

An Instructional Workforce Framework for Coordinated Change in Undergraduate Education

Questions and Prompts for Coordinated Planning

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A working group of the [National Academies Roundtable on Undergraduate STEM Education](#), focusing on examining systemic effects related to the higher education instructional workforce, developed the questions and prompts on the next page to generate reflection, discussion, and insights on guiding positive changes in teaching and learning, particularly those that move toward more inclusive, equitable, and evidence-based educational practices.

The prompts are organized around three levers for change that affect the higher education instructional workforce and the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. The instructional workforce includes faculty who are on the tenure track, who are tenured, and who are in roles such as visitor, instructor, teaching assistant, teaching professor, adjunct, and lecturer (i.e., VITAL faculty, a term coined in [2019](#) by Rachel Levy with the Mathematical Association of America). These three levers are governance, professional development, and evaluation and reward structures. By implementing coordinated support for and engagement of members of the instructional workforce across these three areas, VITAL and tenure-line faculty are more likely to be successful in implementing evidence-based, inclusive teaching practices, which benefit students.

Questions and prompts may be used by institutional leaders, those serving in governance roles, and at various organizational levels, including schools, colleges, and departments. Beyond individual institutions, multi-campus college and university systems and consortia can likewise employ the questions for reflection on policies and practices impacting the instructional workforce, and by funders and organizations involved in supporting and advocating for improving undergraduate education.

Prompts for integrated instructional workforce planning by departments, institutions, and organizations	
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which members of the instructional workforce participate and which are excluded? Consider the roles, demographics, disabilities, and identities of participants. • Do policies and resources established by governance (e.g., funding, time) support participation in and access to professional development for prospective and current members of the instructional workforce, across career stages and roles (VITAL and tenure-line)? • Do policies provide security, a living wage, and pathways for professional advancement to VITAL and tenure-line faculty? • How do governance bodies communicate about policies with the instructional workforce, including seeking input and sharing decisions? • How do governance decisions prioritize resources for and status of teaching, within the context of the institution's mission and goals?
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are tenure-line and VITAL faculty supported, in the form of workload allocation, paid time, and resources, to participate in teaching-related professional development? • Are the teaching-related skills and mindsets addressed in professional development aligned with hiring, evaluation, and reward structures? • Are members of the instructional workforce encouraged and rewarded by departments and institutions for their engagement in professional development, at the institution and through disciplinary organizations? • Are professional development opportunities flexible and accessible; do they address the needs of prospective and current members of the instructional workforce, across the full span of careers and roles (VITAL and tenure-line)? • Are campus-based professional development offices adequately staffed and resourced to meet the needs of VITAL and tenure-line faculty? • Do professional development programs regularly change to incorporate new insights about effective and inclusive teaching practices, as well as more effective professional development methods, from educational research? • Do professional development programs prepare VITAL and tenure-line faculty for participation in departmental and institutional leadership and governance?
Evaluation and reward structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do criteria for evaluation align with institutional and departmental goals for inclusive, equitable, and effective undergraduate teaching? • Are evaluation practices clear and free from bias, with multiple sources of evidence related to teaching effectiveness? • Do evaluation structures provide opportunities for both formative and summative feedback and evaluation? • Is achievement of criteria in the evaluation and reward structures linked to pathways for career progress, for both VITAL and tenure-line faculty? • Are instructional faculty evaluated and rewarded for participation in governance structures and engaging in professional development opportunities? • Do the evaluation and reward structure and criteria inform instructional workforce preparation and professional development, as well as educational practice? • In what ways do evaluation practices need to change to address instructional workforce needs and increase justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for instructors and students?