The State of Professional Development in Higher Education
2016

Contents

Executive Summary

In 2015, more people said that PD was mission-critical, more people said that PD was aligned with department goals and objectives, and institutions were less likely to cut PD when overall budgets were tight. Despite this, however, there was little change to the impact of PD on performance appraisal, and there was less follow-up expected after attending a PD event. **In other words, departments are spending more, but missing critical opportunities.**

Many institutions are more financially secure than in previous years, so there is willingness to invest more in PD, but the investment is undisciplined. We are spending more money with the right intentions, but so far with limited actual impact on performance appraisal and on the larger work of the department. If PD is truly more aligned with department goals, then faculty and staff PD should be measured against those goals, and should also be sharing information that can improve the department's overall performance.

In this report on our second annual survey, we will present:

1. A year-over-year scorecard of 8 critical PD metrics.

2. Evidence that institutions need to raise the bar of what they expect from professional development.

3. Two key findings that can help you maximize the return on your PD in 2016.

What the 2015 scorecard makes clear is that expectations for professional development are too low; institutions are not expecting enough of those participating in PD. Managers in higher education have to raise the bar; we have to expect more out of our professional development. Haphazard and half-planned investments mean haphazard returns.

If PD is to be a strategic asset for your institution, then:

- PD needs to be aligned with departmental objectives (invested in strategically and wisely, to build the department's capacity to meet key objectives or achieve new initiatives).

- During performance review, frontline faculty and staff need to be incentivized to complete their professional development.

- Managers need to expect a return on PD – a tangible outcome for their unit. Attending and debriefing a PD event needs to produce specific action items, new thinking, validation, or next steps.

- PD budgets need to be secure. PD is an opportunity to identify solutions to the problems your unit faces, to learn how peer institutions have piloted critical initiatives, and to gather ideas for how your team can do more with less. 33% of respondents still said that PD was one of the first things to go when budgets are tight, and less than 1% said they strategically invest more in PD during times of change to help the organization meet new demands.

- PD needs to be planned and deliberate in order to have an impact on the department's work. Few managers in higher ed develop written PD plans with their teams, or model investment in PD for their staff.

The 2016 operating environment will demand that your staff develop new skills, that your departments pilot new initiatives and test new ways of doing their work, and that you grow your institution's knowledge base about these strategic challenges by tapping into the expertise, models, and best practices being developed across the industry. This is the context through which you need to evaluate and consider your investment in professional development.

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Introduction

Professional development is a strategic asset to an institution, as it is a key engine for increasing the capacity of your team and for bringing in proven strategies from other organizations—allowing you to both avoid "reinventing the wheel" and to revitalize your work with fresh ideas.

This will be especially critical in 2016 because institutions of higher education are facing a bewildering array of complex challenges, including:

- Shifting demographics

- Disruptive new learning environments and new pedagogies

- Changes in enrollment

- An aging workforce

- A younger donor base

- A more demanding and expensive regulatory landscape

- Pressure from policymakers and from students and their parents to better equip graduates for the workforce

No one team or one department on campus is going to be able to address these challenges alone; they are multifaceted, and often require change that is transformational and adaptive rather than just incremental.

For example, retaining students requires not only co-curricular programming or academic support services (advising, early-alert intervention, peer mentoring, etc.), but also curricular innovation as well. Deans may need to review the curriculum for bottleneck courses, examine course stacking and sequencing, and rethink faculty/student interaction.

And that is going to be a larger set of challenges than can be solved by just one office on campus. It's going to require collaborative thinking and problem-solving across academic units, as well as student affairs, and open discussion of how the institution can better serve, support, and educate its unique student body.

For these conversations, you will need ideas, fresh perspectives, and examples of how other institutions have innovated, and you need to seek these ideas outside the walls of your own institution. To not only survive, but thrive in the years ahead, your department, division, and institution will need to take intelligent risks, pilot new ways of doing your work, and challenge longstanding assumptions that may no longer apply to either your operating context, your financial picture, or the needs of your constituents (students, donors, faculty, etc.).

At Academic Impressions, we believe that investment in professional development is a differentiator of successful institutions. An institution-wide and institution-deep commitment to professional development empowers the institution to operate as a learning organization. Institutions that continually and consistently send staff at every level to professional development events have more ideas and resources available to help them solve complex problems.

For this report, we've surveyed 971 managers and frontline faculty and staff at colleges and universities, both to score this year's investment in professional development against last year's, and to uncover new findings and emerging stories of what teams that are leveraging professional development (PD) to move their institutions forward are doing differently—and what you can learn from them.

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Year over Year PD Scorecard:
8 Critical Metrics

These 8 critical metrics gauge the degree of support for professional development for faculty and staff at post-secondary institutions, the capacity and flexibility for funding PD, and the degree to which PD is aligned with departmental objectives and performance appraisal. This allows us a snapshot in time of the health of an institution's commitment to and practice of professional development.
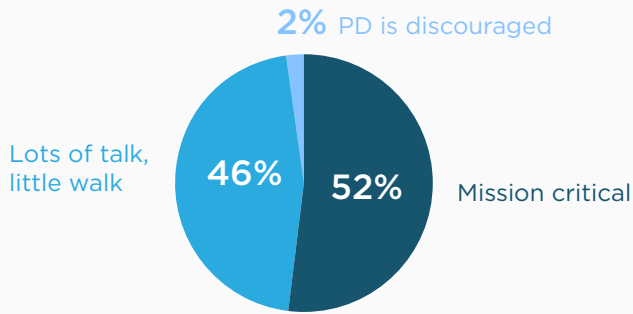
1. How institutions view PD

2. The impact on PD when budgets shrink

3. Alignment of PD with department/division goals

4. Flexibility in funding PD

5. Written PD plans

6. Impact of PD on performance appraisal

7. Whether mangagers model investment in PD

8. Follow-up expected from frontline faculty and staff after PD

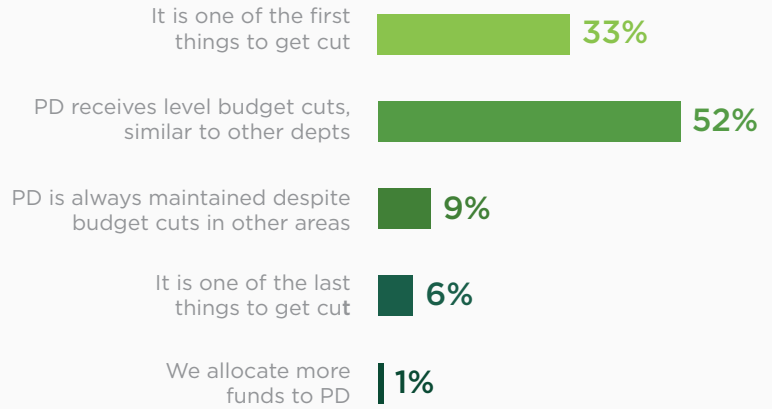Let's look at how 2015 compares to the previous year.

2015 PD SCORECARD

1 How institutions view PD

2% PD is discouraged

46% Lots of talk, little walk

52% Mission critical

2 The impact on PD when budgets shrink

It is one of the first things to get cut — **33%**

PD receives level budget cuts, similar to other depts — **52%**

PD is always maintained despite budget cuts in other areas — **9%**

It is one of the last things to get cut — **6%**

We allocate more funds to PD — **1%**

3 Alignment of PD with department/division goals

1 — 6%
2 — 16%
3 — 26%
4 — 40%
5 — 12%

Not at all aligned — Extremely aligned

4 Flexibility in funding PD

47%

Find it difficult to find funds for new PD opportunities when they arise.

Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

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Written PD plans

70% of managers said **no**

6
Impact of PD on performance appraisal

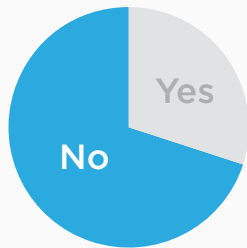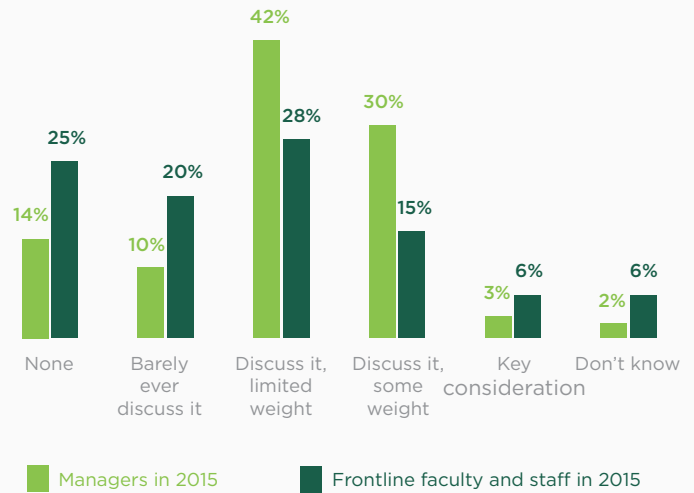|	Managers in 2015	Frontline faculty and staff in 2015
None	14%	25%
Barely ever discuss it	10%	20%
Discuss it, limited weight	42%	28%
Discuss it, some weight	30%	15%
Key consideration	3%	6%
Don't know	2%	6%

7
Whether Managers Model Investment in PD

Frontline faculty and staff say...

6% Never	30% Sometimes	11% All the time

14% Rarely	29% Frequently	10% Don't know
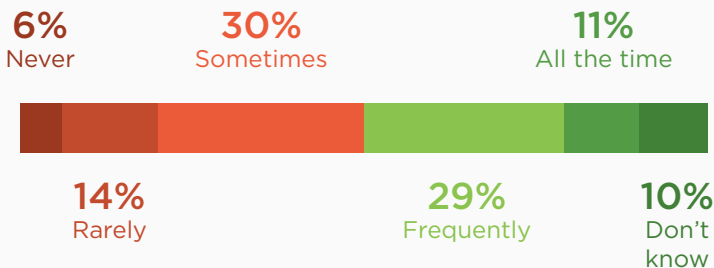
8
Follow-up expected from frontline faculty and staff after PD

I write a report on the program I attended: Only **6%**

I do a presentation for our office/department: Only **12%**

I share resources gathered at the event: Only **40%**

Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

1. How Institutions View PD

Year over year, higher ed professionals are more likely to report that their institution views PD as mission-critical (up 10%, from 42% in 2014 to 52% in 2015). This is a good year-over-year trend!
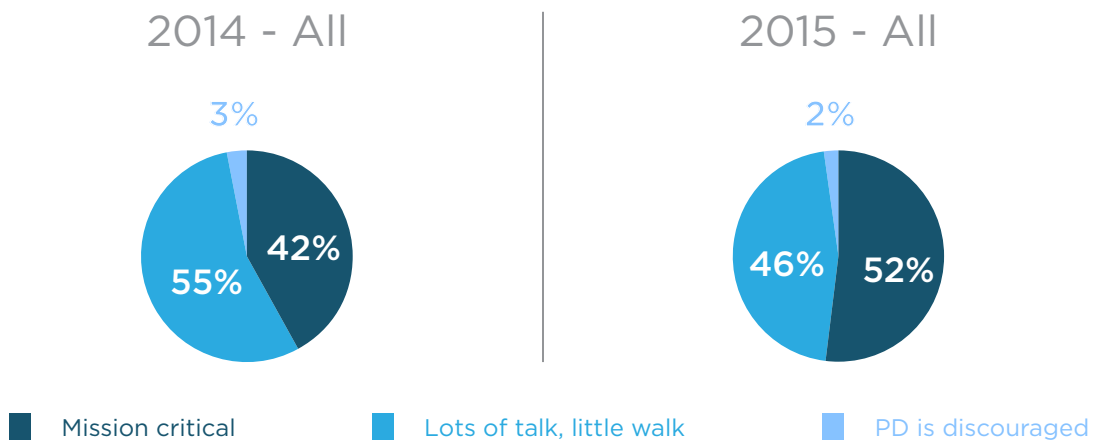
Nevertheless, nearly half of respondents said that institutions still provide limited actual support for the professional development of their staff, and their commitment to PD is seen as "lots of talk, very little walk." That is a mindset that will need to change.

2014 - All

3%

42%

55%

2015 - All

2%

46%

52%

■ Mission critical   ■ Lots of talk, little walk   ■ PD is discouraged

Yet, while higher ed professionals were more likely to say in 2015 that professional development is of strategic importance to their institution, managers continue to have a rosier picture than frontline faculty and staff do. In 2015, 57% of managers believe PD is mission-critical, whereas only 46% of frontline faculty and staff do. And a little more than 3% of frontline faculty and staff still feel that their PD is actively discouraged. While the year-over-year trend is a positive one, there is still significant room for improvement.

2015 - Managers

1%

42%

57%

2015 - Frontline Faculty and Staff

3%

51%

46%

■ Mission critical   ■ Lots of talk, little walk   ■ PD is discouraged

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▋▌▍ STATISTICAL NOTE

An institution's overall view of PD has practical consequences. Both in 2014 and in the current data, whether or not frontline faculty and staff reported that their institution viewed PD as mission-critical also predicted the following important indicators:

- PD is aligned with department or division goals (*r = .41*)

- There is flexibility in funding new PD needs as they arise (difficulty in doing so is inversely correlated, *r = -.43*)

- PD has some weight in performance appraisal (*r = .35*)

- Their managers model investment of time and money in PD (*r = .45*)

- They are more likely to turn to PD to help address strategic challenges facing their department or institution (*r = .45*)

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2. Impact on PD When Budgets Shrink

What Happens to PD when Budgets get Tight?

2014   **2015**

|	
It is one of the first things to get cut	49% (2014) / 33% (2015)
PD receives level budget cuts, similar to other depts	39% (2014) / 52% (2015)
PD is always maintained despite budget cuts in other areas	0% (2014) / 9% (2015)
It is one of the last things to get cut	11% (2014) / 6% (2015)
We allocate more funds to PD	1% (2014) / 1% (2015)
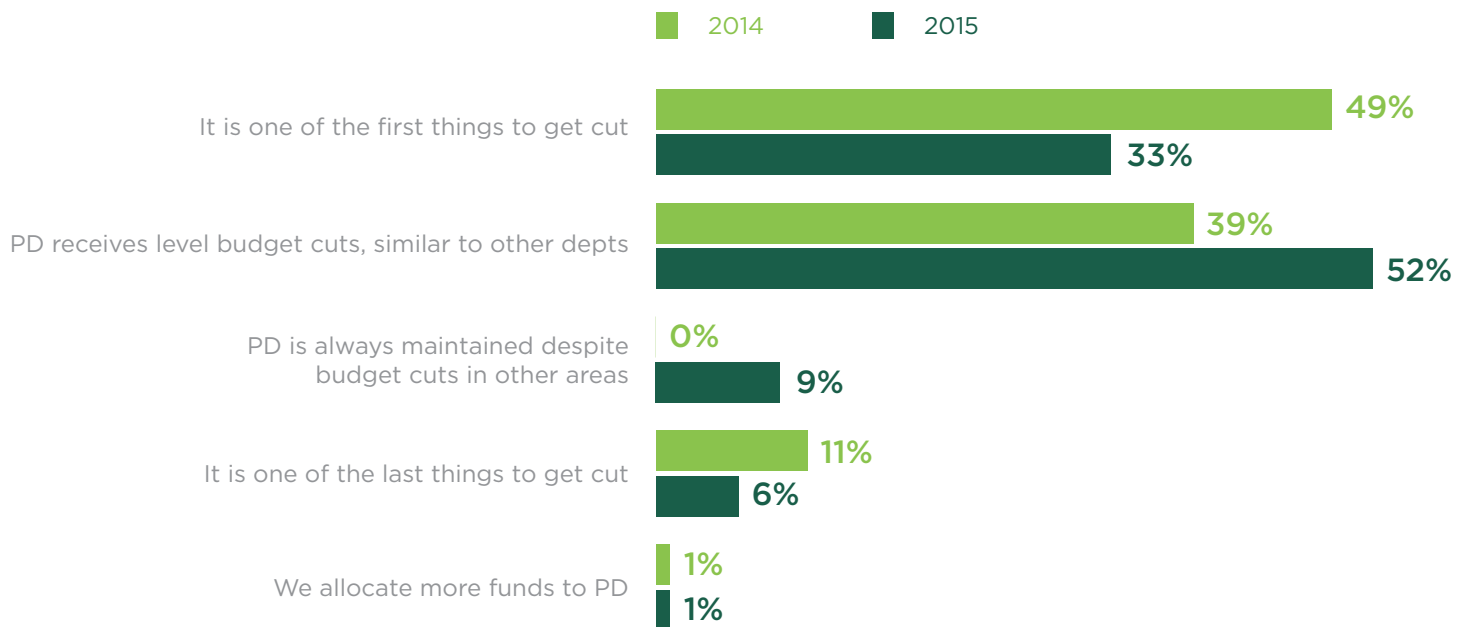
Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

In another positive trend, PD appears to be increasingly insulated against overall budget cuts. 33% in 2015 said PD is "one of the first things to be cut," compared to half of respondents a year ago. And twice as many respondents say that PD is one of the last things to be cut. This could be due to the strengthening or stabilizing of institutional financial situations. In 2014, 37 states increased funding for higher education, and Moody's 2016 Outlook on the sector predicts stability and gradual increase in revenue, except for smaller colleges with limited economies of scale.

Less than 1% (just seven people) take the bold move of allocating more funds to PD when budgets are cut, leveraging professional development to help them uncover ways to do more with less.

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The more "mission-critical" PD is, the less likely it is to be cut (a strong inverse correlation of $r = -.39$ for managers, $r = -.44$ for frontline faculty and staff). However, respondents also report that while this is true if their institution regards PD as mission-critical, it doesn't necessarily hold true at the department level. This raises some important questions that we will look at in the following pages.

3. Alignment of PD with Department/Division Goals

2014

2015
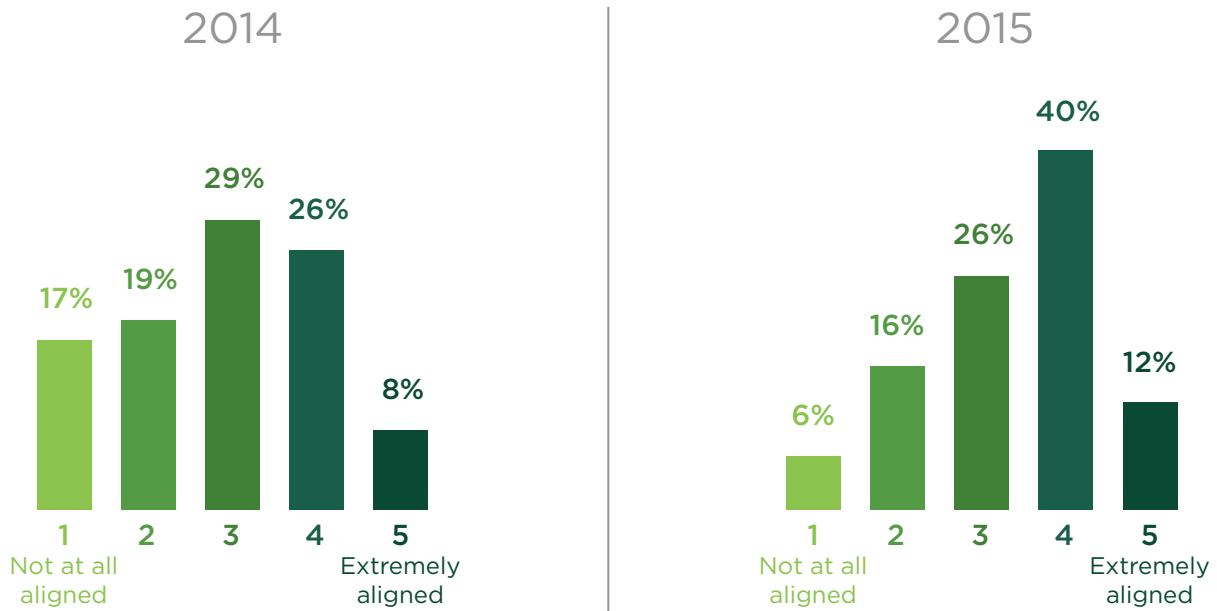
Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

Look at the shape of these graphs. The number of respondents who report that PD is extremely aligned with department or division goals and objectives didn't change much year over year – but the number who reported extreme misalignment did change – from 17% in 2014 to 6% in 2015. Overall, the year-over-year story is one of moderately improved alignment between the department's direction and its investments in PD.

There are two other stories here worth noting, however:

- With only half of departments aligning their objectives and their PD investments, many departments have untapped opportunities to leverage PD investments for greater return. The key is to align the direction of the unit and team members' individual interests and aspirations. When this alignment isn't present, less that is learned in PD gets implemented in the unit.

- The degree of alignment between departmental goals and PD does not appear to have much bearing on the stability of PD budgets. We expected to find that the more aligned PD is with departmental objectives, the more secure the PD budget would be in times of budgetary crisis—but in fact, findings 2 & 3 in our scorecard are only weakly correlated, statistically. This provides an important diagnostic. Does your unit just say professional development is important, or does your unit actually put its money where its mouth is, funding PD to gather new solutions to complex problems and to extend your team's capacity? With so many challenges and so much change facing our institutions, this may be one of the most important questions that many departments and offices in higher ed need to answer.

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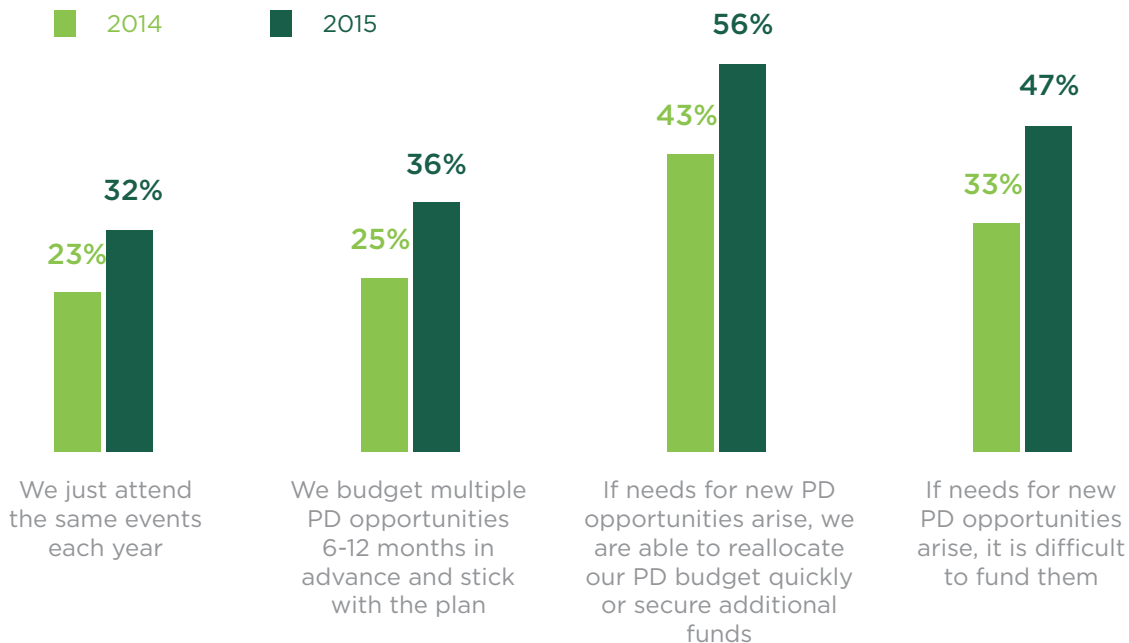**STATISTICAL NOTE**

Whether PD is aligned with departmental goals is closely correlated with:

- Whether managers are seen as modeling active investment of time and money in PD ($r = .36$)

- Whether opportunities to challenge the way the department does its work are seen as justifying funds for PD ($r = .25$ for managers, $r = .42$ for frontline faculty and staff).

4. Flexibility in Funding PD

Legend: 2014, 2015

- We just attend the same events each year: 23% (2014), 32% (2015)
- We budget multiple PD opportunities 6-12 months in advance and stick with the plan: 25% (2014), 36% (2015)
- If needs for new PD opportunities arise, we are able to reallocate our PD budget quickly or secure additional funds: 43% (2014), 56% (2015)
- If needs for new PD opportunities arise, it is difficult to fund them: 33% (2014), 47% (2015)

All four of these metrics are up, year-over-year; from this, we can surmise a nuanced story:

- On the one hand, more higher ed professionals in 2015 are simply attending the same annual events, planned well in advance (32% of all respondents, compared to 23% in 2014).

- Perhaps explaining the tendency to attend only the same annual events, respondents also report the perception that it is more difficult to secure funds for new PD opportunities in the previous year (47%, compared to 33% in 2014).

- Yet more respondents also report that if they need to, they are, in fact, able to reallocate the PD budget quickly (56% are able to, compared to only 43% in 2014).

So one half of respondents are able to reallocate the PD budget as needed, but many perceive that doing so is becoming more difficult—a troubling finding. And one half are unable to reallocate their PD budget at all.

This is critical. Conditions on campus change and new PD opportunities appear. If you aren't prepared to take advantage of these, then how strategic is your investment in PD, actually? How outcomes-focused? How much difference is your team's professional development actually making for your unit?
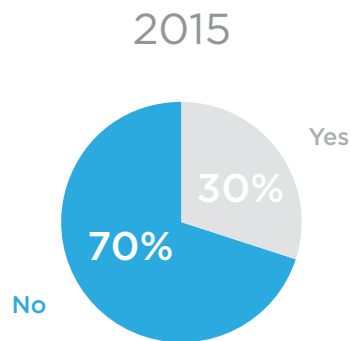
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For managers, difficulty in funding new PD opportunities is correlated with the likelihood that PD budgets are cut first when budgets are lean ($r = .31$), and is inversely correlated to whether their institution sees PD as mission-critical ($r = -.38$).

5. Written PD Plans

2015

Yes
30%
70%
No

Across colleges and universities, most managers (70%) don't have written professional development plans (PDPs) for their team members. Among managers who say that their institutions view PD as mission-critical, 68% don't require written plans, compared with 78% of managers at institutions whose commitment of actual support for PD is "all talk, very little walk." And these numbers have not changed significantly since 2014, when 75% of all managers reported that their team members did not have written plans.

A written professional development plan (PDP) is important; Martin Klubeck, in *The Professional Development Toolbox* (2014), argues that a formal PDP is critical to an organization's ability to optimize its "potential for greatness."

Managers whose team members have written plans are more likely to factor PD into performance appraisal, are less likely to see departmental politics interfere with team members' ability to attend PD events, and are more likely to be able to reallocate funds as needed to meet new PD needs.

Possibly, the formality of a written plan requires units to define the rationale for PD, which makes it easier to plan PD events in advance and fund them.

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AN EMERGING BEST PRACTICE

This year, we also asked a new question: Of those who do have written PDPs, how regularly are those written plans updated? We found that nearly all managers who require written PDPs (80%) update their teams' PDPs annually, but a minority (14%) update them every six months; a closer look at the data shows that these few regular updaters are more likely to have an edge in securing PD funds and are more likely to be tying learnings from PD directly to performance appraisal and to departmental objectives.

RESOURCE

Download a PDP template:
http://www.academicimpressions.com/sites/default/files/pdp-template.pdf

Does your team write down and regularly update PDPs? This is a critical investment in your staff, but it's also a critical investment in your department, as you develop your capacity for meeting your unit's goals and objectives, and commit to actively seeking out fresh ideas from colleagues elsewhere in the industry. PD plans need to be written to be part of an intentional talent development strategy, in order to retain frontline faculty and staff, and to create opportunities for succession planning.

6. Impact of PD on Performance Appraisal

Impact of PD on Performance Appraisal

Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

Bar chart legend: Managers in 2015 (light green); Frontline faculty and staff in 2015 (dark green)

Category	Managers in 2015	Frontline faculty and staff in 2015
None	14%	25%
Barely ever discuss it	10%	20%
Discuss it, limited weight	42%	28%
Discuss it, some weight	30%	15%
Key consideration	3%	6%
Don't know	2%	6%
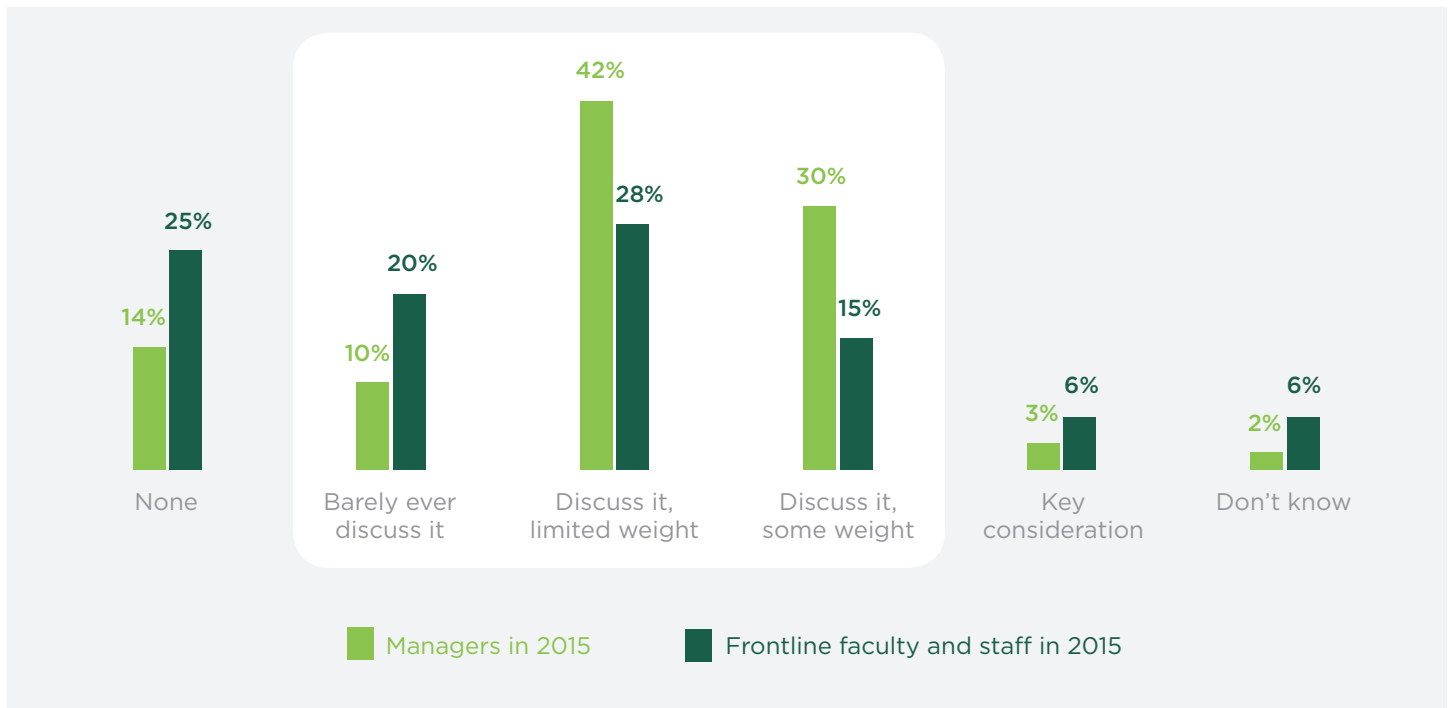
A Huge Gap between Managers and Frontline Faculty and Staff

In 2015, we asked both managers and frontline faculty and staff whether PD has weight in decisions related to compensation and promotion. What we learned is that even when managers say that PD is important to performance and a factor in performance appraisal, frontline faculty and staff don't believe this to be true.

In fact, we think there may be a significant disconnect in the expectations surrounding professional development. Mangers are twice as likely than frontline staff to claim that PD *is discussed* in performance appraisals and that it carries some weight. Conversely frontline faculty and staff are twice as likely to claim it's almost *never discussed*. This disconnect is both alarming but simple to correct. When institutions are willing to reward those who are committed to deepening their skill-set, there can be a remarkable impact on morale and employee engagement.

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From this discrepancy, we can infer that many frontline faculty and staff are unclear what objectives their performance is being measured against and how their participation in professional development affects their performance appraisal. It is possible that this is not being communicated clearly to employees on the frontline.

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Faculty and staff perception of whether PD is used in performance appraisal is another important indicator of an institution's overall approach to PD. In the 2015 data, this measure correlated with:

- Whether they also said their institution views PD as mission-critical ($r = .35$),

- Whether PD is frequently where they turn to get new ideas for meeting big challenges ($r = .34$),

- Whether the department is likely to fund PD opportunities that provide skills training ($r = .33$), or that allow team members to learn how another institution has addressed a key initiative ($r = .34$), or that will challenge how the department does its work ($r = .36$)

7. Whether Managers Model Investment in PD

Do managers model investment in PD?

Managers

1%	8%	36%	34%	18%	3%

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	All the time	Don't know

6%	14%	30%	29%	11%	10%

Frontline Faculty and Staff
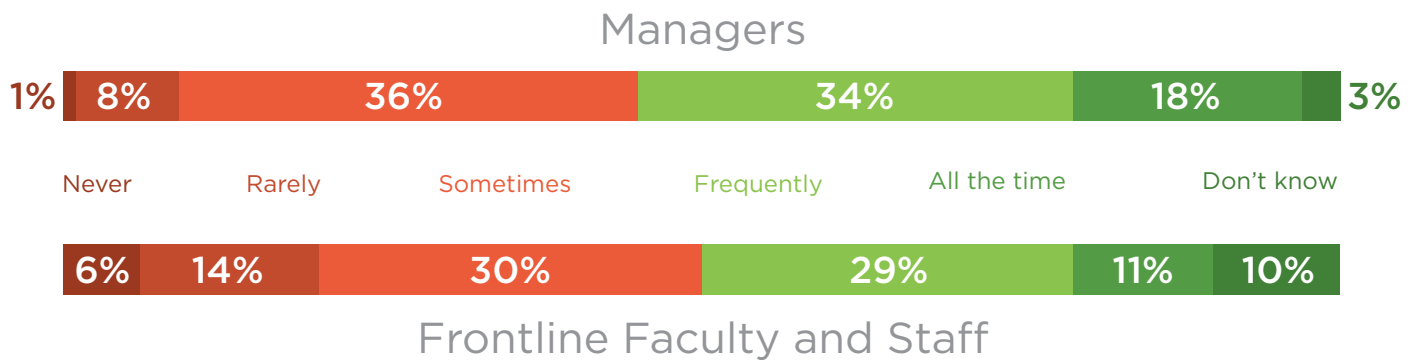
We are institutions of lifelong learning, yet we don't model lifelong learning for our frontline faculty and staff. 45% of managers admit that they never, rarely, or only sometimes model active investment in PD, and 50% of frontline faculty and staff say their managers don't frequently model active investment in PD (down from 53% in 2014 – only a very slight improvement).

This provides a telling diagnostic of how departments treat PD.

What we *do* is more important than what we *say*. We all have very busy schedules, and it can be hard to justify time out of the office, but the busier we are, the more critical it is to invest in learning smarter ways to do our work. This is counterintuitive, and managers are the biggest culprits here, as they often feel overly responsible for their team's success and may be the most reluctant to take the time needed for professional development.

Predictably, these numbers shift depending on how the institution views PD:

- 70% of frontline faculty and staff whose institutions view PD as mission-critical report that their managers model PD, as compared to 30% at institutions that provide limited actual support for PD. (Statistically, the correlation is *r = .45.*)

- 61% of managers whose institutions view PD as mission-critical see themselves as frequently or always modeling PD, as compared to 40% at institutions that provide limited actual support for PD.

Moving from "lots of talk, little walk" to treating PD as "mission-critical" probably starts with how those in supervisor positions think of and invest in their own professional development.

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Whether frontline faculty and staff say their managers model PD is also strongly correlated with:

- Whether PD is aligned with departmental goals (*r = .36*).

- Whether the department is likely to fund PD opportunities that involve learning how other colleges address key initiatives (*r = .34*) or challenging how the department does its work (*r = .36*).

8. Follow-up Expected from Frontline Faculty and Staff after PD

The key to leveraging PD investments is ensuring that ideas gathered through PD have a tangible impact on your campus, that you *do* something with what you have learned. You might change direction, pilot something new, or validate the direction you're taking.

For this reason, we asked whether takeaways and learnings from PD opportunities are implemented after the event. Are frontline faculty and staff expected to share key takeaways? Is there a formal reporting back to the rest of their unit?

In our survey, we ask non-managers the question, "What kinds of follow up does your supervisor request or expect after you attend a PD opportunity or program?" Respondents can select all the options that apply to them.

	2014	2015
I write a report on the program I attended	12%	6%
I do a presentation for our office/department	16%	12%
I share resources gathered at the event	46%	40%
Other	13%	7%

Note: Percentages reflect the percentages of non-managers who said yes to each option.

Notice that every one of these indicators went down. In 2015, fewer frontline faculty and staff were expected to debrief the PD event in written form, fewer did a presentation, and slightly fewer were asked to share resources from the event. If there is no expectation or mechanism for taking what's been learned by a team member at a PD event and integrating it into the work of the department after their event, this is a significant missed opportunity. When paired with the finding that more than 6% of the frontline say they believe their supervisors would "be secretly thankful" if they didn't attend any PD events in a year, it is clear that at least some colleges and universities may not be taking advantage of their most strategic asset: the learning potential of their own people.

...some colleges and universities may not be taking advantage of their most strategic asset: the learning potential of their own people.

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Who are the exceptions?

We found that when people don't just attend the same PD events each year, they are more likely to be asked to provide follow-up. More strategic, targeted investment in which events are attended is paired with greater expectation that what's learned at these events will be shared with the rest of the unit, and events are more likely to be leveraged to gain new ideas and skills for the department.

	I write a report on the program I attended	I do a presentation for our office/department	I share resources gathered at the event
We just attend the same events each year	11 respondents	15 respondents	**56 respondents**
We don't just attend the same events each year	15 respondents	37 respondents	**110 respondents**

A BEST PRACTICE: TRANSLATING PD… INTO ACTION

Here's how El Camino College has put a program in place to ensure that when faculty attend a workshop, they are equipped and empowered to put what they've learned into action almost immediately.

On an individual level, managers need to ensure that team members write into their PDPs a process for debriefing a PD event, disseminating learning across the team, and identifying action items. One rubric for doing this is to encourage team members who are attending a PD event to identify, before the event is over, one action they can take in their first week back on campus, based on what they've learned, one action they can take in the first month, and one action they can take over the next year.

Read more:
http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/high-impact-faculty-development-how-el-camino-college-helps-faculty-implement-learning-centered

10 Tips for Following-through on PD

If you're going to a PD event or program, consider these 10 practices for making the most of the experience:

Before the Event

1. Commit to yourself that you will take time to reflect and process what you learn at the event. For example, can you stay an extra afternoon or even an extra day following the event? If not, block time on your calendar for the day you return from the event for reflection. The challenge in returning immediately to your busy office and catching up on your day-to-day tasks is that you may not have time to reflect and plan – unless you intentionally schedule that time.

2. Schedule a reminder on your calendar for a date 3 months following the conference to review the materials, and to debrief how they've informed your thinking and work and how much progress you've made.

At the Event

3. For each session you attend at the event, write down one reaction, one takeaway, and one question you have.

4. While at the conference, create an action plan. What are 2-3 action steps you can commit to? In your plan, include: How much time will you need to complete these steps? What resources will you need? Which allies on campus can be helpful to you? How will you know if you're successful?

5. At the event, identify a thought partner and schedule a follow-up conference call with your partner, to take place 2-4 weeks following the program. Don't leave the meeting without having the call on the calendar!

On the Way Home

6. Use the plane or train ride home to prepare an informal presentation or some informal remarks to distill the most critical ideas from the event and their implications.

Back on Campus

7. Share your informal remarks with your supervisor to gather his/her input and ideas, and then prepare a formal presentation to share your most important ideas with your colleagues.

8. Beyond just a formal presentation, save your conference workbook and other resources from the event, and share these with your colleagues. You could share some reading or an instructional video that you found especially useful. Schedule a "lunch and learn" session with your colleagues to discuss the workbook, video, or article you shared.

9. Create and extend your network by carving out one hour in the week after the event to review all the business cards you collected and plan appropriate follow up. Also, did you meet anyone who would be a useful contact for one of your colleagues? Similarly, stay connected with the speakers at the event who resonated with you. Follow them on social media, sign up for their newsletters, and—if appropriate—stay in touch with them.

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10. Build momentum immediately around your action steps or the new skills you learned at the event. Improve those new skills by practicing; don't let yourself lose them in the midst of a return to your day-to-day tasks. Can you find someone that you can practice a new skill (like how to have a difficult conversation) with? Can you work with a "test" or "dummy" data set to begin working with some of the new data mining practices you've learned? The key is to build momentum by implementing something—even if it's something very small—within the first few weeks after the event.
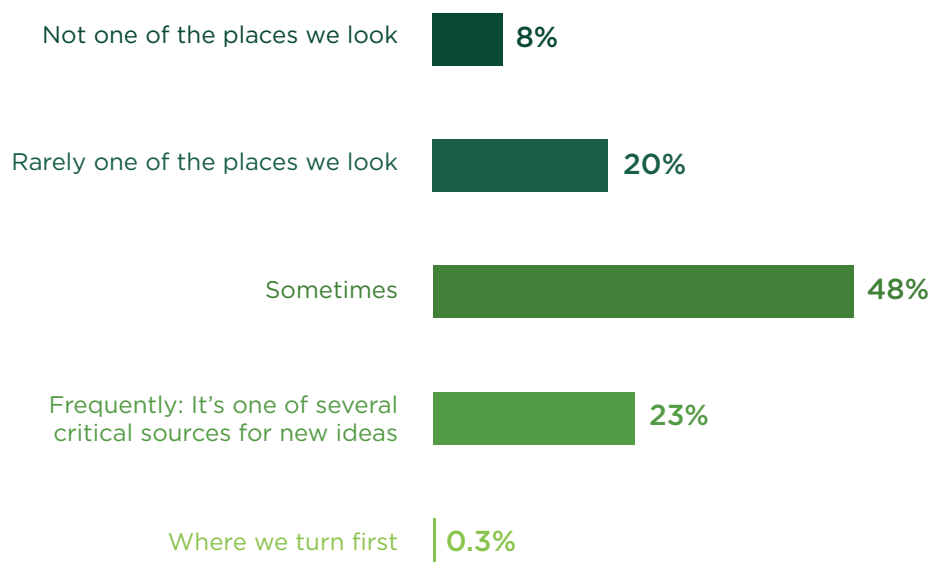
2 Untapped Opportunities to Maximize the Value of PD

To better understand how institutions are developing their own staff to help them thrive in an increasingly high-pressure environment, we asked an array of new questions in our 2015 survey. These new findings confirm that many departments in higher education are not leveraging PD dollars effectively—but we also uncovered some data about the practices of managers and departments that are optimizing the return on their PD investment. Here are the 2 most important opportunities that surfaced:

1. Look to PD as an opportunity to help solve big, strategic challenges in their work.

2. Look in new places for new ideas (they look outside the walls of their institution and of their regular annual conferences).

1. Look to PD as an Opportunity to Solve Big Challenges

In our 2015 survey, we asked a revealing question about what respondents do when facing significant challenges at a division or institutional level – such as improving enrollment, graduation rates, or institutional finances. Is PD one of the places they turn for new ideas and strategies from institutions that are already addressing these same challenges?

Not one of the places we look	8%
Rarely one of the places we look	20%
Sometimes	48%
Frequently: It's one of several critical sources for new ideas	23%
Where we turn first	0.3%

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Only 23% frequently turn to PD as one of several critical sources of new ideas to help them meet big challenges at their institution (28% said *rarely* or *never*). If PD is "mission-critical" and a "way of moving the institution forward" for 52% of all institutions, why do barely more than one third of those who claimed PD was mission-critical, also turn to PD as a resource for ideas to help meet strategic challenges?

The likelihood of turning frequently to PD for new ideas and strategies is strongly correlated with the likelihood of funding PD that informs not only individual skills training, but departmental planning and innovation (according to frontline faculty and staff, correlated *r = .46* with funding PD to learn how other colleges address key challenges, and *r = .49* with funding PD to challenge how the department currently does its work).

When we look just at those 24% who said that they turn to PD frequently or first to get new ideas and strategies, we also discover that, of these:

- 79% say their institution views PD as mission-critical (*r = .45*)

- 76% say PD and departmental goals are aligned or extremely aligned (*r = .39*)

- 39% say PD has some weight in performance appraisal (*r = .34*), and 61% of frontline faculty and staff who say their departments look to PD frequently for new ideas also say their managers model active investment in PD (*r = .40*)

- Only 23% say it is difficult to fund new PD needs as they arise (*r = -.30*)

Yet these are a minority of all respondents: just 29% of the managers and 17% of frontline faculty and staff turn frequently to PD for new ideas and new strategies to address significant challenges facing their institutions.

Challenging the way we work

Those who do look to PD to offer new ideas and new answers to complex questions also report that PD opportunities that are likely to challenge how their department does its work are more likely to be funded. They report that their PD budgets are more secure—these departments value their PD budgets and see professional development – its purpose, its value, and its expected return – very differently from their peers. They see PD as crucial to helping their department navigate troubled times:

When budgets are tight...	% of those who said PD is the last thing to be cut (*n = 54*)	% of those who said PD would be maintained despite cuts to other areas (*n = 87*)	% of those who said PD dollars would be increased (*n = 7*)
Likely to fund PD that challenges how we do our work	58%	58%	57% (4 respondents)
Maybe would fund PD that challenges how we do our work	25%	29%	43% (3 respondents)
Unlikely to fund PD that challenges how we do our work	17%	14%	0%

These individuals also say that:

1. PD is more likely to be aligned (60%) with the goals and objectives of their department or division (*r = .25 for managers, r = .42 for frontline faculty and staff*).

2. Departmental politics were less likely to interfere with the ability of team members to attend PD (59% say "hardly ever" or "never"). Statistically, this inverse correlation is moderate for frontline faculty and staff (*r = -.30*), but weak for managers (*r = -.10*); in the minds of frontline faculty and staff, these two items—the extent to which politics are a barrier to PD and the extent to which the department is likely to fund PD that will challenge its work—are tightly linked.

3. 77% of them don't just attend the same events each year.

4. If needs for new PD opportunities arise, they are able to reallocate their PD budget quickly or secure additional funds (71%).

5. They are a little more likely to turn frequently to PD as a key resource for new ideas to help address significant challenges (39%, compared to 11% of those who were unlikely or would "maybe" fund PD opportunities that challenge how the department does its work). In fact, while only 3 respondents to our survey said that PD was where they would turn "first" at such a time, all 3 of those were also people who were likely to fund PD opportunities that would challenge how their department does its work.

6. These individuals comprise 57% of those who said each team member in their department had a written plan, and 77% of those who said their team's written PDPs are updated every six months.

7. These individuals comprise 63% of managers who said that PD has some weight in discussions of promotion and compensation during performance appraisal (*r = .21*).

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Additionally, many (62%) of professionals from institutions where PD is regarded as mission-critical said PD opportunities that could challenge how their department does its work were likely to get funded, compared to only 28% of professionals from institutions where PD is "all talk and little walk" (*r = .31*).

Institutions where PD is regarded as mission-critical are likelier to leverage PD as a means of innovating, seeking new ideas, and adapting to new challenges. In higher ed, we need new ideas—we need, especially, to share our best models and ideas with each other. We need to be willing to take intelligent risks and learn from the risks others have taken.

2. Look in New Places for New Ideas

Though the challenges now facing colleges and universities require cross-silo thinking and an infusion of fresh ideas, when it comes to developing their teams, most supervisors operate in a very insular way. A surprising percentage of respondents to the survey tell us that they neither frequently seek fresh ideas from outside their department, nor participate in cross-departmental teams to attend professional development events:

Managers: How frequently do you…	Rarely or never	Sometimes	Frequently
Visit another institution to learn how they do things	44%	48%	9%
Visit an organization outside of higher education to get new ideas	**69%**	26%	5%
Send members of your team to a conference with colleagues from another department or division at your institution	33%	51%	16%
Participate in a regular networking group with colleagues in similar roles at other institutions	25%	43%	32%
Seek the advice of colleagues at other institutions on an ongoing basis (not just at an event)	20%	45%	36%

*Note: The percentages in **red**, where more than 50% say they rarely or never engage in these activities.*

Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

Frontline: How frequently do you…	Rarely or never	Sometimes	Frequently
Visit another institution to learn how they do things	**65%**	31%	4%
Visit an organization outside of higher education to get new ideas	**70%**	27%	3%
Go to a conference with colleagues from another department or division at your institution	**53%**	39%	8%
Participate in a regular networking group with colleagues in similar roles at other institutions	**51%**	31%	18%
Seek the advice of colleagues at other institutions on an ongoing basis (not just at an event)	40%	39%	22%

*Note the percentages in **red**, where more than 50% say they rarely or never engage in these activities.*

Note: Percentages may not add up to a 100% total due to rounding.

The picture is bleakest for frontline faculty and staff. More than half do not participate (or rarely participate) in a networking group with peers at other institutions; only 4% report frequently visiting another institution to learn how they do things; and only 8% frequently attend an event with colleagues from another department or division at their institution.

Even among managers, only 8.5% frequently visit another institution to see how they do things. 69% have rarely or never visited an organization outside the higher ed sector to gather new ideas. Only 32% participate frequently in a regular networking group with colleagues in similar roles at other institutions; only 36% seek ongoing advice from peers at other institutions; and only 16% frequently send team members to a PD event with colleagues from another department or division.

Why aren't more higher ed professionals looking outside their own organizations for strategies and innovative new solutions to complex challenges? Despite the fact that we are learning organizations, our colleges and universities remain strikingly siloed.

Join a networking group, visit other institutions often, visit innovative organizations outside of academia, identify conferences and seminars that dig deeply into a specific issue or into specific strategies — when faced with significant challenges, invest time in your department's learning.

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A CONTRASTING EXAMPLE

We interviewed Kevin Ross, president of Lynn University, for our recent paper *Small but Mighty: 4 Small Colleges Thriving in a Disruptive Environment*, in which we profiled small to mid-sized institutions that are bucking the trend of declining enrollment with strong and sustained growth. One of Ross's best practices is to not only take his leadership team (and encourage them to take their own direct reports) on field trips to peer institutions, but to visit the campus of innovators in the corporate sector. Twelve years ago, he and his team visited the storied design firm, Ideo, to learn how they use design thinking to solve problems with innovative solutions.

Throughout our research on successful small institutions, we learned that one of the keys that sets them apart from their struggling competitors is their outward focus. Successful institutions are always scanning the marketplace, always learning from other organizations. This allows them to take—and keep—a proactive stance in a turbulent industry.

Read more:
http://www.academicimpressions.com/news/small-mighty-4-small-colleges-thriving-disruptive-environment

A Call to Action

In an environment of rapid change and complex challenges, the quality and stability of your institution's investment in professional development may be a diagnostic of your institution's health, competitiveness, and sustainability. If our colleges and universities are to thrive, we will need to operate as learning organizations, and not only as organizations that facilitate student learning.

If our students' learning is core to our institutional missions, shouldn't targeted, structured learning for our staff and faculty also be core to the way we operate? Shouldn't we be deeply concerned with how we develop our own capacity? What kind of learning opportunities do we provide, encourage, and reward for our faculty and staff?

We hope this report can start some critical conversations on your campus.

QUESTIONS YOUR DEPARTMENT OR DIVISION SHOULD ASK

- What opportunities might PD provide for us to develop not only skills training for our staff, but to gather knowledge and develop expertise to meet the strategic initiatives we've agreed to?

- How can our departmental priorities and vision more closely influence how we prioritize funding for PD?

- Can we develop six-month PDPs for our staff (including managers)?

- How do we hold staff accountable for PD? Are they expected to share or present information to the team? How do we know if they are using PD to address challenges facing our department and our institution?

- What is our organization's (or department's, or team's) position on the value, purpose, and expected return on investment of professional development? Can we discuss this? Communicate it widely? Live it?

At AI, we'd like to engage you and your team in a discussion of how you can take your professional development to the next level—and move your team and your institution forward.

Let's continue the conversation!

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Amit co-founded Academic Impressions in 2002 to provide a variety of educational products and services that help higher education administrators tackle key, strategic challenges. Since 2002, AI has designed and directed hundreds of conferences and has served representatives from over 3,500 higher education institutions. Besides designing and leading events for cabinet-level officers focused on strategic planning, budgeting, and leadership development, Amit leads Academic Impressions' ongoing research into the five- and 10-year challenges facing higher education and plays a lead role in outlining each issue of Higher Ed Impact: Monthly Diagnostic to highlight how college and university leaders can take an institution-wide approach to answering those challenges.

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At Academic Impressions, Daniel provides strategic direction and content for AI's electronic publication Higher Ed Impact, including market research and interviews with leading subject matter experts on critical issues. Since the publication's launch in 2009, Daniel has written more than 550 articles on strategic issues ranging from student recruitment and retention to development and capital planning. Daniel previously served as a conference director for Academic Impressions, developing training programs focused on issues related to campus sustainability, capital planning, and facilities management. Prior to joining Academic Impressions, Daniel served as adjunct faculty for the University of Denver. Daniel holds a Ph.D. in English.

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Kevin has been working in the higher education industry for 13 years. He joined Academic Impressions in 2004 as the company's first full-time employee. Kevin holds bachelor's degrees in Economics and Finance and a master's degree in Economics. In 2013-14, Kevin led the research and initial implementation of AI Pro, higher education's premier annual membership for professional development and training. Kevin leads the data analytics efforts for AI and is responsible for providing analysis and data integrity for internal and external projects.

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Demographics

We surveyed a random sampling of higher ed professionals; 971 responded. Of these:

1. 544 (56%) either directly control or influence spending on professional development for staff other than themselves ("managers"); 427 (44%) do not ("frontline faculty and staff").

2. Respondents were spread evenly across a variety of institutional sizes by FTE enrollment. Small colleges were represented, with 20% of respondents hailing from institutions with less than 3,000 students, and the largest colleges were represented, too, with 28% hailing from institutions with more than 20,000 students.

3. 62% were from public institutions, 35% from private institutions, and 3% from for-profit colleges.

4. 20% were from academic administration, 21% from advancement/development, 16% from student affairs, 7% were faculty, 6% were enrollment management, and the remainder were spread widely across varied job functions on campus.

Statistical Appendices

Appendix 1: Correlations among Managers and Key Metrics

	How institutions view PD	Impact on PD when budgets shrink	Alignment of PD with dept goals	Always go to same events	Budget PD 6-12 months out	Difficult to fund new PD needs	Written PD plan	Impact of PD on performance appraisal	Managers model PD
How institutions view PD	1	-0.387*	0.3*	-0.286*	0.137	-0.384*	0.111	0.199*	0.223*
Impact on PD when budgets shrink	-0.387*	1	-0.208*	0.192*	-0.093	0.314*	-0.138	-0.188*	-0.163
Alignment of PD with dept goals	0.3*	-0.208*	1	-0.262*	0.163	-0.275*	0.134	0.192*	0.295*
Always go to same events	-0.286*	0.192*	-0.262*	1	-0.094	0.272*	-0.037	-0.089	-0.13
Budget PD 6-12 months out	0.137	-0.093	0.163	-0.094	1	-0.04	0.151	0.187*	0.176
Difficult to fund new PD needs	-0.384*	0.314*	-0.275*	0.272*	-0.04	1	-0.104	-0.166	-0.178
Written PD plan	0.111	-0.138	0.134	-0.037	0.151	-0.104	1	0.094	0.207*
Impact of PD on performance appraisal	0.199*	-0.188*	0.192*	-0.089	0.187*	-0.166	0.094	1	0.237*
Managers model PD	0.223*	-0.163	0.295*	-0.13	0.176	-0.178	0.207*	0.237*	1

*Note: * significant at p < .05, ** significant at p < .01, *** significant at p < .001*

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	How institutions view PD	Impact on PD when budgets shrink	Alignment of PD with dept goals	Always go to same events	Budget PD 6-12 months out	Difficult to fund new PD needs	Written PD plan	Impact of PD on performance appraisal	Managers model PD
Facing challenges, look to PD first	0.309*	-0.247*	0.373*	-0.193*	0.128	-0.351*	0.071	0.211*	0.24*
Dept politics interfere with PD	-0.329*	0.274*	-0.245*	0.262*	-0.124	0.274*	-0.02	-0.088	-0.166
Visit other institutions to learn	0.1	-0.062	0.206*	-0.134	0.133	-0.121	0.142	0.194*	0.257*
Visit orgs outside the sector	0.141	-0.125	0.212*	-0.073	0.082	-0.139	0.121	0.173	0.209*
Send with colleagues from other depts.	0.235*	-0.238*	0.206*	-0.074	0.169	-0.26*	0.116	0.227*	0.181
Regular networking group	0.147	-0.13	0.296*	-0.066	0.127	-0.188*	0.138	0.143	0.31*
Advice from colleagues at other colleges	0.066	-0.068	0.237*	-0.086	0.102	-0.095	0.152	0.13	0.266*
Funds skills training	0.226*	-0.229*	0.183*	-0.104	0.035	-0.207*	0.15	0.072	0.174
Funds networking	0.253*	-0.27*	0.226*	-0.124	0.1	-0.255*	0.161	0.163	0.149
Funds learning how other colleges address key initiative	0.241*	-0.211*	0.251*	-0.211*	0.101	-0.231*	0.099	0.054	0.144
Funds validating dept's direction	0.31*	-0.192*	0.275*	-0.197*	0.164	-0.281*	0.121	0.196*	0.176
Funds challenging how dept does its work	0.309*	-0.21*	0.249*	-0.216*	0.118	-0.243*	0.103	0.212*	0.219*

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

	Facing challenges, look to PD first	Dept politics interfere with PD	Visit other institutions to learn	Visit orgs outside the sector	Send with colleagues from other depts.	Regular networking group	Advice from colleagues at other colleges	Funds skills training	Funds networking	Funds learning how other colleges address key initiative	Funds validating dept's direction	Funds challenging how dept does its work
Facing challenges, look to PD first	1	-0.176	0.241*	0.167	0.279*	0.284*	0.228*	0.212*	0.301*	0.34*	0.391*	0.383*
Dept politics interfere with PD	-0.176	1	-0.108	-0.026	-0.129	-0.135	-0.067	-0.188*	-0.13	-0.216*	-0.125	-0.097
Visit other institutions to learn	0.241*	-0.108	1	0.502**	0.303*	0.445**	0.452**	0.091	0.182	0.25*	0.19*	0.219*
Visit orgs outside the sector	0.167	-0.026	0.502**	1	0.275*	0.351*	0.306*	0.032	0.184*	0.101	0.189*	0.183
Send with colleagues from other depts.	0.279*	-0.129	0.303*	0.275*	1	0.254*	0.578**	0.157	0.202*	0.197*	0.221*	0.256*
Regular networking group	0.284*	-0.135	0.445**	0.351*	0.254*	1	0.171	0.123	0.217*	0.164	0.194*	0.175
Advice from colleagues at other colleges	0.228*	-0.067	0.452**	0.306*	0.578**	0.171	1	0.074	0.142	0.146	0.071	0.142
Funds skills training	0.212*	-0.188*	0.091	0.032	0.157	0.123	0.074	1	0.233*	0.36*	0.201*	0.291*
Funds networking	0.301*	-0.13	0.182	0.184*	0.202*	0.217*	0.142	0.233*	1	0.43**	0.334*	0.316*
Funds learning how other colleges address key initiative	0.34*	-0.216*	0.25*	0.101	0.197*	0.164	0.146	0.36*	0.43**	1	0.36*	0.407**
Funds validating dept's direction	0.391*	-0.125	0.19*	0.189*	0.221*	0.194*	0.071	0.201*	0.334*	0.36*	1	0.617**
Funds challenging how dept does its work	0.383*	-0.097	0.219*	0.183	0.256*	0.175	0.142	0.291*	0.316*	0.407**	0.617**	1

*Note: * significant at p < .05, ** significant at p < .01, *** significant at p < .001*

Appendix 2: Correlations among Frontline Faculty and Staff and Key Metrics

	How institutions view PD	Impact on PD when budgets shrink	Alignment of PD with dept goals	Always go to same events	Budget PD 6-12 months out	Difficult to fund new PD needs	Impact of PD on performance appraisal	Managers model PD
How institutions view PD	1	-0.443**	0.407*	-0.148	0.312*	-0.431*	0.354*	0.452*
Impact on PD when budgets shrink	-0.443**	1	-0.218*	0.125	-0.283*	0.292*	-0.224*	-0.237*
Alignment of PD with dept goals	0.407*	-0.218*	1	-0.134	0.24*	-0.239*	0.286*	0.359*
Always go to same events	-0.148	0.125	-0.134	1	-0.121	0.197	-0.114	-0.031
Budget PD 6-12 months out	0.312*	-0.283*	0.24*	-0.121	1	-0.148	0.176	0.209*
Difficult to fund new PD needs	-0.431*	0.292*	-0.239*	0.197	-0.148	1	-0.183	-0.246*
Impact of PD on performance appraisal	0.354*	-0.224*	0.286*	-0.114	0.176	-0.183	1	0.268*
Managers model PD	0.452*	-0.237*	0.359*	-0.031	0.209*	-0.246*	0.268*	1

*Note: * significant at p < .05, ** significant at p < .01, *** significant at p < .001*

	How institutions view PD	Impact on PD when budgets shrink	Alignment of PD with dept goals	Always go to same events	Budget PD 6-12 months out	Difficult to fund new PD needs	Impact of PD on performance appraisal	Managers model PD
Facing challenges, look to PD first	0.447**	-0.231*	0.388*	-0.195	0.267*	-0.304*	0.342*	0.4*
Dept politics interfere with PD	-0.435**	0.258*	-0.268*	0.159	-0.218*	0.34*	-0.223*	-0.31*
Visit other institutions to learn	0.196	-0.121	0.121	-0.115	0.069	-0.049	0.195	0.143
Visit orgs outside the sector	0.203	-0.097	0.12	-0.057	0.126	-0.131	0.215*	0.127
Go with colleagues from other depts.	0.256*	-0.18	0.109	-0.199	0.161	-0.223*	0.217*	0.182
Regular networking group	0.188	-0.14	0.123	-0.144	0.108	-0.124	0.205	0.196
Advice from colleagues at other colleges	0.117	-0.057	0.067	-0.115	0.058	-0.005	0.101	0.143
Funds skills training	0.459**	-0.207*	0.246*	-0.211*	0.235*	-0.347*	0.205	0.333*
Funds networking	0.445**	-0.284*	0.283*	-0.305*	0.195	-0.355*	0.3*	0.283*
Funds learning how other colleges address key initiative	0.448**	-0.201	0.351*	-0.303*	0.273*	-0.299*	0.276*	0.336*
Funds validating dept's direction	0.395*	-0.196	0.372*	-0.268*	0.327*	-0.302*	0.257*	0.298*
Funds challenging how dept does its work	0.489**	-0.249*	0.417*	-0.303*	0.274*	-0.335*	0.335*	0.364*

*Note: * significant at p < .05, ** significant at p < .01, *** significant at p < .001*

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	Facing challenges, look to PD first	Dept politics interfere with PD	Visit other institutions to learn	Visit orgs outside the sector	Send with colleagues from other depts.	Regular networking group	Advice from colleagues at other colleges	Funds skills training	Funds networking	Funds learning how other colleges address key initiative	Funds validating dept's direction	Funds challenging how dept does its work
Facing challenges, look to PD first	1	-0.195	0.175	0.204	0.228*	0.121	0.102	0.397*	0.338*	0.456**	0.445**	0.492**
Dept politics interfere with PD	-0.195	1	-0.115	-0.057	-0.199	-0.144	-0.115	-0.211*	-0.305*	-0.303*	-0.268*	-0.303*
Visit other institutions to learn	0.175	-0.115	1	0.589**	0.335*	0.479**	0.422*	0.156	0.176	0.157	0.11	0.195
Visit orgs outside the sector	0.204	-0.057	0.589**	1	0.344*	0.347*	0.298*	0.195	0.206*	0.181	0.171	0.238*
Go with colleagues from other depts.	0.228*	-0.199	0.335*	0.344*	1	0.327*	0.186	0.257*	0.29*	0.202	0.233*	0.251*
Regular networking group	0.121	-0.144	0.479**	0.347*	0.327*	1	0.558**	0.105	0.163	0.093	0.057	0.113
Advice from colleagues at other colleges	0.102	-0.115	0.422*	0.298*	0.186	0.558**	1	0.023	0.049	0.149	-0.033	0.096
Funds skills training	0.397*	-0.211*	0.156	0.195	0.257*	0.105	0.023	1	0.471**	0.5**	0.448**	0.43*
Funds networking	0.338*	-0.305*	0.176	0.206*	0.29*	0.163	0.049	0.471**	1	0.511**	0.452**	0.5**
Funds learning how other colleges address key initiative	0.456**	-0.303*	0.157	0.181	0.202	0.093	0.149	0.5**	0.511**	1	0.529**	0.512**
Funds validating dept's direction	0.445**	-0.268*	0.11	0.171	0.233*	0.057	-0.033	0.448**	0.452**	0.529**	1	0.695**
Funds challenging how dept does its work	0.492**	-0.303*	0.195	0.238*	0.251*	0.113	0.096	0.43*	0.5**	0.512**	0.695**	1

*Note: * significant at p < .05, ** significant at p < .01, *** significant at p < .001*

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