

Chapter 5

Outcomes of PFF Programs

PFF students felt that they knew more about the American academic scene and the variety of institutions that comprise it than their non-PFF competitors... And they felt, almost to a person, that they knew better how to present themselves as professionals who could “fit” in different institutional environments.

—Associate graduate dean who surveyed PFF alumni

What are the benefits of PFF programs for students? Are the outcomes the ones anticipated? What are the experiences and outcomes for faculty members and departments? The responses to these questions come from two sources: (1) student and faculty testimony on the value of PFF in preparing students for academic careers, and (2) the assessments of PFF that have been conducted over the decade of its existence. Collectively, these responses and assessments support a conclusion that PFF has been generally successful in meeting the intended goal of developing more effective preparation for faculty careers. The assessments also reveal a consensus among graduate deans, graduate and partner faculty, students, and alumni that the benefits to all who participate more than justify the effort required to establish and sustain the programs. This chapter provides evidence of the benefits to stakeholders. It also registers some concerns expressed by participants and revealed by the PFF assessments, and offers suggestions for addressing these.

Assessments of PFF include surveys of graduate student and faculty participants by PFF staff (Pruitt-Logan, Gaff, and Weibl 1998), case studies by program directors at the conclusion of the first phase of PFF, surveys and interviews with PFF alumni (DeNeef, 2002), surveys and observations by commissioned evaluators (Thomas 2002), and a focus group discussion by PFF doctoral students from different clusters (Millis 2002). The sponsors of the latest PFF phases, the National Science Foundation (NSF, phase three in the sciences and mathematics) and The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP, phase four in the humanities and the social sciences), have supported a three-year independent assessment of all phases of PFF. In addition, a great deal of information is available from other sources: electronic and other communications between Anne Pruitt-Logan and Jerry Gaff and PFF participants from many programs; visits by these authors to several PFF clusters; reports of the several summer working conferences involving teams from participating clusters; presentations by PFF participants at scores of professional meetings; and annual reports submitted by grantees. All of this information points to the conclusion that PFF has proven to be an effective approach to matching the purposes of doctoral education to the needs of hiring institutions. Most importantly, PFF responds to the professional aspirations of doctoral students, for whom PFF was conceptualized.

These conclusions are also supported by insights from several other studies of PFF programs (citations to specific studies will appear as each is discussed).

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The messages from these experiences are presented primarily as quotes from reports of students and faculty, in an effort to convey their experiences accurately and in their own words.

Views of PFF Directors and Deans

The views of PFF Directors and Deans are expressed in the results of the surveys of the NSF/AP assessment of PFF. Between December 2001 and March 2002, sixty-five of sixty-seven program directors and thirty-three of fifty-nine graduate deans completed questionnaires as part of this assessment. In spring 2002, approximately 400 graduate and 450 partner faculty were surveyed. The assessment also included visits by evaluators to several of the PFF campus project sites and interviews with participants. During the fall 2002 semester, approximately 4,000 graduate student “core participants” in PFF were surveyed. On July 15, 2002, NSF/AP released preliminary findings of the completed activities to the Council of Graduate Schools and the Association of American Colleges and Universities for the sole purpose of providing information to those wishing to plan new or to improve existing PFF programs.

These preliminary results indicate that, collectively, 97 percent of PFF directors and graduate deans believed the PFF programs at their institutions were “very successful” or “somewhat successful.” Respondents were asked to name the elements that contributed most to the success of their programs. Here are some of their answers.

- ▲ “The combination of graduate students who see the need for PFF activities in their preparation and energetic faculty members who have taken the lead in providing them, is a self-motivating, self-propelling kind of synergy.”

- ▲ “Students really like the interdisciplinary discussions and emphasis on diversity throughout our seminar series.”
- ▲ “Our program promotes graduate student interaction, autonomy, and self-development. Individuals who emerge from the process are better able to act on and talk about their futures as scholars, teachers, and faculty members.”
- ▲ “Our students have at least two full-fledged mentorships during PFF. Our partner faculty have been very high quality. Many of them have had students every year or even every semester for five years.”
- ▲ “The program conveys to students that they are being prepared to be professionals in the full sense of the term.”
- ▲ [The most important aspects included] “support from chair, graduate dean, and provost; enthusiasm of several of the students involved in the program; and cooperation with partners to make [PFF] a reciprocal, mutually beneficial arrangement.”
- ▲ “The fact that PFF activities are a formal, required part of our program, and not add-ons.”

At the time the fourth phase of PFF was launched, it was thought that PFF might be more eagerly embraced by faculty in the social sciences and humanities than by those in the physical and life sciences and mathematics disciplines. However, project directors and deans across all disciplines report that graduate faculty who become acquainted with the goals and outcomes of PFF are generally positive. Greater support for PFF may exist in the humanities and social sciences because a larger percentage of Ph.D. graduates in these disciplines are employed as faculty members. While upwards of 75 percent of humanities and 67 percent of social science Ph.D. graduates typically pursue

academic careers, approximately 75 percent of doctoral graduates in chemistry, for example, take positions outside the academy (Ingram and Brown 1997). Thus, chemistry graduate faculty may see less value in providing special programs for the relatively few graduates who seek academic careers.

Support may also result from the belief that PFF experiences may enhance a student's chances of obtaining an academic job in the areas of the social sciences and humanities, where fewer jobs are available. Thus, more social science and humanities students were likely to see as useful the kind of preparation provided by PFF programs.

Another reason for greater support for PFF in the social science and humanities could be that the disciplinary societies in those fields have long emphasized pedagogy and professional development. Similarly, PFF may complement pre-existing programs of research into education, student learning, and the teaching profession within the humanities and social science disciplines.

In addition, faculty in different disciplines may differ about how closely graduate students should work with and be mentored by partner faculty. Eighty-two percent of PFF directors indicate that graduate students in PFF programs work closely with faculty at partner institutions, although participation of partner faculty is significantly higher in the social sciences and humanities than in the physical sciences and mathematics.


Eighty-two percent of directors from all disciplines report that PFF sessions at conferences or meetings had either a significant or limited impact. Sixty-eight percent indicated that society newsletter accounts of PFF had an impact in the discipline. The directors of humanities and social science programs report a higher impact and visibility in their disciplines than do directors of mathematics and science programs.

For these and perhaps other reasons that may vary from discipline to discipline, PFF has found a particularly sympathetic home among the humanities and social sciences.

Assessments Conducted by Clusters

Although the PFF programs in the humanities and social sciences have operated for only two years, several clusters have begun the process of assessing results, and what they are learning is enlightening. “Our graduate students’ response to the program has been very positive,” reports Richard Simpson, a political science professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “Our students have been uniformly positive in their formal, written evaluations of the PFF courses.” He also reports: “Since we instituted the PFF program, [the evaluations of our teaching assistants] have dramatically improved. One of the important outcomes has been that we as a department are doing a better job of teaching our undergraduate, not just our graduate, students.”

Although there is broad agreement that additional quantitative assessments of PFF programs are needed, qualitative assessments have also been found to be important, especially for improving cluster programs. For example, each student in the psychology PFF program at Miami University of Ohio prepares a short reflective essay on his or her PFF experiences, and the department conducts focus groups with various constituencies. These qualitative approaches have been much more helpful and informative than initial quantitative evaluation instruments. According to faculty director Cecilia Shore, “The most common aspect of [students’] reflections [is] how much they have learned about the diversity of student needs at different institutions and about the flexibility they need as teachers to respond to those needs.” Almost as often, students mention becoming aware of faculty roles in differ-



ent institutions, and they are grateful to partner faculty mentors for helping them develop these insights. She continues: “Their reflections indicate that the [PFF] program has helped them in making career decisions, and has also been helpful in learning job search skills.”

Students in the psychology department at the University of New Hampshire have participated in the university-wide PFF program for several years, and the department documents their skills and competencies. Students routinely develop a portfolio of their accomplishments in teaching, research, and service. The students also identify the experiences that contributed to the development of specific competencies. In addition, the department tracks its graduates, maintains accurate, up-to-date career records, and periodically surveys its PFF alumni. The department has carried out extensive assessment of a similar program that had operated for 35 years, until 1998, when their PFF program was established. Benassi and Fernald (1993) reported that introductory psychology students gave comparable evaluations to doctoral students and graduate faculty who taught the same course. Because surveys revealed that their psychology Ph.D. alumni spend about 60 percent of their time in teaching-related work, the department’s graduate program has placed greater emphasis on preparation for teaching. When the psychology Ph.D. alumni were asked to rank ten program components in order of importance to their development as psychologists, they listed the top four as the course on the teaching

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of psychology, relationships with faculty, the dissertation, and the opportunity to teach their own course(s).

Many disciplines stress placement records as a measure of PFF success, and departments are urged to maintain placement records and contact information for all Ph.D. graduates and to survey alumni about the effectiveness of their graduate program. One way to judge success of a PFF program is to compare the placement rate of PFF graduates to department graduates who did not participate in PFF. By this measure, Florida State University's PFF program in history has been extraordinarily successful. Since the department joined PFF in 1998, it has awarded 37 Ph.D. degrees and 19 of these graduates are employed in tenure track positions, including all six of the department's PFF participants.

Another measure of placement success is whether graduates are well prepared for academic positions in non-research institutions. Indiana University has a highly-ranked department of sociology, and three of its recent PFF graduates are now faculty members at McDaniel College.

Placement is an important measure, but it reflects only one aspect of success. Comments from PFF graduates and alumni (including some who did not participate in PFF) have been extremely useful to program directors in securing broader faculty support for their PFF program. Moreover, there is general agreement that placement may be a more important measure of success in some disciplines than in others. For instance, some disciplines (such as sociology) have very little trouble placing graduates who desire academic jobs, and in these disciplines, placement is less important than other aspects of PFF in defining the success and value of the program. Measuring success of PFF requires that multiple forms of assessment be employed,



including such tools as “exit interviews,” focus groups, teaching evaluations, and surveys of alumni.

PFF programs in these humanities and social science departments are too young for assessments to provide conclusive evidence of their success, but evidence is accumulating that reinforces earlier data.

Views of Graduate Students

Several studies of PFF programs completed over the last decade offer insights into various aspects of the PFF student experience. For example, these studies have identified reasons students choose to participate in PFF and the benefits they realize from participating. Students are also candid about their perceived obstacles to participation.

Motives and expectations of students who participate

Doctoral students are drawn to the PFF program for a variety of reasons (Pruitt-Logan, Gaff, and Weibl 1998):

- ▲ To explore the possibility of a faculty career and learn about faculty roles;
- ▲ To enhance their teaching skills and learn from a teaching mentor;
- ▲ To learn about institutions with missions, student bodies, and expectations for faculty that differ from those of the research universities where they are pursuing their doctoral degree;
- ▲ To earn a “credential” that will help them secure an academic job; and
- ▲ To learn about the academic profession that they expect to enter.

Studies of student experiences in PFF programs in the social sciences and humanities, as well as conversations that program directors had with participat-

ing students, mirror the results of the assessment of an earlier phase of PFF. In an assessment of the science and mathematics phase, 95 percent of PFF graduate student respondents indicated that the programs either met or exceeded their expectations (Thomas 2002).

Benefits to students from participating in PFF

From the beginning, doctoral students have reported an array of benefits from their PFF programs:

▲ Learning about faculty roles and activities

A PFF student in English at Michigan Technological University spoke for many when she attested to the value of learning about faculty life while still in graduate school:

“When a graduate student is making the transition to the new identity of a faculty member, she might think of herself as something of an ethnographer, observing a culture to gain insight not only about working conditions and departmental politics, but also about such things as how the institution operates, its history, what issues are still at stake, and who constitutes the various positions on particular issues. These are insights that novice faculty members sometimes can’t determine until they’re well into the tenure process, and having an opportunity to investigate institutions on the terms we PFF [participants] had, was rich indeed.” This student testifies to one of the important benefits of PFF programs, which is to involve students in the “politics” of the profession.

One sociology student at Indiana University put it this way: “PFF has shown me that teaching, research, and service are not discrete entities but that the lines are constantly blurred. You can actively blur the line and

have a much more fulfilling academic career, and PFF has definitely shown me how I can do that.”

▲ **Developing expertise as a teacher, articulating a teaching philosophy, and using different approaches to engage students**

A student in psychology at the University of Georgia observed that:

“Institutions are placing greater emphasis on teaching and learning competencies as well as issues of civic engagement. PFF is helping me prepare for the increasingly important role as teacher, and I am developing a professional identity that is not solely research- or practice-focused.”

▲ **Understanding the variety of institutions in which graduates may work and the expectations those institutions have for their faculty**

A communication and culture student from Indiana University stated:

“The most important thing ... in terms of teaching and learning has been a sense of what the expectations are at different types of institutions, which is something I hadn’t really considered prior to PFF. That was really important in giving me a sense of diversity of institutions and the different emphases they place on teaching.”

▲ **Being mentored by a faculty member at a partner institution**

Faculty at partner institutions often serve as non-research mentors to PFF students, providing advice and serving as role models in curriculum development, classroom presentation, and technology-based learning. Some have co-authored teaching-related work with PFF students. And their advice is exempt from the “power factor” that exists in the student’s graduate department between faculty and graduate students.

▲ **Developing a network of professional colleagues who can assist in job searches**

“PFF has provided opportunities for me,” said a psychology student at Miami University of Ohio. She reported that she met people from the AAC&U and the Council of Graduate Schools, toured the APA offices, and “was exposed to...wonderful resources” that neither she nor other students had been aware of before.

▲ **Increasing students’ sense of self-confidence as academic professionals**

A University of South Florida English student put it this way: “Too often graduate education focuses mainly on the scholarly aspect of academic life while ignoring the fact that the majority of the professional life of a scholar will probably be spent teaching, working on committees, [doing] administration, and the like. PFF has provided a much broader academic experience that I believe has more fully prepared me for the realities of an academic career.”

▲ **Empowering students for the job-market**

One of the most frequently reported benefits of participating in a PFF program is that it empowers students by making intangibles tangible and by turning what sometimes appear as the vagaries of the academic job market into a much more deliberate process. A newly-minted Ph.D. in political science who participated in the University of Colorado—Stanford PFF program commented on the impact of PFF on his search for an academic position: “Having participated in PFF, I was better able to convey in interviews that I had a vision of the life I would lead [as a



faculty member], and that I had definite plans for fulfilling my research agenda while being a good teacher and university citizen. And the faculty were reassured that I had a realistic map for navigating the road to tenure.”

A sociology student from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln stated: “PFF gave me a faster start in my faculty job [at a small liberal arts college]. I had a teaching portfolio and several courses sketched out, and I understood that I would be put on committees. I was mentally prepared [for these responsibilities] from my time shadowing a faculty member at a similar college [as a PFF student].”

▲ Clarifying students’ career choices

Some students find that their career goals change as a result of participating in PFF; others find their goals reinforced. A psychology student at the University of Colorado expressed it this way: “PFF hasn’t really affected the direction of my career goals, but it has sharpened them I am stronger in my resolve because I am more realistic about what lies before me.”

A communication student at Indiana University summarized this benefit: “Not only has the PFF program taught me ‘how’ to become a professor, it also has assured me that this is the right profession for me.”

A sociology student from Texas A&M University stated: “I had stereotypes about the students and faculty at community colleges. Through my PFF experience at a community college, I was [overwhelmed] by the wonderful teaching, outstanding technology tools, the eager first-generation students, the small classes, and the satisfaction of the faculty. I changed my mind about the kind of job I would seek.”

Growing Recognition of PFF

At the national level: The American Association for Higher Education offers full support for graduate students to attend its national conference through its K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders Award. Criteria for selection include potential for leadership in teaching and learning, a strong sense of civic responsibility, and a commitment to contribute to others as leaders, scholars, and citizens—all values emphasized in PFF programs. In 2002, PFF students represented three of the seven selected: Ingrid Hoffman in child psychology at the University of Minnesota, Julio Rojas in psychology at the University of Georgia, and Camilla Saulsbury in sociology at Indiana University.

The Indiana University Department of Sociology won the Distinguished Contribution to Teaching Award of the ASA for its PFF program and excellence in teacher preparation—a signal honor for a top-ranked research department that happily blurs the lines between teaching and research.

At the state level: Connie Mixon, a former PFF student and now a tenured political science faculty member at Richard J. Daley Community College in Chicago, was recognized as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching “Illinois Teacher of the Year” in 2002.

At the local level: The Faculty Women’s Association at ASU sponsors awards for achievements in scholarship, research, and leadership. Since 1995, eight of the seventeen recipients have been PFF students or alumni. (Marjorie Zatz, Associate Dean of the Graduate College, 2002, personal communication).

Challenges and Recommendations for Improving the Experience of PFF Students

Graduate students are the primary beneficiaries of PFF and are among its most ardent supporters. However, students also experience challenges and perceive obstacles that inhibit their full participation in PFF. The most frequent are:

- ▲ The time required to take classes, attend workshops and other PFF activities, and to visit and hold internships at partner campuses;
- ▲ The perception that students encounter among graduate faculty that PFF participation may distract from research; and
- ▲ The complexity of logistics and travel to partner institutions.

The collective experience over all phases of PFF provides some guidance on how these concerns can be addressed.

1. Time-management


Students cite concerns about time-management as the greatest challenge to participation in PFF. In particular, they worry about the time required to take courses, attend workshops, and visit other campuses. A related concern is that a menu of PFF activities is often presented to new students, with little guidance as to how to fit those activities into the student's own graduate program or how to select those that best fit with the students' educational objectives. The time required to participate in PFF activities depends in part on the structure and flexibility of the program. These concerns have been addressed primarily either through flexible scheduling of PFF activities or through creating a "developmentally structured" program of PFF activities.

Flexible scheduling of PFF events has helped mitigate time concerns in some programs by scheduling activities at times that minimize overlap with research, teaching, or departmental activities. Thus, PFF courses, workshops, and seminars may be offered late in the day, especially Friday afternoon, on weekends, or during lunch periods. At other times, activities may be scheduled to precede or follow departmental seminars or other departmental events. Such activities may allow PFF students to engage the topic of the seminar or event from the perspectives related to faculty work, pedagogy, or student learning. For example, a history department seminar revealing new aspects of world history might be used as the basis for a PFF session on how one might incorporate such new scholarship into history courses for undergraduate students, or how a faculty member might create opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research that expands on that presented in the seminar.

Students who participate in PFF often serve as peer mentors to newer participants, plan and coordinate PFF activities, and provide leadership in many other ways. Arizona State University's history PFF program has found that rotating leadership among participating students helped alleviate time concerns of some prospective participants, while allowing for the fresh perspectives of new people.

Developmental PFF programs are structured so that activities are integrated into the graduate curriculum and match the various stages of a student's graduate course of study. Some programs find that this approach addresses time-management problems in a way that better meets the needs of students and the cluster than a menu of PFF options.

Professional development is an important aspect of preparation for a career, and new graduate students should be made aware early in their program of the opportunities afforded by PFF. An early PFF orientation workshop engages students in consideration of the issue of professional develop-



ment at a time when the benefits may not be readily apparent. “Raising student awareness of professional development issues before they are on the job market remains a major challenge,” says Jonathan Grant, history PFF director at Florida State University, who recommends that departments introduce all new graduate students to the PFF program from their first day of department orientation. Others concur that such early exposure creates a “habit of mind” among doctoral candidates to search out a variety of professional development opportunities in research, teaching, and service throughout their graduate program. While students are expected to take an entrepreneurial approach toward pursuing professional development opportunities, PFF programs can make these opportunities more accessible to students by integrating them into the graduate program.

A developmentally structured PFF program might, for example, offer students opportunities to participate in courses, seminars, or workshops on:

- ▲ “Teaching the Discipline” before their first TA assignment;
- ▲ Professional ethics and mentoring before working with partner faculty; and
- ▲ Job search strategies as they prepare to enter the job market.


Including partner faculty in PFF activities at the anchor institution is important for students. They acquire confidence through interacting with partner faculty in activities at their home institution and thereby take better advantage of these mentors at the partner campus.

Whether cluster needs are met with flexible scheduling or with a developmental structure, PFF is most successful when it is an integral part of the graduate program. The result of such integration is that students perceive PFF

activities, not as competing with other degree requirements such as comprehensive exams and research, but rather as important components of the total graduate experience.

2. PFF and Research Responsibilities

There is, of course, a real concern and a realistic possibility that PFF participation could lengthen the time to degree. Disciplinary leaders, however, believe this is not the central issue in the humanities and social sciences. In fact, they feel that PFF participation may focus a student's work and actually shorten the time to degree. A more serious issue is that PFF participation may detract from students' research efforts. This may be true in the social sciences and humanities, even though research on professional socialization and the history of the discipline, as well as on learning assessment strategies, are often integral parts of the graduate curriculum. A number of institutional clusters have found innovative ways to integrate research on teaching and learning in the discipline into PFF programs. For example, graduate students in the sociology PFF program at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, create a "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" project in which they learn about classroom-based research and evaluation. This program is structured so that students carry the research and teaching skills developed in the first phase of the project into a second phase involving a partner faculty mentor. Drawing from the work of Cross, Angelo, and Steadman (Cross and Steadman 1996; Angelo and Cross 1993), this aspect of the program challenges traditional distinctions between research and teaching. As John Reilly, program director of English PFF at Howard University, emphasizes, it is important to make clear that teaching is researchable, and that all of the work that faculty perform is subject to rational inquiry, theory, and evaluation. When graduate



education embraces this fact, everyone benefits: faculty, students, the discipline, and society.

Robert Johnson, director of the English PFF program at Michigan Technological University, believes that humanities graduate students require a flexible PFF model that is open to exploring research opportunities, as well as enhanced teaching and service experiences. As he explains, “Humanities departments have long trained graduate students in teaching methods. We might think about [humanities PFF programs as] encouraging research—kind of turning the tables on the science and engineering PFF programs.” As PFF program directors continue to tailor PFF to the needs of their particular discipline, research components relating to the scholarship of teaching and learning may become more prominent.

3. Complexity of Travel and Logistics


Another frequent concern of students regards arrangements and logistics associated with travel to partner institutions. Although some programs have indicated they have the resources to include even international partners and provide opportunities for their students to teach abroad, it is more typical that even relatively short commutes pose difficulties for students. PFF programs provide organizational support to students and faculty to help form working relationships with partner faculty. Arizona State University’s Graduate College assigns a graduate student to coordinate work with clusters and to assist students with travel arrangements. Other programs organize group visits to partner campuses and orientation sessions to facilitate student-mentor relationships. Many PFF program leaders and students assert that conferences and disciplinary society meetings serve to address travel difficulties and to provide alternate venues for networking. As Susan Clarke, the PFF director in political

science at the University of Colorado, describes: “Even the 30 miles between Denver and Boulder or the scenic 90-minute trip to Colorado Springs [presented] logistical hazards in the midst of the semester.” The University of Colorado-Stanford University cluster discovered that national PFF conferences and PFF sessions at APSA meetings “proved to be key opportunities [for students and faculty] to spend time with each other and to meet faculty and students in other PFF-like programs.”

Students in PFF programs also express the need for earlier and more frequent information on career options for program graduates. They also want more opportunities for job skills development and assistance with job search strategies and placement. These issues and concerns are not specific to PFF participants; they are common to all graduate students. PFF cluster leaders report that PFF programs provide ideal forums for meeting the common needs and concerns of graduate students.

Views of Alumni

In the two years since PFF programs in the social sciences and humanities were initiated, only a small number of doctoral students have received their degrees and secured academic appointments. Therefore, systematic research has not yet been conducted on this group. However, the PFF National Office commissioned a survey of the impact of PFF upon the careers of alumni from previous phases who hold faculty positions (DeNeef 2002). This group includes alumni in the social sciences and humanities as well as in the sciences and mathematics. Of 271 alumni contacted, 129 responded. Twenty-five respondents were subsequently interviewed by telephone. The survey results revealed that PFF made a difference in the experiences of these individuals in three primary ways.



- ▲ Alumni believe their doctoral student experience was qualitatively different—and better—than it would have been had they not participated in PFF.
- ▲ They believe that PFF experiences aided them in their job searches, and they typically cited PFF as a central reason for their job offers.
- ▲ They report that what they learned through PFF helped them get a faster and surer start as new faculty members than their faculty peers.

One of the more interesting of DeNeef's findings is that PFF alumni commonly serve as resources for their new faculty colleagues. For example, Wendy Crone, a new faculty member in engineering at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, reports: "PFF provided me with a basket of tools that I am still trying out, tools that I can pick and choose from as the need arises." Because of this "basket of tools," Crone's peers are seeking her advice on various professional matters. "I have become a *de facto* mentor to my colleagues," she observed (DeNeef, p. 16).

DeNeef's findings are supported by anecdotal evidence from other PFF alumni, who consistently report that PFF enriched the quality of their graduate school experience, improved their job search skills, helped them obtain a faculty position, and allowed them to hit the ground running.

Views of Faculty Members

Throughout all phases of PFF, both graduate faculty and faculty from partner institutions have consistently reported a range of benefits from their participation in PFF programs and activities. Likewise, departments with PFF programs report a consistent set of benefits from having a departmental PFF program (Pruitt-Logan, Gaff, and Weibl 1998).

Benefits to graduate faculty from participating in PFF

Benefits commonly reported by graduate faculty include:

- ▲ A deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of faculty members at various institutions;
- ▲ The opportunity to get to know some students quite well, to share ideas about teaching and academic careers, and to learn from them;
- ▲ A better understanding of and communication with participating students, which also helped departments identify areas of their graduate program that needed attention;
- ▲ The opportunity to become acquainted with colleagues at other institutions; and
- ▲ An appreciation for their students' increasingly sophisticated understanding of faculty roles and responsibilities.

One graduate faculty member testified, with the pride all good teachers and mentors take in the success of their students: “One of my senior doctoral students has just become the first successful faculty placement from our PFF program.” Melbourne Cummings, PFF cluster leader in the communications and culture department at Howard University, summarizes the perspectives of PFF graduate faculty: “The PFF program is deeply embedded in our department’s academic program. Our PFF students are constantly involved with faculty, both at Howard and our partner institutions. And faculty and administrators across the campus are excited about the opportunity PFF affords for them to share their views and expertise with students preparing to be faculty members.” These views cover faculty governance, diversity in the classroom and

workplace, effective teaching strategies and learning assessment tools, and professional ethics and responsibilities.

Benefits to partner faculty from participating in PFF

Many partner faculty choose to participate in PFF out of a combination of good will and a professional sense of responsibility to the discipline. Partner faculty who participated in the humanities and social science PFF projects report a number of benefits similar to those reported by faculty in previous surveys and phases of the program. Most of the phase four PFF partner faculty had no previous occasion to work with advanced and energetic doctoral students, and they appreciated this opportunity.

Many report that they appreciated the feedback on their own teaching from the PFF graduate students. And partner faculty appreciated receiving recognition for their participation.

For example, the Arizona State University (ASU) history department recognizes the participation of partner faculty through such benefits as free library privileges, free internet access, and special parking rates on the ASU campus. Such concrete forms of recognition foster a formal connection to the culture of the doctoral institution that partner faculty value.

Other specific benefits frequently mentioned by partner faculty include:


- ▲ Ideas for improving their teaching, scholarship, and community service;

Many partner faculty choose to participate in PFF out of a combination of good will and a professional sense of responsibility to the discipline

- ▲ The benefit to their undergraduate students of learning from PFF graduate students about topics not typically included in the curriculum;
- ▲ The advice PFF graduate students give their undergraduate students about applying to and succeeding in graduate programs;
- ▲ The contact and development of strong ties with faculty peers from other institutions;
- ▲ The potential for PFF graduate students to serve as additional faculty resources for the department, in capacities such as adjunct faculty or sabbatical replacements;
- ▲ The satisfaction of helping to prepare future members of the professoriate;
- ▲ The opportunity to give PFF graduate students the mentoring experiences that they themselves did not have; and
- ▲ Insight into the ever-changing needs of the discipline.

Many faculty participants echo the comment of Carolyn Calhoon-Dilahunt, an English instructor at Yakima Valley Community College, a partner of Washington State University: “It has been an interesting experience to get a cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional view of higher education. I have learned a lot about our cluster and how each of our institutions functions, of course, but I [also] have a better understanding of what is happening in higher education and differences of institutions and of disciplines across the nation.”

Both graduate and partner faculty report that they are energized and revitalized by working with PFF students and reconnecting with the roots of their own interests in an academic career. Graduate and partner faculty often envi-



sion themselves as inhabiting different worlds, and they see PFF as a way to bridge those worlds. Oneida Meranto, a partner faculty member in political science at Metropolitan State College of Denver, remarked that participation in PFF “prevents our department from developing feelings of isolation within the discipline—it helps keep us informed.”

Enhancing the faculty experience of participating in PFF

Faculty members who participate in PFF are generally quite enthusiastic in their overall assessment of their experiences. However, both anchor and partner faculty express some concerns that revolve around three issues:

- ▲ The time-commitment required to participate in PFF
- ▲ Clear communication concerning the nature and expectations of faculty involvement in PFF
- ▲ Rewards and recognition for participating in PFF

Graduate and partner faculty generally have a full load of teaching and service responsibilities and are concerned that participation in PFF will simply add to an already full load. Because most faculty did not have PFF experience in their graduate education, they may have little basis for understanding the nature and goals of such a program and how they can contribute to it. Faculty also have a concern that their work in PFF will not be recognized as a legitimate component of their effort. Some faculty may fear that their participation will limit the time and effort for research and other faculty activities that are more commonly recognized and rewarded.

Faculty who direct PFF programs should communicate frequently and articulate clearly the purpose and benefits of faculty participation. PFF pro-

grams are often initiated by only one or a few department faculty members. However, if PFF is to evolve into an integral part of a department's graduate program, there must be acceptance, if not active involvement, of many faculty. Frequent information to department faculty about PFF activities and accomplishments is required to build a foundation of support for a broader departmental embrace of PFF concepts and activities.

Partner faculty need to feel integrated into the overall PFF program from the outset. They should be fully apprised of the program schedule, including changes such as a delay in the arrival of PFF students on their campus for mentoring. PFF programs also benefit from including partner faculty in other activities on the anchor campus, such as orientation sessions and activities that will relate to students' work on the partner campus.

PFF program directors also make several recommendations to address faculty concerns:

- ▲ Reward faculty with release time from other duties to participate in PFF or recognize PFF involvement as part of their instructional or service responsibilities.
- ▲ Provide small stipends or flexible funds to faculty who participate in PFF.
- ▲ Assist faculty in arranging mentoring opportunities and PFF activities.

Benefits to departments from incorporating PFF as a component of the graduate program

Both students and faculty suggested that a PFF program increases the perceived quality of a department. A department that demonstrates a concern about students' potential academic careers, offers a thoughtful program to pre-



pare students for the variety of such careers that exist, and creates opportunities for students to learn about the profession through close relationships with talented mentors, is likely to be perceived as being of high-quality by students as well as colleagues.

Faculty members and doctoral students who participate in PFF are almost always enthusiastic about their PFF experience, and departments benefit from satisfied faculty and students.

Some doctoral programs have found PFF to be a useful recruiting tool, and there is anecdotal evidence that PFF attracts high-quality students to a graduate program.

According to Ronald Lee, a professor in the communication studies department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, “PFF is becoming an important recruitment tool. ... [Prospective] students are eager to talk about PFF and are comforted by the thought that the faculty is thinking about their professional success from the moment they enter [our graduate program].” (Lee 2001).

The PFF National Office often receives inquiries from students who wish to participate in PFF. One typical example is a query from a student completing a master’s degree in sociology requesting information on doctoral sociology departments that have PFF programs.

The humanities and social science departments participating in this fourth phase of PFF have had only two years to design and implement these new programs—not nearly enough time to assess the value of the programs to participants or to employ those assessments as recruiting aids. However, institutions such as the University of New Hampshire and Howard University that established PFF programs in previous phases have found PFF to be useful in recruiting high-quality doctoral students.

PFF students consistently report that they are able to navigate the job search more effectively than their peers without PFF experience. This suggests that graduates of a department with a PFF program have a competitive advantage in their initial academic job search.


A National Communication Association brochure (2001) summarizes the benefits of PFF for communication doctoral programs:

- ▲ PFF enriches the doctoral education experience.
- ▲ PFF creates a sense of community in the department.
- ▲ PFF aids in the recruitment, retention, and marketability of doctoral students.
- ▲ PFF helps build alliances and support within the university.
- ▲ PFF helps establish regional disciplinary collaborations with partner faculty.

The anecdotal and other evidence discussed above supports the view that providing opportunities such as PFF is the right thing to do. Thus, there is a basis for concluding that a PFF program can raise the reputation of a department's graduate program while improving the undergraduate education in both anchor and partner institutions.

Benefits for the discipline

In addition to the benefits that students, faculty, and departments attribute to PFF program participation, leaders of the disciplinary societies involved in this project assert that PFF also accrues benefits to the academic disciplines themselves. Carla Howery of ASA includes among these: attracting new members—both graduate students and partner faculty; enriching the disciplinary society



and its annual meetings through new work and topics—PFF students have revealed some new teaching facets that were “real gems”; and fostering “cross-talk” on important issues such as graduate training, which helps improve the practice throughout the discipline.

In cases where there is no disciplinary-based state organization to provide opportunities for members of the discipline to meet, the PFF clusters have provided an essential means to foster professional ties among scholars. In addition, beyond the immediate purpose of preparing Ph.D. graduates to succeed in faculty positions, PFF participants report that cluster activities foster a stronger sense of their professional identity within and responsibility for stewardship of the discipline. For example, the PFF clusters in communication worked with leaders of the NCA to plan and offer a workshop on survival skills for doctoral students at the NCA National Convention. Although the workshop originated with the PFF clusters, it was open to all student attendees. Workshop participants received a certificate identifying them as a “steward of the communication discipline.” All PFF students who attended were expected to make a public presentation of their workshop experience at their home campuses. This important additional role of developing a sense of professionalism and responsibility for the discipline results from engaging all stakeholders to reflect on professional roles and responsibilities in a larger context, beyond the bounds of graduate education.

