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Section III: Professional Development Interventions

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The successful pursuit of our business requires skillful interventions—in professional habits of mind and action. In truth, in peoples' lives. Probably more thought has gone into this issue than into any other aspect of professional development work. Interventions are the stuff of ethics, even when—as is usual in the case with the articles in this section—the focus is almost exclusively on techniques. The sensitivity to contexts, to rationale for choice, to outcomes, to people displayed by each author affirms the ethical dimension of specific interventions. Considered thus, the choice of techniques is important indeed.

Alton Roberts, John Clarke, and David Holmes describe a complete set of techniques they use at the University of Vermont. The resulting picture is set, however, against a background of clear ideas about the nature and valences of change theory and practice. Specific intervention techniques take on importance as instruments of value-directed choice, a point Alton, John and David give life through their fictitious, but patently familiar Professor Bard. Similarly, Daniel Wheeler and Lynn Mortensen structure interventions in faculty affairs in terms of informed sensitivity to the issues attending life and career transitions. Dan and Lynn remind us early on that a "person is not a static, unchanging predictable sort of being" and they go on to define

interventions that respond to the range of questions and choices faculty periodically face. Together, these two teams of writers produce articles rich with contextual speculation, sense of movement, regard for individual growth and choice; and they lay out a workbench full of tools to promote professional development.

The next two articles—one by Henry Slotnick and one by L. Dee Fink—play variations on an intervention theme. Henry details his structuring and supportive work with a team of faculty at North Dakota's School of Medicine. Over the course of an academic year, this voluntary "study group" systematically examined instructional issues and developed the habits of mind, as Henry sees it, of "educational connoisseurs." Dee examines a similar developmental organization, year-long faculty discussion groups, as he has worked to organize several of them each year since 1979. He considers their several impacts, their inner workings, faculty interest in them, how best to develop participants' respect in leading them, and some of the practices which seem best to promote success with them. Both Henry and Dee write with obvious high regard for the men and women they hope to influence.

The piece by Russell Lee and Michael Field calls up for us the "hidden opportunities" that recurrent academic situations present as moments for professional development in teaching. Russ and Michael center on interdisciplinary team-teaching and on an evaluation of the general education program at their institution. What they suggest, of course, is that conscious faculty growth need not be the direct objective of a specific educational undertaking, but it can and maybe should always be an important desired by-product in the hands of the skillful developer. After all, development in education is encompassing and holistic, is it not? Edward Kaylor and William Smith, in the last article, offer a strong affirmative in answer, reinforcing the message from Russ and Michael. Edward and William take the comprehensive view, setting their discussion around the intriguing notion of "liberating structures," a paradox suggested in the work of William Torbert. Describing rich opportunities for developmental interventions in the normally stale stuff of institutional planning, Edward and William bring us back around to our ethical home base: "Faculty development," they declare, "must address both professional growth and the

need for a faculty member to assume some measure of self-determination and also acquire a sense of 'place' within the organizational structure."

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