As a unique academic offering, the nontraditional, distance-delivered doctorate poses particular issues for faculty members who choose to teach in such a program. Among these issues are compensation, administrative support, technology, innovation, time demands, workload, and promotion and tenure.

Faculty Concerns Related to Distance Learning Within Nontraditional Doctoral Programs

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Introduction

Although the characteristics used to identify nontraditional doctoral students have broadened since the mid-nineteenth century, the problems usually associated with teaching nontraditional students as expressed by instructors have remained essentially the same. The term “nontraditional student” has over the years become synonymous with distance learning, online learning, and remote learners. The various terms are used interchangeably in describing a broad range of students. Even though the number of doctoral programs actively addressing this expanding population is increasing, the efforts to provide quality doctoral programs remain a vexing issue in the academy. An exploration of the most problematic issues provides insights not only into the quality issue but the culture of doctoral programs and the professors who teach in those programs. The introduction of computer-assisted or online learning has compounded the teaching and learning issues associated with this ever-expanding population. In this chapter, we identify and provide characteristics of those issues most often associated with nontraditional doctoral studies as indicated by the faculty members associated with this environment.

Further, over the past several decades, higher education institutions have experienced a significant surge in nontraditional student enrollments, which has ultimately become the precursor to the more recent increases in
nontraditional doctoral programs throughout the nation. For clarification purposes, it is important to make a distinction between traditional and nontraditional doctoral students, as well as traditional and nontraditional doctoral programs. Nontraditional doctoral students are students who have characteristics not usually associated with students entering mainstream doctoral programs; instead, they are commuters, working professionals, part-time students, parents or single parents, adult learners balancing the responsibilities of both family and employment, older learners, and off-campus students including international students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Besides representing a diverse population with professional and life experiences, nontraditional doctoral students are also different from traditional doctoral students because they are less likely to take a sequential path to pursuing higher education. Accordingly, today’s prospective doctoral students have significantly more options than in previous years, which creates an opportunity for students to choose from an array of online institutions and professional schools with a variety of convenient instructional modalities.

Besides the changing dynamics of doctoral students, it is notably evident that advancements in technology have transformed every aspect of today’s society, including some elements of higher education. As a result, the transition from traditional to nontraditional doctoral programs came about as a means to meet the demands and needs of an ever-evolving student body. Like nontraditional doctoral students, there are several unique characteristics encompassing a nontraditional doctoral program. For instance, nontraditional doctoral programs offer accelerated programs, a variety of modernized instructional delivery options, blended–hybrid options, flexible scheduling, and a cohort learning model that allows students to collaborate with peers and often takes an applied research approach, which is different from a traditional doctoral program as it provides real-world experience. All of the aforementioned characteristics are distinctively different from traditional doctoral programs, and any one of them can potentially become the determining factor by which a faculty member chooses to participate in a nontraditional doctoral program.

Noted in other chapters of this volume, the traditional doctorate is diminishing in proportion and the nontraditional doctorate has become more prominent in higher education. As today’s doctoral programs evolve, the faculty role will also evolve. To provide a framework for this discussion, the literature on an array of faculty concerns was reviewed. Some of these concerns, which will be discussed throughout this volume, include decreases in faculty–student interactions; the development of new fields of study, research, and dissertation competencies; lack of administrative support; tenure and compensation challenges; changes in student demographics; and increases in student-to-faculty ratios. However, because distance education has become a major component of many nontraditional doctoral programs, we will synthesize the literature and only discuss faculty concerns related to distance learning within nontraditional doctoral programs.
Analysis of the Literature

A review of the literature for this chapter revealed a number of studies related to faculty perceptions or attitudes toward teaching courses in non-traditional doctoral programs. The authors concentrated efforts on identifying faculty motivators and inhibitors with special attention to faculty perceptions toward actively participating in nontraditional doctoral programs. An examination of the literature illustrated that the personal perceptions of faculty contribute to a willingness to participate in nontraditional doctoral programs, yet also identified how negative perceptions can deter faculty from participating. Accordingly, this section summarizes some key findings from the literature exploring faculty motivators and inhibitors for participating in nontraditional doctoral studies.

Motivators. Much has been written about what motivates faculty to participate in nontraditional doctoral programs. For instance, in earlier studies Wolcott (1997), Schifter (2000), Parker (2003), and Maguire (2005) found faculty showed no interest in teaching nontraditional courses based on stipend promises, merit increases, or promotion assurances, yet participation was inspired by personal and social benefits, such as:

- Reaching prospective students
- Creating innovative opportunities
- Utilizing advanced technologies
- Increasing visibility and reputation
- Stimulating intellectual creativity
- Achieving overall job satisfaction

Extrinsic motivators—such as recognition, decreased workload, and release time—were also theorized to be significant contributors to faculty being more favorable toward nontraditional instruction. Stressing the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Cook, Ley, Crawford, and Warner (2009) more recently found similar results and argued not much has changed in relation to faculty perceptions of nontraditional education. It is striking to note that findings of this study revealed significantly similar factors continue to motivate faculty to deliver instruction in nontraditional environments. Cook, Ley, Crawford, and Warner (2009) listed the following top five intrinsic motivators:

1. Ability to reach new audiences that could not attend classes on campus
2. Opportunity to develop new ideas
3. Personal motivation to use technology
4. Intellectual challenge
5. Overall job satisfaction

Compensation. Like other practitioners, faculty members must find incentive in teaching. However, Betts (1998) and Schifter (2000) oppose the
assumption that the primary reason faculty participate in nontraditional education is based on financial incentives. Building on previous research, Schifter (2004) explored faculty perceptions about compensation and incentive policies at a large urban university. Overall findings illustrated a consensus among the majority of the faculty population; however, results indicated a significant difference in responses among four distinct groups. As Schifter’s findings indicated, female faculty responded they were more motivated by extrinsic factors such as support for their contributions from the administration. The “junior faculty” group (under age 30), faculty at the associate level, and nontenured faculty responded as having a great deal to achieve, as well as something to lose, by participating in a nontraditional teaching environment (Schifter, 2004). Because the preparation for teaching a nontraditional doctoral course can be time consuming, “junior faculty” often find they must battle between the contending demands of research and scholarship. With regard to faculty compensation and incentives policies, Schifter (2004) continued by adding, “There are no clear models of faculty compensation or incentives for participating in a distance education initiative because compensation practices vary on many points, including whether the educational institution is public or private, two-year or four-year, the years of institutional experience with distance education, the nature of union contracts, and more” (p. 32).

Administrative Support. Providing resources and other means of supporting faculty is of significant importance in encouraging faculty to participate in nontraditional instruction. Betts (1998), Meyer (2002), and Schifter (2002) each determined faculty’s motivation to teach in nontraditional teaching and learning environments is based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Parthasarathy and Smith, 2009). However, Parthasarathy and Smith (2009) assert “indirect institutional motivators” may also play a significant role in whether faculty members adopt the position of nontraditional educators. This view was based on the idea that potential adopters consider delivery time and effort as greater in an online setting. Stated another way, there are institutional factors that can enhance or impede faculty development. For instance, lacking institutional support and lacking necessary resources are both common challenges faced by faculty and can contribute to the failure of a nontraditional doctoral program.

Essentially, instructors who perceive themselves as less valued than colleagues in traditional programs are inclined to have at least a moderately negative effect on teaching and learning in nontraditional doctoral programs. However, when administrators are more involved and take a proactive stance to counterbalance their doctoral course delivery beliefs, both positive and negative, faculty may be more likely to adopt nontraditional courses (Parthasarathy and Smith, 2009). In essence, to ensure future success of nontraditional doctoral programs, institutional administrators should be informed, prepared, and enabled to tackle any foreseeable challenges.
**Technology.** It is evident that technology has become a critical component for higher education institutions, as it has changed the way students learn and faculty teach. Technology complements the doctoral student's educational experience by providing more opportunities for learning and sharing knowledge. Consequently, faculty attitudes can potentially become a major roadblock in nontraditional teaching and learning environments. Therefore, to maintain an effective teaching and learning environment and increase new modernized competencies, Valentine (2002) and Lindsay, Jeffery, and Singh (2009) propose extensive and continual institutional training that would allow faculty to develop on multiple platforms to be incorporated as a comprehensive part of postsecondary education systems. An effective instructional process is largely dependent on how well instructors teach in nontraditional environments; hence, faculty should receive comprehensive ongoing training, especially integrating technology.

In a recent survey examining information technology issues, “faculty development, support, and training” was rated as the fifth major postsecondary education concern (Crawford, Rudy, and EDUCAUSE Current Issues Committee, 2003, p. 23). Using conventional methods to deliver instruction in a nontraditional doctoral program is not feasible and can create frustration and unsuccessful delivery. In the end, technology training plays a major role in preparing faculty to deliver effective instruction to information-age learners and, equally important, increases the level of satisfaction and motivation, which can subsequently have a positive impact on self-perception and stimulate less apprehension of the faculty’s role in a nontraditional teaching environment. Considering this, researchers argue that faculty generally teaches in a nontraditional environment for similar reasons that faculty teaches in a traditional face-to-face environment: intrinsic rewards.

**Innovation in a Nontraditional Environment.** Research literature is replete with evidence that new age technologies not only enrich but also expand nontraditional educational offerings. Although current instructional approaches are becoming more learner-centered and more self-directed, doctoral level faculty are more inclined to participate in nontraditional course delivery instruction because it allows them to take a flexible and innovative approach to instruction (McCombs, 2000; Rumble, 2001; Miller, 2001). Although faculty may be challenged to meet academic duties—such as research, scholarship, and teaching—the opportunity to be innovative creates a willingness to participate in nontraditional doctoral programs regardless of these parameters.

Tabata and Johnsrud (2008) found faculty members who participate in nontraditional instruction tend to associate distance education with their work style. Moreover, Tabata and Johnsrud speculated that the nontraditional education environment, unlike a traditional face-to-face environment, offers certain advantages. With the advent of emerging technologies, nontraditional programs can be used as a vehicle to equip faculty with a myriad
of instructional delivery possibilities, including the utilization of a proliferation of Web-based technologies, self-publishing or blogging, formal and informal networks, and live-virtual chatting. All things considered, nontraditional education serves as a strategic tool that can be utilized by doctoral program faculty to offer individualized, interactive, and creative instruction.

**Inhibitors.** Although intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are predictors of faculty participation in nontraditional doctoral programs, inhibitors or disincentives also should be discussed. Faculty tends to resist participating in nontraditional course delivery for a variety of reasons. Bower (2002), Pachnowski and Jurczyk (2003), and Rockwell, Schauer, Fritz, and Marx (1999) argued faculty express inhibitions about technology support and other technology-related resources to maintain a certain level of technological savvy. Other inhibitors that create concerns among faculty members are time requirements. Maguire (2005) noted faculty teaching a nontraditional course for the first time increased the amount of both time and effort as opposed to teaching in a face-to-face environment.

Olcott (1996) expressed the importance of faculty adopting distance education and uncovered several potential factors related to faculty refusing to participate in the delivery of nontraditional courses. To name a few, lack of faculty support, time demand, and incentives were all identified as barriers. Similar to faculty motivators, over several decades, the top inhibitors have remained stable. However, the one inhibitor that over the years has decreased as a concern within the postsecondary industry is the quality of instruction. In the past, there was a common assumption that nontraditional education could not measure up with traditional face-to-face education; in more recent years, this view was disputed by research from the Sloan Consortium. In a series of studies conducted by Allen and Seaman (2003, 2004, 2005, 2008), findings indicated that learning outcomes from online or distance instruction were ranked equal to face-to-face courses and were even expected to become superior to face-to-face courses over the next few years. Cook, Ley, Crawford, and Warner (2009) listed the following top five inhibitors to distance education:

1. Lack of technical support provided by the institution
2. Concern about faculty workload
3. Lack of release time
4. Lack of grants for materials/expenses
5. Concern about quality of the course

**Time Demands.** Considering the amount of time required for effective instruction in a nontraditional learning environment, the literature suggests faculty may perceive the lack of recognition as a major disincentive. Suggesting that the nature of nontraditional instruction is more individualized and personalized than traditional instruction, Bruner (2007) and Manning,
Cohen, and DeMichiell (2003) assert teaching a nontraditional course is time-consuming and requires more hours per week than required by faculty who do not teach nontraditional courses. It should be noted in this study that the identified inhibiting factors were all related issues essential for program success. Although preparation time demands decrease after the first time teaching a nontraditional course, the time required to communicate and interact with students increases.

Essentially, faculty members are more likely to adopt a positive perspective of teaching nontraditional doctoral courses when experience with nontraditional education increases and, moreover, when technology support is provided by the administration. Exploring faculty burnout, Manning, Cohen, and DeMichiell (2003) assert that although nontraditional educators have the flexibility to deliver instruction any time and any place, researchers found nontraditional faculty members are often challenged by students’ expectations for instructor–student interactions, which in essence can widely range in scope.

**Workload.** The faculty workload is noticeably impacted by the recent shift in doctoral student demographics. As mentioned in other chapters, students pursuing nontraditional doctoral degrees are older working professionals looking for flexible education options. These students are actively engaged in their family and work life, so they seek nontraditional doctoral programs that are tailored to meet their individual education needs. Unlike traditional doctoral students, nontraditional students are balancing several responsibilities besides education that challenge faculty to adapt to the changing demands of this emerging student body and require authentic interaction. The faculty workload appears to be increasingly impacted by issues related to the student schedule. Although there is research in this area, it is limited in scope, so factors such as time and place constraints and timely responses to students all seem to drive the workload agenda.

Accordingly, a common barrier to delivering instruction for nontraditional courses is that there seems to be a blurred line in regard to what is actually considered a reasonable teaching load, especially as it pertains to nontraditional doctoral instruction delivered online. Unlike faculty members teaching traditional or face-to-face doctoral courses, there seems to be no concrete baseline in regard to the teaching load for nontraditional educators delivering online instruction (Pachnowski and Jurczyk, 2003; Tomei, 2004). Much of the previous literature implies teacher–student interaction is essential for student success. Accordingly, the way teachers and students interact in online doctoral courses plays a pivotal role in students’ attitudes about enrolling in other doctoral courses delivered online. As indicated in the preceding section, nontraditional doctoral courses delivered online are labor-intensive and require significantly more time from faculty than traditional or face-to-face courses. In a nontraditional online teaching environment, thanks to electronic mail, discussion boards, and required chats, office hours are diffused into twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
In contrast, a traditional teaching environment is one where office hours are scheduled and primarily used for advisement, assessments, or scholarly and research activities. Unlike teaching in a traditional environment, nontraditional doctoral faculty members often realize that they tend to oversubscribe and only have their experiences or hunches on which to rely. To gauge a better understanding of this phenomenon, Tomei (2004) analyzed the workload of faculty teaching a traditional graduate course compared with faculty teaching a nontraditional graduate course over a fifteen-week session.

Findings revealed, on average, 136 hours of face-to-face interaction were the norm when teaching traditional students. These hours included disseminating course-related information, counseling and advisement during scheduled office hours, and student assessments. In contrast, online learners were required to participate in three online chats a week along with weekly e-mails, assignments, and threaded discussion groups. The findings of the study revealed significant variations. To teach the same number of students, faculty teaching the online course required approximately 14 percent more hours than faculty teaching the traditional course (156 hours). Tomei further stated, “Faculty contracts often take into account three commonly agreed upon elements. Most importantly is teaching itself. A majority of a full-time faculty load is rightly dedicated to delivery of instructional content, advisement of student charges, and evaluation of student progress. Research fosters the continuous professional development of the individual while service to the school or community constitutes the third element” (p. 43).

Although the most attention was paid to instructional content, findings indicated that online courses require more time for all three elements of teaching and demanded a minimum of 20 percent more time than the traditional course. Because there is an increased demand for teacher–student interaction, online doctoral educators must adapt to being accessible to students by learning to interact in new ways.

**Promotion and Tenure.** Nontenured faculty members at major universities often face the dual challenge of establishing a notable research and publication background alongside a high level of teaching aptitude (Hackmann, 2003). Because promotion and tenure is based on research output and teaching performance, nontenured faculty cannot afford to fall short in either area. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), 80 percent of higher education institutions offer training to assist faculty with nontraditional instruction; however, nontraditional training can be a complication for nontenured doctoral faculty, as they must invest a significant amount of time for the nontraditional delivery training to impact their instructional practices. In essence, nontenured doctoral faculty faces the dilemma of choosing which area, research or teaching, on which to place greater focus. It is evident promotion and tenure are part of the portfolio of general concerns faculty members have regarding their careers. When issues
associated with distance education are included in the promotion and tenure criteria, the stakes become more problematic, particularly when distance education is not valued by core faculty.

In the foreseeable future, postsecondary institutions should consider reviewing faculty promotion and tenure systems. As nontraditional doctoral programs continue to grow, it will become much harder for higher education to maintain a traditional promotion and tenure system. There is a consensus among doctoral faculty teaching in nontraditional doctoral programs that nontraditional instruction contributions should be equally compensated. Therefore, accompanying the growth of nontraditional doctoral programs should be a shift in institutional processes, and the creation of an equivalent promotion and tenure system should be taken into consideration by postsecondary leaders for the instruction of both nontraditional and traditional education.

Summary

It is clear from the research that internal or intrinsic motivators are the primary reasons faculty members participate in nontraditional doctoral programs. Educational leaders must be able to analyze the state of any given situation and construct a plan to improve or increase positive outcomes. To a great extent, a successful nontraditional doctoral program requires educational systems to support faculty in the delivery of nontraditional instruction, and, to do so, it is imperative for institutional administrators to systematically assess what factors motivate and/or inhibit faculty from participating. Because nontraditional doctoral programs involve a uniquely different teaching environment than traditional face-to-face programs, the aforesaid learning process is multidimensional. With this in mind, the success of a nontraditional doctoral program also relies on the enthusiasm of faculty.

As noted in this chapter, faculty plays an essential role in much of the success of nontraditional doctoral programs, and factors such as promotion and tenure, workload, and time constraints often affect faculty attitudes to participate. However, even though program success can be attributed to the many efforts made by faculty, faculty must also accept equal responsibility for understanding the nontraditional education system. Accordingly, faculty members not familiar with the constraints associated with a nontraditional teaching environment should alter their perception of the teaching and learning process and ultimately adapt to the technology-mediated pedagogy of a nontraditional teaching environment. Additionally, as the analysis of literature progressed, the need for future research in the area of faculty compensation and tenure as related to nontraditional instruction emerged as a significant theme. As identified by the research, it is evident that compensation for developing a nontraditional doctoral course is higher than teaching a nontraditional doctoral course. This is an interesting discovery because,
as the anecdotal literature suggests, it is considerably more time-consuming to deliver a nontraditional course than a face-to-face course.

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