Teaching, Learning, Equity and Change

Realizing the Promise of Professional Learning

New Data and Recommendations from the Field

everylearner everywhere

Achieving the Dream

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Acknowledgments

Suggested Citation

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Every Learner Everywhere is a network of twelve partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work aims to advance equity in higher education centers on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institution practices and market trends. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Research shows that professional learning (often called "faculty development") has the potential to transform teaching and advance equity, learning and student success. Yet notable gaps in practice undercut its impact. This report, *Teaching, Learning, Equity and Change: Realizing the Promise of Professional Learning*, can inform the strategic action needed to realize the promise of professional learning at our nation's equity-focused campuses.

Recent research demonstrates the effectiveness of professional learning in advancing equity-focused change in education.[1] It also provides a clear picture of the best practices used by effective Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs). Yet key questions remain:

> *"We act on the premise that faculty engagement and faculty development will lead to improved teaching and learning and student success, including retention and completion,"* explains one high performing CAO.

- What is the status of professional learning on campuses serving most of the nation's racially minoritized and poverty-affected students?

- How do these institutions deploy professional learning to support equity-focused teaching and learning?

- What does best practice look like? What obstacles and gaps in practice get in the way?

- What kind of assistance would be helpful?

In 2022, a team of field practitioner leaders from Achieving the Dream and the Online Learning Consortium gathered data to explore these questions. We conducted a survey with nearly a hundred respondents – CTL directors and staff, as well as Provosts and other campus leaders. They represent Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), community colleges as well as research universities. We also interviewed 20 leaders, intentionally including those from campuses with exemplary CTLs. This report summarizes our findings and recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

As detailed in the report, our findings include:

Growing interest, lagging investment

Our data (see Section IIA) suggests that across higher education there is a high level of interest in professional learning and growing awareness of its strategic value in improving teaching and advancing equity. We found this awareness to be particularly high at institutions focused on access and equity, such as MSIs and community colleges.

However, this interest has not been matched by investment. In our survey, only 39.3 percent of all respondents agreed with the statement, "Our CTL is adequately funded." At MSIs, the figure was only 29.4 percent. Asked about staffing, the response pattern was similar. "I am an office of one," reported a CTL director at one MSI. This underscores recent research that has documented systemic inequalities in funding and staffing that disproportionately constrain the power of professional learning.[2]

Professional learning as a strategic intervention

Colleges with high-performing CTLs embed professional learning in strategic plans and resource allocation processes (see Section IIA). They use institutional and grant funds to support quality programs led by teams of faculty and CTL staff. They use promotion and reward structures to incentivize faculty engagement and build a culture that values learning. Leaders from these colleges take this approach because they see the strategic importance of professional learning for improving retention and enrollment, advancing equity, and achieving other mission-critical goals. "We act on the premise that faculty engagement and faculty development will lead to improved teaching and learning and student success, including retention and completion," explains one high-performing CAO.

Priority focal points

Our survey asked respondents to identify topics they address (see Section IIB). At MSIs, community colleges and other institutions, the four most common topics are:

1. Active learning, collaborative learning, and other evidence-based pedagogies

2. Inclusive or Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

3. Strategies for making online and hybrid learning more engaging for students

4. Improving teaching and learning related to Student Learning Outcomes

Our data suggests CTLs were reshaped by the COVID pandemic and broad attention to systemic racial inequity. Supporting the shift to remote learning required CTLs to develop new methods for virtual professional learning, which continue to be widely used.

Gaps around awareness, alignment and assessment

Leaders of high-performing CTLs are keenly aware of best practices in professional learning and research-based resources such as the *ACE/POD Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix*, the *New Learning Compact*, and the *ATD Teaching and Learning Toolkit*.

More broadly, however, our data found fieldwide practitioner awareness of such resources to be low, including at MSIs and community colleges (see Section IIC). This may contribute to another issue revealed by our data: uneven alignment with research-based principles of good practice. This report spotlights significant gaps, including:

- Program duration: Despite strong evidence that sustained programs are essential to effectiveness, our data suggests that isolated workshops are the most common professional learning structure on campuses nationwide, including at MSIs and community colleges.

- Program design: Research shows that collaborative programs that leverage educator expertise are more likely to build motivation and advance teaching improvement. Yet our data suggests that, in practice, this principle is inconsistently applied.

- Program assessment: Evaluation of professional learning is critical to program quality, and yet meaningful evaluation efforts remain relatively rare.

Increased awareness of evidence-based resources and the alignment of practice with good practice design principles will be crucial to ensure that professional learning realizes its promise.

A need for capacity-building partnerships

Our survey found strong interest in building partnerships to strengthen professional learning (see Section IID). The most common requests for external assistance were:

1. Help us develop a long-term plan for strengthening our professional development work.

2. Help campus leadership learn ways to strategically deploy professional development.

3. Help our campus professional development leaders identify useful resources, tools and strategies.

Interest in capacity-building partnerships was particularly high at MSIs and community colleges. For example, 92.8 percent of MSI respondents would welcome this type of support.

RECOMMENDATIONS: FULFILLING THE PROMISE

What could be done to strengthen CTLs and professional learning effectiveness at community colleges and other institutions that serve racially minoritized and poverty-affected students? Our recommendations are detailed at the conclusion of the report and briefly listed here.

1. We encourage *Professional Learning Leaders* to:

- **Engage educators as partners.** *Employ co-constructed design principles to leverage educators' expertise, build motivation and activate classroom change.*

- **Design sustained programs.** *Find ways to engage educators in the sustained programs (e.g., Faculty Learning Communities) that yield teaching improvement and improved equity outcomes.*

- **Assess the impact of professional learning.** *Move beyond headcounts to correlate participation in professional learning with change in practice and improved student outcomes.*

- **Develop a strategic vision.** *Using research-based standards, review the structures and programs of your CTL, envision where it could be in 3–5 years, and pursue strategies to realize your vision.*

2. We encourage *Institutional Leaders* to:

- **Invest in your CTL.** *Provide the funds (through internal budget reallocation and/or the securing of external funds) needed to support CTL capacity building and purposeful use of effective, research-based professional learning design.*

- **Plan strategic deployment.** *Given the enrollment, retention and completion challenges facing MSIs and community colleges, campus executives must highlight professional learning in campus strategic planning and deploy it to advance mission-critical initiatives.*

- **Engage part-time faculty.** *Focus greater professional learning support on the part-time faculty so important to teaching and learning at MSIs, community colleges and other broad access institutions.*

- **Demonstrate your commitment to teaching improvement.** *Leverage faculty reward systems to recognize engagement and power cost-effective teaching improvement efforts.*

3. We encourage *Ecosystem Partners* (e.g., funders, state systems, and national higher education networks) to:

- **Support capacity building.** *Offer programs that help MSIs and community colleges develop and advance strategic plans for strengthening CTLs, building institutional capacity and implementing more effective professional learning design.*

- **Build leadership awareness.** *Create opportunities for campus leaders from MSIs and community colleges to work with their peers, examining research and jointly developing strategies for linking professional learning with broader change initiatives.*

- **Help disseminate professional learning resources.** *Work to put available research-based professional learning resources and planning guides into the hands of CTL leaders at MSIs, community colleges and other broad access institutions.*

- **Invest in effectiveness.** *Our examination of professional learning at under-resourced MSIs and community colleges suggests that exemplary CTLs use grant funding to leverage institutional support and spark broad change. To spur more effective change efforts, RFP structures and funding programs for equity-focused teaching and learning should require a thoughtful professional learning plan.*

None of these steps will by itself transform the field. Yet change is possible. A concerted effort that builds partnerships and advances broad conversation will go far to ensuring more effective change initiatives, improved teaching and learning, and greater equity for our students.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRACTICE

ACE/POD Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix is an evidence-based template for leaders of professional learning to use as a frame for goal-setting, strategic planning, benchmarking, self-study, program review, and reflection. This tool is helpful for assessing the status of a CTL (or similar professional learning unit) and program offerings to improve impact and advocate for funding and resources.

The New Learning Compact: A Framework for Professional Learning & Educational Change focuses central and unifying attention on professional learning -- the nexus of teaching, learning, professional development, and institutional change. The Framework aims to strategically link change in individual practice with essential issues of community, institutional structure and systemic policy.

ATD Teaching & Learning Toolkit: A Research-Based Guide to Building a Culture of Teaching & Learning Excellence: Grounded in research and informed by the strong work of colleges across the Achieving the Dream network, this resource supports cross-functional college teams in leveraging high-impact professional learning as a lever to advance equity-focused strategic change in teaching and learning.

To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development is the flagship peer-reviewed publication of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD Network). The journal is open-access and publishes two issues annually, available electronically.

I. Introduction

Across higher education, colleges and universities seek effective strategies to advance student learning and achieve greater equity in student outcomes. Nowhere is this challenge more pressing than at campuses serving the most poverty-affected students and racially minoritized students – Minority Serving Institutions (including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic Serving Institutions), community colleges, and other broad-access institutions.

As discussed below, researchers have identified evidence-based teaching practices that build student success.[3] They have shown that professional learning (often called "faculty development") is critical to scaling the high-quality implementation of these pedagogies.[4] We now know professional learning can support educators in effectively implementing new, evidence-based pedagogies which translates to increased equity and improved student learning.[5]

We now know that professional learning can support educators in effectively implementing new, evidence-based pedagogies.

Thanks to this research, much is known about best practices in professional learning. Yet key questions remain: What is the status of professional learning on the campuses serving most of the nation's poverty-affected and racially minoritized students? How do these institutions deploy professional learning to support equity-focused teaching and learning? What does best practice look like? What obstacles and gaps in practice get in the way? What kinds of assistance would be helpful?

Spotlighting campuses vital to achieving equity, this report explores those questions. It analyzes quantitative data and interviews with professional learning practitioners to offer vital insight to educators, campus executives and higher education stakeholders.

A BODY OF ACTIONABLE SCHOLARSHIP

The research on evidence-based pedagogy is well known. Studies show that the quality of educational practice is critical to student learning, retention and completion.[6] "Instructional quality," found one major literature review, "is positively correlated with student learning and motivation, retention, course pass rates and subsequent interest in a subject, all of which have the potential to decrease course retake and time to the degree."[7] As one respected study of the success of women of color in STEM fields at 135 colleges concluded: "Simply stated, pedagogy matters."[8]

These studies demonstrate the impact of specific pedagogies when "done well" – when implemented with fidelity to research-based principles of practice. "Done well," active learning pedagogies build student engagement and achievement and close equity gaps, as do High-Impact Practices such as First-Year Seminars and learning communities.[9] Culturally responsive teaching addresses inequitable outcomes experienced by students with racialized identities.[10] Effective use of digital learning tools and systems is grounded in engaging pedagogy.[11]

Professional learning helps scale efforts to advance equity, strengthen retention and enrollment, and address other mission-critical needs.

Research has also shown that professional learning can be a powerful tool for engaging educators, helping them effectively implement evidence-based pedagogies and collaboratively advance holistic student support initiatives.[12] Professional learning helps scale efforts to advance equity, strengthen retention and enrollment, and address mission-critical needs.[13]

A leading example of this new research, *Faculty Development and Student Learning: Assessing the Connections*, studied professional learning programs at two colleges that engaged faculty with evidence-based practices such as writing across the curriculum.[14] The authors asked whether these programs helped faculty learn targeted methods and change their instructional practice. Moreover, they examined whether these changes in faculty practice advanced student learning.

HIGH IMPACT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

We use professional learning to reframe what is traditionally labeled faculty development. We recognize that students are not the only learners in higher education, but also faculty, advisors and the academic support staff needed to address the whole student. We also understand that high impact professional learning involves what is sometimes called educational development, the systemic strategies and structures that support on-going professional learning and link it to broader institutional change.

Extensive examination of the evidence produced a clear conclusion: "Well designed faculty development definitely yields great value," prompting "changes in teaching practices that generate corresponding changes in student learning, as demonstrated in actual student work products."[15]

Studies at Purdue, Creighton, LaGuardia and elsewhere have affirmed this finding, showing that professional learning, done well, supports educators as they deepen teaching quality and foster improvements in equity and student success.[16] A Bronx Community College study concludes:

> *The critical implication is that intensive professional development is worth the investment of money and time, as it helps an institution attain the goals of not only improving retention and graduation, but also deepening students' learning and improving their long-term professional and personal success.[17]*

Reviewed together, research on evidence-based pedagogy and professional learning combine to spotlight a strategic insight: Professional learning is critical to advancing equity in higher education.[18]

FRAMEWORKS FOR BROAD CHANGE

Not all professional learning programs are created equal, however. Just as evidence-based pedagogies must be "done well" to benefit students, professional learning must be "done well" to advance teaching and learning.

Professional learning must be "done well" to advance teaching and learning.

What does high quality professional learning look like? Research found in journals and professional associations such as the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD) offers quality insight into professional learning "done well."[19]

Two research-based resources that synthesize this literature inform this study. In 2018, POD and the American Council on Education (ACE) published the *ACE/POD Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix*, a guide to the creation and growth of effective CTLs. The *ACE/POD CTL Matrix*[20] focuses on three related domains of what its authors call Center-building:

- Organizational Structure, which includes mission, leadership, and institutional placement

- Resource Allocation and Infrastructure, which includes budget, space and location, staffing, online resources, and communication

- Programs and Services, which includes audience, content, approach, and impact assessment

For each domain, the *Matrix* identifies characteristics found at what the authors call the Beginning, Growing, and Exemplary Centers. In so doing, the *Matrix* offers a road map for building a robust CTL.

A 2019 Every Learner Everywhere publication complements the *Matrix*. *The New Learning Compact: A Framework for Professional Learning and Educational Change* synthesizes the research on professional learning to identify key principles and practices modeled by the most effective professional learning programs.[21] The *Framework* provides a crucial tool for ensuring that a college's professional learning programs productively engage educators and benefit students.

> *By valuing educators' expertise, co-constructive design enhances motivation and effectiveness and increases the likelihood of lasting teaching improvement.*

The *Framework* and a follow-up article in *Change Magazine* identify a common thread found in dynamic professional learning programs: the vital importance of co-construction, engaging educators as partners in inquiry-driven change processes.[22] Research shows that, by valuing educators' expertise, co-constructive design enhances motivation and effectiveness and increases the likelihood of lasting teaching improvement.[23] Employing structures of mutuality and collaboration, linking professional learning to everyday practice and nurturing educators as reflective practitioners, a co-constructive

approach engages the experiential capital of an increasingly diverse professoriate while modeling the constructivist pedagogy at the heart of culturally responsive teaching.[24]

The *Framework* also spotlights the need to approach professional learning from a systems perspective, one that puts professional learning at the core of institutional policy and practice. Such an approach, researchers from the Community College Research Center have argued, includes attention to hiring and rewards systems that value teaching and professional learning.[25] It centers the integration of assessment with professional learning to effectively "close the loop" and considers the role of external stakeholders such as accrediting organizations, state systems, and funding agencies. Embedding co-constructed professional learning methods within an agile, systems-based approach to institutional change, the *Framework* suggests, creates the continuous improvement model needed to ensure that higher education can advance equity and meet other pressing challenges.

> *Embedding co-constructed professional learning methods within an agile, systems-based approach creates the continuous improvement model needed to ensure that higher education can advance equity.*

New Learning Compact Framework
Good Practice Principles for High Impact Professional Learning

Principles of Good Practice
Individual Dimension

- Respect Educators' Knowledge
- Connect with Practice
- Engage Inquiry and Reflection
- Protect Participant Time

Principles of Good Practice
Community Dimension

- Create Supportive Professional Communities
- Involve All Sectors of the Professoriate
- Bridge Boundaries
- Learn From and With Students

Principles of Good Practice
Institutional Dimension

- Integrate Changes in Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Assessment
- Connect Professional Development with Strategic Priorities
- Leverage Reward Systems as a Resource
- Build a Learning Culture

Principles of Good Practice
Ecosystem Dimension

- Build Partnerships and Exchange
- Capitalize on Strategic Messaging
- Leverage External Funding
- Engage Internal and External Stakeholders

The *Framework* and the *ATD Teaching and Learning Toolkit* translated these insights into Good Practice Principles (GPPs) in four key domains of professional learning practice.[26]

- *Individual*: How do effective professional learning programs engage educators as individual practitioners? What approaches support educators in the sustained process of inquiry and reflection needed to design equity-focused learning environments?

- *Community*: How can professional learning bring educators into community, co-constructing new student learning opportunities? What are the principles for designing supportive, change-focused professional communities?

- *Institutional*: Professional learning cannot succeed if it is not rooted in systematic institutional support. What institutional policies and practices sustain high-impact professional learning?

- *Ecosystem*: Colleges are linked to other higher education actors such as state systems, accreditors, and higher ed networks. How can campuses engage with these entities to advance high-impact professional learning? And in turn, how can funders, disciplinary associations, and other stakeholders more intentionally advance equity-focused learning, teaching, and change?

This report uses the *ACE/POD Matrix* and the *NLC Framework* as research-based standards for professional learning done well, guiding our analysis of the status of CTLs and the quality of their professional learning programs. We follow the *Framework* in explicitly incorporating Student Affairs professionals as well as faculty under the label of "educators." We do so understanding that learning happens inside and outside the classroom, that holistic student support advances equity, and that professional learning can facilitate effective collaboration between Academic and Student Affairs.

GATHERING NEW EVIDENCE

Research has revealed evidence-based strategies for professional learning, but many questions remain. Scholarship on the status of CTLs and professional learning on campuses focused on equity and access, such as Minority Serving Institutions and community colleges, has been limited. This report aims to begin filling this gap. Drawing on the *Matrix* and the *Framework*, this study gathered data to pursue a standards-based examination of the status and quality of professional learning practice.

Scholarship on the status of CTLs on campuses focused on equity and access, such as Minority Serving Institutions and community colleges, has been limited.

What is the status of CTLs on our nation's campuses? How are they structured, funded, and led? What differences do we see between sectors such as Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)?

1. How have these CTLs adapted as a result of COVID-19? How are they supporting new modalities? What practices have developed in response to COVID-19?

2. What topics do professional learning programs address, particularly at MSIs and other equity focused institutions? What issues do they focus on? How has equity been addressed?

3. What can we say about the *quality* of professional learning programs and services? How widely are evidence-based, high-impact professional learning practices implemented at MSIs, community colleges and other institutions? What are the obstacles to broader and deeper professional learning practice? What are the gaps in existing practice?

4. What kinds of assistance would advance equity-focused professional learning? How can funders, national networks and other organizations help strengthen the work of CTLs?

To explore these questions, we gathered quantitative and qualitative data. Our quantitative data gathering centered on a 36-item survey asking about CTLs and professional learning strategies. Just under 100 (n=95) CTL leaders and campus executives completed this online survey in the spring of 2022. Figure 1 outlines their institutional roles.

Figure 1: *INSTITUTIONAL ROLE IN SAMPLE (N=95)*

- **UNIT-LEVEL LEADER** *(E.G. DIRECTOR OR COORDINATOR OF CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING)*
- **CTL TEAM MEMBER** *(E.G. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER, TEACHING CONSULTANT, FACULTY DEVELOPER, INSTRUCTIONAL COACH)*
- **COLLEGE-LEVEL LEADER** *(E.G. DEAN, ADVISOR)*
- **OTHER**
- **INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL LEADER** *(E.G. PROVOST, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, DEAN OF STUDENTS)*

To set the context for our examination, we gathered data from a broad spectrum of institutions. Given our focus on institutions serving racially minoritized and poverty-affected students, we disaggregated data by institutional type (see Figure 2). Although every effort was made to recruit participants from across the higher education spectrum, some types of institutions are inevitably somewhat over- or under-represented in opt-in survey samples such as this. We have relatively few respondents from regional comprehensive universities, which has limited our ability to consider such institutions

in this report. Fortunately, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) are both well represented, and therefore the sample positions the research team to use descriptive statistical analysis to compare patterns of professional learning experiences, resources, and opportunities between PWIs and MSIs (see Figure 3). To consider intersectional differences based on institutional type, we compare Research I universities with community colleges. (See Appendix for detail on institutional types and data analysis procedures.)

Figure 2: *INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN SAMPLE (N=97)*
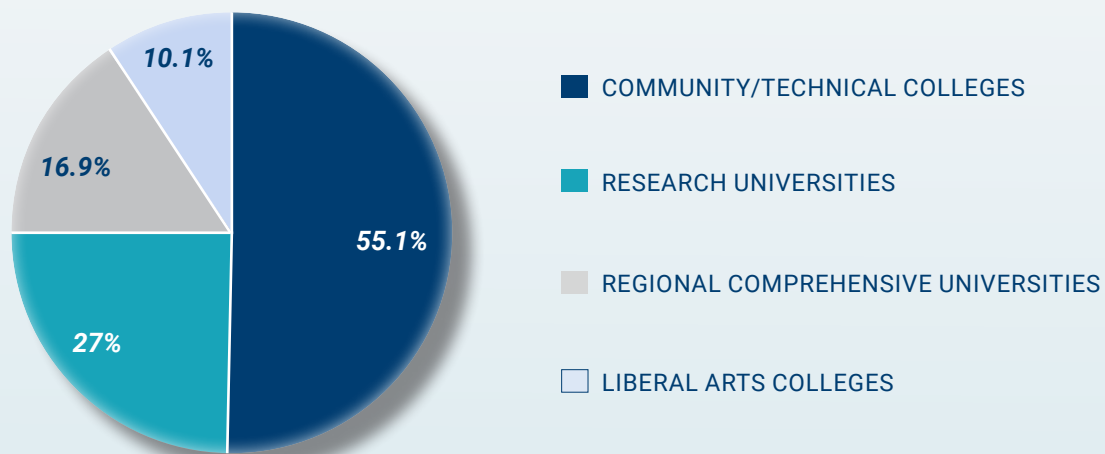
Figure 3: *PERCENTAGES OF PWIs VS MSIs IN SAMPLE*
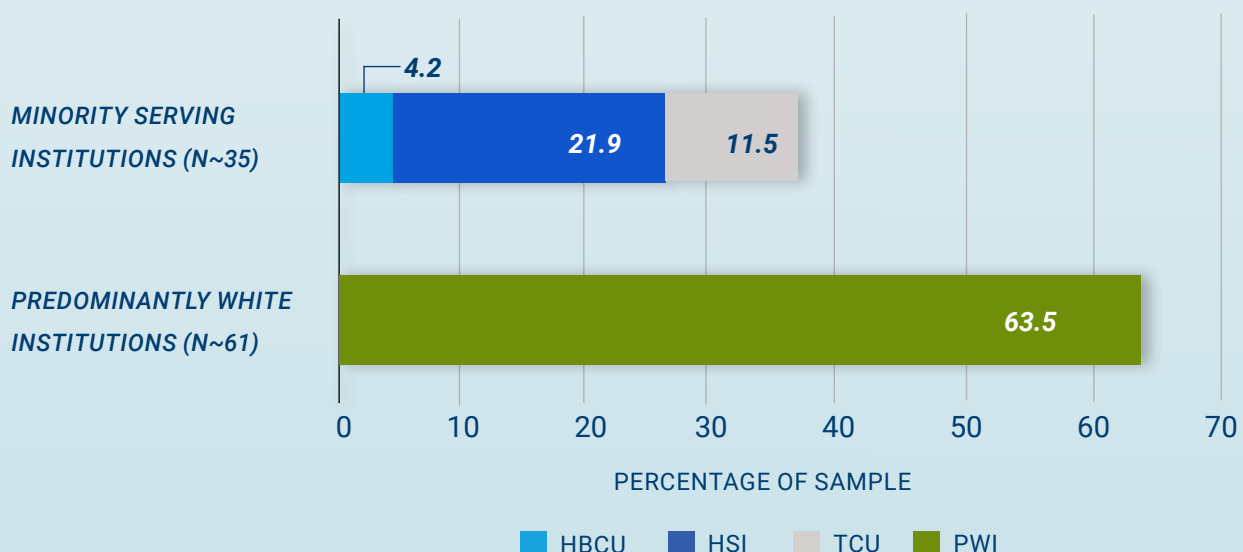
To spotlight examples of best practice, we interviewed educators from campuses with CTLs that consistently matched the "Exemplary" criteria of the ACE/POD CTL Matrix.

To supplement our quantitative data, we interviewed professional learning leaders and campus executives (e.g., Provosts and Chief Academic Officers). As detailed in the Appendix, we gathered testimony representing a wide range of campuses. We particularly emphasized representation from MSIs and community colleges. To spotlight examples of best practice, we intentionally included a set of educators from campuses with CTLs that, based on preliminary conversations and available evidence, we deemed to consistently match the "Exemplary" criteria of the *ACE/POD CTL Matrix*, as outlined above. Conducted in May, June and July 2022, our hour-long interviews were transcribed and thematically coded to identify and analyze patterns of strategies, strengths and challenges.

Section II of *Teaching, Learning, Equity and Change* draws on the existing research literature to analyze this new evidence and share findings related to our research questions. Section IIA explores the general status of Centers for Teaching and Learning and the impact of COVID-19. Section IIB discusses the content focus and the quality of professional learning design. Section IIC examines gaps and challenges in practice, and Section IID spotlights the potential for action by external partners. Section III offers recommendations for campus leaders and higher education stakeholders.

II. Findings: A Dynamic and Uneven Field

What is the status of professional learning on our nation's campuses, particularly those serving poverty-affected students and racially minoritized students? Our review of findings begins with discussion of Centers for Teaching and Learning and the impact of the COVID pandemic years.

IIA. CTLs: Hubs for Innovation and Change

Centers for Teaching and Learning (CTLs) and professional learning are often seen as synonymous terms. And a Center can be foundational, serving as the institutional home for the educators who plan and lead professional learning programs. In *The Advancement of Learning,* Huber and Hutchings called CTLs "sanctuaries for faculty eager to find colleagues with whom they can trade their pedagogical wares. They are clearinghouses for practical resources and research on learning and teaching, and help connect faculty with wider networks of innovation beyond the campus … And on many campuses, teaching centers are an important crossroads where multiple initiatives intersect and can be coordinated in ways that add value for the institution."[27]

We note two caveats. First, not all campuses use a CTL as their base for professional learning. The names of CTLs vary widely. And on some campuses, professional learning is managed by committees of faculty or HR offices. Some campuses use a decentralized approach, with responsibility shared by multiple offices. Other campuses outsource their professional learning, using external providers. To accommodate this diversity, some survey questions asked about CTLs and other Professional Learning Hubs (PLHs). In our narrative, we'll use CTL to signify the institutional base for professional learning.

> *"On many campuses, teaching centers are an important crossroads where multiple initiatives intersect and can be coordinated in ways that add value for the institution."*

Second, the existence of a CTL does not tell us all we want to know about professional learning. A CTL can be large or small. A large, well-resourced CTL does not necessarily guarantee quality programs. See Sections IIB and IIC for discussion of the *quality* of professional learning programs.

AN INSTITUTIONAL HOME FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In our survey, most respondents (72.7 percent) reported that a CTL led professional learning on their campus (see Figure 4). A sizeable minority (21.1 percent) pointed to a decentralized structure, with responsibility distributed among different offices. Some indicated key roles for department chairs, committees and external providers.

Eight of ten Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) organized professional learning through a CTL, compared to six of ten Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

In our data, eight of ten Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) organized professional learning through a CTL, compared to six of ten Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). MSIs were more likely to use a decentralized structure. Examining the data by institutional type shows a similar pattern: 67.4 percent of community college respondents said a CTL played a

central role in professional learning on their campuses, versus 79.2 percent from Research I campuses.

Our data suggests that professional learning holds an important place on US campuses. Across all institutions in our study, 71.9 percent of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "My institution is committed to professional development." For MSIs, the figure was even higher: 85.3 percent, compared to 63.6 percent for PWIs. Similarly, the rate of agreement from community colleges was higher than it was for Research I-based respondents.

Responses to other questions showed similar patterns. Across institutions, there were high levels of agreement with statements such as "Our CTL/PLH is a valued member of the campus community," "My institution's leadership understands what our CTL/PLH does," and "Our institution strategically deploys professional learning to achieve priority goals." In every case, respondents from MSIs and community colleges showed comparatively high levels of agreement with these statements.

Figure 4: *HOW IS TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT ORGANIZED AT YOUR INSTITUTION? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)*

External providers such as the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) offer many of these activities. — 11.8 / 5.4

Our diversity, equity, and inclusion unit also provides teaching and learning support. — 14.7 / 16.1

A committee of faculty coordinates most or all of these activities. — 11.8 / 7.1

Our departments and academic chairs coordinate most or all of these activities. — 14.7 / 1.8

We have a decentralized structure where a range of different offices and programs share coordination of such activities. — 35.3 / 11.8

We have a CTL that coordinates most or all of these activities. — 61.8 / 78.6

MSI (N=34)   PWI (N=56)

A GAP BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND RESOURCES

Our survey data revealed an important tension. Although respondents from MSIs and community colleges said their campuses valued professional learning, they were less positive than others about adequate levels of sustained funding and staffing, which the *ACE/POD Matrix* identifies as key features of robust CTLs.

Across all institutions in our study, only 39.3 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Our CTL/PLH is adequately funded." At PWIs, this figure was 45.4 percent; at MSIs, only 29.4 percent. Research I respondents indicated greater satisfaction with funding than those from community colleges. Data on staffing followed a similar pattern (see Figure 5).

Our data reinforces evidence from recent research. In the widely respected 2016 study *Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence: Current Practices, Future Imperatives*, a team of researchers shared data gathered from 160 higher education institutions, including data on funding and staffing levels, disaggregated by institutional type. While they did not consider

MSIs as a category, they did compare research universities and community colleges. Two data points stand out:

- Seven out of ten CTLs based at research universities had an annual budget of over $50,000. Only four out of ten community college CTLs reached this threshold. Thirty-five percent of CTLs from community colleges had annual budgets of less than $25,000.

- CTLs at research universities had an average of 9.3 employees. CTLs at community colleges had an average of 3.2 employees.[28]

This suggests a critical finding. While funding and staffing are broad problems, these issues disproportionately impact institutions serving poverty-affected students and racially minoritized students. Systemic inequality means these institutions are less able to adequately fund and staff an institutional home for professional learning. This equity issue may impact equity in student outcomes.

Figure 5: *AGREEMENT WITH OUR STATEMENT: OUR CTL/PLH IS ADEQUATELY STAFFED*

■ *STRONGLY AGREE*
■ *AGREE*

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES

	OVERALL (N=89)	PWI (N=55)	MSI (N=34)
(total)	32.6	36.4	26.5
AGREE	23.6	25.5	20.6
STRONGLY AGREE	9.0	10.9	5.9
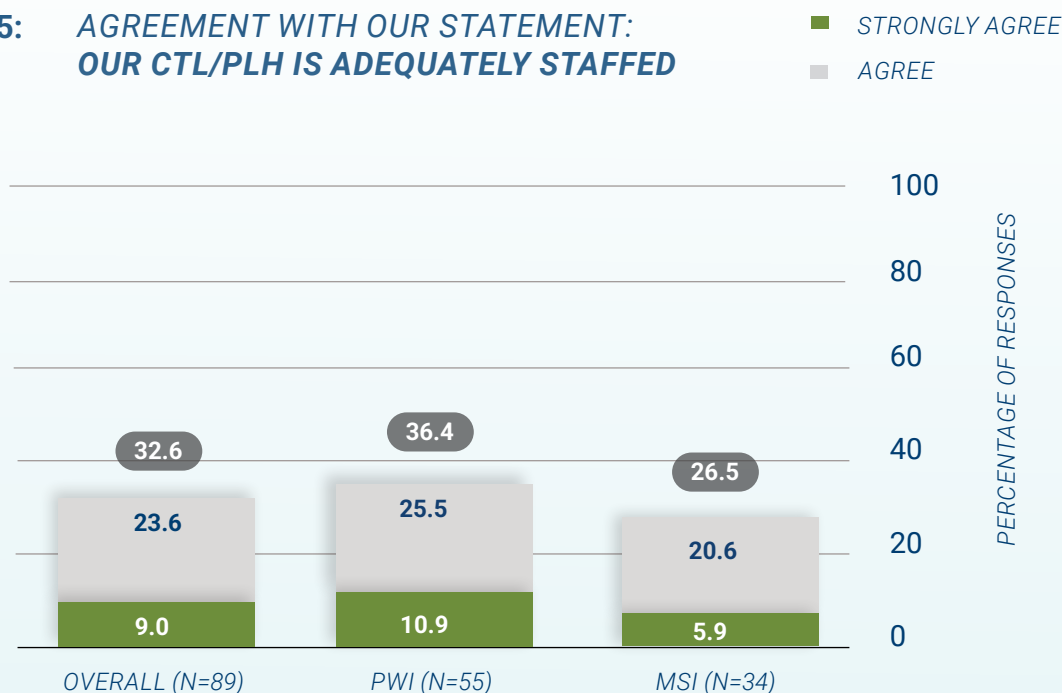
EXEMPLARY CTLs

Our interview respondents included leaders from campuses with exemplary CTLs, defined as those consistently meeting the Exemplary standards of the *ACE/POD Matrix*. These CTLs, (including some that primarily serve poverty-affected students and/or racially minoritized students, such as Valencia College, Amarillo College, Wilkes Community College and Florida State College at Jacksonville), offer us insight into leading-edge practice. Our interviews found several features characteristic of these CTLs, including greater centralization; more staff; the importance of including faculty in leadership; recognition of professional learning in the campus strategic plan; and persistent efforts to focus attention and funds on CTL support.

Centralization. The *ACE/POD Matrix* suggests that exemplary CTLs are centralized, managing most campus professional learning. Our respondents felt that centralization supported effective coordination and use of resources. Respondents from campuses with decentralized structures shared concerns.

Respondents from campuses with decentralized structures shared concerns about wasted effort. "I feel like if this work was under one umbrella, it would be more cohesive," noted a professional learning leader from a campus with a decentralized structure.

One HBCU dean saw the birth of a CTL at her campus as exciting progress. A CTL director described the friendly collaboration between her CTL team and instructional support staff in IT as a step towards greater effectiveness.

"I feel like if this work was under one umbrella it would be more cohesive," noted a professional learning leader.

Campuses with robust professional learning programs described well-established CTLs with clear lines to the top. As Amarillo's VP for Academic Affairs Tamara Clunis explained, "The director for the Center for Teaching and Learning reports up to the Associate VP for Learning, and then the AVP for Learning reports to the VP for Academic Affairs."

Size. Our respondents came from CTLs of various sizes. Some had only one or two staffing working part-time. "I am an office of one," reported an HBCU CTL director, who described the difficulty of keeping up with the demands of their position. In contrast, at Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ), the professional learning "Academy" has seven full- and/or part-time staff. CTLs with larger staffs can offer more programming, engage more educators, and enhance teaching and learning for more students.

Faculty Leadership. Across the field, there are different answers to the question of who should lead CTLs: faculty or professional staff. Faculty bring classroom expertise and connect to a major constituency. Staff bring organizational skills and (sometimes) training in professional learning methods and can provide institutions with continuity over time.

Across all institutions in our study, three quarters of the CTLs had professional staff. A sizeable minority (24 percent) had both professional staff and faculty. Roughly 10 percent of respondents reported that the only people working in their CTLs were faculty, some reassigned from a part of their teaching load. MSIs were less likely than PWIs to have professional staff. Our interviews suggest that campuses with exemplary CTLs tend to integrate staff and faculty leadership. FSCJ has a professional staff member, a faculty member fully reassigned from teaching, and five faculty members partly reassigned from teaching.

National research shows professional learning programs that respect the knowledge and expertise of faculty are more likely to be effective.[29] Many of our interviewees agreed, highlighting the importance of including faculty as co-leaders. "I think academics need to be talking to academics," reported one CTL director. While staff often play critical roles, faculty–staff collaborations help ensure that faculty expertise, faculty perspective, and faculty needs shape program planning design and facilitation. Involving faculty from the beginning signals and supports a co-constructed approach.

Faculty-staff collaborations help ensure that faculty expertise, faculty perspective and faculty needs shape program planning and facilitation.

Yolanda Wilson, describing a successful program at Wilkes Community College, pointed to the value of faculty leadership. "It was faculty as coaches and mentors who helped lead and facilitate the work with other faculty," she explains. "There was buy-in because they were working on it together."

Who should lead CTLs and their programs? Should it be professional staff or faculty? Isis Artze-Vega, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Valencia College, suggests that there is a valuable role for both and values co-leadership. She has found that engaging faculty as partners who bring crucial expertise to the conversation is critical to powerful professional learning.

Isis Artze-Vega,
Vice President for Academic Affairs at Valencia College

"Before I came to Valencia," Artze-Vega explains, "I was used to a faculty development model where there were educational developers and then there were the faculty. For the most part, facilitation was the responsibility of the educational developers."

"When I got to Valencia," Artze-Vega continues, "I learned that the faculty were facilitating the large majority of our professional development programs." Valencia faculty have course-release to serve as program facilitators, and their contributions are recognized in the reward system. **"Faculty co-design with the educational developers, and sometimes they co-facilitate, but the faculty feel ownership over the professional development realm. Like it is theirs."**

This sense of ownership powers broad faculty engagement with professional learning and an institution-wide focus on learning. **"As with most things in higher ed,"** Artze-Vega points out, **"doing professional learning in partnership and in collaboration is the key to success. So here, the faculty are the partners in this work and their expertise is validated. We** learn from faculty, and they learn from one another. It creates this beautiful symbiotic relationship."

Faculty's sense of ownership of professional learning at Valencia powers broad engagement and an institutionwide focus on learning.

When the COVID pandemic hit, Artze-Vega found that faculty leadership had an additional benefit. She remembers thinking about the need to shift rapidly to online learning – to "turn the battleship around" – and realized that Valencia's professional learning model was a powerful resource for adaptive change. Her team reached out to "maybe a hundred plus faculty who had the expertise and the experience" of facilitating faculty learning groups – and they quickly prepared the programs needed to support faculty during the pandemic.

"Now we have this enormous cadre of experts supporting each other," she concludes. "What faculty leadership means is that you have capacity way beyond what you could ever staff in a CTL."

INVESTING IN A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Research summarized in the *ACE/POD Matrix*, the *NLC Framework* and the *ATD Teaching and Learning Toolkit* suggests campuses should recognize CTLs in strategic plans. To achieve their higher education mission, the *Toolkit* notes, campus leaders must build professional learning "into strategic planning, decision-making and resource allocation processes."

[This] requires more than lip service or a symbolic mention of teaching quality. It means building a hub for professional learning and deploying it as a powerful tool for advancing strategic initiatives; it means engaging professional development leaders as partners in identifying campus needs and opportunities, empowering them to help shape institutional goals, plans and decisions. And campus leaders must go further, supporting professional learning by allocating to it the resources it needs, in accord with its strategic importance.[30]

As we have seen, funding for professional learning is an issue nationwide, particularly at MSIs, community colleges and other under-resourced colleges. At campuses with exemplary CTLs, leaders persistently search for internal and external sources of funding. Deborah Fontaine, who oversees a robust professional learning effort as AVP for Strategic Priorities at FSCJ, pointed to her combination of institutional and grant funds. "We have been blessed to have a federal Title V grant," CAO Tamara Clunis says of the effort to build a dynamic CTL at Amarillo College. Grant funds have leveraged hundreds of thousands of dollars in institutional funding, building enduring capacity to advance change. Meanwhile, Clunis says, new grants are sparking new initiatives. "We're starting our second HSI STEM grant, and we're writing another Title V. They're all centered around professional learning."

At campuses with exemplary CTLs, executive leaders spoke of the importance of explicitly building professional learning into their campus strategic plan. And, in turn, directors of robust

CTLs recognized the need to connect their work with the advancement of campus priorities. This combination helped ensure that campus leadership considered ways to deploy professional learning to achieve mission-critical goals and addressed CTL funding during the resource allocation process.

"It has to be in the strategic plan. People have to see that it's important."

"It has to be in the strategic plan," contends Yolanda Wilson, CAO at Wilkes Community College. "People have to see that it's important." Noting that professional learning was "built into everything we do," Wilson outlines the rationale for making a strategic investment in professional learning. "We act on the premise that faculty engagement and faculty development will lead to improved teaching and learning and student success, including retention and completion." Building student success is both a philosophical and pragmatic priority at Wilkes. Wilson noted that many colleges face enrollment challenges and suggested that improved teaching and learning was vital to any response.

We may not have as many students coming into the enrollment funnel. So, we have to keep the ones we have. Where does that happen? The instructional space and wrap-around services. And your budget needs to reflect those priorities.

CTLs AND THE COVID ERA

In 2020, colleges responded to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, abruptly closing off physical access to learning and services and scrambling to move classes online. Recurring pandemic surges, economic dislocations, and social distancing stressed students and educators. Our research was done in early 2022, as respondents emerged from the shadows of Omicron. While the long-term impact of COVID on higher education is still to be determined, we recognize that CTLs were reshaped by the pandemic.

CTLs played a herculean role in supporting the massive shift to remote teaching early in the pandemic. CTL leaders and staff supported their campuses by creating self-help materials, offering synchronous virtual training sessions on technology and pedagogy, engaging in one-on-one consultations, and facilitating communities of practice for instructors to share their experiences and offer each other support.[31]

CTLs played a herculean role in supporting the massive shift to remote teaching early in the pandemic.

Some respondents found this prompted broader use of digital tools. "Many of our faculty now take greater advantage of our LMS," notes one CTL leader. "We have many faculty who in the past did not use the LMS, and now it is more integrated into their practice." This is consistent with national research showing that the pandemic sparked a sustained shift to more online and hybrid courses.[32]

While strides were made in technology adoption, not all instructors used digital tools with research-driven pedagogies, and some students were unhappy with their learning experiences. As the pandemic wore on, CTLs focused on supporting instructors in moving from emergency remote teaching to online learning, spotlighting ways to use active learning pedagogy in a remote context and facilitating conversations around diversity, equity, inclusion, and caring for students.[33]

CTLs also emerged as places where faculty found community to help them through the stress of the pandemic. "We quickly pivoted to being about, 'Let's just get together and look at each other on this screen and think about what it means to be living through all of this,'" reported one professional learning leader. "It helped establish us as a resource, and as leaders." Another notes, "Our faculty learning communities became safe spaces to unload, places where faculty could get emotional support."

BUILDING ONLINE LEARNING EXCELLENCE

The Online Learning Consortium's <u>Quality Scorecard Suite</u> provides colleges and universities with the necessary criteria and benchmarking tools to ensure online learning excellence across departments and programs. The Quality Scorecards support institutional efforts in five areas:

• **Administration of Online Programs** (measures effectiveness of online learning programs)

• **Blended Learning Programs** (focuses on best practices for implementing successful hybrid and blended learning programs)

• **Quality Course Teaching and Instructional Practice** (supports in-depth reviews to validate instructional practices)

• **Digital Courseware Instructional Practice** (supports thoughtful integration of digital courseware)

• **Online Student Support** (assists in the identification of gaps in services with an aim of improving support for online students)

In addition, OLC offers the OSCQR Course Design Review scorecard from SUNY Online. This tool supports faculty, instructional designers, leaders of professional learning and other administrators who seek to improve the quality and accessibility of their online course design.

NEW DELIVERY MODELS

The pandemic also forced CTLs to experiment with new ways of delivering their services, quickly shifting to virtual gatherings. While it at first seemed challenging, our respondents eventually found that remote professional learning allowed more educators to participate and facilitated engagement with outside experts. Our data (see Figure 6) shows that most CTLs, including those at MSIs, continue to use online synchronous meetings.

As the pandemic evolved, other delivery strategies drew interest, including multimodal conversations that mix face-to-face and virtual engagement. Some respondents developed modular online tutorials and virtual self-help libraries. One CTL director discussed the one-stop-shop she developed for new faculty, combining orientation with practical tools for submitting book orders and syllabi. "Those resources meet an ongoing need and can save a lot of time and energy compared to individually onboarding everyone."

Pressed by the pandemic, some campuses drew on external professional learning providers. On average, our respondents indicated that 24 percent of their current professional learning programs are supported by external providers. Some interviewees reported working to figure out ways to integrate such providers with campus-based activity, strengthening customization and sustainability.

FACING BURNOUT AND EXHAUSTION

The innovation prompted by the pandemic had a price. Existing programs, such as efforts to implement Guided Pathways or High-Impact Practices, were disrupted and sometimes shelved. Supporting remote teaching stressed professional learning leaders. Educators took on new roles and juggled responsibilities (e.g., supporting children and at-home learning). "Faculty were just exhausted," says one professional learning leader. "People are still weary," noted another.

It is still too early to fully grasp COVID-19's impact on professional learning. Higher education is still adjusting to new realities. It will be important to monitor trends as they evolve. "It changed everything," reflected an interviewee. "We're still trying to figure out what is going to be a permanent change and what is not."

Figure 6: *IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MODES DO YOU OFFER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. (N=82)*
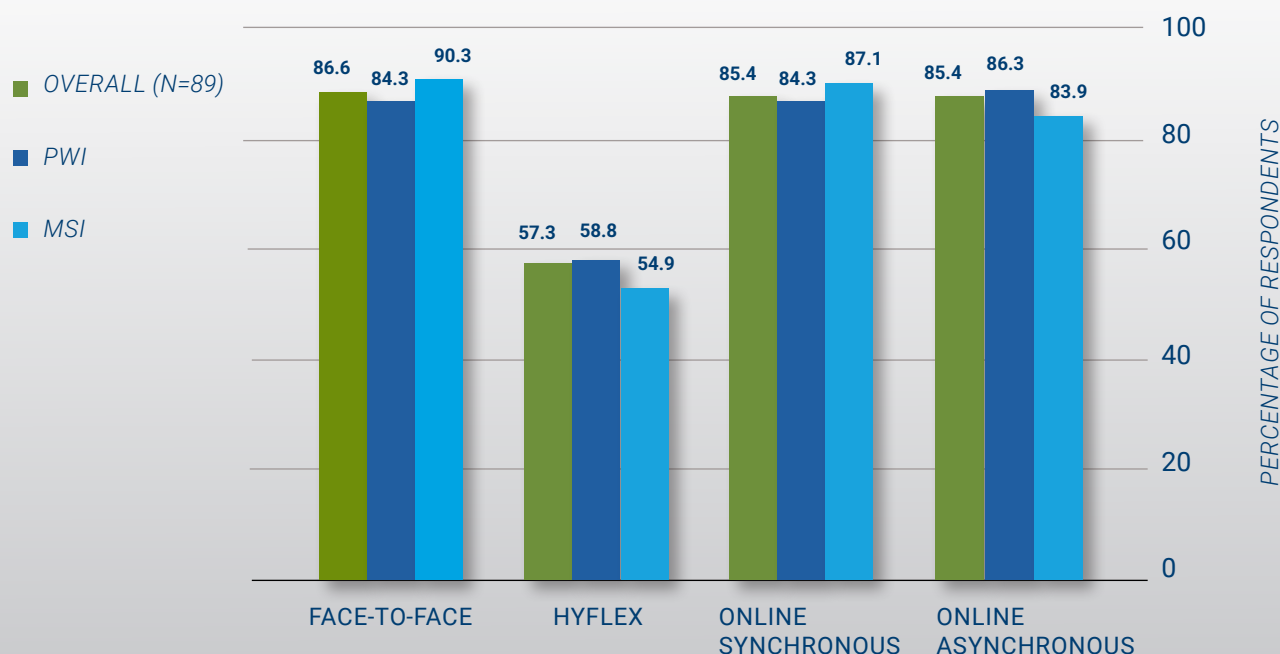
IIB. Program Content and Quality

Our second set of findings focuses on professional learning content and quality. What topics do CTLs spotlight? How do they engage educators? How are CTLs at community colleges and MSIs similar and different from others? What can we learn from exemplary CTLs about effective design?

A FOCUS ON HIGH-IMPACT PEDAGOGIES

In our study, CTL programs tended to focus on pedagogies that research suggests build student learning and success, with a particular benefit for poverty-affected students and racially minoritized students. This was true across institutional types.

Our data shows that most CTL programs focus on research-based pedagogies that build student learning and success.

Our survey asked all respondents to consider a list of professional learning topics. Which topics are a major, moderate or minor focus of professional learning on your campus? Which are not currently focused on at all? Adding major and moderate emphases, we found four particularly common topics:

- Active learning, collaborative learning, and other evidence-based pedagogies – 83.5 percent

- Inclusive or culturally responsive pedagogy, a specific evidence-based pedagogy – 78.9 percent

- Strategies to make online and hybrid learning more engaging for students – 77.4 percent

- Improving teaching and learning related to student learning outcomes – 75.6 percent

This pattern was largely consistent across institutional types. At MSIs, for example, both Active Learning and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy were very common, at 81.2 and 84.3 percent, respectively.

Two other items also drew high ratings across MSIs, community colleges and all other institutions. "Equity in teaching and learning" (78.1 percent) points to high interest in better engaging racially minoritized students. "Managing the tools of remote and hybrid learning" (71.5 percent) connects to technology-enhanced teaching. Taken together, this data suggests that inclusive, equity-focused teaching and technology-enhanced teaching are the hottest topics for professional learning.

These topics rated higher than other possible professional learning focal points. Implementation of accelerated remediation was rated as a major or moderate focus by only 22.5 percent of respondents. Guided Pathways, a strategy to align curriculum and advisement first advanced by the Community College Research Center,[34] was a focus of professional learning for 31.6 percent of respondents.

These priorities may reflect the experience of recent years. The pandemic-prompted switch to remote classrooms required CTLs to help faculty teach in virtual settings. Interest in culturally responsive pedagogy in our survey, conducted in 2022, was much higher than it had been in surveys released before the nationwide protests following the 2020 murder of George Floyd and the accompanying rise in attention to questions of equity in higher education.[35]

The fourth-rated topic, "Improving student learning related to programmatic and institutional student learning outcomes," may reflect increased rigor in accreditation processes. Connecting pedagogy-focused professional learning with outcomes assessment can be highly productive, grounding pedagogical change in data and shifting the perceived focus of assessment from accountability to improvement.[36] Such efforts require complex and sustained cross-institutional collaboration, however. Persistent pressure from accreditation agencies may help explain the focus on this particular topic.

Exemplary CTLs braid multiple themes to address campus needs. The Amarillo CTL integrates equity-focused High Impact Practices into online teaching.

Exemplary CTLs address campus-specific needs, often braiding many themes into single programs. The FSCJ Academy weaves effective pedagogy into a Guided Pathways initiative. The Amarillo CTL has a sweeping program designed to integrate High-impact Practices and equity-focused pedagogy into online teaching. And it has a year-long academy, introducing new faculty to effective pedagogies. Tamara Clunis explains:

We think that if we have faculty who are from the beginning trained on the importance of relationships and student voice, with the faculty knowing how to foster critical thinking with high-impact practices, the students are going to learn. And they're going to build the relationships with faculty that support retention and graduation.

DESIGNING HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

Research has shown that some professional learning designs are particularly effective at engaging educators, helping them learn about and implement new approaches.[37] Are CTLs at MSIs and community colleges using the research-based principles that guide professional learning "done well"? What practices are used by exemplary CTLs?

Are CTLs at MSIs and community colleges using the research-based principles that guide professional learning "done well"?

The research literature as summarized in the *NLC Framework* and the ATD *Toolkit* points to the value of Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs).[38] FLCs bring faculty together for sustained small group conversation about a specific topic. Often FLCs have a facilitator or faculty leader. Topics can vary, with some CTLs coordinating sustained conversation in multiple groups about a common priority topic. Done well, FLCs align with key, research-derived Good Practice Principles, including:

- *Respect faculty knowledge*. FLCs emphasize co-constructed peer learning, starting from a premise that everyone in the FLC is active, everyone brings expertise, and everyone has something to learn. This takes faculty leadership to a new level.

- *Engage inquiry and reflection*. FLCs can support educators in a sustained inquiry process, adapting and testing new teaching strategies with students. Bridging support from initial consideration of evidence-based approaches to ongoing support during classroom application increases the likelihood of implementation and encourages reflective learning.

- *Build supportive community*. Changing one's long-standing teaching practice is a challenging process, demanding much risk-taking as well as hard work. Building mutuality, FLCs create safe space to consider possibilities, discuss challenges happening in the classroom, and engage in collective problem-solving.

One-on-one consultations have some of the qualities outlined above, providing opportunities for practice-focused improvement work customized to the felt needs of the instructor. FLCs take some of the strengths of consultation, add the power of community, and create opportunities to bring innovations to scale more quickly and at lower cost. Both provide sustained support for educators as they move from learning about new methods to trying them out with students.

The sustained approach contrasts with "stand-alone" workshops, which bring participants together for a brief experience and provide little or no follow-up support during implementation. Research has pointed out the limitation of isolated workshops, suggesting their brief, one-and-done quality limits impact.[39] Convocations and professional development days tend to share that limitation. As one literature review concluded, the "research shows teacher learning and changes in teaching practice involve a recursive and continual process that takes place over time," and that "the more time teachers spend in professional development, the more likely their practice is to improve."[40] However, stand-alone events do not cost as much to implement and require less faculty time.

Our survey identified nine common professional learning structures and asked respondents to rate how important they were to professional learning on their campuses: extremely, moderately, slightly or not at all important. As shown in Figures 7a and 7b, we aggregated extremely and moderately important to capture the most common design approaches.

Figure 7a: **HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING STRUCTURES TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON YOUR CAMPUS?**
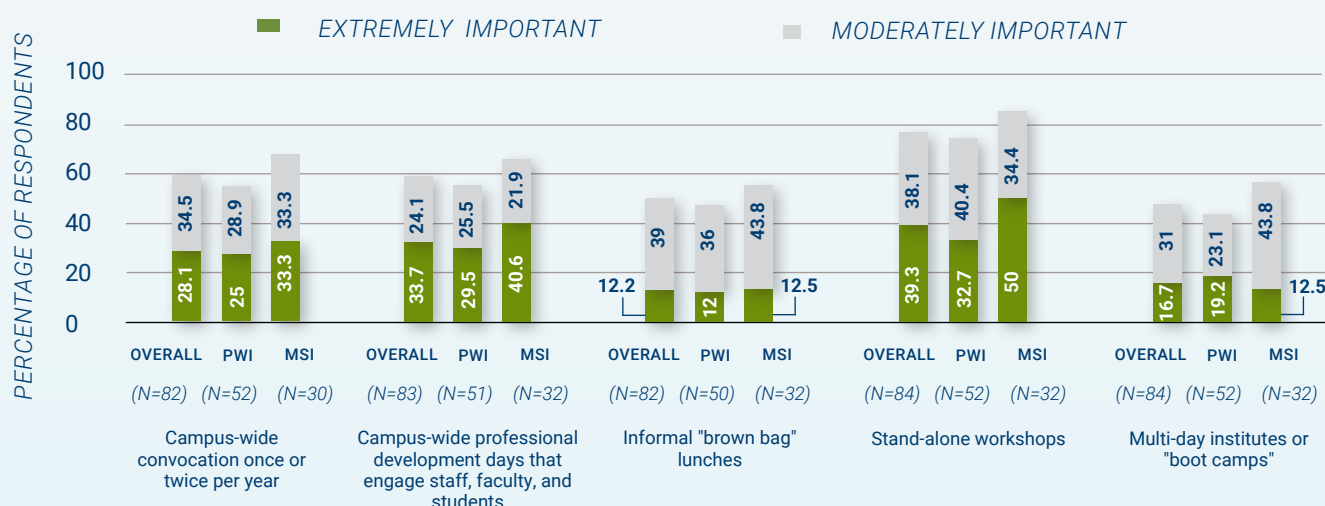
Figure 7b: **HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING STRUCTURES TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON YOUR CAMPUS?**
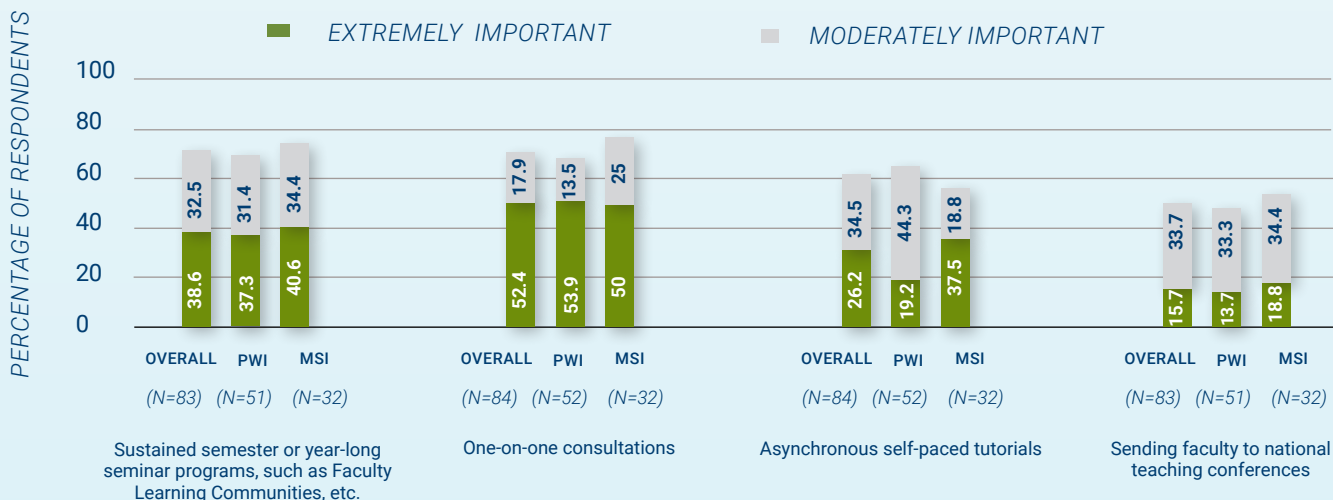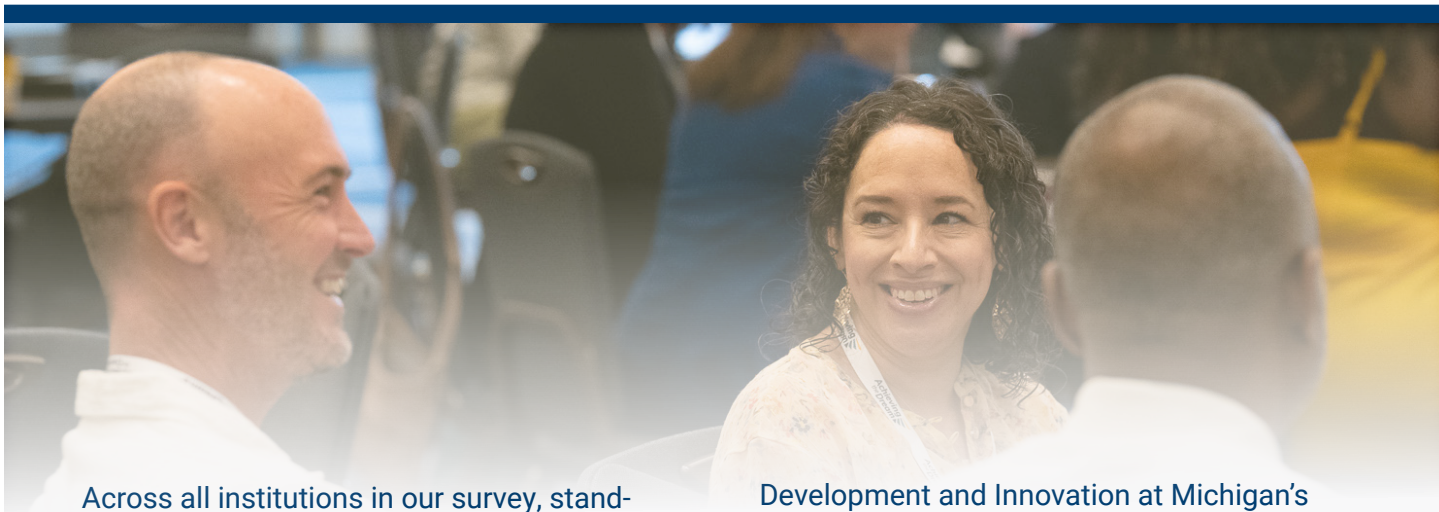
Across all institutions in our survey, stand-alone workshops were the most common professional learning structure; despite the evidence cited above, showing the limited effectiveness of isolated workshops, 77.4 percent of respondents rated standalone workshops as extremely or moderately important.[41] MSI respondents were more likely (84.4 percent) to highlight workshops than those from PWIs (73.0). And 85.4 percent of community college respondents said workshops were important on their campuses. The systematic underfunding of MSIs and community colleges, which can limit professional learning budgets and lead to high faculty workloads, may explain this pattern.

Testimony from exemplary CTLs illustrates the power of Faculty Learning Communities.

In our survey, Faculty Learning Communities was the second most common professional learning design. Across all campuses, 71.1 percent of respondents rated "sustained, semester or year-long programs, such as Faculty Learning Communities" as extremely or moderately important. One-on-one consultations was third at 70.2 percent. This pattern held for MSIs and community colleges.

Testimony from exemplary CTLs illustrates the power of FLCs. "We have a robust Faculty Learning Community program," explains Christine Rener, Vice Provost for Instructional

Development and Innovation at Michigan's Grand Valley State University. "Peer-to-peer and collaborative is our primary model." The FLCs at Grand Valley are cohort-based and sustained. Some address topics chosen by faculty participants, while others focus on priority institutional initiatives. At this point, Rener says, sustained FLCs are the norm at GVSU, and adds, "we do very few one-off, one-hit-wonder workshops."

The CTL at Montgomery College offers workshops, but its premier program is an FLC focused on Open Educational Resources. According to Dean Shinta Hernandez, faculty work in cross-disciplinary teams for a year to develop and test OER resources that engage students in experiential learning projects focused on sustainability and social justice. The cross-disciplinary process provides mutual support; it also pushes faculty "outside their comfort zone." The program has been so successful that Montgomery now partners with other CTLs to create dynamic cross-institutional learning partnerships.

These FLC examples offer a model for strengthening the quality and impact of professional learning at MSIs, community colleges and other institutions. Given the proven value of sustained support and FLCs' ability to provide such support economically and at scale, helping other CTLs move beyond isolated events such as workshops could advance equity. Experimentation with mini-seminars (connected workshops offered as a cohesive series) and the integration of synchronous and asynchronous digital support may offer steps towards more sustained programming from CTLs nationwide.

Wilkes Community College uses FLCs at scale in its effort to increase retention, address equity, and prepare students for success in career and advanced education. In 2021–22 they engaged full- and part-time faculty college-wide in parallel FLCs. "We created these professional learning communities using resources from ATD and the North Carolina Student Success Center to create a pedagogical curriculum around key elements of good teaching and learning practice," explains Yolanda Wilson.

Key to that was growth mindset. We need faculty to have a growth mindset as they think about their teaching, and a growth mindset as they think about students, so they approach student success from an equity lens.

In small, faculty-led interdisciplinary groups, faculty explored growth mindset, Backward Design and Universal Design for Learning – and then applied those concepts to their classes. They worked throughout the year, supporting implementation, reflection and refinement. The interdisciplinary quality of the conversation was crucial, as was the sense of supportive professional community.

It was general education faculty working with the career and technical faculty, both full- and part-time.

Yolanda Wilson
CAO at Wilkes Community College

They loved working together and learned so much from each other. It reinforced that an English teacher can help an automotive instructor or a welding instructor can connect to a science professor about the value of project-based learning.

Faculty learning communities at Wilkes engaged faculty through the year, supporting implementation, reflection, and refinement of new app oaches.

Drawing on this experience, WCC is now working with the Belk Center at North Carolina State University, advancing a state-wide effort in partnership with Achieving the Dream and the North Carolina Student Success Center to create regional, faculty-led professional learning hubs supporting faculty across North Carolina's 58 community colleges.[42]

SUPPORTING HIGH-IMPACT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Research suggests that high-impact professional learning requires systematic and sustained institutional commitment.[43] To effectively engage the power of professional learning, institutions must consider a wide range of policies and practices, from institutional planning and resource allocation to questions of hiring, tenure and promotion.

> *It takes extra work for educators to participate in sustained professional learning programs, rethink their practice and engage in ongoing reflection. How should this extra work be recognized?*

In Section IIA we reviewed two facets of institutional support: strategic planning and allocation of resources. Across campuses, our respondents said their CTL was under-resourced and understaffed; this was particularly true for institutions serving poverty-affected students and racially minoritized students. This perception confirms recent research showing that systemic inequities constrain CTLs at less resourced institutions;

for example, the average research university CTL has three times as many employees as the average community college CTL.[44]

High-quality institutional support has other facets, notably the ways institutions incentivize engagement in professional learning. It takes extra work for educators to participate in sustained professional learning programs, rethink their practice and engage in ongoing reflection. How should this extra work be recognized? One of the *Framework's* Good Practice Principles encourages campuses to:

> *"Leverage Reward Systems as a Resource." Advance institutional policies, practices, and norms that celebrate and reward individual and departmental innovation and change. Design and sustain reward structures and resource allocation that value teaching and recognize effective engagement with professional learning processes. For full-time tenure-track faculty, "learning about teaching" should be valued appropriately in annual review, promotion, and tenure processes. Reward adjunct faculty and staff engagement with professional learning with opportunities for career advancement, equitable treatment, and access to resources.*

Figure 8a: *PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INCENTIVE STRUCTURES CURRENTLY IN USE*

	Monetary stipend			Targeted resources (e.g., money to use for travel or research)			Certificates, badges or other credentials			Recognition in performance evaluations, promotion processes and tenure decisions			Public "shout outs" (e.g., campus announcements, designations in faculty handbooks)		
	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)
%	41.8	42	41.4	60.8	58	65.5	48.1	42	58.6	58.2	62	51.7	55.7	52	62.1

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

Figure 8b: *PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INCENTIVE STRUCTURES CURRENTLY IN USE*

	Course release time for participation			Required professional hours			Eligibility for full-time employment (part-time instructors only)			Higher priority in course assignment processes (part-time instructors only)		
	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)	OVERALL (N~77)	PWI (N~48)	MSI (N=29)
%	21.5	20	24.1	35.4	42	24.1	5.1	4.0	6.9	3.8	4.0	3.4

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
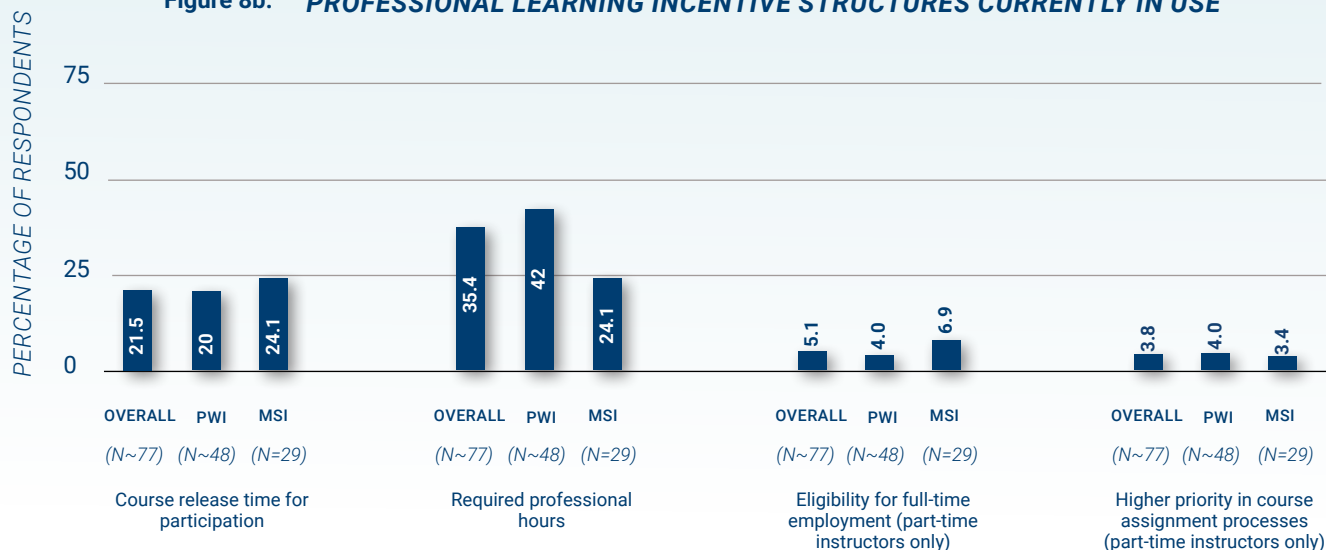
How do campuses actually incentivize professional learning? We asked survey respondents to indicate what incentive strategies were used on their campus. Figures 8a and 8b show the results. Across all institutions in our survey, the most common incentive structure was offering participants "targeted resources (e.g., money to use for travel or resources)." This was true for MSIs as well as PWIs. Another highly common mechanism was "public shout-outs (e.g., campus announcements)."

Notably, 58.2 percent of respondents (51.7 percent at MSIs) said their campus incentivized

participation by "recognition in performance evaluations, promotion processes and tenure decisions." This is promising. Released time and stipends have value as incentives but are difficult to employ in large and long-term programs, particularly at institutions with fewer resources. Recognition in the hiring and reward systems are comparatively more sustainable and scalable.

However, as we drilled down on this topic, we found a complicated picture. We broke out different facets of the reward system and asked the question differently (see Figure 9). We asked respondents to review statements

and indicate whether they were completely or mostly true, somewhat true and false, mostly or completely false. One statement was "Hiring, evaluation and promotion policies [on my campus] explicitly recognize and value professional learning." Only 26.2 percent of respondents said this was either mostly or completely true. Only 27 percent gave those ratings to the statement "Professional development expectations [on my campus] are clearly articulated in faculty and staff position descriptions." This pattern held true for MSIs and community colleges.

Executives with exemplary CTLs described concrete ways they leveraged reward systems.

Executives with exemplary CTLs described concrete ways they leveraged reward systems. At Wilkes, Yolanda Wilson discussed how the college added days to the nine-month faculty

contracts to support professional learning participation. Tamara Clunis described how she used the hiring system to ensure that Amarillo hired faculty ready to join professional learning-based initiatives:

We hire for it. I interview every faculty member in the hiring process, and I talk about professional development. I let them know the expectations even before we hire them. I want them to make a decision knowing our expectations.

At Valencia College, VP Isis Artze-Vega oversees an outstanding incentive strategy that has earned national acclaim. Valencia established seven essential competencies for faculty, including use of learner-centered teaching practices, engagement with assessment, and professional commitment (which includes participation in faculty development programs). Faculty develop their own plan for building their competencies, year by year, using Valencia's professional learning programs to build and demonstrate their competencies.

Figure 9: *PLEASE INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE STATEMENTS DESCRIBE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT YOUR INSTITUTION. (N~84)*
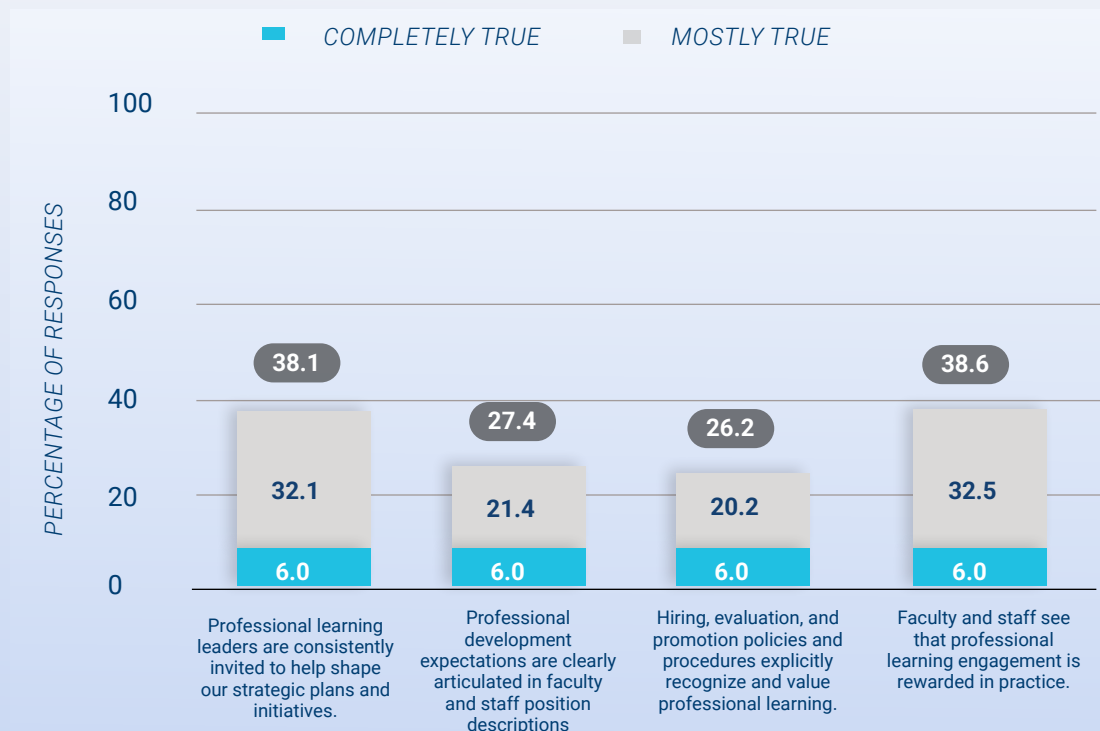
Faculty self-reports on this process shape promotion and tenure. The competencies are incorporated into both job descriptions and the hiring process, ensuring that new hires understand that teaching quality and professional learning are priorities.[45] Artze-Vega further explains:

Professional learning is a key part of what faculty see as their responsibility, as part of being a Valencia faculty. Every new faculty member engages in a new faculty orientation that includes an introduction to our pedagogy. The entire tenure process is focused on becoming a Valencia educator with reflexivity and attending to assessment and equity. Those are competencies toward which the entire tenure process is designed. That's where you get a lot of initial professional development in teaching right away, and then it's everywhere – tons of opportunities for both individualized support and for learning from one another. It is infused everywhere.

The use of certificates and digital badges is also drawing interest. FSCJ faculty can earn a certificate in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy by taking a series of professional learning "courses," which earn them credentials such as "Humanizing the Syllabus," "Active Learning," "Using Data to Improve Teaching" and "Care Pedagogy." Faculty can leverage these certificates in the college's reward process. Respondents from MSIs showed particular interest in this strategy.

"Professional learning is a key part of what faculty see as their responsibility, as part of being a Valencia faculty member."

Developing effective incentive policies is pivotal for institutions seeking to engage faculty in sustained, high-impact professional learning. The models offered by Wilkes, Valencia and FSCJ can help CTLs at MSIs and community colleges nationwide institute the policies needed to support equity-focused teaching and learning improvement, at scale.

IIC. Gaps and Challenges

What does our research suggest about the challenges facing professional learning leaders and their institutions? Our findings spotlight challenges and gaps in four areas:

- Institutional policy and campus culture
- Valuing educators' expertise
- Engagement of part-time faculty and professional staff
- Professional learning research and assessment

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY AND CAMPUS CULTURE

We have previously spotlighted the issue of CTL funding and discussed ways that limited staff and budgets make it difficult to design and scale high-impact professional learning programs. Interestingly, our survey suggests that other obstacles pose even greater barriers to effective use of professional learning.

Reviewing a list of nine possibilities, our survey respondents identified which were obstacles to professional learning success on their campus.

Campus policy and culture shaped the most common obstacles to high-impact professional learning.

As shown in Figure 10, "Our CTL/PLH lacks sufficient staff" ranked fourth out of ten, and "Our CTL/PLH lacks sufficient financial resources" came in at sixth.

Figure 10: *WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS DO YOU CONSIDER A MAJOR BARRIER TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AT YOUR INSTITUTION? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. (N=78)*

Legend: OVERALL, PWI, MSI

Category	OVERALL	PWI	MSI
Our PLH lacks sufficient financial resources	37.2	35.4	40
Our PLH lacks sufficient staff	42.3	41.7	43.4
Institution does not consistently encourage a focus on teaching improvement	44.9	50	36.7
Institution does not consistently encourage and reward engagement with professional learning	73.1	77.1	63.3
Most instructors are not aware of the impact of evidence-based pedagogies	48.7	50	43.3
Most instructors are not interested in changing their pedagogy	43.6	47.9	33.3
Full-time instructors are overloaded and do not have time for professional learning	78.2	81.3	73.3
Part-time instructors are not engaged with campus culture and success initiatives	50	45.8	56.7
Part-time instructors are overloaded and do not have time for professional learning	47.4	50	43.3

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

According to our survey, campus policy and culture shaped the most common obstacles to high-impact professional learning. The top obstacle was "Full-time faculty are overloaded and do not have time for professional learning." Second was "Institution does not consistently encourage and reward engagement with professional learning improvement." This held true for MSIs and community colleges.

> **If a college fails to consistently encourage engagement with professional learning, faculty will focus elsewhere.**

Leveraging reward structures is vital, as previously discussed. Faculty workloads (which are particularly strenuous at community colleges and MSIs) need more attention. Here, we focus on the phrase "encourage… engagement with professional learning" and its links to campus culture. Campus culture is a powerful force, flanking policy in shaping attitudes and behaviors. If a college fails to consistently encourage engagement with professional learning and "consistently encourage a focus on teaching improvement," faculty and staff educators will focus elsewhere. Conversely, a clear message about the value of teaching improvement, reinforced at every level of faculty life, supports a pervasive focus on student learning and creates opportunities for innovation, collaboration and transformation.

Campuses with high-performing CTLs addressed campus culture and encouraged engagement with shoutouts and whole campus celebrations to new faculty seminars, departmental discussions and strategic planning. "We celebrate faculty, and we make sure we're very explicit about that," explained one campus leader. Valencia's Artze-Vega suggested that faculty leadership of professional learning helped reinforce a culture where faculty took ownership of teaching improvement.

> *At Valencia, professional learning is a core part of our culture. It's really inseparable from Valencia. It's a point of pride as an institution, a cornerstone of our culture. It isn't this thing that happens once in a while. It isn't an office or something on the side, someone else's job – it's everyone's job. And if something is a part of your culture, it has more staying power. It's the culture; that's how we do it here. We keep learning together.*

Christine Rener of Grand Valley and others linked a teaching-focused culture with a carefully aligned reward system. "I'm very lucky to be at an institution where that's part of our culture – that expected attention to teaching," she explained. "Professional learning is built into our evaluation system, and it's also built into our culture, an expectation of continued growth and development around teaching."

ENGAGING PART-TIME FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

At community colleges, 67 percent of faculty are part-time. Yet our data suggests that part-time faculty are under-represented and under-served by professional learning processes.

Just under half of the faculty teaching in US higher education are part-time faculty, with an even higher proportion at community colleges and MSIs.[46] At community colleges, for example, recent data shows that 67 percent of faculty are part-time.[47] Part-time faculty have a major role in shaping student success for poverty-affected students and racially minoritized students. Yet our data suggests that part-time faculty are under-represented and under-served by professional learning processes.

Our survey asked respondents to consider who took part in their professional learning programs

and estimate the proportion of participants from different campus constituencies. At MSIs, respondents estimated that part-time faculty made up only 30.4 percent of their participants (see Figure 11).

Other data confirm the gap around professional learning for part-time faculty, particularly at institutions serving the most racially minoritized and poverty-affected students. In the average ranking of obstacles (Figure 9), MSI respondents were particularly likely to see challenges related to engaging part-time faculty. "Part-time instructors are not engaged with campus culture and success initiatives" and "Part-time instructors are overloaded and do not have time for professional learning" were cited as major obstacles by 57 and 43 percent of MSI respondents, respectively. On another question (Figure 11), across all sectors, only 51.9 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "Our programs effectively engage both full-time and part-time faculty."

Figure 11: *PERCENTAGE OF CTL/PLH AUDIENCE FROM VARIOUS ACADEMIC RANKS*

Legend: OVERALL (N~70), PWI (N~43), MSI (N~27)

Academic Rank	OVERALL	PWI	MSI
Tenured and Tenure-track faculty	50.7	50.2	51.4
Contingent instructors	32.3	33.4	30.4
Graduate students	5.8	5.2	6.8
Non-instructional academic staff	9.1	8.9	9.5
Undergraduate students	2.1	2.3	1.9

AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF AUDIENCE
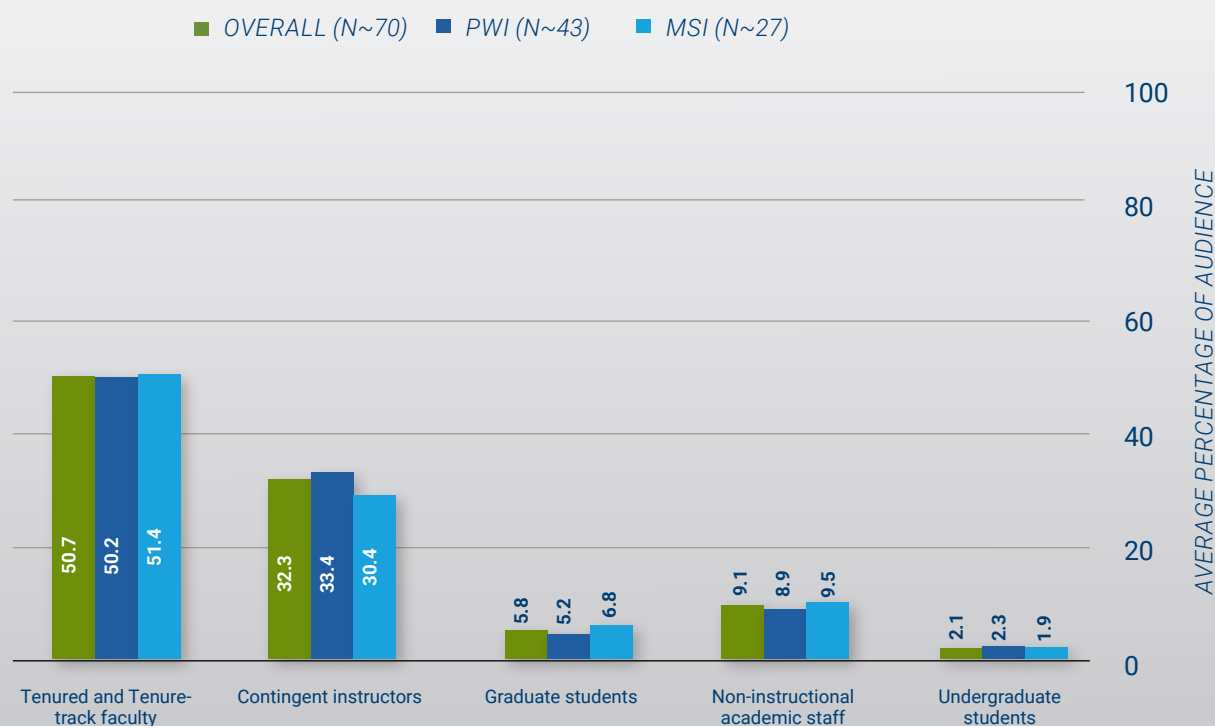
Our data confirms a well-known reality. Part-time faculty are often treated as second-class citizens. Pay structures, work schedules and job-related expectations make it more difficult for adjunct faculty to take part in professional learning. Already struggling to engage full-time faculty, many professional learning leaders feel overwhelmed by the challenge of engaging their part-time colleagues.

Wilkes, Montgomery, and Valencia have all developed special part-time faculty programs, led by part-timers.

Some campuses have strategies to address this challenge. Leaders from campuses with high-performing CTLs described prioritizing part-time faculty engagement. Given the schedules of most part-time faculty, some found asynchronous programs and self-paced tutorials effective. "Thirty-eight percent of our faculty are adjuncts," explains the director of one HBCU CTL, "so we have to be more intentional with including them, expanding our weekend and evening offerings to accommodate them."

Wilkes, Montgomery, and Valencia have all developed special part-time faculty programs, led by part-timers. Montgomery's Institute for Part-time Faculty Engagement and Support was recently recognized with the Delphi Award for its success in supporting part-time faculty. The award – bestowed each year by the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University

of Southern California – recognizes efforts to support adjunct, contingent, and non-tenure-track faculty in promoting student success.

Institutional incentives such as recognizing professional learning in tenure decisions ignores part-time faculty. Exemplar campuses link adjunct participation in professional learning to salary increases and other perquisites, such as priority attention in class scheduling.[50] These innovations are not currently in wide use. As shown in Figure 8b, only 4 percent of our respondents indicated that they used priority in class assignment to incentivize part-time faculty participation, and that figure was even lower at MSIs.

If part-time faculty are too often overlooked by professional learning programs, the situation regarding professional staff educators is even more problematic. Advisement and co-curricular learning are critical to the student experience, and holistic student support builds equity and student success. Well-designed professional learning for staff educators can help ensure the quality of these efforts; joint professional learning can build bridges between faculty and staff educators. Yet our data (Figure 10) suggests professional learning for staff plays a limited role at most institutions, including MSIs.

More attention to supporting part-time faculty and professional staff could serve as a key lever in advancing equity in teaching and learning. Colleges and universities should consider how equitable outcomes for students rest on a foundation of equitable supports for educators.

Colleges that have developed effective approaches to engaging and supporting their adjunct faculty typically follow a process that includes careful attention to each of these steps:[48]

1. *Understand who your adjunct faculty are and what they need.*

2. *Design and implement professional learning structures and programs that address the diverse needs of your institution's adjunct faculty.*

3. *Consider recognition and reward structures.*

4. *Communicate the value of this work to key stakeholders.*

Exemplar colleges like Harper, Montgomery, Valencia and Wilkes typically begin by examining the profile of their adjunct faculty. This means asking whether the college's adjunct faculty population leans towards individuals who work full-time in industry but bring little teaching experience or people with significant teaching experience who are employed part-time at multiple institutions. These groups have different needs and interests in professional learning, and our exemplar colleges design and implement professional learning structures and programs that meet those needs.

Harper and Valencia have also redesigned their adjunct faculty contracts to align with a greater emphasis on participation in sustained professional learning. These programs incentivize and recognize adjunct faculty for their ongoing engagement as reflective p actitioners. This approach brings

adjunct faculty in from the margins, engaging them more thoughtfully in the life of the college and in their students' success. "We're significantly increasing our CTL budget to start building out the same services and engage part-time faculty the way we do full-timers," explains one CAO. "We know that's crucial."

Exemplary CAOs and professional learning leaders share a commitment to engaging part-time faculty in professional learning.

Ultimately, the success of these approaches rests to some extent on how the value of the work is communicated to key stakeholders. This means that Chief Academic Officers, p ofessional learning leaders, and full-time faculty, department chairs and deans all share in the responsibility of garnering support for these efforts across campus. And it ensures that faculty, staff and administrators share a commitment to the idea that students must receive strong support from all their instructors, regardless of their status as full-time or part-time faculty.

College examples and tools to support this work can be found in recent publications from Achieving the Dream, Every Learner Everywhere, Online Learning Consortium, USC's Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success, and WCET.[49]

VALUING EDUCATORS' EXPERTISE

The research-based *NLC Framework* argues that high-impact professional learning must value and leverage the expertise of educators.[52] In Section IIA of this report, leaders of exemplary CTLs described how they design their programs, using a co-constructed model to build motivation and productive engagement. Our data suggests that implementation of this principle is uneven, at best.

Our survey listed practices that research shows contribute to effective professional learning and asked respondents which were true of their campus. Figure 12 shows the percentage of respondents who said that these statements were mostly or completely true on their campus.
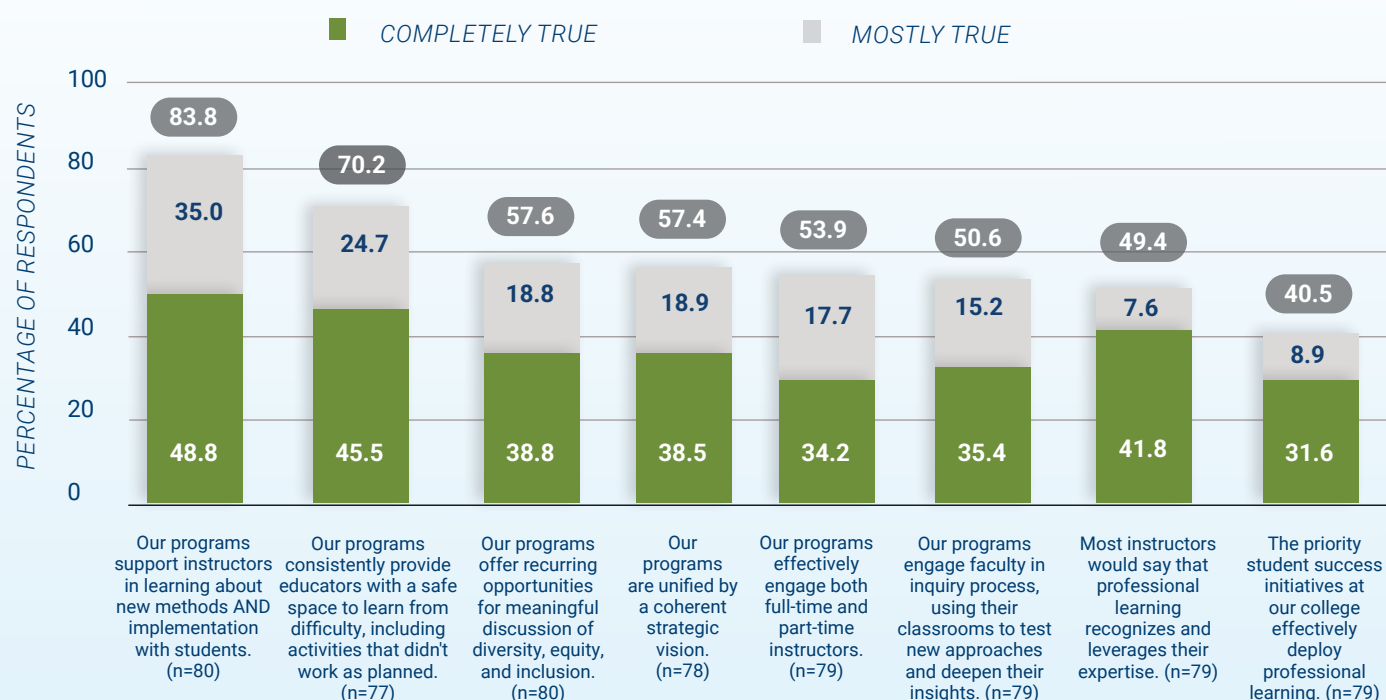
Some principles of high-impact professional learning are widely practiced. For example, 70.1 percent of respondents said their programs provide participants with a safe space to discuss challenges and learn from difficulty. Other principles are less commonly practiced. Only 57.5 percent reported that their programs provided recurring opportunities for discussion of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Most strikingly, only 49.4 percent felt that educators would say that their programs recognize and leverage their professional expertise. That pattern largely held true across institutions – at community colleges, only 41 percent said educators felt professional learning built on their expertise.

Only 41 percent of community college respondents said their faculty felt professional learning built on their expertise.

This spotlights a major gap in practice. Productive engagement of educators depends on broader understanding and implementation of this fundamental principle.[53] If it is implemented consistently by fewer than 50 percent of CTLs, it significantly undercuts the promise of professional learning and its impact on equity and student success. We encourage CTL leaders and their stakeholders to review their program design and facilitation practices to address this challenge. The ATD *Toolkit* and the examples presented throughout this report can be helpful in this regard.

Figure 12: *TO WHAT EXTENT DO THESE STATEMENTS ACCURATELY DESCRIBE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS AT YOUR INSTITUTION? (ALL INSTITUTIONS)*

COMPLETELY TRUE   MOSTLY TRUE

83.8	70.2	57.6	57.4	53.9	50.6	49.4	40.5
35.0	24.7	18.8	18.9	17.7	15.2	7.6	8.9
48.8	45.5	38.8	38.5	34.2	35.4	41.8	31.6
Our programs support instructors in learning about new methods AND implementation with students. (n=80)	Our programs consistently provide educators with a safe space to learn from difficulty, including activities that didn't work as planned. (n=77)	Our programs offer recurring opportunities for meaningful discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion. (n=80)	Our programs are unified by a coherent strategic vision. (n=78)	Our programs effectively engage both full-time and part-time instructors. (n=79)	Our programs engage faculty in inquiry process, using their classrooms to test new approaches and deepen their insights. (n=79)	Most instructors would say that professional learning recognizes and leverages their expertise. (n=79)	The priority student success initiatives at our college effectively deploy professional learning. (n=79)

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

AWARENESS AND ASSESSMENT: CONNECTING PRACTICE WITH STANDARDS

A set of accessible resources offers professional learning leaders research-based practices and principles that can help ensure teaching improvement and benefits for students. Leaders from campuses with exemplary CTLs mentioned such resources often and described the guidance they provided. More broadly, our data suggests that leaders on most campuses are unaware of these resources. This limits the implementation of high-impact professional learning practice. Further, assessment of professional learning, which could inform and spur improvement, is uneven. Strengthening awareness and assessment could help campuses advance progress towards more high-impact professional learning.
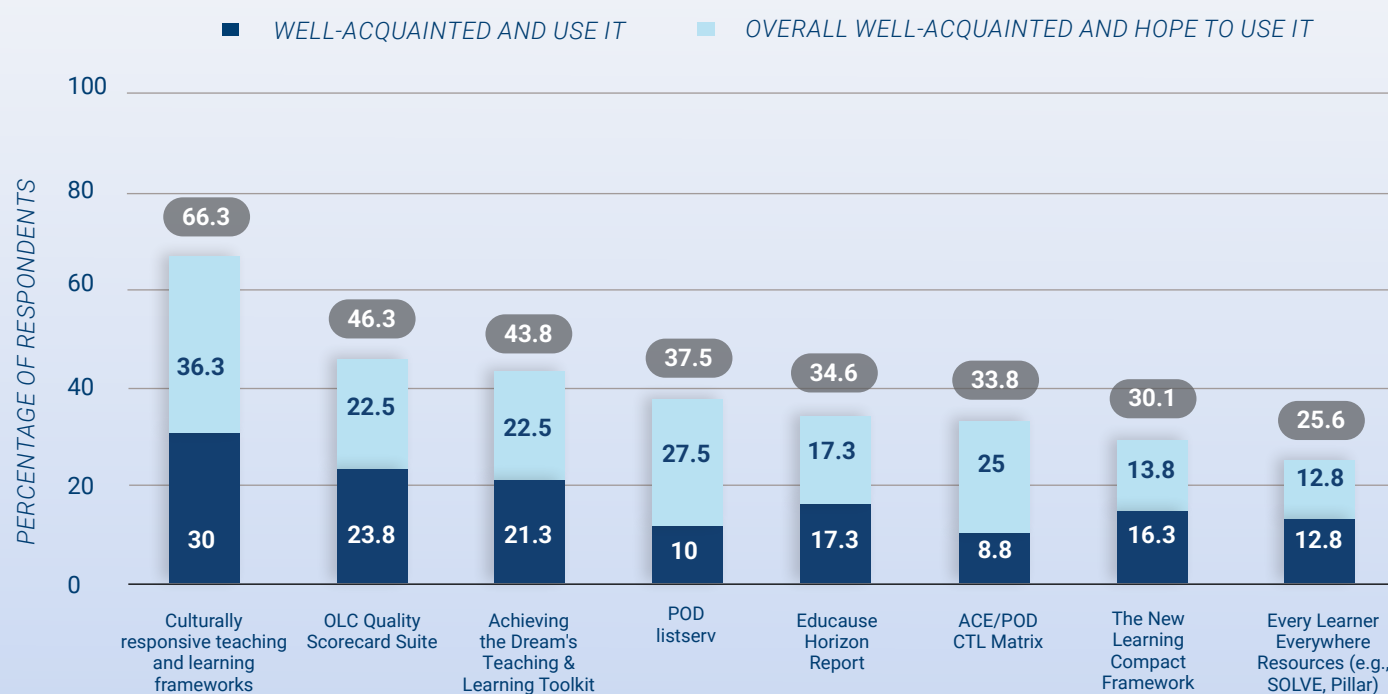
As discussed earlier, the *ACE/POD Center for Teaching and Learning Matrix*, the *NLC Framework* and the *ATD Teaching & Learning Toolkit* are notable, research-based resources for strengthening professional learning practice. In our survey, we asked respondents to review a list of such resources and gave them four

choices: 1) Never heard of it; 2) Know a bit but don't use; 3) Well acquainted and plan to use; and 4) Well acquainted and use regularly.

A set of accessible resources offers professional learning practices and principles. Yet our data suggests that leaders on most campuses are unaware of these resources.

As seen in Figure 13, awareness of valuable guides to effective practice was strikingly low. Only 33.7 percent were familiar with the *ACE/POD Matrix*, and only 30.0 percent with the NLC *Framework*. Slightly more were acquainted with the ATD *Toolkit* and the POD listserv (43.7 and 37.5 percent, respectively). These patterns held for MSIs and community college respondents, with only minor variations. PWI respondents were more aware of some resources than MSI respondents, and less aware of others.

Figure 13: *PLEASE INDICATE HOW MUCH THESE RESOURCES SHAPE CURRENT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES AT YOUR INSTITUTION. (OVERALL N~80)*

■ *WELL-ACQUAINTED AND USE IT*   ■ *OVERALL WELL-ACQUAINTED AND HOPE TO USE IT*

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

Resource	Well-acquainted and use it	Overall well-acquainted and hope to use it	Total
Culturally responsive teaching and learning frameworks	30	36.3	66.3
OLC Quality Scorecard Suite	23.8	22.5	46.3
Achieving the Dream's Teaching & Learning Toolkit	21.3	22.5	43.8
POD listserv	10	27.5	37.5
Educause Horizon Report	17.3	17.3	34.6
ACE/POD CTL Matrix	8.8	25	33.8
The New Learning Compact Framework	16.3	13.8	30.1
Every Learner Everywhere Resources (e.g., SOLVE, Pillar)	12.8	12.8	25.6

Low familiarity with these quality-focused resources may be a factor in the uneven implementation of research-based best practice. Another factor could be the limited attention paid to assessment of professional learning. Quality assessment of professional learning evaluates the extent to which these programs help educators effectively incorporate evidence-based pedagogies into their practice and whether these changes build equity and student success. Assessment of professional learning quality and impact can help CTL leaders see what is working in their programs and use research-based methods to improve them. It can also inform college-level strategic planning and investment. Yet our research suggests that assessment of professional learning remains uneven.

As shown in Figure 14, only the most basic evaluation techniques were used by more than 50 percent of respondents: tracking attendance was used by 91.2 percent of respondents; surveying participants about their satisfaction with their experience in the program by 81.2 percent. More sophisticated methods, examining changes in practice and impact on students, were far less common. This pattern was consistent across institutional type, similar for MSIs and community colleges.

Another question asked, "Does your CTL/PLH presently evaluate its services in terms of their contributions to equity and inclusion on campus?" Two thirds (65.6 percent) answered no.

Across institutional type, our data found sophisticated assessment of professional learning to be rare.

Our interviews underscored the need to pay more attention to assessment. "You asked me which of our programs are the best. I don't know that because I don't have good measurements, and that bothers me," reflected one respondent. "We're primarily tracking satisfaction with our programming," said another, "but in terms of connecting what we do to impact, we haven't made that connection."

Leaders of exemplary CTLs are aware of and adressing this gap (see Sidebar 4). They have launched efforts to gather more sophisticated and actionable data on change in faculty practice and impact on students. These CTLs are building processes to use this data to refine their programs and help faculty use data to guide and reinforce their own self-improvement. If other campuses follow their path, it will be an important step for the professional learning field.

Figure 14: *WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS TO EVALUATE THE QUALITY AND IMPACT OF OUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS DO YOU USE ON YOUR CAMPUS? CHECK ALL THAT APPLY. (N=80)*
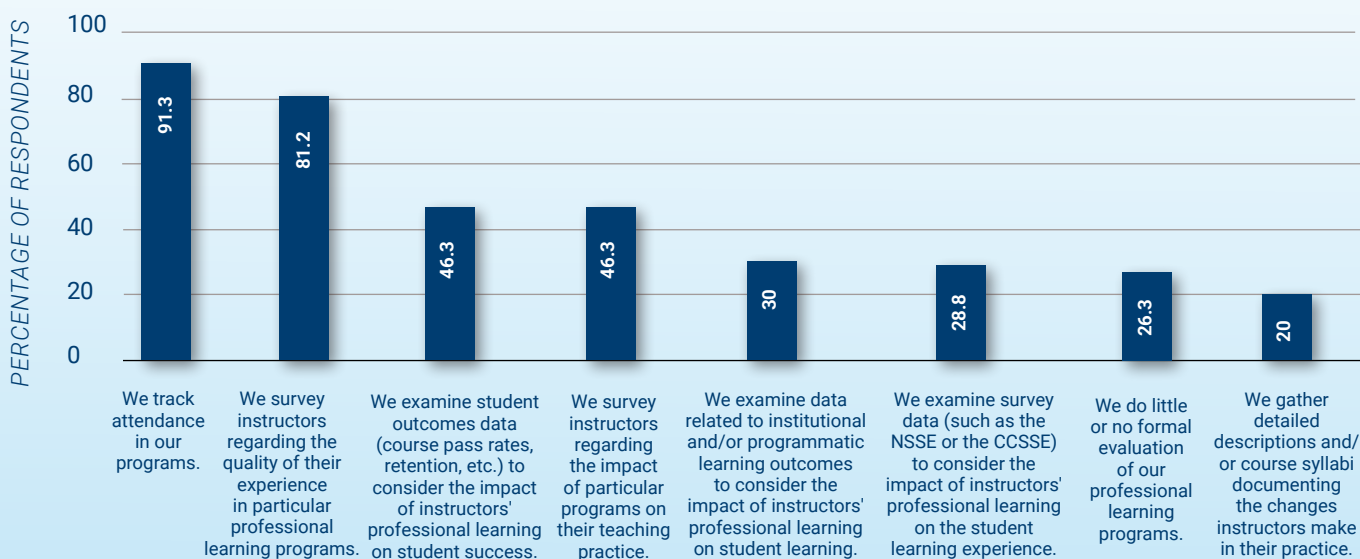
At exemplary CTLs, assessment of professional learning impact is growing more common and more sophisticated. Two examples illustrate this trend.

From 2015 to 2021, the CTL at Wilkes Community College ran the CORE program (Collaborative Online Reflective Experience), a sustained seminar helping scores of faculty learn about the use of evidence-based pedagogies in digital environments. "This experience," explained the program description, "aims to provide support and instructional strategies based on research-based best practices in online instruction, giving faculty a sustained growth experience rather than isolated and random assistance." Topics included active learning, backwards design and using feedback to build student engagement.

Examining syllabi and assignments, WCC assessed the redesigned courses and found they were much more likely to incorporate best practice. It examined changes in course completion (with a grade of C or better) using course-specific historical comparisons and saw a recurring pattern of improvement. For example, in Fall 2019, 85.2 percent of the students taught by CORE faculty passed the course − an improvement of nearly 17 percentage points over the historical comparison pass rate of 68.5 percent.

This assessment persuaded Wilkes to invest in professional learning programs, leading to its college-wide Professional Learning Communities initiative.

The LaGuardia Community College CTL led a college-wide redesign of the First Year Seminar, featuring an intensive year-long professional development program for discipline-based faculty. This redesign prepared them to engage with first semester students in new ways.

Assessment data persuaded Wilkes leaders to invest in sustained professional learning programs.

A survey showed that 87 percent of participating faculty felt the program helped them rethink their teaching practice. Meanwhile, a rigorous evaluation demonstrated that the redesigned courses produced a 15 percentage point gain in next semester retention and a 12 percentage point gain in one year retention, statistically significant imp ovements with strong effect size.

This data helped to persuade LaGuardia's leadership to scale the program and to ask its CTL to lead new college-wide change efforts. As one LaGuardia report concluded, "Professional development offerings empower faculty to learn together as they…prepare students to survive and thrive in the fast-changing environment of the twenty-first century "[54]

IID. Ecosystem Support: What Assistance Would Help?

Colleges and universities do not exist in a vacuum. The ecosystem of higher education includes state systems, funders, and higher education organizations. What kinds of external or ecosystem support would help colleges (particularly MSIs, community colleges and other broad access institutions) to strengthen their professional learning programs, ensuring high quality and broad impact?

Our data has illuminated the strengths and challenges of professional learning on US campuses. We have identified strategies pursued by high-performing CTLs. Here we ask: What could external agencies and organizations do to help more campuses adopt such strategies, meet their challenges, and better use professional learning to address mission-critical goals?
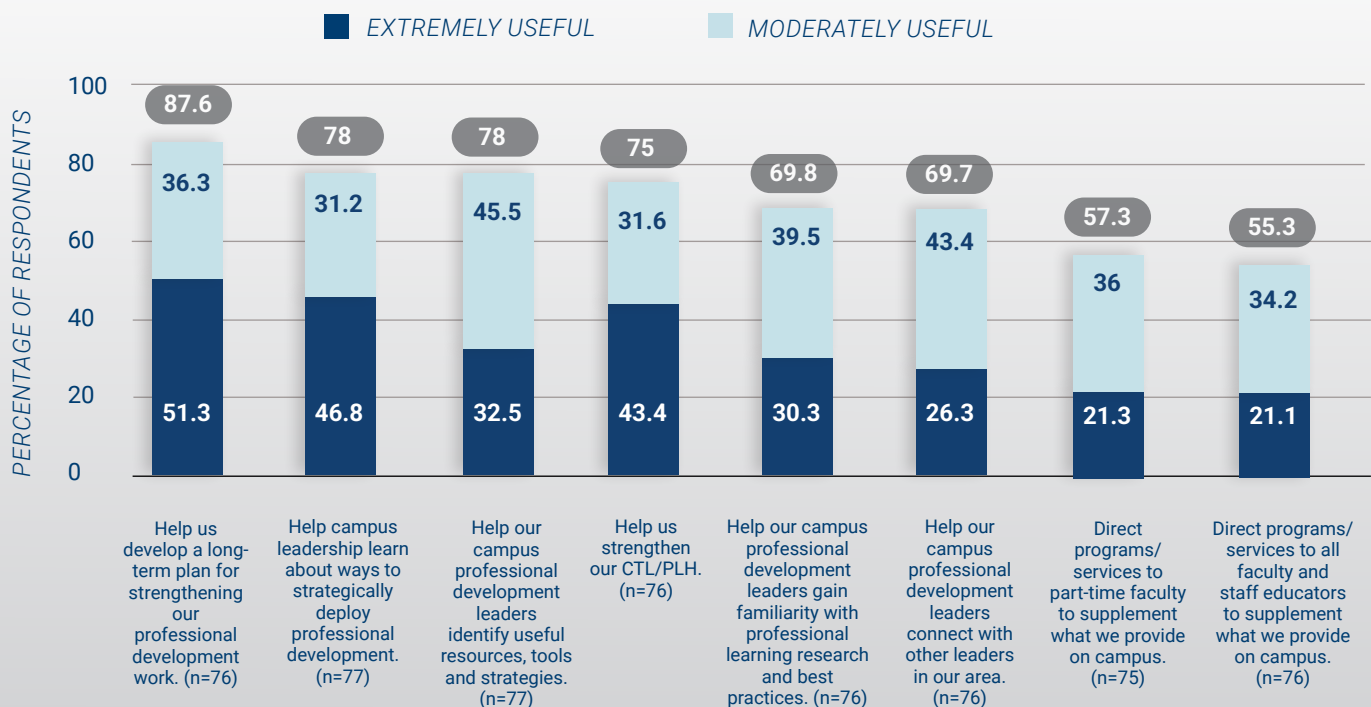
Our survey listed different types of external assistance and asked respondents, "How

The most requested form of assistance was "Help us develop a long-term plan for strengthening our professional development work."

helpful would each of the following kinds of externally provided assistance be to strengthening your professional learning work?" Figure 15 highlights the percentage that rated each item Extremely or Moderately Useful. These results should inform plans and programs offered by external organizations.

The most highly rated form of assistance, with 85.5 percent rating it as moderately or extremely useful, was, "Help us develop a long-term plan for strengthening our professional development work." Campus leaders are eager to develop a well-informed strategic approach to building

Figure 15: *HOW HELPFUL WOULD EACH OF THE FOLLOWING EXTERNALLY-PROVIDED ASSISTANCE BE TO STRENGTHENING YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING WORK? (ALL INSTITUTIONS)*

Legend: ■ EXTREMELY USEFUL   ■ MODERATELY USEFUL

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

Category	Extremely Useful	Moderately Useful	Total
Help us develop a long-term plan for strengthening our professional development work. (n=76)	51.3	36.3	87.6
Help campus leadership learn about ways to strategically deploy professional development. (n=77)	46.8	31.2	78
Help our campus professional development leaders identify useful resources, tools and strategies. (n=77)	32.5	45.5	78
Help us strengthen our CTL/PLH. (n=76)	43.4	31.6	75
Help our campus professional development leaders gain familiarity with professional learning research and best practices. (n=76)	30.3	39.5	69.8
Help our campus professional development leaders connect with other leaders in our area. (n=76)	26.3	43.4	69.7
Direct programs/services to part-time faculty to supplement what we provide on campus. (n=75)	21.3	36	57.3
Direct programs/services to all faculty and staff educators to supplement what we provide on campus. (n=76)	21.1	34.2	55.3

campus capacity to design and deliver high-impact professional learning programs, and they would welcome guidance and support in this area. It is worth noting that this was the most highly rated item for community colleges (94.6 percent) and MSIs (92.8 percent).

This conclusion is bolstered by the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th most highly rated forms of assistance: "Help campus leadership learn about ways to strategically deploy professional development" (78.9 percent); "Help our campus professional development leaders identify useful resources, tools and strategies" (75.9 percent); and "Help us strengthen our CTL/PLH" (75.0 percent). These items were all highly rated by community colleges and MSI respondents.

All forms of assistance listed in this question were seen positively and would be welcomed by campuses. This includes the direct provision of services to educators, supplementing campus-based programming. But the data suggests that the most important assistance would empower campuses to work more to strengthen their own professional learning practice.

Our interviews reinforce this message. We asked our respondents what they would want to say to external partners – what kind of help they needed and what they wanted those partners to understand. Across the board, our respondents thanked them for their previous help. And they shared a rich and diverse set of messages that we'll share as the final part of our findings.

"I want external organizations to put out RFPs specifically designed to promote professional learning for faculty. Funding opportunities to build capacity, to build infrastructure, to create that physical space, to bring people together."

"I want help getting our administration – our provost, deans, and chairs – to help them understand what is possible in terms of professional learning support and impact."

"It's very important to invest in our future – young people who will contribute to the economy, and, on top of that, our decision-makers of tomorrow. And education is one of those places that can have one of the biggest results on our economy. It can have one of the biggest results on our sense of equity as a country. There are so many ways that investing in professional learning at community colleges and Tribal Colleges and HSIs and HBCUs has big effects."

"I want to talk with funders and other partners about the role of teaching and student success. Those completion goals and that progress towards the degree are hollow if they don't represent learning, knowledge, competencies, and skills. Yes, we can have a student success agenda, a completion agenda, and an equitable outcomes agenda. But the only way that those goals are meaningful and change lives and family trajectories is if they represent knowledge, skills, and abilities. And the only ways that we have that assurance is by supporting professional learning."

"The future of our democracy is contingent on our student population – period. That's what I want people to understand. The shape of our future is contingent on our students getting an education, having critical thinking skills, and being able to deduce if something is a fact or not. The future of our democracy is at stake. There's nothing flippant in that statement. I feel like I'm sounding really grandiose, but it's the people who are in the classrooms – and I mean people, because this is a web of supports. It's the faculty, it's the academic counselors, it's the career development, it's the transfer services, it's the admissions office… it's across the

board. If we do not put student learning at the front and center of every decision we make, the future of a democracy is at stake. And CTLs are a key part of that because it's through professional learning practices that we can get better."

"We need help getting the word out about all of the resources that are available ... There's just a wealth of information – if you know where to look."

"What help do we need? Really capacity building and technical assistance. I have always been open to technical assistance. We need technical assistance, not just money."

"I think understanding the importance of professional learning can help funders get better projects, give better feedback, better design the expectations for the projects they fund. For example, I would be reticent to fund a project that's supposed to improve student success that's going to not engage faculty. That's probably not going to work as well as it could. I do think it's important to embed professional learning in the criteria they establish and the kinds of things they ask about. And expecting, not prescribing, but expecting a broader level of engagement with faculty and support for teaching."

"We define success as students learning, achieving our institutional learning outcomes. We need to invest in teaching because there is no effective learning without effective teaching. I'm thinking about teaching broadly, including holistic support for students. So that's essential. We need to invest in teaching for our students to succeed. There's not going to be effective learning without effective teaching – and effective teaching and effective professional learning go together."

III. Recommendations: Fulfilling the Promise

What are the implications of our findings? What steps would support the high-impact professional learning needed to advance equity and student success? What could be done to strengthen CTLs at MSIs, community colleges and other institutions dedicated to serving the nation's racially minoritized and poverty-affected students?

We organize our recommendations into three categories, suggesting steps to be taken by campus professional learning leaders, institutional leaders, and ecosystem partners. We recognize that the first two categories are not always distinct. Across all categories, the process of improvement and change requires shared vision and collaborative partnership.

1. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LEADERS (SUPPORTED BY THEIR INSTITUTION)

A. Engage educators as partners.

Exemplary CTLs engage educators as partners, leveraging their expertise to build motivation and activate classroom change. Research shows that co-constructed design is foundational to high-impact professional learning practice, and, not incidentally, it models the essential principles of culturally responsive pedagogy that our students need. Yet our data suggests that such approaches are not in wide use, and faculty do not feel valued *(Section IIC)*. To deepen engagement, professional learning leaders must more persistently align program design with research-based best practice principles.

B. Design sustained programs.

Use national standards to re-examine the design of your professional learning programs. Find ways to move beyond stand-alone workshops that, despite strong evidence of their limitations, are still the most common program structure at MSIs and community colleges nationwide *(Section IIB)*. Expand opportunities to engage your educators in sustained programs (e.g., Faculty Learning Communities; Communities of Practice) that support them as they learn about and test the pedagogies that advance equity in student learning. Such programs require investment but yield greater teaching improvement and improved equity outcomes.

C. Assess the impact of professional learning.

Our research shows that meaningful assessment of professional learning is rare across campuses, including MSIs and community colleges. We encourage you to devote new energy to evaluating the impact of your programs *(Section IIC)*. While this work can be challenging, new evaluation methodology and database systems have made this work more accessible than ever. We can now correlate participation in professional learning and change in practice with improved student outcomes. Professional learning leaders should leverage campus expertise to build refined evaluation processes. This will strengthen the work we do, reinforcing its legitimacy and making a case for return on investment.[55]

Apply national standards to engage your educators in high impact sustained programs.

D. Develop a strategic vision.

As professional learning leaders, reflect on what you learned from the past two to three years, thinking about what should continue as you plan your path forward. Develop a strategic approach to strengthening your CTL by conducting an analysis that looks at your own experience, your faculty and student needs, and your institution's priority goals and initiatives. Drawing on research-based resources such as the *ACE/POD CTL Matrix* and the ATD *Teaching & Learning Toolkit*, evaluate your program design, consider how you're staffed, and envision where you want your CTL to be in three to five years. How could you work with key partners over time to strengthen your CTL?

2. INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS (IN COLLABORATION WITH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING LEADERS)

A. Invest in your CTL.

Leaders from campuses with exemplary CTLs know that strategic investment in professional learning pays dividends. Yet our data suggests that, at most MSIs and community colleges, CTLs are underfunded and understaffed *(Section IIA)*. We encourage institutional leaders to move from funding one or two faculty on reassigned time to a more robust professional learning team that includes staff with background in educational development, working in collaboration with faculty leaders. Find the funds to support CTL capacity building and purposeful use of more effective, research-based professional learning design.

B. Plan strategic deployment.

Campuses with high-performing CTLs spotlight professional learning in their strategic planning processes *(Section IIA)*. Given the challenges facing MSIs and community colleges around enrollment, retention and completion, campus executives should intentionally deploy high-impact professional learning, using it to advance institutional change initiatives and achieve mission-critical goals. This requires engagement of your professional learning leaders in your strategic planning and resource allocation processes.

> *Given the challenges facing MSIs and community colleges around enrollment, retention and completion, campus leaders should intentionally deploy high-impact professional learning to achieve mission-critical goals.*

C. Engage part-time faculty.

For faculty to improve teaching, ATD's Karen Stout has written, they need support, including time and space for innovation and reflection.[56] As you work to support your faculty, ensure that your plan supports *all* faculty. Our findings highlight the persistent gaps in how institutions support adjunct faculty *(Section IIC)*. This is particularly problematic at MSIs and community colleges that depend on adjuncts. Make sure your professional learning leaders understand the importance of part-time faculty, focus on their needs and design for their engagement.

D. Demonstrate your commitment to teaching improvement.

Strategic use of reward systems can power sustained, cost-effective teaching improvement efforts *(Section IIB)*. This is especially vital for MSIs and community colleges, where faculty workloads are high. Building a culture that values teaching can complement and reinforce the strategic use of reward systems. We encourage you to study the reward structures used at Valencia and Harper and the badging programs emerging at FSCJ and elsewhere and develop a well-grounded incentive program that can support change at scale.

> *Building a culture that values teaching can complement and reinforce the strategic use of reward systems.*

3. ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS

Institutions operate in the context of the larger educational ecosystem. We encourage funders, state systems and national higher education networks to consider how they can help campuses effectively leverage professional learning, paying particular attention to the MSIs, community colleges and other broad access institutions. In this regard, we urge ecosystem partners to consider the ecosystem-related data provided in the Findings (Section IID) and develop new strategies designed to:

A. Support capacity building.

In our survey, the most highly rated form of external assistance was "Help us develop a long-term plan for strengthening our professional development work." (Among respondents from MSIs, 92.4 percent identified this as their priority form of assistance.) We encourage ecosystem partners to offer programs that help institutions – MSIs and community colleges, in particular – develop strategic plans for strengthening CTLs, building professional learning capacity and implementing more effective professional learning design.

We encourage ecosystem partners to offer programs that help MSIs, community colleges and other institutions build capacity and implement more effective professional learning design.

B. Build leadership awareness.

Our second most highly rated form of external assistance was "Help campus leadership learn about ways to strategically deploy professional development." We encourage ecosystem partners to spotlight research on professional learning in conferences, publications and executive preparation programs. Create opportunities for executives from MSIs and community colleges to work with their peers from other exemplary institutions, jointly developing strategies for broad change.

C. Help disseminate professional learning resources.

Resources to guide capacity building and high-impact professional learning practice are available, but most professional learning leaders are not aware of them. Our third most highly rated request for assistance was "Help our campus professional development leaders identify useful resources, tools and strategies." We encourage you to identify programming and publicity to get these resources into the hands of professional learning leaders at MSIs, community colleges and other broad access institutions.

D. Invest in effectiveness.

Funders, both public and private, have a crucial role to play in this process. Our examination of professional learning at under-resourced MSIs and community colleges suggests that exemplary CTLs use grant funding to leverage institutional support and spark broad change. To spur more effective change efforts, RFP structures and major grant initiatives should require a thoughtful professional learning plan for any equity-focused teaching and learning or student success initiative. Connect RFP structures and proposal development processes to best practice guidelines, building broad awareness among campus leaders and helping to ensure more effective change initiatives.

Equity-focused RFPs and grant programs should require a plan for high-impact professional learning.

None of these steps will transform the field all by itself. Yet change is possible. A concerted effort that builds partnerships and advances broad conversation will go far to ensuring more effective change initiatives, improved teaching and learning, and greater equity for our students.

Appendix: Details on Methodology

This report is based not only on current research and resources related to professional learning but also on two sets of original data, one quantitative and the other qualitative.
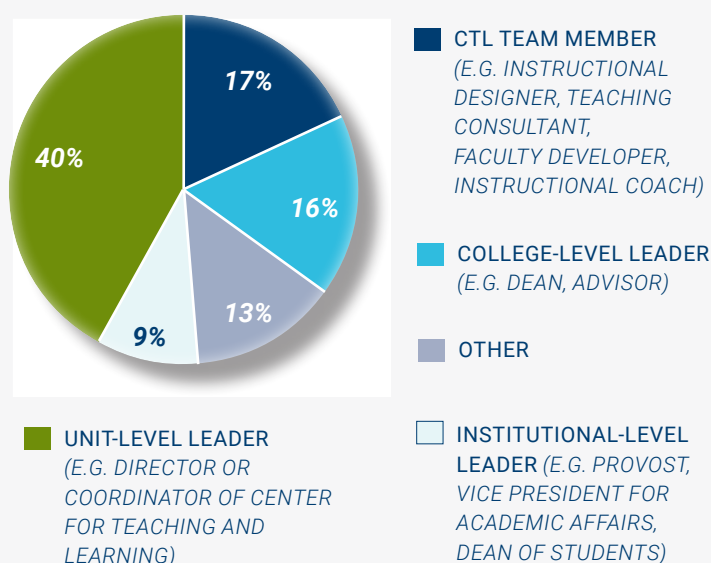
The Quantitative Data Set

As discussed briefly in the Introduction, our quantitative data gathering centered on a survey completed by CTL directors, CTL staff and campus leaders (e.g., Deans, Chief Academic Officers). We designed a 36-item survey that asked respondents about the status of professional learning on their campuses – strengths and successes, as well as challenges. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to listservs related to professional learning, such as those maintained by the POD Network, and to networks maintained by organizations such as the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), Achieving the Dream (ATD), the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) and Every Learner Everywhere (ELE). Personalized emails were also sent to ATD and OLC member institutions that identify as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to ensure perspectives from these institutions were shared.
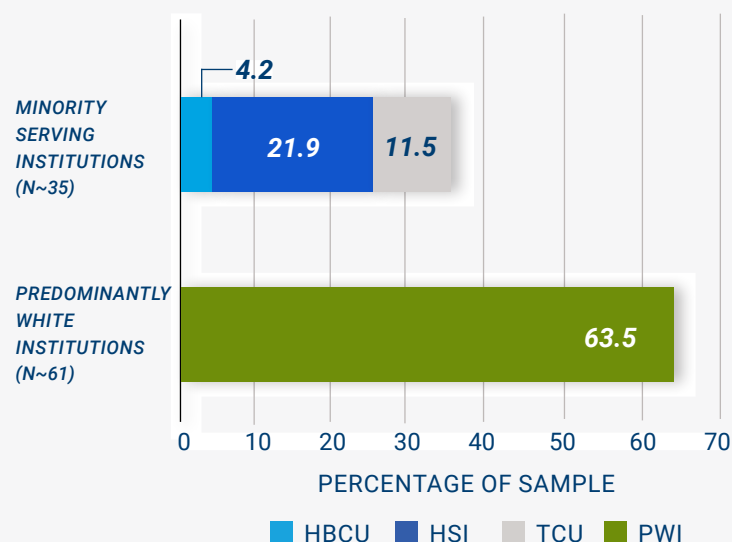
Nearly 100 (n=95) higher education professionals responded to the online survey between March and July 2022. Participation rates across different questions vary, but generally 75–85 individuals offered responses on any given survey item. Appendix Figure 1 reports the self-identified roles of the respondents.

As shown in Appendix Figure 2, just under 40 percent of the respondents came from an MSI, with the largest group based at Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Appendix Figure 1: *INSTITUTIONAL ROLE IN SAMPLE* (N=95)

- **CTL TEAM MEMBER** *(E.G. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER, TEACHING CONSULTANT, FACULTY DEVELOPER, INSTRUCTIONAL COACH)*
- **COLLEGE-LEVEL LEADER** *(E.G. DEAN, ADVISOR)*
- **OTHER**
- **UNIT-LEVEL LEADER** *(E.G. DIRECTOR OR COORDINATOR OF CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING)*
- **INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL LEADER** *(E.G. PROVOST, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, DEAN OF STUDENTS)*

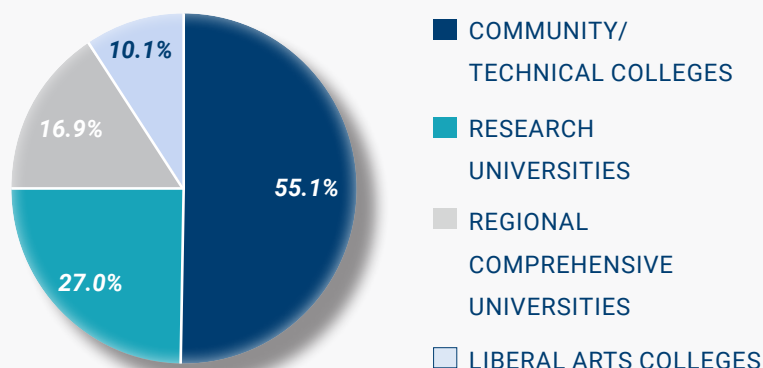**Appendix Figure 2:** *PERCENTAGE OF PWIs/ MSIs IN SAMPLE*

Appendix Figure 3 shows the breakdown in terms of institutional type, with the largest groups coming from community colleges or Research 1 universities. We recognize that our categories are not mutually exclusive; for example, some community colleges are also MSIs.

Although every effort was made to recruit participants from across the higher education spectrum, some types of roles and institutions are inevitably somewhat over- or under-represented in opt-in survey samples such as this one. For example, we have relatively few respondents from regional comprehensive universities. Fortunately, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) are both well represented, and therefore the sample positions the research team to analyze and compare patterns of professional learning experiences, resources, and opportunities between PWIs and MSIs. To consider intersectional differences based on institutional type, we compare Research 1 universities with community colleges.

Because of the relatively small data set, the research team decided to use descriptive rather than inferential statistical analysis. We pursued our work with a goal of focusing on the types of colleges and universities that have historically been under-represented in research on professional learning and to begin to identify trends, for example, in our comparisons of PWIs and MSIs. Between-group comparisons within a sample of this size are less likely to yield statistically significant differences. Furthermore, while our sample may not be generalizable to all institutions of higher education, we believe that the colleges and universities represented in these responses have a powerful story to share about the role of professional learning in institutional change and student success.

INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN SAMPLE (N=97)

- COMMUNITY/ TECHNICAL COLLEGES
- RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES
- REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES
- LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

The Qualitative Data Set

To supplement our quantitative data, we conducted oral interviews with campus educators involved with professional learning on their campuses. To engage a range of perspectives, survey respondents were invited to volunteer to be interviewed at the end of the survey. We reviewed the types of roles and institutions represented in our sample and identified 20 individuals from a variety of colleges and universities. These interviewees were paid $250 for their participation. We particularly emphasized representation from campuses that primarily serve poverty-affected students and/or racially minoritized students. To spotlight examples of best practice, we intentionally included a set of leaders from campuses with CTLs that, based on preliminary conversations and available data, we deemed to consistently match the "Exemplary" criteria of the *ACE/POD CTL Matrix*.

Interviews were conducted via video conferencing tools from April through August 2022 and lasted approximately one hour each. Following each interview, the research team reviewed transcripts to identify key themes and quotes,

organizing them into a central research document containing 17 coding frames (e.g., "Scope and Focus of CTL Services and Programming" and "Potential Assistance from External Partners and Funders"). This process facilitated a thorough consideration of all the interviews and allowed the research team to identify common strengths, challenges and opportunities.

Interviewees were promised anonymity. Where it seemed that names and institutional affiliations would help ground the testimony and strengthen the report, we shared quotes that we planned to use and asked for permission to make more specific attribution.

Despite our relatively small quantitative data set, this report suggests the value of future research in this area. We have only begun to ask standards-based questions about quality professional learning, professional learning "done well." And professional learning at Minority Serving Institutions and community colleges, which jointly serve the vast majority of our nation's racially minoritized and poverty-affected students, remains all too often overlooked. We hope that this report creates a strong foundation for a robust exploration of both of these unique aspects of our study.

Notes

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