



COLLEGE ^{OF} THE
ALBEMARLE

Transform Your Tomorrow

Professional Development Resource Guide

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Introduction

“Professional development refers to the process of learning and acquiring new skills, knowledge, and experiences to enhance one's career and professional growth. It is a continuous and intentional effort to improve one's abilities, competencies, and qualifications in a specific field or industry. Professional development can take various forms, including attending workshops, seminars, conferences, pursuing further education, on-the-job training, networking, and seeking out mentorship opportunities.

Professional development is essential for several reasons:

1. **Skill Enhancement:** It helps individuals acquire and refine the skills and knowledge required to excel in their current roles and adapt to the evolving demands of their professions.
2. **Career Advancement:** Professional development often leads to increased job opportunities and career advancement. It can open doors to promotions, salary increases, and leadership roles.
3. **Increased Productivity:** As professionals develop new skills and knowledge, they become more effective and efficient in their roles, which can benefit their employers and organizations.
4. **Job Satisfaction:** Learning and growing in one's career can lead to greater job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, which in turn can contribute to overall well-being.
5. **Adaptation to Change:** In a rapidly changing work environment, staying up-to-date with the latest trends, technologies, and best practices is crucial for remaining relevant and competitive.
6. **Improved Problem Solving:** Professional development can enhance problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills, enabling individuals to tackle challenges and find innovative solutions.

7. **Networking Opportunities:** Attending professional development events and engaging in educational activities provides opportunities to network with peers, experts, and potential mentors, which can be invaluable for personal and professional growth.
8. **Long-term Success:** Continuous professional development helps individuals remain agile in their careers, preparing them for a successful and sustainable professional journey.
9. **Ethical and Legal Compliance:** In some professions, ongoing professional development is essential to stay compliant with industry regulations, ethical standards, and legal requirements.
10. **Lifelong Learning:** Professional development encourages the mindset of lifelong learning, which is increasingly important in an era of rapid technological and societal change.

Professional development in the field of education is essential for improving teaching quality, supporting student success, adapting to changes in the field, and promoting innovation and excellence in and out of the classroom. It allows individuals to adapt to change, stay competitive, and achieve their career goals while contributing to the success of their organizations.” (OpenAI, 2023)

General Requirements

College of The Albemarle (COA) “recognizes that educational quality is dependent upon the availability of qualified and dedicated employees. The essential responsibility for professional growth and development rests with each individual employee; however, the College expects the involvement of all employees in appropriate professional growth activities” (College of The Albemarle [COA], 2023a).

Professional Development (PD) should be rooted in the employee evaluation process. In consultation with their supervisors, employees should annually identify both short-term and long-term goals and develop a plan for job growth and development, including *projected* PD activities to help meet their goals. Employees are then responsible for maintaining a record of their own professional

development activities, which they should submit during the annual evaluation process (COA, 2023c).

Including a list of *completed* PD activities closes the loop on the previous year's goals.

Currently, all *full-time* employees are expected to complete a minimum of ten hours of professional development, which may include required, annual compliance trainings; general PD activities sponsored by the College, such as training sessions offered on convocation days or other professional development days; and individualized training needs based upon goal setting during the evaluation process. As a condition of employment, *part-time* employees must complete the required compliance trainings. However, while part-time employees have no set number of required PD hours beyond compliance training, they are encouraged to participate in PD activities at the College and to communicate with their supervisors about such offerings. To support personal and professional growth and to facilitate employees meeting the required number of hours of PD, "the College makes available several opportunities designed to help employees meet their Goals" (COA, 2023a).

To ensure compliance with federal, state, and college regulations, laws, and standards, COA provides annual, free professional development. The following topics are examples of such required training:

- Drug Free Workplace
- Emergency and Crisis Management
- Preventing Discrimination and Harassment
- Cybersecurity
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Title IX (civil rights law)
- Records Retention & Disposal
- Various Supervisor Trainings

Completing the required annual trainings will provide employees with over three hours of PD. In addition, professional development sessions offered on convocation days typically allow employees to accumulate several more hours. Other college-sponsored PD activities include Lunch & Learns, workshops, and webinars. Employees taking advantage of COA provided, general trainings should be able to meet their minimum number of required PD hours without ever having to travel away from campus.

Participation in college-sponsored Professional Development activities such as convocation training sessions, Lunch & Learns, workshops, and webinars will be documented by the session facilitator. There are several advantages to documenting this type of PD:

1. Helps support employees' efforts to document their own professional development activities for their annual evaluations or other purposes
2. Allows for identification of common areas/topics where employees seek improvement
3. Informs discussion of future Professional Development offerings

Session facilitators should utilize the [Professional Development Participation Form](#) available on the Policies and Procedures webpage. Completed forms should be scanned and emailed to coa_profdevelopment@albemarle.edu for collection in the Google drive.

Individualized Training and Funding Options

In addition to taking advantage of the general professional development opportunities offered by the College, employees are encouraged to seek out individualized PD aligned with the stated goals in their annual evaluations. Various funding opportunities exist to help employees gain more specialized training geared towards their individual roles.

State Budget

State funding may be used to pay for conference registrations. Related line items include ground travel, air travel, meals, and hotels. Guidelines for allowable expenses, reimbursement rates, and approval signatures can be found on the Travel Request Form located in the Google drive.

During the annual evaluation period, supervisors should develop a list of PD requests for their areas. A prioritization schedule should then be developed based on several factors, which may include projected impact of the training for the individual and the department; alignment with institutional, divisional, and departmental strategic goals; cost; the employee's plan to share knowledge gained; and recency of an individual's receipt of PD funding.

At times, professional development trainings that meet pressing needs of the College may not yet be publicized at the time of annual evaluations. Supervisors are encouraged to maintain flexibility in their prioritization schedules in order to take advantage of such opportunities.

Perkins Funds

Carl Perkins Grant funding can be used to pay for equipment, positions, and professional development related to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Perkins funds may be used for tuition reimbursement when used for the attainment of credentials required by CTE job descriptions, training at conferences or workshops, programmatic accreditation training, and training software.

Needs may be identified through the annual employee evaluation process as well as through continuous improvement processes involving Unit Action Plans. Requests for professional development funding may be made up the chain of command through the academic deans with oversight of CTE programs. Final approval is made by the Vice President of Learning. Approvals for Perkins PD funding shall be submitted to the Professional Development Committee for documentation purposes.

Institutional/Non-state Funding

Professional development funding from institutional/non-state sources is provided by the College of The Albemarle Foundation; these funds are intended to be used for expenses not allowed or met by state or Perkins money. Institutional/non-state PD funds may be used for individual professional memberships, coursework enabling an individual to apply for a professional license/credential (but not the license/credential itself), COA courses, and higher education courses taken as part of an advanced degree. Funded PD activities should be related to an individual's current job description and assigned duties, or to develop new skills/competencies for career development at the College. In some cases, the institutional/non-state funds may be used for higher education coursework related to succession planning at the College. Employees seeking an advanced degree are encouraged to submit a complete academic plan/timeline to secure a tentative pre-approval of funds for future courses and to enable the Professional Development Committee to plan for future funding needs.

Applications for institutional/non-state PD funds can be found in the College of The Albemarle Professional Development Funds Request Packet, located in the Google drive. Requests may be made in fall and spring semesters. Applications are reviewed and approvals are granted by the Professional Development Committee composed of college employees representing both faculty and staff. The Chair of the Professional Development Committee, or their designee, shall send out a call for institutional/non-state PD funding applications each fall and spring semester. Additional details about the committee, including makeup and functions, are discussed in [Procedure 1.10.1: College Committee Structure](#).

Professional Development Program Oversight

In addition to serving as the vetting body for requests for PD funding through institutional/non-state sources to meet individualized training needs, the Professional Development Committee helps coordinate the College's general PD offerings (COA, 2023b).

Tuition Reimbursement

Although COA is not technically a state agency, the College's tuition reimbursement program's guidelines are consistent with the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources Academic Assistance Program. COA has adopted the same eligibility guidelines as the state:

- Full-time and part-time (half time or more) permanent, probationary and time-limited employees are eligible for Academic Assistance.
- Probationary employees are eligible after satisfactory performance for a period of not less than six months as determined by management.
- Temporary and part-time (less than half time) are not eligible. (North Carolina Office of State Human Resources, 2020)

Requests for tuition reimbursement should be made prior to taking classes, but may be initiated either by the employee or by management, depending on the reason for taking coursework.

While mid-level supervisors may initiate the process, a management initiated requested must also have the approval of the senior administrator over the area. Courses approved for tuition reimbursement must be taken at an accredited institution and must be based upon one of the following reasons:

Employee initiated courses to:

- Maintain/enhance current skills
- Develop new skills/competencies for career development [at the College]

Management initiated courses to:

- Ensure employees have mandated licensure or certification
- Address a shortage of skilled workers in specific classifications
- Develop a pool of employees for workforce planning
- Build specific high priority skills

- Address performance expectations of the employee as specified in the performance management policy of the agency. (North Carolina Office of State Human Resources, 2020)

Additional guidelines that the Professional Development Committee will use to weigh the approval of tuition reimbursement can be found in the Professional Development Funds Request Packet.

Coordination of Professional Development Offerings

The Professional Development Committee also maintains oversight of the College's general PD offerings, specifically sessions offered on convocation days and other days designated as College Professional Development Days. The process of developing a list of potential PD topics begins in the annual evaluation period, during which supervisors create a list of topics based upon broad needs in their areas. Supervisors should submit any topics for consideration to the senior leader of their area by mid-July; senior leaders will then vet and forward a final area list to the Professional Development Committee for consideration. After the committee vets the suggestions, the committee's Resource Administrator will bring the final suggested list to the President's Leadership Team for discussion and approval.

References

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