models Use of PD	What if You Didn't Attend?	Supervisor Requests No Follow-up
Institution View of PD	1	.524**	-.427**	.351**	-.557**	-.354**	.332**	.340**	-.133
Proactive or Reactive	.524**	1	-.364**	.378**	-.539**	-.312**	.417**	.272**	-.056
Does Institution Target PD?	-.427**	-.364**	1	-.253**	.366**	.252**	-.201**	-.288**	.101
PD is Goal Driven	.351**	.378**	-.253**	1	-.595**	-.305**	.415**	.408**	-.088
PD is Difficult to Get Approved	-.557**	-.539**	.366**	-.595**	1	.379**	.413**	-.443**	.075
Need to Find Your Own PD	-.354**	-.312**	-.252**	.305**	-.379**	1	.304**	.347**	-.198**
Supervisor Models Use of PD	.332**	.417**	-.201**	.415**	-.413**	-.304**	1	.388**	-.112
What if You Didn't Attend?	.340**	.272**	-.288**	.408**	-.443**	-.347**	.388**	1	-.129
Supervisor Requests No Follow-up	-.133	-.056	.101	-.088	.075	.198**	-.112	-.129	1

Note. \* significant at  $p < .05$ , \*\* significant at  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* significant at  $p < .001$