

Chapter 2

Strategies for Establishing a PFF Program

The PFF experience has allowed me to gain experience in teaching at an institution other than a research institution so that I can make some decisions about the type of institution—teaching or research—where I would eventually like to work.

—Graduate Student in English, University of Illinois, Chicago

After two years of participation in the phase four humanities and social science PFF program, faculty were asked to reflect on their experiences and to share with their colleagues across the range of doctoral programs in their disciplines what they had learned about starting PFF programs. In this chapter, participants' responses are summarized, quoted, or paraphrased as a means of conveying recommended actions and activities for graduate and partner faculty to consider or undertake when they create a PFF program.

Secure Leadership

The humanities and social science PFF programs in this project were largely initiated by department faculty, some acting in their capacity as department chair or director of graduate studies. Graduate deans and directors of teaching-learning centers also contributed to program development. Experience throughout the four phases of PFF confirms that a PFF program can be initiated by anyone who has standing in graduate education, is aware of the advantages offered by a PFF program, and is willing to work with various con-

stituencies to forge a supportive coalition for broadening the graduate education of students who may become faculty members in the discipline.

Before the program begins, a faculty member who shares the ideals of PFF must be identified to serve as the director. The director must recognize that graduate education is a collective responsibility of the faculty and develop a

Barbara Risman, Director of Graduate Studies in sociology at North Carolina State University, says,

“It really makes it easy if the PFF organizer is also the Director of Graduate Studies, and the graduate committee sees this as part of their purview. It avoids being an ‘add on’ to already burdened faculty.”

departmental consensus for launching a PFF program. Moreover, it is essential that graduate faculty be supportive and that they encourage their students to participate in PFF, for it is faculty commitment that will sustain the program. Several PFF leaders have also found it a good strategy to connect a new PFF program to a previously sanctioned departmental activity.

Identify Cluster Partners

The core of a PFF program is the cluster, a configuration of institutions representing the diversity of American colleges and universities, anchored by a

Ph.D. degree-granting department. The task of creating a cluster of different kinds of institutions—the most distinguishing element in PFF programs—is often complex. The cluster of diverse institutions, such as liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, and community colleges, represents the variety of institutional contexts where graduate students might pursue a career. In some cases, institutions or departments may have already established connections that are easily transformed into a PFF partnership. In many instances, however, PFF

partnerships may represent a new form of collaboration that may require institutions to overcome a history of competition or of stereotyping, and to foster a spirit of cooperation to better prepare the next generation of faculty members.

Those organizing PFF programs must confront issues of prestige, perceptions of colleagues at different institutions, and the value that faculty from different institutions bring to the graduate experience of doctoral students. For instance, at certain institutions, faculty might think of themselves as more accomplished researchers, more effective teachers, or more committed to educating a diverse student body than the faculty at other institutions. But when faculty members become acquainted and begin to collaborate, they soon understand that such views are simplistic and that the common hierarchies by which institutions are ranked are counterproductive. They realize that there are strengths among faculty at each type of institution and that these can be of advantage to a PFF program.

Issues that arise in organizing clusters include administrative complexity and the corresponding time required to recruit, organize, and maintain the clusters. When a university has an established, centralized PFF program (as in the case of institutions that participated in the first two PFF phases), the task of organizing a departmental cluster may be relatively easy. The PFF director can take advantage of existing cluster arrangements developed by the graduate school. For example, both Howard University and the University of Nebraska established PFF clusters in the phases preceding this PFF project. Therefore, when the department of communication at these universities wished to create PFF programs, they were able to build on the continuing relationships with partner institutions. On the other hand, the departments of sociology at North Carolina State University and Texas A&M University were the first to initiate PFF programs at their institutions. Consequently, the departmental PFF organizers had to contact colleagues in sociology departments at other institu-

tions and invite them to participate as “partner institutions” in a grant application and in the subsequent PFF program. “For stand-alone PFF programs like ours,” writes Robin Fleming, director of the history PFF program at Boston College, “it is important to keep the program simple. We have had much better luck organizing programs and events that include the participation of one local school, rather than two or three.” As the program grows and positive experiences increase, more institutions can be added.

One of the challenges of the cluster concept is to explain what PFF and the anchor institution can offer partner faculty, departments, and institutions. This should be carefully considered before any contact is made, since partner school representatives often raise this issue early in discussions about establishing a cluster.

A number of relationships may already exist between research universities and potential partner institutions, including research and educational collaborations between faculty members and administrators. Partner faculty may also be graduates of the department establishing the PFF program, and they often welcome an opportunity to “give back” something of value to their graduate program. Thus, they are often effective advocates for the PFF program and can be asked to facilitate interactions between the two faculties. These pre-existing ties can be the starting points for developing clusters. Once potential partner faculty members are identified, an initial meeting where the goals of PFF are explained and program possibilities are presented has proved to be a good recruiting strategy. Once partner faculty are involved in the program, they can be asked to recruit additional colleagues.

One of the initial steps is for the collaborating faculty members at the graduate and partner institutions to become acquainted and to establish mutual trust, according to Noel Stowe, director of the history PFF program at Arizona State University (ASU). Two PFF summer conferences brought the



ASU cluster members together for several days, and Stowe credits those experiences with developing a rapport among fellow historians as they learned about each other and discussed common interests.

Appoint a Steering Committee

All relevant constituencies from participating institutions should be involved in the process of defining PFF program goals, planning program activities, and developing long-range plans. For this reason, PFF leaders in the social sciences and humanities recommend forming a steering committee that (1) includes doctoral students, (2) is manageable in size, (3) meets on different campuses, and (4) is representative of faculty at both the partner institutions and the graduate university. In fact, to ensure that the partners have a strong voice, the steering committee of the ASU department of history PFF program is structured to require the number of partner institution members to equal or exceed the number of ASU members. The role of the steering committee is to assess members' perspectives on the preparation of future faculty, understand differences in the academic cultures of partner institutions, and recognize the potential contributions that each institution in the cluster can make to the program.

Once a PFF program has begun, leaders have found it valuable for the steering committee to shift its focus from program planning to oversight. They suggest that the committee meet at least once per academic term to inform participants about program activities and to discuss program-related issues. Continuing opportunities to communicate across constituencies and reaffirm involvement are critical elements to an effective PFF program. In order to facilitate communication, each partner institution usually designates one contact person who is familiar with and actively participates in and supports the program. Many programs appoint a senior graduate student as PFF administrative assistant. This provides a valuable experience for the student, since the assistant is at the hub of program

planning and administration and sees the program from the perspectives of all constituencies. Because communication among all participants is vital, some programs have developed a PFF cluster Web site or an electronic listserve.

Recruit Doctoral Student Participants

Graduate students are eager to participate in professional development activities, and recruiting them is among the easiest tasks in launching a PFF program. Indeed, doctoral students are perhaps the best advocates and the best recruiters for PFF, often through informal conversations with their peers. Just as in other areas, word of mouth seems to be among the most effective means of advertising PFF.

Attracting students. Doctoral students are attracted to PFF for a variety of reasons. Some are certain they want an academic career and seek to learn as much as they can about their chosen profession. Others want to explore the possibility of a faculty career and wish to learn about faculty roles at a variety of institutions. Many say they would like to enhance their teaching abilities and acquire credentials. Nearly all want to be more competitive in securing their first academic position and believe that PFF participation gives them a competitive advantage.

Although most PFF programs target students who have chosen an academic career goal, those who are ambivalent about an academic career constitute another pool of potential recruits. Rosemary Phelps, who leads the psychology PFF program at the University of Georgia, advocates identifying students with the potential for a successful academic career and exploring this alternative with them. One way to appeal to students who are ambivalent about an academic career is to arrange open forums for students on such topics as what students expect from their doctoral degree work, what the expectations of faculty are at various types of institutions, and what the department can do



to facilitate progress toward a degree. John Reilly, who directs the PFF program in English at Howard University writes, “When they [students] realize that the life of a professor really is about more than making life hard for apprentices, they are ready to be introduced to a PFF program. Once they become PFF participants, they enjoy other opportunities, such as co-authorship of papers, paid membership in disciplinary societies, and travel to deliver presentations at disciplinary conferences.”

Students of color. From the beginning of this project, PFF clusters in the social sciences and humanities have been committed to addressing the underrepresentation of persons of color among college and university faculty in their disciplines by ensuring that students of color participate in PFF programs. PFF leaders have succeeded in increasing participation of students of color by connecting their recruitment efforts to those of institutional programs that address similar concerns. The sociology PFF program at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, exemplifies this approach. The PFF program’s recruiting efforts build upon the institution’s Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The McNair program prepares underrepresented undergraduate students for graduate studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities.

Howard University programs in communication, history, and political science offer another example of attracting students of color, in this case through linking to the university’s Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program. The U.S. Department of Education’s GAANN program requires grantees to establish policies and procedures to ensure that talented students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds are actively recruited to the GAANN program; hence these programs are natural partners for PFF.

Robert Robinson, Chair of the Department of Sociology at Indiana University, writes that a departmental poster designed to recruit students high-

lights the PFF program and its commitment to training outstanding scholars and teachers. The poster was sent to universities with high minority enrollments, including historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges.

Many students, especially students of color, emphasize that service is important in their lives and that they want public service to be an integral part of their professional career. PFF can help all students recognize that service is a broad concept that involves more than direct work with clients or the traditional committee work of faculty. According to Julio Rojas, a PFF student in psychology at the University of Georgia, some students of color realize that, as future members of the academy, they can provide leadership for service learning and thereby maintain their core values (Rojas 2002).

A commitment to developing a broad understanding by all students of the issue of student diversity and how it relates to faculty work can serve as an effective recruiting tool. Many of the phase four PFF programs intentionally included institutions that have a more diverse student body than that of the graduate university. Thus, the English PFF programs at Michigan Tech University and Washington State University both include tribal colleges in their clusters, and both report that students in these programs gained a much broader and more useful understanding of diversity through their experiences on these cluster campuses.

Program flexibility. PFF leaders report that flexibility in the PFF program allows doctoral students to participate when and for as long as they are interested. Some first and second year doctoral students find that PFF programs complement teaching assistant training and enhance their contribution to the department's undergraduate teaching efforts. Those students further along in their graduate program may benefit more from participating in intensive teaching activities at cluster institutions, such as co-teaching a course or a

portion of a course with a mentor at the cluster institution, or being responsible for an entire course. Students in the later stages of their doctoral work also benefit from participating in service activities, such as faculty governance and public outreach. Many PFF programs pay special attention to developing effective writing and communications skills. Some programs also include grant-writing activities, since some new assistant professors will be expected to generate external support for their research.

Student recognition. Typically, PFF programs offer participants graduate credit for courses. Some give a certificate for participation, and others note PFF participation on the transcript. Regardless of how it is conferred, recognition of student participation is an important element of a PFF program. The presence on the résumé and transcript of a formally documented PFF experience may significantly improve a doctoral student's chance of obtaining an academic position at an institution at which good teaching and service are especially important criteria for new faculty hires. Such documentation also helps to create a market demand for the type of faculty preparation that PFF provides, by informing faculty search committees about special qualities of these candidates.

Design Mentoring Activities

Mentoring of graduate students by both graduate and partner faculty is a key component of a PFF program. Although the relationship between doctoral student and dissertation research mentor is usually well defined, the PFF mentoring relationship typically is more flexible and is designed to meet the particular professional development needs of the doctoral student. A unique advantage of the PFF program is that participating students have access to at least one mentor besides their research adviser. This allows students to establish relationships with faculty members with expertise in teaching and service as well as in their content specialties.

One of the most powerful innovations of PFF is the unique opportunity for doctoral students to work with a faculty mentor at a partner institution. This arrangement allows doctoral students to establish a relationship with a faculty member who can introduce them to specific challenges of teaching that institution's student body, the expectations and support for faculty research, and the roles of faculty members in the shared governance of that department or institution. "They learn what you do with your time," says Kathryn Adams, a Guilford College psychology professor who mentors Duke University students. "They learn about academic life, rather than psychology *per se*" (quoted in Murray 2000 p. 65).

The process of matching PFF mentors to students varies. Some directors collect résumés from faculty and allow doctoral students to choose mentors, or vice versa. Often the assignment results from a process of exchanging information between faculty and students until a preferred choice emerges. Sometimes doctoral students visit a partner institution and meet with potential mentors. If a suitable relationship with one of these faculty members is agreed to, the mentoring relationship commences.

Regardless of how the relationship is established, it is important for both parties to decide on specific goals, activities, means of assessment and feedback, and the amount of time required. In the sociology PFF program at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (UNL), both student and mentor sign an agreement in which the student agrees to participate in activities such as attending a colloquium on conducting classroom research, working with the mentor to explore a service opportunity, and discussing the co-authorship of a potential publication. The mentor agrees to undertake responsibilities such as conferring with the student on his/her proposed capstone project, collaborating on identifying appropriate teaching opportunities, and discussing whether



co-authorship of a publication is appropriate and of mutual benefit (see Appendix III for the UNL mentoring contract).

PFF leaders emphasize that an effective mentoring relationship requires mutual respect and that the mentoring process is reciprocal; that is, the relationship requires input and effort from, and usually has positive outcomes for, both graduate students and faculty.

Secure the Support of Graduate and Partner Faculty

Graduate faculty members participate in a PFF program in a variety of ways. They serve as mentors to help doctoral students develop their skills in teaching, research, and professional service; and they advise students on classroom practices, pedagogy, presentations, and other aspects of an academic profession. They also participate in PFF seminars and workshops, and they offer suggestions for improving the program. They often facilitate interactions between doctoral students and partner institution faculty. Most also discuss faculty roles with their students and encourage those who might be interested in academic careers to participate in the PFF program.

One important role for departmental faculty who may not be directly involved in the program is to voice support for PFF and to encourage appropriate students to participate. Some doctoral students report receiving mixed messages from the graduate faculty and other doctoral students: some faculty members encourage participation in PFF, while others discourage any activity that takes time away from research. Given the department faculty's collective responsibility for their department's graduate program, once a department decides to offer a PFF program, faculty members who do not wish to participate should (at the very least) not discourage students from taking part.

It is essential that graduate faculty recognize the PFF program as an integral part of the department's graduate program. Victor Benassi, director of the psychology PFF program at the University of New Hampshire, writes that in reports to his colleagues, he includes information about the national initiative as well. He focuses on ways that faculty can participate and on the advantage their participation has for their students. He observes that when graduate faculty take part in PFF, they learn of their colleagues' perceptions of the initiative as well as how students are responding to the program. PFF leaders in social sciences and humanities report that most graduate faculty members have been generous with their time and expertise when asked by the program director to take a doctoral student to a committee meeting, for example, or to a national disciplinary conference. Once involved, faculty members tend to be supportive of students' participation in PFF. In general, less involved graduate faculty in the humanities and social sciences present little active resistance to the participation of their students in PFF activities.

Service on a standing PFF committee is considered a regular departmental assignment for history department faculty at Florida State University, according to PFF director Jonathan Grant. Because faculty members receive service credit for PFF committee work, PFF work is not an "add on," but rather an integrated part of departmental service. As faculty awareness of and receptivity to PFF goals develop within the department, interest in serving on the PFF committees increases.

Like graduate faculty, partner faculty members play essential and distinctive roles in PFF programs. Although their involvement varies among programs, typical activities include designing and implementing doctoral student internships, participating in workshops, giving conference presentations on PFF, lecturing in graduate PFF courses, sharing their experiences as faculty at very different types of institutions, and supervising students' teaching responsi-



bilities at their institutions. According to Barbara Risman, director of the PFF program in sociology at North Carolina State University, involvement of partner faculty is highly successful. Partner faculty members participate on panel discussions open to all graduate students, covering such topics as the realities of their jobs and the way hiring decisions are made at their institutions. These sorts of activities require partner institution faculty members to be involved in academic programs at research universities.

Partner faculty and graduate faculty both feel obligated to provide opportunities for doctoral students to participate in PFF. They also view the opportunity to interact and work with PFF participants as a major benefit to faculty. Moreover, partner faculty themselves benefit from a closer relationship with the academic department at the research university, a relationship that sometimes leads to collaboration on other professional projects. Some partner schools that employ adjunct faculty regard PFF programs as reliable sources of motivated and effective instructors. These schools sometimes recruit PFF students as adjunct faculty to serve as sabbatical replacements or to offer courses in subjects not currently available at the partner institution. In some instances, the student is later recruited by the institution or recommended to other institutions for a permanent faculty position. PFF students also give talks to enrich the partner institution's program, and they can provide links to faculty members at the research university who are willing to assist with research projects that involve undergraduate students, thus providing new opportunities for the partner schools' undergraduates.

Obtain Funding

Those involved in the leadership of a PFF program, whether departmental or university-wide, know that establishing and maintaining a program requires some money, though generally not large amounts. Typically, funds are used for

a variety of programmatic activities, such as student and faculty travel to partner institutions, student travel to professional meetings, printing of newsletters in which students report on their PFF experiences and what they learned, and meals and snacks for PFF meetings. Securing budgetary support is one of the key indicators that a program can be sustained after it is launched with a grant.

The grants to departments in this fourth phase of PFF were small: \$10,000 for each of two years, matched by institutional funds. Departments were allowed to use grant funds for a variety of programmatic activities, such as those mentioned above.

The matching funds came from various sources—the academic department, graduate school, academic dean's office, and teaching and learning center. Institutional funds were used to provide student stipends, to supplement faculty salaries, or to provide honoraria for partner faculty. To supplement grant funds, PFF directors and graduate deans have also been particularly creative in linking PFF program concepts to proposals for funding from related graduate education initiatives. For example, the GAANN Program at Howard University requires GAANN participants to participate in the university's PFF program, thus providing supplemental stipend support for PFF participants.

Most PFF cluster leaders anticipate a continuation of PFF after the grant period, although for a few public institutions in states projecting reduced revenues and smaller higher education budgets, there are concerns that such constraints might make it difficult for universities to support even a successful PFF program. Since budgets, however, always reflect values and priorities, such contingencies could be countered by building a coalition of support for PFF in the form of a critical mass of students and faculty members who know from experience the benefits that PFF provides.

Having considered the elements needed to start PFF programs, we turn in the next chapter to the array of activities that constitute the substance of PFF programs.