



**TYCA Working Paper #5:  
Two-Year College English Faculty Professional  
Development Workload**  
Two-Year College English Association Workload Task  
Force  
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### **Abstract/Summary**

In Fall of 2019, the Two-Year College English Association distributed a 39-question survey to two-year college English faculty through professional listservs, regional distribution lists, and social media platforms. We received 1,062 responses to questions about workload in the areas of teaching, service, and professional development. This working paper provides qualitative analysis of the 138 statements provided in response to the open-ended question: “What other comments would you like to make about your workload as it relates to professional development?” from the 2019 TYCA Workload Survey. This national survey drew from professional developmental scholarship within two-year college English studies, and the paper explores linkages between major themes within the responses and existing literature. These themes included *Forms of Professional Development*, *Reasons for Participating in Professional Development*, *Barriers and Challenges to Participating in Professional Development*, *Affect Related to Professional Development*, and *Adjunct Faculty and Professional Development*.

### **Overview**

This TYCA Workload Task Force paper focuses on professional development and explores the qualitative responses to the question: “What other comments would you like to make about your workload as it relates to professional development?” While 159 of the survey’s 1,062 total respondents indicated that professional development impacted their workload, as many as 923 respondents reported participating in professional development. Of these, 138 participants offered additional statements to the open-ended question requesting additional comments about workload and professional development. This report explores the findings related to professional development through the following themes: *Forms of Professional Development*, *Reasons for Participating in Professional Development*, *Barriers and Challenges to Participating in Professional Development*, *Affect Related to Professional Development*, and *Adjunct Faculty and Professional Development*.

Professional development for two-year college English faculty varies across institutions and in terms of resources allocated. Although some respondents described participating in discipline-specific professional development, many indicated that their colleges provided only institution-specific and/or generic professional development activities that were not specifically grounded in the discipline, for example Title IX training. Two-year college English faculty reported various reasons for participating in professional development. Many faculty were required to do so as

part of their contractual obligations, while others discussed a variety of incentives—some outside the expectations, resources, or reward structures of their colleges—for engaging in professional development. Many faculty identified barriers or challenges to participating in professional development, such as lack of resources, lack of relevance, lack of incentives, and lack of requirements. While some respondents identified lack of time as a major deterrent to participating in professional development (we discuss this within the larger context of lack of resources). Additionally, faculty also related affective dimensions of professional development, e.g., the way faculty felt about engaging in professional development. Taken together, these findings suggest that many two-year college English faculty see an often unmet need for institutionally relevant disciplinary professional development that is recognized, rewarded, and materially supported by their colleges.

## **Literature Review**

Over the decades, the field has produced a range of scholarship and position statements discussing the state of faculty professional development in two-year college English departments and making arguments for the kinds of activities most relevant and necessary for their “distinct and significant profession” (Holladay-Hicks and Reynolds, ix). Many associated with the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) have maintained that meaningful professional development must be: a) engaged with disciplinary knowledge-making, particularly knowledge about the teaching of writing; b) supported by engagement with disciplinary professional organizations; and c) relevant to the specific student populations, institutional structures, material resources, and faculty roles of two-year colleges (TYCA “Guidelines” and “Characteristics”). As the 2006 TYCA “Guidelines for the Academic Preparation of English Faculty at Two-Year Colleges” assert, “ongoing academic and professional development must be an expectation of those who enter the field” (11). Christie Toth and Patrick Sullivan have suggested that disciplinary scholarship might be most transformative when two-year college English departments engage with it collectively to foster “local teacher-scholar communities of practice” (252).

Since the early 2000s, TYCA has promoted a *teacher-scholar* model of two-year college English faculty professional identity (see Andelora “Forging,” “Teacher/Scholar: Reconstructing,” and “Teacher/Scholar/Activist: A Response”; TYCA “Guidelines,” “Research,” and “Characteristics”; Toth and Sullivan). This model calls on faculty to be knowledge-makers-- that is, producers of scholarship informed by and relevant to the distinctive nature of their profession. In the words of the 2012 TYCA statement “Research and Scholarship in the Two-Year College,” “At two-year colleges, good teaching matters most, but this committee views scholarship as a prerequisite and a corequisite for good teaching—because teachers’ scholarship legitimizes their expertise, informs their classroom practice, and provides their students with models for intellectual inquiry” (3-4; see also Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf; Griffiths; Griffiths and Jensen; Klausman). In the 2010s, many TYCA members have taken this model a step further by embracing a *teacher-scholar-activist* identity (e.g., Andelora “Teacher/Scholar/Activist”; Sullivan; Griffiths; Jensen and Suh; Toth, Sullivan, and Calhoon-Dillahunt). Teacher-scholar-activists engage with professional organizations and disciplinary knowledge with the explicit goal of effecting change in their classrooms, on their campuses, in the discipline and profession, in their local communities, and in state and national policy relevant to their work. Brett Griffiths and Darin Jensen suggest that a shared disciplinary framework can support faculty and department resilience amid the deprofessionalizing effects of neoliberal austerity (see also Griffiths).

Since the 1960s, these conversations about professional engagement and identity have also grappled with the reality that teaching and service loads often negatively impact the

expectations, rewards, and possibilities for ongoing disciplinary professional development at two-year colleges. Course loads, classroom sizes, and the particularly labor-intensive demands of teaching composition often leave faculty with little time for professional engagement (see “Workload”; McPherson; Kroll), and institutional professional development often “disengage[s] faculty from their academic disciplines and create[s] ‘generic teachers’” (Kroll 203; see also McGrath and Spear; Spear, et al). In many two-year colleges, disciplinary professional development is not an expectation, nor is it materially supported or rewarded in promotions and tenure processes (see Toth “Unmeasured”; Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf; Toth and Sullivan; Griffiths; Griffiths and Jensen; Jensen). The findings presented in this working paper affirm that, while many two-year college English faculty value disciplinary professional development, their workloads, institutional resources, and reward structures often do not enable or sufficiently support such activities.

## **Methods**

This study is a mixed-methods analysis of responses to a survey on the workload of two-year college faculty and the effects of workload on educator effectiveness. The survey included six demographic questions, 28 closed-ended items that asked respondents to select from a list of possible responses, and five open-ended items. The survey was distributed to TYCA members and other two-year college instructors during Fall 2019. In total, 1,062 participants completed the survey. We conducted a mixed-methods analysis of responses to the survey using descriptive statistics to analyze closed-ended responses. We also applied iterative thematic analyses of open-ended responses to survey questions using Dedoose (a web-based platform). In the coding process, each of the 138 responses was coded individually and could yield multiple tokens or responses. For example, one response, “I suggest full professors should regularly hold best practices presentations in the department to help the junior faculty because they have a lot of experience and expertise” was labeled with the codes *Desired PD*, *Disciplinary PD*, and *Format/Modality*. This working paper focuses on professional development and analyzes the 138 statements provided in response to the open-response question, “What other comments would you like to make about your workload as it relates to professional development?”

## **Summary of Findings on Professional Development**

Iterative thematic analysis of responses to the question “What other comments would you like to make about your workload as it relates to professional development?” yielded five themes: *Forms of Professional Development*, *Reasons for Participating in Professional Development*, *Barriers and Challenges to Participating in Professional Development*, *Affect Related to Professional Development*, and *Adjunct Faculty and Professional Development*. The theme *Adjunct Faculty and Professional Development* is discussed in a separate working paper on adjunct faculty.

### ***Forms of Professional Development***

One hundred seventeen (117) survey respondents identified *forms of professional development*: that is, activities or kinds of engagement that they associated with the term “professional development.” These forms can be grouped into four subthemes: *formats/modalities of professional development* (64), *disciplinary professional development* (24), *non-disciplinary professional development* (13), and *desired professional development* (16).

#### ***Formats/Modalities of Professional Development***

Sixty-four respondents described specific *formats or modalities* for this development. Many forms of professional development were located at their colleges and/or within their departments. Those activities could be formal professional development sessions—workshops or “brownbags,” college-wide professional development days, or other planned discussions of books/articles—as well as informal discussions with colleagues. Some respondents described other activities that served a professional development function, such as developing Open Educational Resources (OER), work on grant projects, or other institutional service or leadership activities. As one respondent wrote, “One of the main forms of professional development in my department is via participation in portfolio assessment. This feels practical, because it’s helping with assessment as a collaborative project. But it also offers insight into other ways of teaching—specifically assigning writing and commenting.” In participants’ perceptions, then, “professional development” was not always designated as such: it could be formal or informal, stand-alone or emerging through various service or assessment activities.

### *Disciplinary (and Non-Disciplinary) Professional Development*

Several respondents observed that formal college-wide professional development activities often took place during specific times of the year, such as fall or winter break. Others noted that their colleges expected faculty to pursue professional development “on their own time,” such as during the summers (in some cases, when they were off-contract). Twenty-four (24) described participating in *disciplinary professional development*, some of which took place within their departments: for example, portfolio assessment, reading groups, OER development. However, 13 indicated that most professional development at their institution was *non-disciplinary* (e.g., trainings on ADA compliance, cyber security, or “active shooter or sexual harassment”). Some respondents viewed this disconnect between professional development and discipline as a problem. In the words of one participant, “Institutional PD is a requirement, but it does not support my discipline in any way.”

### *Desired Professional Development*

Sixteen respondents identified *desired professional development* that they believed would improve teaching and learning at their institutions. This “wish” list included a desire for more time for professional development, more teaching-related professional development opportunities, more current/up-to-date professional development, and more mentorship of junior faculty by senior colleagues. Most prominently, respondents expressed a desire for more professional development grounded in their discipline. As one respondent wrote, “We have a fairly desperate need for discipline-specific professional development, but it is not readily available unless we pay for it out-of-pocket.” Another stated, “I wish I had more institutional support developing disciplinary knowledge and working on my own scholarship.” This issue of “support”—both material and through recognition and reward structures—was frequently reported as a *barrier to disciplinary professional development* (see below).

Most of the 24 respondents who described engaging in *disciplinary professional development* located those activities outside their institutions. These activities included memberships and/or service in professional organizations, regional and/or national conference attendance, or discipline-specific webinars. As one respondent wrote, “I have found that some organizations offer webinars and these have been solid sources for professional development, e.g. NCTE’s recent Alcott presentation.” Others described working on their research/scholarly publications, taking coursework (on- or off-line), or pursuing an additional graduate degree. These findings suggest that professional organizations like TYCA, CCC and NCTE, disciplinary publications like *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, and university-based graduate programs play an

important role in providing disciplinary professional development that many two-year college English faculty find lacking in their home institutions.

### ***Reasons for participating in PD***

Participants discussed various *reasons for participating in professional development* (60 statements). These reasons can be grouped into three subthemes: *requirement for professional development* (28), *incentives for participating* (19), and *resources for professional development* (23).

#### *Requirement for Professional Development*

Twenty- eight participants indicated that their institutions had a *requirement for professional development* as part of their faculty positions. For example, some respondents shared they were contractually required to complete a number of hours of professional development per semester. One response in particular highlights this point: “Contractually obligated to PD twice the number of hours of my teaching load, usually 16 hours per semester. I typically do 75–100.” This response may indicate the variations in institutional conceptualizations of professional development and what is expected of faculty. Several respondents noted that they voluntarily completed more professional development hours than their institutions required. Some part-time faculty respondents also described participating in required professional development. As one commented, “We are required to do about 5–10 hours a year if professional development as part-time, adjunct faculty.”

#### *Incentives for Participating*

Faculty shared a variety of *incentives for participating in professional development* (19), ranging from personal to professional to financial. Participants described engaging in professional development because it is something they enjoy doing as part of their professional growth. One respondent described, “Besides grading, the most time I spend on any one aspect of my job is professional development. Because I love it and it makes me love my profession.” Some respondents also commented on the financial incentive for participating in professional development. These incentives varied, but as one participant noted, “I can also put together a professional development plan with my dean each year to be put in line for an increment pay increase.” Others described having financial support to attend conferences as a financial incentive. Incentives for professional development, then, could be both intrinsic and extrinsic.

#### *Resources for Professional Development*

One important *resource for professional development* that faculty (23) identified was being allotted an annual budget for such activities. The amount of funding for professional development varied widely. As one respondent described, “We are given \$650 per year for professional development and we can roll it over for one year, which means we can accrue \$1300 for a conference or such.” However, respondents shared other means through which professional development was funded. Another participant noted, “Professional development tends to be grant-sponsored. There is otherwise only \$250/year available to support FT faculty (only) professional activities, including conference attendance. Thus, with few exceptions, almost all professional development and professional engagement is an out-of-pocket expense. Professional development activities outside of college-sponsored activities are generally not recognized and rewarded in any meaningful way.” As this response suggests, not all respondents had consistent institutional resources for professional development, which was one

among many barriers and challenges to participating in professional development the respondents described.

### ***Barriers and Challenges to Participating in Professional Development***

*Barriers/challenges to participating in professional development* (152) were the most prevalent theme in the survey responses. These barriers and challenges could be broken down into four major subthemes: *lack of resources* (91), *lack of relevance* (21), *lack of incentive/reward* (16), and *lack of requirement* (8).

#### *Lack of Resources*

*Lack of resources* (91) was the most commonly identified barrier to participating in professional development. Although several respondents provided broad statements about challenges related to accessing professional development, such as “Our professional development program has been in disarray for years,” *time* was referenced 40 times as the resource they were missing most. As one respondent noted, “My heavy workload makes it quite difficult to engage in professional development.” Another commented, “Being contractually required to teach 16 credits a semester makes it more difficult to remain professionally involved.” The second most commonly cited necessary resource was *financial support* (27). One respondent noted, “The progress of accessing funds is too fiduciary and the available funds are insufficient to cover costs.” Several other responses echoed this statement, noting the scarcity or absence of institutional funds to support conference travel or other forms of professional development. One respondent even described an institutional policy of docking pay for classes canceled in order to participate in conferences. As discussed in “The Profession of Teaching English in the Two-Year College: Findings from the 2019 TYCA Workload Survey,” 18% of the faculty participating in weekly professional development do so, despite the fact that professional development is neither required by their institutions nor compensated.

#### *Lack of Relevance*

Respondents described the *lack of relevance* (21) of professional development opportunities, particularly those opportunities available through their institutions. The majority of these respondents noted a *lack of disciplinary relevance* (15) because funding or training were related to campus-wide initiatives or areas outside of the respondents’ area. For example, one respondent noted how “More money seems to be available for ‘big initiatives’ like Guided Pathways, assessment, or developmental education redesign.” However, respondents also described professional development that was irrelevant because of *poor quality* (6). For example, one made the following observation about professional development: “When it was offered, it was usually outdated.” The findings therefore illustrate the dual constraints of limited institutional investment in professional development and expectations that faculty participate in professional development, which they found to be irrelevant to their work.

#### *Lack of Incentive/Reward*

These findings about the lack of resources available for professional development aligned with findings about the devaluation of professional development at the institutional level. Respondents also described a *lack of incentive/reward* (16) for professional development. One respondent emphasized that they “receive NO acknowledgement whatsoever” for participating in professional activities. Some part-time faculty attributed the limited expectations for their professional development to their status as adjuncts. However, full-time faculty also described

limited or non-existent resources for their participation in professional development opportunities.

### *Lack of Requirement*

Finally, participants also noted the *lack of requirement* (8) from institutions in terms of professional development. One participant described, “while we are required to do this, half of the department’s members do not do professional development.” Another respondent suggested this causes a split among faculty: “When it isn’t expected of everyone, a campus can see a split in the faculty—those who want to learn more and those who are okay with the status quo.” Furthermore, another participant stated, “My institution pays lip service to requiring it but does not enforce that requirement.” These findings present some of the challenges the lack of a requirement for professional development cause among faculty when not everyone is required to engage in professional development and there is no oversight of professional development.

### **Affect Related to Professional Development**

Many comments also included statements expressing *affect related to professional development* (47): that is, feelings or emotions associated with their professional development experiences. These expressions could involve *positive affect* or *negative affect*. While the limited number of responses related to these findings suggest that they are not frequently occurring themes within the data, faculty’s affect related to professional development remains an important area of the findings given the number of faculty engaged in professional development—and oftentimes at their own expense.

### ***Positive Affect***

Some (19) of these descriptions were *positive affect*— feelings of enjoyment, reward, or growth. As one respondent wrote, “I do it because it’s fun.” These positive expressions were often linked to discussions of disciplinary professional development, primarily within the department or outside the institution (e.g. conferences or professional organizations).

### ***Negative Affect***

More respondents (26), however, expressed *negative affect* towards professional development. Such affect included experiences of frustration, dissatisfaction, or disappointment with their professional development at their institutions. For example, one respondent lamented a perceived decline, writing “This is probably the single biggest disappointment I have had in my 17+ years here, watching a reasonably well-organized professional development program fall apart.” These negative affective expressions were often associated with discussions of non-disciplinary professional development or barriers and challenges to professional development.

These findings related to affect suggest that faculty feel positively about professional development relevant to their discipline, particularly when that professional development is institutionally supported and rewarded, while poor-quality, irrelevant, non-disciplinary, or unsupported/unrewarded was a source of negative feelings about professional development.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The survey results suggest that, while participants valued professional development in principle, they were often dissatisfied with the available structures and opportunities at their institutions. In

some cases, professional development was not required, encouraged, supported, or rewarded. In other cases, the professional development offered was of poor quality, irrelevant, or not specific to the disciplinary nature of their teaching. Likewise, the workloads faculty shouldered—teaching loads, the particular labor demands of teaching composition, and service obligations—often left little time or energy for professional development, especially when faculty were expected to pursue it on their own time (and sometimes on their own dime). Those who were most engaged in disciplinary professional development frequently found it outside their institutions. The positive effect associated with meaningful and well-supported professional development suggests that such activities can be a sustaining experience that supports engaged instruction and works against faculty burnout.

These findings suggest that two-year colleges need to devote more resources to disciplinary professional development, including funding, time, support for travel, and recognition. Two-year college English department chairs, writing program administrators, and others in disciplinary leadership positions can work to secure more institutional resources for professional development, both “in-house” and through faculty engagement with external bodies like the professional organizations. Such professional development should be fully and consistently funded by the institution, as well as recognized and rewarded in faculty hiring, retention, tenure, and promotion criteria. Furthermore, such activities should be factored into faculty workload when determining teaching load and service responsibilities.

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### **For More Information**

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