

# Build It But Will They Teach?: Strategies for Increasing Faculty Participation & Retention in Online & Blended Education

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## Abstract

The need for online and blended programs within higher education continues to grow as the student population in the United States becomes increasingly non-traditional. As administrators strategically offer and expand online and blended programs, faculty recruitment and retention will be key. This case study highlights how a public comprehensive university utilized the results of a 2012 institutional study to design faculty development initiatives, an online course development process, and an online course review process to support faculty participation and retention in online and blended programs. Recommendations based on this case study include replicable strategies on how to increase faculty participation and retention in online and blended programs using collaboration, support, and ongoing assessment. This case study is a compendium to the 2012 Armstrong institutional study highlighted in the article "Factors Influencing Faculty Participation & Retention In Online & Blended Education."

## Introduction

Postsecondary education enrollments in the United States reveal that today's student population is more diverse than ever before. According to the New America Foundation (2012), "Only 14 percent of undergraduates attend full time and live on campus" (p. 2). With increasing non-traditional enrollments, there has been an increasing demand for online education. Annual reports by the Sloan-Consortium (Sloan-C) have shown increases in the number of students enrolled in online education over the past decade. The Sloan-C report *Sizing the Opportunity: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2002 and 2003* showed that in fall 2002 there were over 1.6 million students enrolled in at least one online course (Allen & Seaman, 2003). By 2013, enrollments in at least one online course increased to over 7.11 million students as shared in *Grade Change: Tracking Online Education in the United States*. (Allen & Seaman, 2013). The Sloan-C 2013 report also revealed "Ninety percent of academic leaders believe that it is likely or very likely that a majority of all higher education students will be taking at least one online course in five years' time" (Allen & Seaman, 2013, p. 5).

Faculty attitude toward distance education has been found to play a role in decisions to participate or not participate in distance education (Badu-Nyarko, 2006; Verduin & Clark, 1991). According to the literature, faculty with distance education experience tend to have a more positive attitude toward distance education (Moore, 2012; Lin, 2002; Allen, Seaman, Lederman, & Jaschik, 2009). However, faculty with no distance education experience may tend to have a more negative attitude toward distance education because of perceived inhibitors or barriers such as concerns about quality (e.g., courses, student), concerns about time (e.g., workload), and concerns about technology and support (e.g., lack of adequate equipment to support distance education teaching, technical support, etc.) (Betts, 2014; Betts, 1998). According to research findings by Lloyd, Byrne and McCoy (2012) in "Perceived Barriers of Online Education," "faculty who had the least experience with online education perceived the barriers as greater than those who had the most experience with online education" (p. 7). Furthermore, Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy (2012) stated that the findings in their study "supports the effect of experience on resistance to online instruction" (p. 8). Faculty participation and retention is critical for meeting online and blended education enrollments today and in the future. Therefore, administrative leaders need to identify factors that motivate and inhibit faculty participation in online and blended education.

Armstrong Atlantic State University (Armstrong) is a public comprehensive institution that is part of the University System of Georgia (USG). Armstrong offers certificate programs and degree programs on the associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level. Armstrong enrolls 7,101 students of which 80% live off campus.

Over the past four years, Armstrong has been increasing the number of courses and programs that are offered through online and blended formats in support of Armstrong's strategic goals and in alignment with the USG's strategic plan. In 2011, Armstrong created an Office of Online Learning to work collaboratively with the administration, deans, faculty, Educational Technology Committee, and Information Technology Services to expand the University's online and blended offerings. The Office of Online Learning was charged with working with each of Armstrong's four colleges to meet projected online and blended enrollments for summer 2012.

In fall 2011, the Office of Online Learning conducted an institutional climate assessment regarding Armstrong's online and blended programs. The climate assessment revealed:

- Armstrong was expanding its online and blended offerings but most of the program and course development was being led by each of the four colleges;
- Faculty development was being offered through Information Technology Services; however, the training focused on the use of technology and did not integrate pedagogy; and
- There was a high level of faculty interest in new faculty development initiatives to support online and blended education.

Based on the climate assessment, the Office of Online Learning developed several one-hour workshops and a four-week Boot Camp for course development to be launched in mid- and late fall as part of a new faculty development initiative.

### **The Problem**

The new workshops and the four-week Boot Camp, offered through the Office of Online Learning, were extensively promoted during fall 2012 at Armstrong. However, a combined total of 10 faculty of Armstrong's 258 full-time faculty attended the five workshops offered in October and November 2011 – four faculty were repeat attendees. Additionally, registration for the four-week Boot Camp held steady at only five participants following six weeks of campus-wide announcements. Although the design and implementation of the faculty development infrastructure was being built, the problem was low *faculty participation*, which would greatly affect meeting the projected online and blended enrollments for summer 2012.

### **Presentation of the Case**

The Office of Online Learning set up several meetings with the deans, department chairs, and faculty across the four colleges. The collective feedback from the meetings indicated that faculty wanted to be more collaboratively involved in the development of the online and blended initiatives. Although faculty members were a key part of the climate assessment, it was decided that increased involvement and additional data and feedback from the faculty would be needed to build the online and blended infrastructure. Four immediate recommendations were put forward:

1. Hold open sessions with the faculty to discuss and answer questions about Armstrong's plans for online and blended education;
2. Rename the Office of Online Learning to the Office of Online & Blended Learning;
3. Change the name of the Boot Camp to the Teaching Fellows Program; and
4. Conduct an institutional study, in which faculty and deans are administered a survey, to collect data and feedback about their needs, concerns, challenges, recommendations, etc. regarding faculty participation in online and blended education.

**Open Sessions.** Four open sessions were held during the months of November and December 2011. A total 55 faculty attended the sessions. The open sessions highlighted student demographics (national, statewide, local, institutional), Armstrong's strategic goals, USG's strategic plan, and information related to Armstrong's impending 2013 Decennial Affirmation Review with the Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC).

**Office of Online & Blended Learning.** During the open sessions many faculty shared that they did not attend the workshops offered by the Office of Online Learning because they did not want to teach online. They were interested in potentially teaching a hybrid or partially online course but they did not want to teach fully online courses. Even though the workshop descriptions included best practices for hybrid, partially online, and fully online courses, there was a perceived understanding that there would be more of an emphasis on "online" teaching than hybrid or partially online. Approval was given to change the name of the office to the Office of Online & Blended Learning.

**Boot Camp to Teaching Fellows Program.** During the meetings with faculty, it was shared that the term "Boot Camp" to some faculty may imply a sense of urgency to quickly train faculty to teach online. Several faculty members, including some who had registered for the Boot Camp, shared that changing "Boot Camp" to "Teaching Fellows Program" would more accurately reflect the focus on quality and rigor that faculty wanted to see in both course development and instruction in online and blended education. Additionally, faculty shared that extending the time of the program from four weeks to eight or twelve weeks would provide faculty with more time to collaborate with the Office of Online & Blended Learning in support of course development and implementation. The term Boot Camp was changed to Teaching Fellows Program and the length of the session was changed from four to 12 weeks.

**Institutional Study.**<sup>1</sup> In spring 2012, the *Office of Online & Blended Learning* began working collaboratively with Armstrong's Educational Technology Committee, Information Technology Services, and the Chief of Staff in the Office of the President on a new institutional study and the development of survey instruments to collect data and feedback from all full-time faculty and deans at Armstrong. The purpose of the institutional study was threefold:

1. To identify factors that motivate and inhibit faculty participation in distance education at Armstrong.
2. To address institutional factors that inhibit faculty participation in online education.
3. To design new faculty development initiatives to support faculty participation and retention in distance education.

The Armstrong study built upon an institutional study conducted at The George Washington University (GWU) in 1997 that examined factors influencing faculty participation in distance education (Betts, 1998). The surveys used in the GWU study were updated, approved by Armstrong's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and pilot tested using the test-retest reliability method.

In May 2001, surveys were sent electronically to 291 full-time faculty and four deans employed at Armstrong. The number of respondents and response rates are provided below:

- 4 deans (100% response rate);
- 175 of 291 faculty (60% response rate);
  - 90 faculty (51%) self-identified as being "having participated in distance education" (i.e., have taught, co-taught or developed distance education courses)
  - 85 (49%) self-identified as being "not having participated distance education" (i.e., have not taught, co-taught or developed distance education courses) (Betts, 2014).

It should be noted that the term "distance education" was used in the Armstrong study since (a) it was in alignment with terminology used by the University System of Georgia that includes online and blended program formats, and it (b) aligned with the terminology used in the GWU study.

## Findings

The Armstrong institutional survey revealed that all four colleges had faculty participating in distance education. Fifty-one percent of the faculty self-identified as having participated in distance education and 49% self-identified as not having participated in distance education.

**Motivating Factors.** The surveys examined 29 factors that motivate faculty participation in distance education. The faculty and deans were asked the following questions.

- Faculty with distance education experience: "rate the extent to which you agree the factors listed below **have motivated** you to participate (teach and/or develop courses) in distance education."
- Faculty with no distance education experience: "rate the extent to which you agree the factors listed below **would motivate** you to participate (teach and/or develop courses) in distance education."
- Deans: "rate the extent to which you agree the factors listed below **would motivate** the faculty in your College to participate (teach and/or develop courses) in distance education" (Betts, 2014).

A five-point Likert scale was used (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree) for rating the 29 motivating factors. The list of 29 motivating factors from the Armstrong surveys is included below.

1. Personal motivation to use technology
2. Opportunity for scholarly pursuit
3. Release time (e.g., reduced teaching load)

4. Requirement by department
5. Support and encouragement from dean or program director/chair
6. Job security
7. Financial compensation for participation (e.g., stipend, overload, merit pay)
8. Support and encouragement from program director/chair
9. Institutional pressure/expectation
10. Opportunity for grants for research
11. Support and encouragement from departmental colleagues
12. Intellectual challenge
13. Overall job satisfaction
14. Part of teaching load (assigned courses to teach)
15. Technical support provided by the institution
16. Career exploration
17. Credit toward promotion and tenure
18. Distance education professional development/training provided by the institution
19. Greater course flexibility for students
20. Great course flexibility for faculty
21. Opportunity to diversify program offerings
22. Recognition and awards
23. Ability to reach students who cannot come to campus
24. Opportunity to diversify my teaching
25. Access to adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching
26. Support and encouragement from institution's administrators
27. Opportunity to increase access to students with disabilities
28. Technology incentives for faculty involved in distance education such as teaching and/or course development (e.g., Laptop, iPad other hardware, software, etc.)
29. To support University System of Georgia in increasing the number of available online courses to students across the state

Table 1 includes the top five highest mean scores for the three groups (i.e., distance education participants, the distance education non-participants, and deans) for factors that have motivated/would motivate faculty participation in distance education. The data in Table 1 reveals there were actually no common factors between the *distance education participants* and *deans* and no common factors between the *distance education participants* and *non-participants* when reviewing the top five highest mean scores that have motivated/would motivate faculty participation in distance education. However, the *distance education non-participants* and the *deans* shared in common all five of the top highest mean scores.

Table 1

*Top Five Highest Mean Scores for Factors that Have Motivated/Would Motivate Faculty Participation in Distance Education at Armstrong with Standard Deviations in Parentheses*

	<b>Faculty Who Have Participated in Distance Education</b>	<b>Faculty Who Have Not Participated in Distance Education</b>	<b>Deans</b>
1	Personal motivation to use technology 4.26 (1.02)	Financial compensation for participation (e.g., stipend, overload) 3.76 (1.42)	Release time (e.g., reduced teaching load) 4.75 (0.50)
2	Greater course flexibility for students 4.07 (1.02)	Release time (e.g., reduced teaching load) 3.65 (1.40)	Technical support provided by institution 4.50 (0.57)
3	*Greater course flexibility for faculty 4.01(1.02)	Access to adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching 3.54 (1.42)	Financial compensation for participation (e.g., stipend, overload) 4.50 (0.57)
	Ability to reach students who cannot come to	Opportunity to increase access to students	Technology incentives for faculty who are involved in distance education

4	campus 3.88 (1.34)	with disabilities 3.52 (1.28)	(e.g., Laptop, iPad other hardware, software, etc.) 4.25 (0.96)
5	Overall job satisfaction 3.85 (1.15)	Technical support provided by institution 3.49 (1.39)	Access to adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching 4.25 (0.96)

Note: An asterisk (\*) indicates commonality between faculty who have participated in distance education and faculty who have not participated in distance education. A plus (+) indicates commonality between faculty who have participated in distance education and deans. Shading in the cells indicates common factors between faculty who have not participated in distance education and deans.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to determine the relationship between what participators, non-participators, and deans identified as factors that motivate faculty participation in distance education. Post hoc comparisons were performed using the Scheffe post hoc method. The data revealed that 15 of 29 factors indicated significant differences between what participators, non-participators, and deans identified as factors that motivate faculty to participate in distance education. The significant difference, in most cases, was between faculty who have participated in distance education and faculty who have not participated in distance education.

**Inhibiting Factors.** The study examined 20 factors that inhibit faculty participation in distance education. The faculty and deans were asked the following questions.

- Faculty with distance education experience: "rate the extent to which you agree the factors listed below **would inhibit** your decision to continue participating (teach and/or develop courses) in distance education."
- Faculty with no distance education experience: "rate the extent to which you agree the factors listed below **would inhibit** your decision to participate (teach and/or develop courses) in distance education."
- Deans: "rate the extent to which you agree the factors listed below **would inhibit** the faculty in your College from participating (teach and/or develop courses) in distance education." (Betts, 2014).

A five-point Likert scale was used (1-Strongly Disagree to 5-Strongly Agree) for rating the 29 motivating factors. The list of the 20 inhibiting factors from the Armstrong survey is included below.

1. Concern about faculty workload
2. Negative comments made by colleagues about distance education teaching experiences
3. Lack of distance education training provided by the institution
4. Lack of support and encouragement from departmental colleagues
5. Lack of release time (e.g., no reduced teaching load)
6. Lack of professional prestige
7. Lack of a technological background
8. Lack of support and encouragement from dean
9. Lack of support and encouragement from program director/chair
10. Lack of financial compensation for participation (e.g. stipend, overload, merit pay)
11. Concern about quality of courses
12. Lack of technical support provided by the institution
13. Lack of adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching
14. Lack of support and encouragement from institution's administrators
15. Institutional pressure/expectation
16. Concern about quality of students
17. Lack of recognition and awards
18. Concern about negative press surrounding distance education
19. Lack of credit toward tenure and promotion
20. Lack of technology incentives for faculty who are involved in distance education (e.g., Laptop, iPad, other hardware, software, etc.)

Table 2 includes the top five highest mean scores for the three groups (i.e., distance education participators, the distance education non-participators, and deans) for factors that would inhibit faculty participation in distance education. The

*Distance education participators* and the *deans* had three factors in common when examining the top five highest mean scores for factors that would inhibit faculty participation in distance education. The *Distance education participators* and the *non-participators* had three inhibiting factors in common. Similarly, the *distance education non-participators* and the *deans* had three factors in common when examining the top factors that would inhibit faculty participation in distance education. Table 2 reveals concerns across all three groups about distance education in regards to technology, technical support, quality (e.g., course, students), and time (e.g., release time, workload).

Table 2

*Top Five Highest Mean Scores for Factors that Would Inhibit Faculty Participation in Distance Education at Armstrong with Standard Deviation in Parentheses*

	<b>Faculty with Experience in Distance Education</b>	<b>Faculty with No Experience in Distance Education</b>	<b>Deans</b>
1	*+Lack of adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching 4.26 (1.03)	*Concern about quality of courses 4.33 (1.10)	+Lack of adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching 4.75 (0.50)
2	*+Lack of technical support provided by the institution 3.86 (1.27)	*Concern about faculty workload 4.31 (1.22)	+Lack of technical support provided by the institution 4.75 (0.50)
3	*+Concern about faculty workload 3.75 (1.28)	*Lack of adequate equipment (e.g., computer, software, etc.) to support distance education teaching 4.15 (1.31)	+Concern about faculty workload 4.75 (0.50)
4	Lack of release time (e.g., no reduced teaching load) 3.59 (1.43)	Concern about quality of the students 4.13 (1.11)	Lack of a technological background 4.50 (0.58)
5	*Concern about quality of courses 3.54 (1.37)	*Lack of technical support provided by the institution 4.07 (1.31)	Lack of distance education training provided by the institution 4.50 (0.58)

Note: An asterisk (\*) indicates commonality between faculty who have participated in distance education and faculty who have not participated in distance education. A plus (+) indicates commonality between faculty who have participated in distance education and deans. Shading in the cells indicates common factors between faculty who have not participated in distance education and deans.

A MANOVA was run on the inhibiting factors. Post hoc comparisons were performed using the Scheffe post hoc method. The data revealed that 5 of 20 factors indicated significant differences between what participators, non-participators, and deans identified as factors that would inhibit faculty participation in distance education. The significant differences were found primarily between faculty who have participated in distance education and faculty who have not participated in distance education (Betts, 2014).

**Interest in Faculty Development.** Distance education participators indicated higher levels of interest in faculty development than non-participators. As shown in Table 3, over two-thirds of the distance education participators shared interest in both instruction and course development in distance education. Non-participators showed higher levels of interest with hybrid instruction and partially online course development with lower levels of interest in fully online instruction and fully online course development. Less than 10% of non-participators indicated they had been asked to teach, develop, or co-teach a distance education course (Betts, 2014). This may have been one of the primary reasons for the faculty requesting the name change from Office of Online Learning to the Office of Online & Blended Learning.

Table 3

*Faculty Interest in Faculty Development for Instruction & Course Development at Armstrong*

	Fully Online Instruction	Partially Online Instruction	Hybrid Instruction	Fully Online Course Development	Partially Online Course Development	Hybrid Course Development
Faculty Who Have Participated in Distance Education	72%	66%	70%	73%	66%	69%
Faculty Who Have Not Participated in Distance Education	29%	46%	58%	29%	46%	54%

## Results & Implementation

The open sessions and results from Armstrong institutional study provided critical data and feedback to support faculty participation and retention in distance education as well as the design of new faculty development initiatives, an online course development process, and an online course review process. The full results of the Armstrong study are available through the *Factors Influencing Faculty Participation & Retention In Online & Blended Education* (Betts, 2014).

The results from the Armstrong study were immediately used to address inhibiting factors to faculty participation in distance education. The data was then used to develop and expand six new faculty development initiatives, a new online course development process, and a new online course review process. The overview below provides the sequential steps that were taken to create an infrastructure to increase faculty participation and retention in distance education.

## Inhibiting Factors

Armstrong immediately addressed the inhibiting factors identified by the distance education participators, non-participators, and deans. Armstrong conducted a full audit of the technology used by faculty across the campus. A plan was developed and implemented to replace older computers and laptops with new ones within one to two semesters. Concurrently, Information Technology Services and Office of Blended & Online Learning met to design faculty development initiatives that provided faculty with pedagogically based workshops offered by the Office of Online & Blended Learning followed by technology based-training offered by the Information Technology Services. Technical support by the Information Technology Services was increased through expanded office hours and staff outreach.

## Online Quality

The quality of online courses was a primary concern of both the participators and non-participators in distance education. Therefore, the Office of Online & Blended Learning worked collaboratively with Academic Affairs, the deans, and the Educational Technology Committee to develop an online course development process and an online course review process. Both of these new processes were developed collaboratively with faculty and implemented in fall 2012 following the Armstrong institutional study.

**Online Course Development Process.** The Online Course Development (OCD) Process at Armstrong is designed to assist faculty with ensuring that fully online and partially online courses are in alignment with the United States Department of Education, SACS-COC, and the Program Integrity Rules in support of quality design principles. Workshops are offered on the OCD Process. The Office of Online & Blended Learning also works one-on-one with departments within the colleges that are developing new fully online or partially online courses as well as transitioning current course content online. All fully online and partially online courses at Armstrong must be reviewed by the Online Course Review (OCR) Subcommittee, which operates as part of the Educational Technology Committee.

**Online Course Review Process.** Armstrong has an Online Course Review (OCR) Process to assist faculty with ensuring that fully online and partially online courses are in alignment with the United States Department of Education, SACS-COC, and the Program Integrity Rules in support of quality design principles. All fully online and partially online courses are reviewed by the Online Course Review (OCR) Subcommittee, which operates as part of the Educational Technology Committee. Armstrong has selected the Quality Matters rubric to provide the framework for the OCR Process and has integrated direct references to federal regulations, SACS accreditation, Universal Design for Learning, and Section 508.

## New Faculty Development Initiatives & Participation

The open sessions and the Armstrong institutional study provided detailed feedback to support the design and implementation of new faculty development initiatives. The descriptions for six faculty development initiatives that resulted from the open session and 2012 Armstrong institutional study are provided below.

1. 60-minute Workshops
2. eLearning Faculty Status
3. Teaching Fellows Program (previously called Boot Camp for Online Learning)
4. Faculty Showcase
5. University System of Georgia Webcasts
6. Quality Matters

**60-Minute Workshops.** The Office of Online & Blended Learning offers workshops on a monthly basis that actively engage faculty in pedagogical practices to support student learning and engagement in distance education. Private workshops can be scheduled with the departments and colleges. Workshops are also co-hosted, depending upon the topic, by the Office of Online & Blended Learning and Information Technology Services. Sample workshops hosted between July 2012 and January 2014 included:

- Thinking about Teaching a Hybrid, Partially Online, or Fully Online Course?
- Optimizing Desire2Learn: Tips, Short Cuts & Planning Now for Summer Course
- Desire2Learn Rubrics Tool
- Active Learning & Student Engagement: Creating Dynamic Discussion Boards & Assignments that Align with Course Outcomes
- Understanding the Credit Hour Policy & Required Alternative Equivalency for Fully Online, Partially Online & Hybrid Courses
- Section 508 for Word and PowerPoint
- Armstrong's Online Course Review Process
- Incorporating "Flipped Classroom" Concepts through Embedded Videos, Guest Speakers, Web Resources & Action Research
- Blackboard Collaborate Pedagogy
- Turnitin: Overview and Hands on Tutorial for Instructors
- Google App Pedagogy

**eLearning Faculty Status.** The eLearning Faculty Status course is offered online and faculty receive a certificate upon completion. The eLearning Faculty Status course supports faculty who are teaching or developing fully online and partially online courses. The interactive content in this course provides faculty and adjunct instructors with a detailed understanding of teaching, learning, and student success in online and blended education as well as the experience of being an online student. The course modules cover topics including, but not limited to, federal compliance, SACS-COC accreditation, Program Integrity Rules, Section 508, optimizing educational technology, Scholarship of Teaching & Learning, Alternative Instructional Equivalency, Quality Matters, active learning, neuroplasticity, student and faculty engagement, etc. The course also covers best practices and strategies for instruction, course development, and assessment. The eLearning Faculty Status course is currently being reviewed and revised to provide new specializations for faculty.

**Teaching Fellows Program.** The Teaching Fellows Program for Online & Blended Learning began as a Boot Camp. Based on faculty recommendations, the 4-week Boot Camp transitioned to become a 12-week Teaching Fellow Program offered through a blended format. Each of the 12 weeks covers critical topics relating to online and blended education including, but not limited to, federal compliance, SACS-COC accreditation, Program Integrity Rules, Section 508 compliance, Scholarship of Teaching & Learning, Quality Matters, Alternative Instructional Equivalency, student and faculty engagement, assessment, etc. The 12-week course also covers best practices and strategies for course development and instruction. Faculty members are required to create a course template in Desire2Learn and weekly lessons with lectures and activities that are all Section 508 compliant. The Teaching Fellows Program requires faculty to come to campus for some face-to-face sessions as well as have faculty complete weekly lessons and assignments online.

As part of the 12-week program, faculty simultaneously completes the requirements for eLearning Teaching Status. At the end of the 12 weeks, faculty present their syllabi, Weekly Lesson & Activity Plans, rubrics, recorded content, alternative instructional equivalency examples, and flipped eClassroom concepts that have been integrated into their course. Faculty members are also asked to showcase their updated or new courses in the Faculty Showcase for Online & Blended Learning as well as serve as guest speakers at some workshops offered by the Office of Online & Blended Learning.

**Faculty Showcase.** The faculty showcase is an annual event that was designed and launched in spring 2012 following recommendations by several faculty in the Teaching Fellows Program. The Faculty Showcase enables faculty who complete the Teaching Fellows Program course to share their innovative teaching strategies, new technologies, and assessments that engage their students in fully online and partially online courses across all four colleges. The Faculty Showcase is held in a large conference room on campus. The Faculty Showcase events are also "live" streamed using Blackboard Collaborate so faculty who were unable to attend the event on campus can watch it "live" through their computer or mobile device as well as watch the archived event.

**University System of Georgia Faculty Development Webcasts.** The University System of Georgia hosts webcasts throughout the year that support teaching, learning, and assessment in online and blended education. Armstrong's Office Online & Blended Learning adds all USG webcast dates to the monthly faculty development calendar. Invitations are sent out with reminders to Armstrong faculty to attend the webcasts collectively in the Office of Online & Blended Learning's seminar room or at their given location via computer or mobile device. Faculty who attend the "live" webcasts collectively in the seminar rooms often further discuss the content of the webcasts following the session. Archive links of the USG webcasts are sent out to Armstrong faculty following each session.

**Quality Matters.** The Office of Online & Blended Learning worked closely with Academic Affairs and the deans of the four colleges to provide faculty with the opportunity to attend Quality Matters workshops both on-campus and online. Each Quality Matters workshop provided faculty with a certificate of completion. Armstrong also provided faculty with the opportunity to serve as Quality Matters Peer Reviewers and Master Reviewers. Approximately 30 faculty completed the QM Rubric (APPQMR) Workshop. Additionally, approximately 10 faculty have become Peer Reviewers and Master Reviewers since implementing this initiative.

## Faculty Development Participation

Following the Armstrong institutional survey, faculty development data was collected for an 18-month period between July 1, 2012 and January 1, 2014 to include as part of the overall faculty development data from July 2011 when the Office of Online & Blended Learning was founded. The data in Table 1 highlights the number of faculty development initiatives and faculty attendance between July 1, 2011 and January 1, 2014.

Table 1

*Faculty Development Initiatives: Sessions & Attendance, July 1, 2011 to January 1, 2014*

	Number of Sessions	Attendance
60 Minute Workshops	68	353
eLearning Faculty Status	8	76
Teaching Fellows Program	4	36
Faculty Showcase	2	110
USG Webcasts	13	116
Quality Matters	6	41

## Recommendations

There are eight recommendations that build upon this case study. The recommendations include replicable strategies on how to increase faculty participation and retention in online and blended programs using on data, collaboration, support, and ongoing assessment.

1. *Faculty Involvement:* Increasing faculty participation and retention in online and blended programs begins with faculty involvement in the development of the institution's strategic plan for online and blended education. Faculty members need to be engaged in the conversations about what the institution wants to achieve with online and blended education and how it can achieve the goals. Being partners in the building of the plan increases ownership of the process and its outcomes.
2. *Barriers to Participation in Distance Education:* Once the institution's strategic plan for online and blended education is developed, an institution needs to recognize and address barriers (i.e., inhibiting factors) that may prohibit faculty from participating or continuing to participate in online and blended education. This is

an ongoing process as technology continues to evolve, learning platforms are updated, and faculty needs and concerns change.

3. *Faculty Time*: Recognize the ongoing demands placed on faculty time. An institution needs to acknowledge the time and effort needed to develop courses for online and blended education programs. Faculty members need time to attend training on the learning management system and how to effectively utilize its features as well as attend workshops on effective pedagogy in the online environment. Faculty members need release time or summer teaching grants to develop content for their distance education courses.
4. *Access to Adequate Technologies, Training & Support*: Delivery of courses in online and blended programs requires more than just an updated computer. Instructional designers and technology specialists need to work with faculty to identify their technology needs (e.g., hardware, software, etc.) so they can deliver high quality instruction through their course delivery format. Faculty members need training on how to use and optimize their computer, new software, and learning platforms. Additionally, institutions need to provide ongoing technical support for faculty so they are able to develop innovative and dynamic course content as well as actively engage in their distance education courses.
5. *Faculty Expertise - Content*: It is important to recognize that faculty expertise is the content of the discipline. An institution needs to acknowledge that a faculty member may not be an expert in the area of web instructional design. Faculty members need to be supported by instructional designers who can assist them in presenting the content they have developed effectively in the online environment as well as actively engage students in learning and assessment.
6. *Quality by Example*: The quality of online education is questioned for various reasons. Therefore, an institution needs to demonstrate what high quality online learning looks like. Faculty need to be able to showcase their work, illustrating the high quality of instruction and learning to their colleagues. Faculty engagement with external organizations that exemplify best practices, such as Quality Matters, enables institutions to extend faculty development beyond the campus and to provide a framework for quality course reviews. The development of an online course development process and an online course review process also support the institutional commitment to quality and provide quality examples to faculty who may be new to distance education.
7. *Campus Collaboration*: Faculty success in online and blended education requires collaboration across campus. Offices that provide training or services related to teaching, learning, assessment, academic support, and technology need to work together to reduce redundancy in training and conflicting schedules. It is important with increasing budget cuts to find ways to creatively, collaboratively, and seamlessly develop a calendar of events that optimizes institutional resources and funding to support faculty success in distance education.
8. *Ongoing Evaluation*: Data driven decision-making is critical to the long-term sustainability of online and blended programs. Formative and summative evaluation is needed so administrators can proactively, not reactively, support faculty throughout the year. From July 2011 to January 2014, Armstrong's Office of Online & Blended Learning was engaged in 18 research initiatives including, but not limited to, an institutional climate assessment; pre/post enrollment evaluations for faculty development initiatives; focus groups; interviews; market segment analyses; an institutional survey; annual faculty development needs assessments; etc. The collected data at Armstrong has been used for decision-making related to faculty development initiatives, modifications in training programs, and expanding faculty support.

Increasing faculty participation and retention in online and blended programs begins with the "faculty." Faculty need to be involved in the development of online and blended program initiatives from the beginning. They need to have their expertise valued. They need to be supported in an ongoing basis in order to develop and teach high quality courses in online and blended programs. Faculty members must also be recognized for their work, time, and commitment to academic excellence. Building an online and blended infrastructure does not mean faculty will teach. However, collaboratively developing online and blended programs with the faculty, providing support, and providing time will increase faculty participation and enable an institution to begin offering world-class online and blended programs that meet the needs of the students and the faculty.

1 The compendium article "Factors Influencing Faculty Participation & Retention In Online & Blended Education" provides a full overview of the Armstrong institutional study and is available through *Online Journal of Distance Education Administrators*. Betts, K. S. (2014). Factors influencing faculty participation & retention in online & blended education. *Online Journal of Distance Education Administrators*, 17(1). Retrieved from <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl/spring171/betts171.html>

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