DO NOMINAL MONETARY INCENTIVES WORK TO INCREASE FULL-TIME PUBLIC HEALTH FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE TEACHING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

As a part of the overall strategy to increase the number of online course sections, the Dornsife School of Public Health (DSPH) offered a professional development workshop program on online teaching, course design, and the learning management system (LMS). Low attendance in these workshops over the first two years led the school to pilot an incentive program for faculty development in online course design and teaching in Fall 2018. This paper will review the design of the incentive and training program and the measured outcomes.

Key words: faculty incentive, online teaching, professional development, pedagogy training

INTRODUCTION

The race to develop high quality online courses and programs has continued as programs seek to attract and support a broader range of students (Lederman, 2018). Toward that end, the Dornsife School of Public Health (DSPH) set a goal to increase its online course offerings to at least 30% of all sections taught by the 2020-21 academic year. To achieve this goal, the school needed to support faculty training to develop and teach online courses by creating and managing a series of professional development workshops on online course design, online teaching, and the learning management system (LMS). Evaluation data indicated that these trainings were poorly attended, and the school was not making progress toward its goal to increase online course offerings. Therefore, an incentive program was piloted where faculty could earn points for participating in professional development as an incentive to increase participation at these workshops. At the end of the academic year, faculty were paid one dollar per point earned. This paper will discuss the strategy for the incentive program, how it was operationalized, and the measured outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying the reasons for resistance to online teaching and course design is critical for developing strategies to increase online teaching (Brownell & Tanner, 2012; Herman, 2013; McCourt et al., 2017). Common reasons that people resist change include lack of awareness, lack of understanding, a perception that the change is flawed, lack of participation in the change process, or having a bad experience with change (Ford et al., 2008). Resistance to change connects to a core human emotion: fear of loss including loss of power, authority, and personal identity (Brownell & Tanner, 2012; Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013; Kaufman, 2016). Faculty are experts in their field and may find it threatening to admit that they do not know how to do something (Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013). Additionally, there is an inherent risk in developing online courses because the work that is required to build an online course may not factor into tenure and promotion decisions (McCourt et al., 2017;
Furthermore, faculty might not understand the reasons for moving to an online format, and this lack of understanding can generate resistance (Herman, 2013; McCourt et al., 2017). While administrators and institutional leadership may strongly endorse and promote online learning, many faculty do not follow developments in online pedagogy or the developments in the higher education market toward digital formats (Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013).

There is evidence that incentives to participate in professional development, if structured appropriately, can overcome some of these barriers and motivate faculty to engage in professional development for online course design and teaching (Covell, et al., 2016; Ho & Yeung, 2015; Shabbir et al., 2016). One study looked at incentive programs from six universities and found that incentive programs can motivate faculty to change their teaching behavior, but they must be structured carefully to avoid introducing inefficiencies in the teaching workload (Shabbir et al., 2016). Another study used two psychological techniques to increase the efficacy of a financial incentive to improve the commitment to training (Ho & Yeung, 2015). Lack of incentives for online instruction could be a barrier if the incentives that are offered do not align with faculty needs or interests (Herman, 2013). The administration may not be able to offer incentives faculty desire such as a course release or supplemental pay (Herman, 2013).

The research on pay for performance (PfP) tells a less optimistic picture. The literature on PfP is mixed at best with the majority finding that it doesn’t work at all (Gläser et al., 2017; Goff et al., 2016; Gondi et al., 2019; Mintrop et al., 2018), and in some cases it can even worsen performance if it is a poorly structured program or increases competitiveness between employees (Gläser et al., 2017; Goff et al., 2016). Several articles found that it worked to some degree under specific circumstances (Bryson et al., 2017; Opstrup, 2017; Wang et al., 2018); for example, Bryson et al. (2017) found that PfP worked to some degree in the private sector but not all in the public sector. The research also noted that institutions that have a PfP program in place may attract higher performing employees, thus creating a selection bias (Jones & Hartney, 2017). Eren (2019) found that a PfP program in a high school setting did improve limited student learning outcomes. Overall, the literature on PfP appears to be equivocal, which suggests that more research is needed to understand the degree to which and contexts within which incentives might affect performance.

**BACKGROUND**

**Incentive Program**

As a part of their overall strategy to increase the number of online course sections, the DSPH offers a professional development workshop program on online teaching, course design, and the LMS. These workshops had low attendance the first two years they were offered. In the Fall of 2018, DSPH decided to pilot an incentive program for faculty development in online course design and teaching in which faculty could earn points for attending a variety of professional development opportunities. These points translated into one dollar per point that were paid out at the end of the academic year. Except for the Certificates in Online Teaching, all opportunities were offered free of charge to the faculty.

All full-time faculty, including teaching faculty, tenure-track, and tenured faculty, were invited to participate in the program. Their teaching experience ranged from 1 year to over 20 years. There were a variety of activities that could earn points in the incentive program, but the design choice on activities met two criteria. First, the workshops must provide high quality training in online teaching and course design (Brownell & Tanner, 2012; Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013). Second, DSPH produced workshops were made as easy to attend as possible by scheduling the workshops at times when the fewest faculty were teaching and holding workshops in the school’s building.

Drexel University produced trainings and workshops that were conducted by experts in online teaching and the LMS. While not held in the school’s building, these workshops were offered online so faculty could participate regardless of location. Finally, the online teaching certificates allowed faculty to participate in training that would provide them with a tangible credential at the end that might be helpful in promotion and tenure decisions (McCourt et al., 2017).

**DSPH Produced Workshops**

The DSPH produced workshops were offered 8 to 10 times a quarter. Each workshop was an
hour long and involved a mix of presentation and question/answer. These workshops were held in person and streamed online. They were conducted by Online Learning Faculty Fellows (Drexel faculty from other schools), experts from Drexel’s Instructional Technology Group, and DSPH’s Director of Online Learning. The goal of these workshops was to combat lack of training as a barrier to teaching online (Brownell & Tanner, 2012). Faculty received 10 points for each of these workshops. DSPH posted recordings of previously held workshops to a Blackboard shell, and faculty could watch them and take a short 3–5 question quiz and earn 5 points per quiz.

DSPH also held a monthly Online Teaching and Learning Community brown-bag lunch that enabled faculty to come together for an hour to informally discuss successes, failures, and challenges in online teaching and course development. The purpose of these lunches was to provide faculty with an opportunity to discuss the challenges (and opportunities) of online teaching (McCourt et al., 2017). These lunches earned faculty 5 points.

**Drexel University Online (DUO) Trainings**

DSPH also leveraged the available university resources. Drexel University Online (DUO) offers three trainings for faculty. The Applying the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR) workshop was offered asynchronously online over the course of 2 weeks; faculty could expect to spend 1–2 hours a day on this workshop and received 50 points for participating. Quality Matters is a nonprofit organization that has created a rubric for assessing the quality of an online course. This rubric is widely used in the development and assessment of online courses in higher education, and the APPQMR workshop provided a detailed training in applying the rubric.

The Essentials for Online Teaching workshop and the Advanced Pedagogy and Instructional Design workshop were also offered asynchronously online but 5 five weeks. Faculty could expect to spend 1–2 hours a week on these workshops and were awarded 25 points for completing them. In addition, Drexel Instructional Technology Group (ITG) regularly offers workshops on Blackboard, the official learning management system (LMS) of Drexel, throughout the year. Faculty could attend a training offered by ITG either in person or streamed online and received 10 points per workshop. The purpose of these trainings and workshops was to provide faculty support and grow their confidence in developing and teaching a high-quality course (Hoyt & Öviatt, 2013).

**Online Teaching Certificate**

In addition to the offerings listed above, DSPH encouraged faculty to get training outside the university from quality certificate programs. Three institutions were identified that offer a Certificate in Online Teaching. The Quality Matters: Teaching Online Certificate cost $1,100 and the time commitment was seven workshop series that were 1–2 weeks each; faculty could earn 200 Points for completing this certificate. The Rutgers: Online Teaching Certificate cost $1,200 for four workshops that were 5 weeks long each; faculty could earn 200 Points for completing this certificate. Finally, the Central Michigan: Certificate in Online Instruction cost $295 and was one workshop over 4 weeks; faculty could earn 100 points for completing this certificate.

Because these certificates were not free, faculty needed to use departmental funds to participate. However, the DSPH agreed to support up to three faculty in attending the Central Michigan Certificate and ultimately paid for one faculty to complete this certificate. The purpose of offering an external certificate in online teaching was to provide additional support and training for faculty and to provide them with a tangible credential that they could list on their annual evaluation and their faculty portfolio (Brownell & Tanner, 2012; Herman, 2013). Table 1 provides a summary of the training opportunities and point values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Certificate</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Matters: Teaching Online Certificate</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers University: Online Teaching Certificate</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan: Certificate in Online Instruction</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUO Online Pedagogy Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applying the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR)</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essentials for Online Teaching</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Pedagogy and Instructional Design</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>DSPH Workshops</td>
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<td>DSPH Workshops</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSPH Community Lunch</td>
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**Program Promotion**

The incentive program was promoted to faculty in several ways. First, an email from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs went out to all faculty announcing the program. Second, it was included as an announcement in a DSPH-wide faculty meeting. Third, the Director of Online Learning attended departmental faculty meetings to explain and promote the program. Weekly reminder emails about upcoming workshops were sent to all faculty, and included in that communication was a reminder that points could be earned and a link to the Blackboard shell where faculty could track points.

DSPH also maintained a Leader Board where faculty could see who had earned points and who was in the lead. Twice during the program, emails were sent out announcing who was currently in the lead. The hope was the transparency of points earned would further motivate faculty to participate in the training options and help deepen their identities as online teachers (Brownell & Tanner, 2012; McCourt et al., 2017). To promote the program further, DSPH also gave faculty points for two years of the workshop series.

**Goal of the Program**

The goal of the incentive program was to engage 50% of DSPH full-time faculty in a training opportunity. While the budget would have allowed for 50% of faculty to receive the full points, it was not anticipated that would happen. However, it was thought that three to five faculty would do the certificate in online teaching (which had the highest pay-out value). Part of DPSH’s theory on the slow adoption of online teaching is that faculty were not familiar with it or trained in online teaching. An increase in training would hopefully result in an increase in online teaching.

**EVALUATION**

This paper used two methods to evaluate the success of the incentive program. The first was participation numbers: Both the percentage of faculty who participated in the program and the average number of points earned by participant. DSPH offered professional development workshops for faculty in online teaching and course design for three years. Over the three years, participation has been inconsistent. In 2016-2017 26% of faculty participated in at least one activity. In 2017-2018 that number dropped to 18% of faculty. In 2018-2019, the year of the incentive program, the number jumped up to 35% of faculty who participated in at least one of the incentive activities, nine of whom had not participated in the previous two years. However, this represented only one-third of the total faculty at DSPH (Figure 1).

The second evaluation method was a survey at the end of the program. This short survey asked five questions:

1. Do you agree with the following statement: The incentive program increased my attendance at DSPH Teaching and Learning Workshops, Online Teaching and Learning Lunches, or training held by Drexel’s Online Learning Council?
2. Overall did the workshops and trainings you participated in meet your expectations?
3. How likely are you to use information you gained at these workshops in your teaching?
4. How likely are you to use information you gained at these workshops in your teaching?
5. After participating in the Program please rate your confidence in the following: Designing and Online Class, Teaching an Online Class, Designing a Hybrid Class, Teaching a Hybrid Class.

**RESULTS**

On average, faculty who participated in the incentive program attended one or two workshops in the academic year. Only one faculty member participated in an Online Teaching Certificate, and
that faculty member received a scholarship from the DSPH Academic Affairs to attend. This low level of engagement with the program led us to believe that faculty were not incentivized enough to change their behavior.

The highest point total earned by an individual faculty member was 180 points with an average of 25 points for faculty who participated. This means that on average faculty who participated only earned $25 for their participation. The total points awarded was 1,140 points, or $1,140 that DSPH paid out. This was a low-cost program to administer, which was a mark in its favor. However, the amount of $25 was not high enough to motivate faculty into attending more training and thus did not achieve the goals of the program.

While attendance at workshops and responses to the final program evaluation survey were both low, the results showed that the survey respondents found the professional development valuable. All of the respondents said they were either very likely or likely to use the information gained in their teaching and that the workshops they attended either exceeded or met their expectations (Figures 2 and 3). However, only 62% agreed that the program increased their participation in professional development while 25% disagreed (Figure 4).

**DISCUSSION**

There are some limitations in evaluating this approach for incentivizing faculty development in online teaching. This program had a participant pool of 68 faculty members in one school at one university and therefore the results are not be generalizable. Additionally, when this program was launched, DSPH had no approved online degree programs and just four online certificates. Less than a third (30%) of participants responded to the program evaluation survey, making it challenging to truly gauge the effectiveness of the incentive program. This program also did not look to see if participants increased their use of tools to develop technology enhanced courses.

The incentive program had moderate success and appeared to encourage some faculty to attend professional development opportunities who had not done so in the past. The faculty member who earned the Central Michigan Online Teaching Certificate did develop a new online class. However, DSPH’s overall conclusion was that the incentive program would not continue for the 2019-2020 academic year. The school will launch its first fully online graduate degree in the fall of 2020 and continues to develop new online programs.

The priority placed on adding online degree programs by school leadership appears...
to be motivating an increase in online course development. The school has identified the faculty to develop the six required courses that will be put online for this degree, with an additional five faculty asking to develop elective courses that will go online in 2019-2020 or 2020-2021. Four online courses were added in 2018-2019 and another two to three are anticipated to be added in 2019-2020. Ten additional online courses with 16 online course sections are expected to be added in 2020-2021, which should bring the school within reach of the goal of offering 30% of its course sections online.

DSPH is continuing to explore other incentives to promote the development and teaching of online programs. One such endeavor is a peer evaluation of teaching program (Shabbir et al., 2016). This program would establish a rubric and process for faculty to evaluate their peers on their course design and teaching, which should be an incentive to increase the quality of online teaching. Second, the Director of Online Learning has begun to present 10 to 15 minute modules at schoolwide faculty meetings and departmental faculty meetings. These meetings are already well established and traditionally have high attendance. While not as in depth as a traditional workshop, a 10 to 15 minute segment on online teaching fits within the structure of these meetings and exposes more faculty to the content than the voluntary trainings.

Culture change is one of the most challenging change processes to undertake (Cummings & Worley, 2009). The DSPH Faculty Development for Online Teaching—Incentive Program was designed to encourage faculty to participate in training around online teaching with the hope that it would increase the ability and confidence of their faculty to teach online. While the program was not as successful as we hoped it would be, our incentive program suggests that changing the way faculty teach is challenging and that more research is needed on faculty incentives to participate in professional development for online teaching.
References


Early childhood professionals (ECPs, a term used here to describe early childhood educators, daycare providers, childcare workers, preschool teachers, and others who work with young children) need better preparation to help them protect young children from abuse (Ayling et al., 2019; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; McKee & Dillenburger, 2012). Only a very few trainings have any evidence-base for changing knowledge or attitudes (e.g., Gushwa et al., 2019; Kenny, 2007; Townsend & Haviland, 2016). For the vast majority, purported efficacy is based on self-report (e.g., “I feel like I learned a lot”), involves nonvalidated measures, and fails to evaluate for sustained effects on knowledge or attitudes, much less actual behavior (Ayling et al., 2019; Sokolowski, 2005). Even newer online training typically consists of little more than linear recitations of information regarding the various types of child abuse and their consequences, legal definitions and requirements for reporting, and contact information (Goldman & Evans, 2015; New York State Office of Child and Family Services, n.d.; University of Pennsylvania, n.d.). It is in fact rather surprising that the potential of online learning has not been effectively leveraged for an issue as important and far reaching as child abuse.

Over 675,000 cases of child abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and neglect) are confirmed annually in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018), with evidence that the true incidence is much higher (Finkelhor et al., 2010). The long-lasting and sometimes severe consequences of abuse include physical disabilities, cognitive impairment, neurological damage, mental health problems (depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, etc.), maladaptive behaviors (alcoholism, drug abuse, intimate partner violence), and of course further victimization (Norman et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018). In short, abuse can have a devastating impact on a child’s life and the adult they become. Young children (0–5 years) are particularly vulnerable to victimization, accounting for more than 75% of deaths from abuse and a greater proportion of abuse than older children.