

Chapter 4

Disciplinary Society Activities and Reflections of Executives

Only by changing both campus and disciplinary cultures will we succeed in our efforts to change graduate education.

—James L. Applegate, past president, National Communication Association

The six collaborating social science and humanities disciplinary societies brought to this project a rich history of work on improving the preparation of future faculty as well as a tradition of promoting cutting-edge research. Their leadership in this project sends important signals that the national PFF initiative has broad support among faculty organizations and that it transcends any one discipline. Their major roles were to 1) select academic departments in their fields to innovate with PFF, 2) support, encourage, and assist these departments to develop successful PFF programs, 3) develop and disseminate resources that encourage more departments to develop programs, 4) promote PFF concepts as legitimate aspects of graduate education in the disciplines, and 5) infuse their disciplines with the PFF vision for preparing the next generation of faculty. This chapter discusses the societies' motivations for participating in this project, summarizes their PFF activities, and presents their perspectives on the PFF initiative.

Why did the societies participate in this project?

There are many reasons why the preparation of doctoral students for the professoriate is a matter of concern to disciplinary societies. Traditionally, the societies have organized themselves to advance and highlight research in their fields—their annual meetings contain sessions on recent research findings, their journals publish the most intellectually significant research and theories, and their boards and committees typically consist largely of leading researchers, often from research universities. However, for at least two decades, the humanities and social science disciplinary societies currently involved in this project have recognized that supporting and disseminating research is not enough to serve the discipline adequately. Through various mechanisms, each of these societies also emphasizes the importance of teaching and learning, professional and career development of faculty members and graduate students, educational innovations, and knowledge of larger trends affecting higher education and the institutions in which their specializations are practiced. PFF affords these societies an additional opportunity to further these agendas within their organizations. The societies realize that doctoral students in their disciplines represent the society members of the future, and they recognize the importance of ensuring that the next generation of faculty be well-educated professionals.

Some societies, such as those in English and history, were attracted to PFF partly for the same reason that doctoral students and departments often are—the poor academic job market in their fields. But other disciplines, such as sociology and psychology, enjoy strong job markets and had other motivations. Leaders of all societies agree that PFF is about “fit”—the match between, on the one hand, the student’s interests, skills, and values, and, on the other hand, the environment and expectations for faculty at different types of academic institutions. Research universities, however,

often assume that doctoral students are likely to become faculty at other research institutions, and thus provide training in research but little in other areas. In reality, most academic jobs are in other types of institutions, and many new Ph.D.s are unprepared for such faculty positions as a result. And, for those who do obtain an academic position, many are not prepared for the realities they will encounter as new faculty, regardless of institutional type.

Disciplinary societies are aware of significant initiatives to improve undergraduate education and of the changing roles of faculty members. The societies perceive PFF as a strategy for enhancing doctoral education in ways that better prepare graduate students for and inform faculty of these changing realities.

By relating PFF to the challenges and opportunities facing the disciplines, the societies legitimized PFF ideas. They encouraged graduate faculty to look more carefully at the world of higher education in which new assistant professors work. They called attention to the multiple roles of faculty, new approaches to teaching and learning, and innovations in undergraduate education. They also supported selected departments in their disciplines to implement creative educational reforms so that programs would be more attuned to this changing world.


One other factor motivated the leaders of these societies to participate in this project: the opportunity to collaborate with other well-regarded organizations. Most of the humanities and social science disciplinary society leaders knew each other well, and they respected one another. Collectively, the six societies recognized that the need to better connect doctoral education to the expectations for new faculty justifies PFF innovations. Together, they achieved greater credibility than any one society could have. In addition, funding agencies perceived that supporting six societies collectively offered greater potential for national impact than supporting individual societies. This collaborative

program also provided an opportunity for the disciplinary societies to partner with the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), two institutional membership groups. These partnerships provided a means for the societies to reach graduate deans, other institutional leaders, and other audiences, as well as to link disciplinary and institutional initiatives in new ways.

Faculty members and academic administrators may have perspectives of one another that are colored by campus dynamics. The PFF collaborations allowed the disciplinary societies representing faculty and the associations representing institutions to seek mutual understanding and create common support for the PFF initiative. PFF is an innovation that can be incorporated relatively easily into a department's doctoral program. It also represents a comfortable extension of the societies' historic values and activities. The PFF initiative is also aligned closely with the strategic missions of institutions to provide quality undergraduate education and to sustain the high quality of the educational enterprise and its responsiveness to the needs of constituents.

What did the societies do?

Created a leadership team. Each society assembled a leadership team to provide oversight and support for the PFF initiative within the discipline. Society leaders headed the teams that included the chairs of key society committees or projects related to PFF, influential scholars, faculty members and doctoral students involved in PFF programs, and administrators and faculty members at primarily undergraduate institutions and community colleges. Each team provided advice on publicizing the PFF initiative and conducting a national competition for departments to develop model PFF programs.



With the active involvement of the leadership team, each society conducted a national competition in the winter and spring of 2000. As a result, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) selected five departments for PFF awards and each of the other societies selected four. All are listed in Appendix II, along with their cluster institutions. In some cases, the leadership teams remained active throughout the project. For example, the American Sociological Association (ASA) team divided into two-member sub-teams, each of which conducted site visits and had continuing relationships with one cluster during the entire project.


Connected PFF within the society. In addition to forming leadership teams, societies connected PFF with related divisions and committees in their organizations. For example, the American Psychological Association (APA) Society of Teaching in Psychology appointed a task force to create a five-year plan for workshops on faculty development that included PFF among the program topics. These workshops were to be presented at annual meetings of the seven regional psychological associations. The American Political Science Association (APSA) connected PFF to its long-standing Departmental Services Program to inform political science department chairs at all types of colleges and universities about the attributes and outcomes of PFF. APSA also connected PFF with its Conference for Chairs by including PFF among conference agenda items. The National Communication Association (NCA) Educational Policies Board and its Doctoral Education Committee both support and connect to the association's PFF program.

Supported the cluster programs. The societies provided a good deal of assistance to the departmental leaders and cluster participants. They helped create opportunities for participants to network with colleagues from other clusters in their disciplines in order to share experiences, problems, and

ideas. Mechanisms included the creation of listservs, as well as discussions at annual conferences and regional meetings at which chairs and leaders were encouraged to support PFF programs. The societies shared information with their members about the PFF Web site, which includes a growing knowledge base concerning PFF and resources for PFF programs, and distributed copies of PFF Occasional Papers. They also helped design and lead the 2001 and 2002 PFF summer working conferences that brought participants from all PFF departments together. These conferences provided opportunities for attendees to learn from each other, network, and discuss strategic issues facing the clusters, the disciplines, and the national PFF initiative.

Since there was broad agreement that the success of the PFF initiative requires sound empirical evidence, society executives also encouraged cluster leaders and their colleagues to participate in assessment efforts. Several discipline leaders or executives visited their clusters to learn first-hand how the PFF programs worked; to encourage the innovations; to meet personally with students, faculty members, and administrators; and to hear stories of what PFF meant to them. They also offered technical assistance and, in some cases, advised cluster leaders to make changes.

Educated their members about PFF. The design of PFF phase four called for disciplinary societies to communicate with members and educate them about PFF as part of their ongoing activities. The society executives led the efforts to promote PFF, both within the society and the leadership teams and among cluster leaders. The most common means of promoting PFF was through presentations of PFF activities by faculty and students at annual meeting sessions. For example, a session at the 2002 American Historical Association (AHA) annual meeting focused on two PFF history clusters and featured a faculty member from the graduate campus, a faculty member from a



partner institution, and three doctoral students. The session was sponsored jointly by the AHA Teaching Division and the AHA Committee for Graduate Education.

Presentations by PFF students, partner faculty, and graduate faculty were included in all major NCTE conferences during the grant period, culminating in a full session devoted to each institutional cluster at the 2002 spring meeting.

At the 2001 APA annual convention, PFF-related activities included a pre-conference workshop for doctoral students and new faculty, a special forum for PFF students to share their experiences, and a faculty symposium.

Regional meetings of several participating disciplinary societies also incorporated programs on PFF. For example, NCA hosted a PFF presentation, followed by a reception, at each of four regional communication gatherings. The 2002 NCA program focused on the needs of students and was structured as a mini-PFF experience for doctoral students. Although regional sociology meetings are independent of ASA, several featured PFF sessions, which included participation by PFF students. A PFF session was held at the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) meeting in 2001; another session will be held at the 2003 MPSA meeting.

Each society also published information about PFF and PFF issues. NCA produced an attractive and informative brochure and a manual (National Communication Association 2002) on how to start PFF programs, both of which were adopted by other societies. Monthly magazines and society newsletters have also been vehicles for dissemination. For example, stories about PFF have been published in NCTE's quarterly newsletter, *The Council Chronicle*, NCA's monthly publication, *Spectra*, and APSA's newsletter for department chairs, "*For the Chair...*" ASA has produced four publications:

“Preparing Graduate Students to Teach,” “Looking for a Job in a Teaching-Oriented Institution,” “Taking Your First Job as an Assistant Professor,” and “Proseminars in Sociology.” APSA also hosted a symposium on PFF projects that was published in the December 2002 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

Each association developed a PFF Web presence. APA, for example, established a PFF-in-Psychology Web page as part of the APA Education Directorate website for graduate education and training (www.apa.org). That Web page links to psychology PFF program sites at the cluster institutions, as well as to the national PFF Web site. Thus, access is provided to a broad range of information about the purpose of PFF, various implementation models, and an extensive faculty development bibliography. APSA established an extensive Web page devoted to PFF (www.apsanet.org), which includes resources for PFF and related programs, significant research relating to student concerns about doctoral education, and descriptions of the missions of various colleges and universities.

Despite such attempts to educate members about the value and potential of PFF, Paul Bodmer of NCTE stated that PFF sessions in his discipline are not generally well attended. This reflects the difficulty of changing the culture of faculty preparation, even when the disciplinary societies are energetic advocates for PFF.

Linked PFF to other activities. The disciplinary societies embraced PFF because it was consistent with other disciplinary initiatives and could assist in accomplishing related society goals. For example, five of the societies—AHA, APA, APSA, ASA and NCA—connected PFF with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines program of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. APSA arranged a

roundtable presentation at the 2001 conference entitled, “The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Political Science” (a transcript is included in the report of the symposium; Clarke, Hutchings, Keeter, Reeher, Alex-Assensoh 2002). NCA worked closely with the Carnegie Foundation to publish a monograph (Huber and Morreale 2002) highlighting the scholarship of teaching in ten disciplines.

As a result of its study of the role of Directors of Graduate Study (Subcommittee on Directors of Graduate Education, 1998), ASA decided to hold an annual meeting for individuals with these responsibilities. PFF was an agenda item for the first meeting, and departments were encouraged to develop such programs.

Created programs to address underrepresentation of students of color. Each of the societies has initiatives directed toward increasing the number of underrepresented faculty members in the discipline. Activities of the ASA are typical: supported by the National Institute of Mental Health, ASA sponsors the Minority Fellowship Program for pre-doctoral work in the sociology of mental health. ASA also includes among its activities PFF sessions for minority fellows who, like other fully funded students, have few opportunities to learn about faculty roles. Each of the four sociology PFF programs sent representatives to the Association of Black Sociologists’ annual meeting to discuss the graduate student training opportunities available in their departments.

Indiana University, South Bend, a partner institution in the Indiana University cluster, engineered a temporary adjunct appointment at its campus for a minority doctoral student from Howard University who had completed all but the dissertation. This appointment is a win-win situation, integrating the appointee into the life of the department, providing her a year of exposure to an institution that is different from her home institution, and providing the

faculty and students the opportunity to learn from a talented minority faculty member.

The social science and humanities disciplinary societies that participated in PFF see it as a disciplinary responsibility to improve the preparation of graduates for academic careers. And they are prepared to devote prominent and sustained attention, as well as resources, to this issue. But as Sheilah Mann of APSA observed, “We could never have [created the fourth phase of PFF] without the resources of a grant. Societies are not barriers to change, but they have limited ability to make change.”

What do disciplinary leaders see as the emergent outcomes?

Now, after three years of promoting PFF, society leaders sense the beginning of a cultural shift in doctoral education. Paul Nelson of APA observed that he especially valued conversations with graduate students during his visits to PFF clusters. One student told him: “We could never have had this conversation without PFF—it would have detracted from my research.” This observation generated a vigorous discussion among the society executives that concluded, with many provisos, that a “paradigm shift” is taking place in graduate education. The discussion produced several other insights:

- ▲ Several years ago, surveys of departments asked what they did to help their graduate students learn to teach; now they ask what they do to prepare their graduate students more broadly. During this time of change, initial responses to new survey questions tended to be simplistic, but they have gradually become more sophisticated.

- ▲ If a paradigm shift is taking place, it is less evident at top-tier departments, where research is still enshrined as the only substantive requirement. Since many society board members are from such institutions, this poses a challenge to more general acceptance of change in the discipline.
- ▲ There are several examples of universities below the top-tier that are doing innovative things, suggesting a possible “bubble up” model of disciplinary change. Some question whether a “bubble up” strategy will actually lead to more general adoption of PFF, because top departments are unlikely to imitate programs at institutions outside their peer group.

There was greater agreement that PFF adds value for doctoral students, graduate programs, faculty and students in partner institutions, and the disciplines themselves. Each society has many anecdotes and stories that support these conclusions, but solid data will be needed to convince skeptics. As one society executive observed, “The opposite of anecdote is data.” But as anecdotes accumulate, evidence starts to emerge of substantial positive outcomes of PFF—the forerunner of data that will develop over time.

The observations of two executives seem to capture the views of all disciplinary leaders. Carla Howery of ASA reflected that “PFF” suggests that we *prepare* future faculty, implying intentional action and assessment of how well that preparation works, which is in itself a breakthrough from standard practice. Graduate education usually involves a dyadic relationship between a student and an advisor. Even when that relationship works perfectly, a student can benefit more from the collective experiences and wisdom of the faculty than

from simply the individual interactions that occur by taking classes or working with a research advisor. A collective approach to graduate education, such as a departmental PFF program, can improve mentoring of all students. PFF has set a new bar: students expect graduate programs to include preparation for a full range of career options, and hiring institutions rightly expect a faculty candidate to understand the nature of their institution and value its mission.

Paul Bodmer of NCTE reported that students in some of the English PFF programs gained an insight into campus politics when they were called upon to justify their program to the administration. Students in another English program felt a new sense of ownership when they were allowed to design some aspects of the PFF program to meet their needs. Most of the students he talked with felt their education was broadened significantly beyond what it would have been without the PFF program.

Perhaps the most important paradigm shift is that leaders of these disciplinary societies now view and discuss PFF not as a desirable “add-on,” but as an essential part of preparation for work in the disciplines.

