

Appendix G: ANSWERS TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM CHAIRS

Background

1. How long have you been employed by the NFA? In what position were/are you employed.
 - ! 12 years with FEMA - Hazard Mitigation Officer, 10 months as NFA Program Chair.
 - ! ½ year as Program Chair, with FEMA since 1986 as an agency safety manager.
 - ! 18 years with NFA. Started as Training Instructor, became Program Chair in 1983.
 - ! 18 years with NFA, Started as Field Program Coordinator, Program Chair for 6 months.
 - ! 6 years as Program Chair.
 - ! 5 years as Program Chair.
 - ! 14 years with NFA. December 1989 promoted to Program Chair.
 - ! 17 ½ years with NFA. Started as Training Instructor, Program Chair in 1983.
2. As a Program Chair what is the extent of classroom instruction that you have performed for NFA?
 - ! No NFA instruction, but extensive experience before FEMA employment for EMS at Erie County Community College, State University of New York.
 - ! None.
 - ! Full time for first 3 years. Until 1990 instruction was 90% of job. Now about 10 % or less.
 - ! Minimal.
 - ! Limited to sessions of 2 hours or less per 2 week course.

- ! Limited -- 1 to 10 times per year.
- ! Still teach about 40% of the time, since that way I can get continuity and consistency.
- ! No more than 5 %.

Perceptions

3. In general, how would you characterize your working relationship with the contract instructors that you manage?

- ! Good
- ! Excellent
- ! Very professional.
- ! Very good.
- ! Outstanding (I support them).
- ! Good
- ! Excellent
- ! Very good.

Would you illustrate with examples?

- ! Often work with Contract Instructors in development or instruction in other areas, i.e. community colleges.
- ! Very professional, knowledgeable.
- ! Rely on knowledge, they come to me when need assistance, they are open to feedback, work in collegial way, prevent problems, both groups have best interests of students in focus, customer service orientation 110%.
- ! Contract Instructors -- true professionals, content of course is delivered by instructors, Program Chair [function] for me is “house-keeping”, phenomenal

trainers with real expertise.

! Most valuable resource, are empowered to get excellent outcomes, have latitude to cover content.

! Rely extremely heavily on instructors. They are what makes NFA a premier institution in conjunction with program staff.

! Most of them work way beyond contract requirements -- one example: although not required to they converted the slides in a program to Powerpoint.

! I rely on the Contract Instructors a lot, so they have a lot of discretion.

4. What is your perception of the need, beyond what already exists, for administrative support? Specifically, is there a need for an orientation program for new instructors?

! Believe there should be.

! Yes.

! Yes, certainly. Content should include latest information--what's new, changed.

! Absolutely.

! In this Program Area -- this (orientation) is already covered. Diverse needs are there so I tailor the orientation with each instructor.

! Without doubt, but a diverse program -- specific to each program area.

! Yes, a new instructor should have some kind of orientation.

! Yes. For example, content, activities, "do's & don'ts" of the content, learning methods.

5. What is your perception of the need for administrative support, beyond what already exists, that would improve contract instructors' program delivery?

! Need an evaluation of each curriculum area. Has Instructional System Design been done appropriately? -- if not more delivery tools may be needed.

! Availability of stand alone PCs, printers within each classroom area.

! Need an assigned support person for A/V and for clerical duties.

- ! We need to have the technical resources available -- techniques, laws, etc., in arson field.
- ! This is taken care of by pre-screening of instructors who first take the class as a student.
- ! Each program area should have a support person and classroom support.
- ! In theory, the Contract Instructor is supposed to be qualified to do the job -- according to procurement rules it would be difficult to provide sessions to improve Contract Instructor program delivery skills.
- ! More administrative support needed.

Again, would you provide examples that illustrate your belief?

- ! Need to look at core values of instructors and participants in classes to determine a paradigm shift.
- ! ---
- ! When things (A/V) break the Program Chair has to go outside of “J” Building (classroom building) for service. Photocopying is done by adjuncts.
- ! Current literature, case law, etc. “pool” needed -- this provides best, most technically developed course.
- ! Contract instructors go through first few programs as new instructors and are monitored.
- ! ---
- ! We should provide information on A/V (computer in classroom, Internet), etc. Also depending on course material new information nationally should be provided to instructors.
- ! More availability of A/V support.

6. What is your perception of the need for administrative support, beyond what already exists, of evaluation processes?

- ! Need to do long-term evaluations to see if long term impact.
- ! Evaluation is a valuable tool, we need mechanism to scan results individually and get results to the instructor.
- ! Consistency needed so faculty can get results in timely manner.
- ! Needs complete revamping.
- ! Dilemma is that mediocre Contract Instructor can continue to participate -- I want to have better instructors.
- ! Evaluation of instructors: there should be continuing education requirements. The Program Chair would weigh criteria to get better instructors.
- ! More needs to be done to make evaluation results more objective.
- ! I do not regularly evaluate the Contract Instructors. They do a good job and I leave them to do it.

Again, would you provide examples that illustrate your belief?

- ! --
- ! Student evaluations were used to counsel one of the Contract Instructors.
- ! Can be months before Instructors gets feedback. Would be nice if we had time to analyze data together and develop plans as to training needed (but they go home after program is over).
- ! The evaluations scans only give “bare-bones” of positive responses-- need written responses distributed in graphical format.
- ! More active Program Chair involvement needed -- actually observe presentations of Contract Instructors.
- ! NFA needs to do better job of determining how an instructor gets to be lead instructor. NFA misses the boat on students evaluation re: outcomes.
- ! Whole area of evaluation needs reviewing and improving.

! I regret that I don't have time to do more evaluating.

7. What is your perception of the need for administrative support, beyond what already exists, of contract instructors' professional development?

! Need to identify knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) needed before instructional criteria determined. But Program Chairs not responsible for KSA's on input. But, we can enhance the outcome by supporting instructors.

! As Program Chair -- questionable if this is a government responsibility. As taxpayer - Contractor Instructors should get every opportunity to give our NFA students the best they can.

! No legal obligation to do professional development. Professionally, would still like to see training ability, strategies, planning, problem-solving covered.

! Government has some obligation to provide content that is "close hold" (not widely available or classified) for specialized arson-content.

! NFA should make opportunity available in new concepts.

! The federal government selects an instructor -- a partnership results, and the NFA should create professional development.

! In theory the government can't do this. But, if NFA wants consistency they have to look at some way to do this.

! Since professional development improves performance then it should be considered--especially if administered fairly.

Again, would you provide examples that illustrate your belief?

! Contract Instructors could audit classes, encourage Contract Instructors to bring information on other classes that are available.

! Government has no responsibility.

! Newsletter would keep them up to date, with technology could develop webpage for instructors.

! Need most recent case laws, techniques, etc.

! Instructional methodology needed for some instructors.

- ! Has to be generalized for all Contract Instructors, but specific to each group of programs.
- ! Contract Instructors need in-depth overview of NFA programs.
- ! Contract Instructors could be given information on trends both within Fire/EMS and outside (businesses).

8. What other administrative support services do you believe would contribute to the effectiveness of contract instructors?

- ! Students sometimes have problems with Contract Instructors that are in Fire Department system at a lower rank than the students.
- ! Would be helpful if Contract Instructors had knowledge of NFA vision of future.
- ! NFA should poll/survey Fire Departments to determine answer to this.
- ! Difficult to do since a lack of personnel to do administrative support due to budget constraints.
- ! Better contract relationship (some kind of temporary federal employee status for Contract Instructors) -- would show that they are valued and accountable.
- ! A comprehensive analysis of performance indicators for each program with our expectations for instructors and what resources should be associated with this.
- ! Contract Instructors need to find ways to become excellent instructors.
- ! Long term evaluation methods need to be researched -- and communicated to Contract Instructors.

Again, would you provide examples that illustrate your belief?

- ! Credentials are important -- but not rank, rather experience.
- ! As experts the Contract Instructors should have input into direction of the NFA.
- ! Again, we should ask the contract instructors this.
- ! Need full-time person to staff "evaluation center".
- ! --

- ! --
- ! Self-study, video tape of presentations.
- ! None

After Review of Survey Results

9. Now that you have had an opportunity to review the contract instructors' survey results what reaction or further comments do you make about their perceived need for administrative support services? Please provide specific examples.

- ! Concerned that less experienced Contract Instructors have needs that are not articulated before class -- we use a routine set-up.
- ! NFA has "old dogs" & "young turks" -- Young Turks are more computer literate, Old Dogs are used to having someone do things for them. Contract Instructors at middle age/experience brackets are looking for further advancement past retirement -- so perhaps this is mid-life job crisis?
- ! Questionnaire table #2 Content: I was surprised and would like to investigate what is meant. My perception is that instructors are so experienced that to them the content is outdated. Not surprised at the rest. Least surprised about Contract Instructors wanting preferred admission into other NFA classes.
- ! Mixed reaction. I think Contract Instructors should have Instructor Orientation Manual, my personal experience is that most instructors are very cohesive (work together well).
- ! Contract Instructors and Program Chairs need a dialogue.
- ! No surprises/no further reactions.
- ! --
- ! Surprised that many instructors felt content was outdated.

Based on your experience, how do their survey comments reflect your perception of their needs? Please provide specific examples.

- ! Key point: surprised that they wanted on-site conferences.

- ! --
- ! I know they needed support in classroom: A/V, clerical needed.
- ! Would be good to have more classroom support -- photocopying.
- ! These perceptions appear accurate -- especially as related to improvements.
- ! On target.
- ! Yes, especially as it relates to outdated program content.
- ! Yes, especially a need for on-site conferences.

10. Given the survey results, how will you use what you have learned about contract instructors' perception of their needs in your working relationship with them?

- ! Will spend more time looking over this material since have an in-service soon and want to compare this data to what instructors there say.
- ! Will consider the differences, specifically.
- ! Would like to create feedback form to get data from contract instructors. Program Chairs should develop strategies to solve problems.
- ! Raised a couple of issues about NFA administrative support.
- ! Need to discuss the results with instructors.
- ! The provision of support people to contract instructors is under flux. This information needs to be revisited.
- ! Surprised about need for handbook.
- ! Preferred Admission may or may not be an issue.

What portion of the survey results is particularly meaningful to you?

- ! I would want to wait and see -- need to digest this information.
- ! Different age groups (esp. 40-50 year olds) have different needs. I want to offer more feedback and understanding.

- ! Would like to re-look at data in more detail.
- ! Need for continuing education/professional development and government role in this. Wonder how many Contract Instructors have adult education training. Would be good for Program Chair to get Professional Development -- this way consistency between Program Chairs and Contract Instructors.
- ! Surprised about how willing the Contract Instructors were to engage in training to improve.
- ! Outdated content -- and how to fix it.
- ! All of it.
- ! The thought that was most enlightening was that NFA may need to do more to professionally develop its Contract Instructors.