

A Conversation with Dr. Lynn Wild, Associate Provost for Faculty Development and the Wallace Center

Facilitated by Luke Auburn

Luke Auburn: You're listening to the RIT Professional Development Podcast Series. I'm your host, Luke Auburn. Our guest today is Dr. Lynn Wild, Associate Provost for Faculty Development and the Wallace Center. She came to RIT in February of 2002 and in 2009 guided the merger of teaching and learning services and the RIT libraries forming the Wallace Center, which provides academic support and service for students and faculty, contributing to RIT's recognition as a leader in research, scholarship, innovation, and creativity. We'll talk about how her organization creates an environment that supports professional development for faculty and how she supports her staff to grow in their careers. Thank you for having us.

Dr. Wild: Delighted to be here, Luke. Thank you, everybody, for listening.

Luke Auburn: So what do faculty at RIT find the most critical for professional development? And how has the Wallace Center supported this?

Dr. Wild: Well, Luke, you know, faculty needs are as individual as they are. What we try to do in the Wallace Center is support the whole range of activities and career needs for faculty beginning as early as new faculty orientation. So it starts there, but we try to provide support throughout their careers. So things around academic publishing, teaching. We partner with the Innovative Learning Institute. We offer grants and training on mentoring so that people have support that way. We have reference librarians here who help faculty with their teaching, research, and scholarship. And as I said, we collaborate with other units on campus to bring everything together. Intersession is relatively new at RIT. And we've used that as a professional development student for faculty, too. And they're on contract, but they're not teaching. So we find that's a time when they can kind of focus on their own development. So it's a whole range

of things, web-based materials. Because, as you know, people learn differently and at different points in their career, they want different things.

Luke Auburn: Excellent. And it's interesting you mentioned inner session because NTID also uses that for interpreting staff.

Dr. Wild: Absolutely. And we partnered with NTID. In fact, they did a session for us on teaching, deaf and hard of hearing students. That's also a very important part of new faculty orientation. And we do new faculty orientation for the new group of faculty, all faculty who are coming in the fall. But we also do two sessions for adjunct faculty. And we also try to put a lot of things online. Because, as you know, we have a flexible workforce, so people come in at different times and we don't want them to have to wait till there's a formal event to get the things they need to be successful in their jobs.

Luke Auburn: Having covered some of the things you do for faculty, how do you approach professional development of your own staff? Do you have formal processes in place, or do you take a more organic approach?

Dr. Wild: Both. Our staff is our most important resource and asset. And you really do want to practice what you preach. I think one of the things that we try to do here and we've been successful is provide opportunities for people to grow and try new things within the organization. So, for example, we have a person who works in our operations group who works part time in archives. We had a staff member recently graduate with her master's degree in communication. We reworked her job assignment so she's doing marketing for us. And we have an IT person who's working in circulation where you mentioned you had worked. So, in fact, Laura, your former supervisor, is working in RIT press. So in addition to enabling staff to take CPD courses, which are fabulous, to go to conferences and professional development, we have funds for that. We encourage people to take advantage of our generous tuition benefits. We also try to provide opportunities within the organization for people to build and expand on

their skills. I think we have the best team on campus. And part of that is the flexibility and adaptability of the staff. The other important part of this is feedback. Really giving people feedback about how they're doing and where the opportunities are. So that's how we approach it here. And it's been very successful.

Luke Auburn: Excellent. And what do you find works for you? What has been your own experiences with professional development and forging your career path?

Dr. Wild: Well, again, I think you have to always be a life-long learner. Especially because we work in higher education. So you can't be stagnant. I don't think anybody can anymore and I teach. One of the ways that I keep fresh is by teaching. It keeps me very close to our core business which is students. We're all here. You know, if you're one step removed or two, we're all here for students. That's what we do for a living. So in all my positions I've always taught and when I came to RIT, it was the first time teaching online. So I had to learn all about that technology and the new things that are happening. This semester, I developed and am teaching an eight-week accelerated graduate course for the first time on leadership. So I have to do all the research for that and develop the course and see how it runs. But everything I learn about leadership, and I do courses in change management and organizational culture, I apply directly to my job, too. I find that my professional development links to the needs I have to be successful in the various aspects of my, you know, work and life really.

Luke Auburn: And you touched on some of the new developments. As we look into the future, what professional development trends do you see becoming most important for faculty and staff?

Dr. Wild: Well, higher education as a business is changing as you know. And it's to do more with less or it's about reallocation. And so even in the way that we work with our staff, it's all about collaboration and trying to eliminate redundancies. I'm not going to build CPD courses when there's a unit that does that. I think for all of us, it's being flexible, adaptable, and continuing to

learn. With technology being infused in all our roles, it's up to us to keep, to keep ahead of things and to keep current. And to have a curiosity. I think once you think you know everything, you're probably dead [laughter]. You know, because there's always something to learn. And we do reverse mentoring, too. So a younger person like you has a lot that you could teach someone like me. Plus, of course, the web is fantastic. Hot water and the web are two things I couldn't live without [laughter]. So, you know, I think for all of us, that's how we stay fresh, current, and are able to advance, move, and enjoy our lives, really.

Luke Auburn: Well, thank you very much for your time.

Dr. Wild: My pleasure.

Luke Auburn: So this concludes another edition of the RIT Professional Development Podcast Series. For more information about how you can develop your career, visit rit.edu/cpd.