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Training and Development of Financial Education Program Staff

Sonya L. Britt
Kansas State University, sbritt@ksu.edu

Ryan Halley
George Fox University, halleyr@georgefox.edu

D. B. Durband
Texas Tech University, dottie.durband@ttu.edu

Chapter 4
Training and Development of Financial Education Program Staff

Sonya L. Britt, Ryan E. Halley, and Dorothy B. Durband

Training

The previous chapter discussed possible staff positions you will want to recruit for your financial education program. The focus of this chapter is the training and development of your staff. You may buy skills through hiring or you may develop skills through providing internal training and development programs for staff (Olian et al. 1998). Key questions to ask when considering training for program staff are posed here: What types of training support your financial education program's mission? What changes in the external environment (e.g., knowledge or financial) demand training and development of your staff members? Which of your staff members need training and development and how much do they need? What staff tasks need improvement through training and development? How can experienced program staff be used to mentor new student staff members? To begin answering these questions, we report the expert advice of existing program directors surveyed for this book.

As shown in Fig. 4.1, full-time and part-time financial education staff members do not always spend their work time doing the same tasks, meaning different training programs may be needed for various levels of staff members. Full-time financial

S.L. Britt, Ph.D. (✉)
Institute of Personal Financial Planning, School of Family Studies and Human Services,
Kansas State University, 317 Justin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506, USA
e-mail: sbritt@k-state.edu

R.E. Halley, Ph.D.
School of Business, George Fox University,
414 North Meridian Street #6263, Newberg, OR 97132, USA
e-mail: halleyr@georgefox.edu

D.B. Durband, Ph.D.
Department of Personal Financial Planning, Texas Tech University,
15th Street & Akron, Room 262, Lubbock, TX 79409, USA
e-mail: dottie.durband@ttu.edu
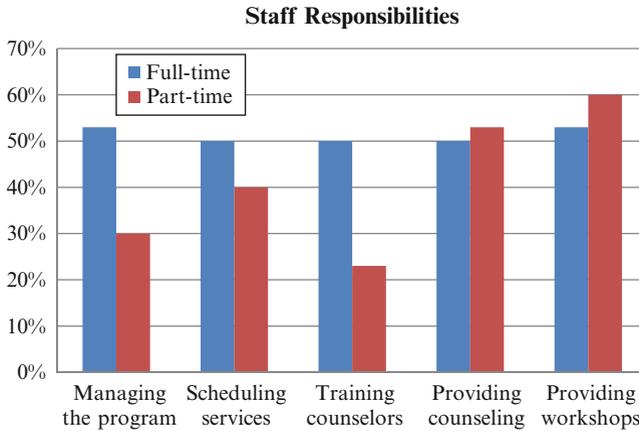
Staff Responsibilities

Fig. 4.1 Staff responsibilities by full-time and part-time status

education program staff members tend to serve as directors and clerical staff members, which is consistent with the support team categories presented in Chap. 3. Part-time financial education program staff members tend to fill the roles of financial counselors and educators.

The remainder of this chapter will present recommendations for necessary and desirable competencies, training content, and training format considerations.

Core Competencies

Staff members must possess some level of fundamental skills and knowledge to be effective in providing financial education program services. This section addresses what we believe to be the core competencies for financial education program staff members who provide financial counseling or education services. The general competency areas are basic financial knowledge, interpersonal skills, university policies and procedures, support resources available to students, and presentation skills.

Basic Financial Knowledge

A perusal of any introduction to personal financial planning university-level textbook reveals coverage of the following broad topics:

- Overview of the financial planning process
- Time value of money
- Cash management
- Credit management
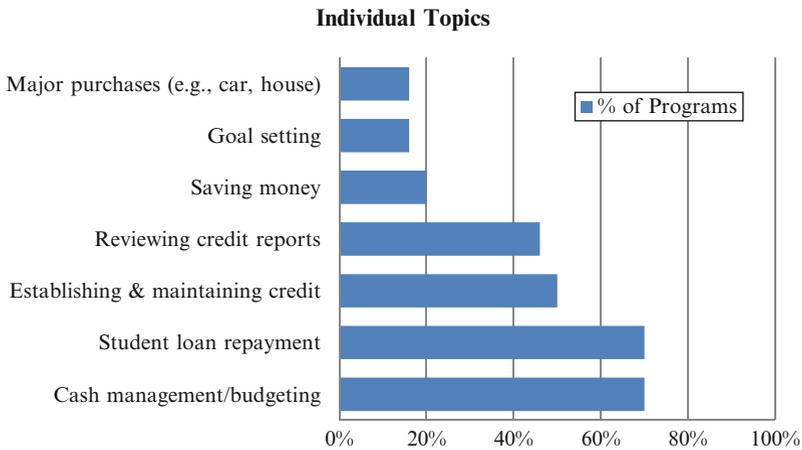
Individual Topics

Fig. 4.2 Frequently requested individual financial counseling topics

- Major purchases
- Tax planning
- Insurance planning
- Investment basics
- Retirement planning
- Estate planning

These content concentrations tend to reflect the most commonly requested program topics for campus financial education programs as found in the recent survey of existing financial education programs surveyed for this book (Durband and Britt 2011). The study found that 81% of respondents include personal finance content within their training program for their financial education program staff. Figure 4.2 illustrates the most frequently requested topics for one-on-one financial counseling within the financial education programs. The most frequently requested topics for individual counseling were cash management/budgeting (70%) and student loan repayment (70%).

The most frequently requested topics for group workshops include cash management/budgeting and establishing and maintaining credit, both reported by 86% of the sample (see Fig. 4.3). Seventy percent of the sample listed reviewing credit reports and credit scores as a requested topic, followed by a little more than half (56%) reporting student loan repayment. In addition to students, university faculty, staff, and administrators will also request group programs for their classes or for campus organizations.

Interpersonal Skills

After a basic understanding of financial knowledge is assured, the next step is becoming confident that staff members have adequate interpersonal skills. A college or university course in helping relationships or counseling skills would likely
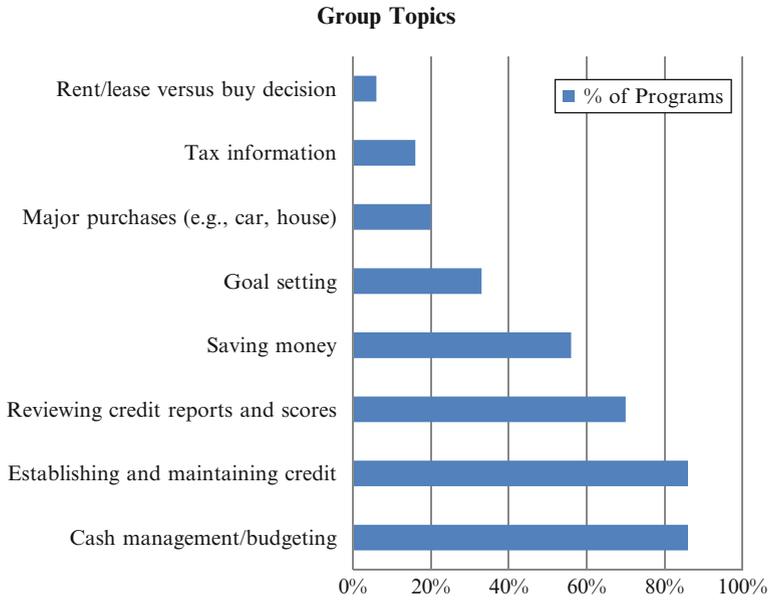
Group Topics

Fig. 4.3 Frequently requested group workshop topics

strengthen the interpersonal skills needed by financial education program staff members. Noncredit courses, online courses, workshops, or books may also be an option, depending on your available resources.

University and Program Policies and Procedures

The third basic competency needed from financial education program staff is an understanding of university policies and procedures. Reviewing existing policies and procedures will promote organizational awareness and convey the responsibilities, structure, and rules of one's college or university to staff members. In addition, staff members need to be well informed on your internal program policies and procedures.

Resources Available to Students

Universities are known for the numerous free and low-cost services they offer to students. Given the immense amount of resources available, students may need help finding the best resource to meet their needs. Your financial education program staff needs to know enough about the other services on campus to make a referral, if needed. Additional information about making referrals is provided below.

Training Content

This section will discuss specific training methods and procedures. It seems logical to conclude that staff members need a working knowledge of items covered in an introduction to personal finance course, although it is surprising to note that only 26% of programs polled in our study for this book require a for-credit course prerequisite for staff members or volunteers. The majority of programs surveyed for this book offer ongoing training for their staff members (84%). The training is provided by a diverse group of individuals including faculty for 48% of programs, financial aid officers for 45% of programs, and external professionals for 42% of programs. A few programs indicated that they do not provide training because their services are provided by external professionals.

In the survey of existing financial education programs, respondents were asked to indicate partners who provide training for their staff. As shown in Fig. 4.4, faculty members are the most frequently called upon group to provide training. Other sources include financial aid office professionals and external professionals (i.e., other financial counselors).

Current financial education program directors are covering the basic competencies among other key topics (see Fig. 4.5). Specifically, 81% of programs train on personal finance content, 68% of programs train staff on presentation and counseling skills, as well as confidentiality issues, 61% of programs train their staff on policies and procedures and ethics, and 58% cover recordkeeping in the training process.

Figure 4.5 displays how complex and multifaceted the role and responsibilities of a financial education program staff member can be. A comprehensive list of staff competencies is provided in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, and some of these are discussed in detail in the following section. In addition to personal finance content, it will be necessary for staff to be trained on other issues, such as how to give quality presentations and how to conduct a financial counseling session.

Referrals

There may come a time in the course of providing services when it is appropriate for the financial counselor to refer a client to another source. One of the most important aspects of training financial counselors is to help them determine when a referral is needed. The program staff should be trained on guidelines that would indicate a need to refer a client for further assistance outside of the financial counseling setting. Some of the warning signs that might be present include:

- Dissatisfaction with one's major or with college itself.
- Multiple class absences.
- Marked seclusion and unwillingness to communicate.
- Outbursts of unexplained crying or anger.
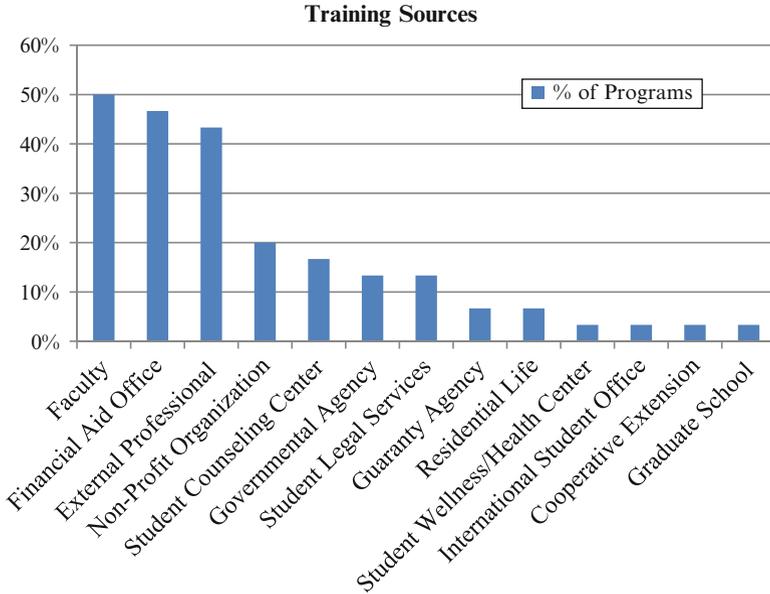
Training Sources

Fig. 4.4 Sources providing training for financial education program staff
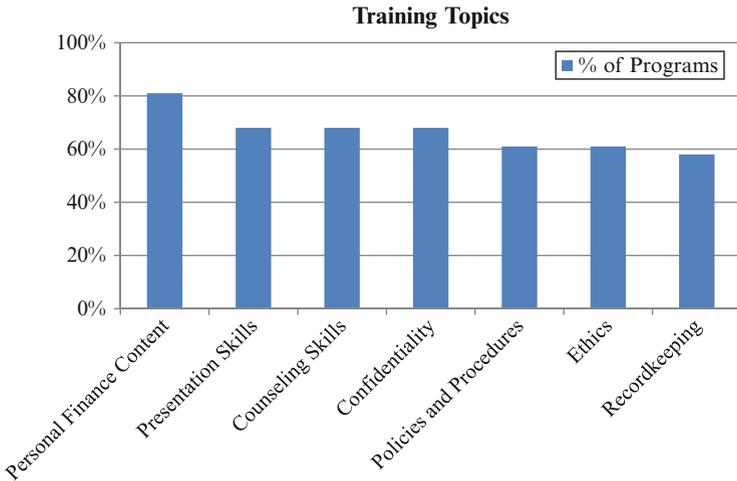
Training Topics

Fig. 4.5 Topics covered in financial education training programs

- Excessive fatigue, lethargy, depressed mood.
- Increased activity levels (e.g., incessant talking, irritability, physical restlessness, disruptive behavior).
- Any form of physical aggression or violence.
- Noticeable change in dress or personal hygiene.

Table 4.1 What financial education staff members should be able to do

Understand their roles and responsibilities
Maintain client privacy and confidentiality
Follow ethical principles
Establish client relationships
Build trust and rapport
Demonstrate empathy
Recognize nonverbal messages
Demonstrate interviewing and listening skills
Manage client expectations
Maintain boundaries
Problem solve
Let clients solve their own problems
Handle difficult questions for which they do not know the answer
Resolve conflicts
Manage crises
Exercise discretion
Keep good records
Educate clients on sound money management principles
Assist clients in exploring their values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors around money
Guide clients in achieving financial goals
Defuse anger
Provide tools and resources for clients
Identify alternatives

Table 4.2 What financial education staff members should know

How to greet a client for the first time
Cultural differences in working with clients
Campus support resources that are available for students
How to make a referral to another resource
How to handle a crisis situation
Personal safety indicators
Internal program policies and procedures
College or university policies and procedures
The scope and boundaries of their position

- Extreme suspiciousness or irrational feeling of persecution.
- Nonsensical conversation, indications of being markedly out of touch with reality.
- Consistently missed appointments.
- Death or serious illness of family member or friend.
- Difficulties in relationships (e.g., marital problems, breakup with significant other).
- Roommate or family problems.
- Signs of intoxication or being "hung over."
- Detached, non-caring, and/or manipulative behavior.

- Statements of feeling that life in not worth living or that problems cannot be solved.
- Any reference to personal consideration of harm to self or others. Immediate referral is necessary (Newton and Ender 2010; Texas Tech University n.d.).

The financial counselor should be instructed to use personal judgment when assessing the above signs. Financial counseling typically involves working with students who have financial difficulties and are often under substantial stress as a result of these circumstances. It is not uncommon for a client to cry during a session or to mention that other areas of life are suffering because of financial stress (e.g., poor academic performance). It is important for the financial counselor to exhibit discretion in assessing each client and to be able to distinguish the "range of normal" from those signs that indicate that the client needs additional help. Staff member training on the topic of referrals should provide instruction on the specific steps of referring. These steps would include:

1. Describe to the client why there is a need for additional assistance. Articulate why you feel it is necessary or desirable to make a referral.
2. Demonstrate a nonjudgmental attitude. Provide only concrete descriptions of client behaviors, thoughts, and speech that indicate the need for a referral.
3. Be clear about what services you can provide and what services you cannot.
4. Support the client by suggesting that help-seeking behavior is healthy and a sign of strength.
5. Acknowledge any fears or anxiety that the client may express about further counseling.
6. Leave the option open for the client to accept or refuse further counseling. Give the client time to think the suggestion over.
7. Volunteer to help the client make the initial contact (i.e., provide a phone number and offer the use of the office phone). The client should make the initial contact if at all possible.
8. Encourage the client to check-in with you to see if they followed your recommendation.

Safety

Staff should always be made aware of the need for exercising safety. There should also be appropriate training on campus and/or program safety resources. Some general safety procedures include:

- Setting boundaries for giving personal phone numbers to clients
- Using an office phone for calling clients versus a personal phone
- Positioning the financial counselor's chair nearest the door when in session
- Leaving the room or terminating the session if the financial counselor feels unsafe at any time
- Developing a code phrase that a staff member can use to call for assistance

Campus Financial Education Program Name

I hereby agree that I will maintain the confidentiality of clients and that I will not disclose any personally identifiable client information. I will respect client privacy and the confidentiality of the client/financial counselor relationship. Such matter will not be discussed outside of the [Program name] supervisory staff.

By signing this agreement, I agree to fulfill in good faith the confidentiality requirement set forward herein and be strictly guided by this agreement in all my activities related to [Program Name].

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Fig. 4.6 Confidentiality agreement

- Knowing who else is present at the facility and where they can be found (e.g., a supervisor)
- Never conducting a private counseling session in a place where there is no assistance close by
- Knowing the number for campus police or finding out if your facility has a police/emergency call button

Client Confidentiality

Clients need to know that there is a strong commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of the information they share. A confidential client file should be established and maintained in a safe place within the reach of only authorized staff members. Information discussed in counseling sessions remains confidential unless the client indicates in writing that he or she wishes the information to be communicated to a specific person outside of the program. If a parent, friend, roommate, employer, or family member requests information about a client, the program cannot state whether a student has been to an appointment or not nor can they release any session information.

A formal policy and procedures manual is highly recommended. If you are developing a program, some counseling policies that you should consider include confidentiality and ethics. All staff members must sign a confidentiality agreement before providing any counseling. A sample confidentiality agreement for staff is provided in Fig. 4.6.

In terms of location, all individual sessions must be performed in a private office. Prior to service delivery, the financial counselor must have the client sign a counseling consent form. Clients and their counseling sessions are not discussed outside the program office with anyone at any time. It is recommended that financial counselors are given an opportunity to discuss their case load with a supervisor on a regular basis. This may be organized through regular supervisory meetings or a practicum. A sample consent form for a university financial education program with student volunteers in a teaching program is provided in Fig. 4.7.

I voluntarily consent to receive financial counseling services from the [   ]
Program. I understand that services will be provided by a student of the [   ]
program under the supervision of the [   ] staff or faculty. Additionally,
I understand that a faculty member may be involved in the supervision process. I
further understand that Name of University is a teaching institution and I agree to
be part of the teaching program.

I understand that the student providing financial information is *not a licensed
financial professional* and cannot recommend any investments, insurance, nor provide
legal advice. If I feel that I need legal advice, I will contact Student Legal Services or
an attorney.

*Confidentiality is an important aspect of the counseling process, and we will carefully
guard the information you entrust to us. There are three situations, however, when it
may be necessary for us to share certain information with others: when a counselor is
uncertain of how to address a particular problem and needs to seek advice from a
supervisor; when there is a clear indication that someone may be harmed unless others
intervene; or when it becomes necessary to seek the assistance of others in the
community to help you (with your permission). Please be assured that our counselors
strongly prefer not to disclose personal information to others, and they will make every
effort to help you find ways to resolve a problem as privately as possible.*

In the course of [Program Name] providing financial counseling services to me, it may
be necessary for my counselor to discuss my financial information with his/her
supervisor and creditors to whom I owe money.

I understand the educational purpose and potential of questionnaires and supervision
of my financial counseling sessions and I voluntarily consent and agree to their use.

By my signature (or the signature of my guardian) below, I do hereby release,
indemnify, and hold harmless Name of University, its Board of Regents, University
officers, agents and employees, and students of the [   ] program from any and all
liability of any type whatsoever arising from any acts or omissions, negligent or
otherwise, by said [University] officers, agents, employees, volunteers, or students
relating to the [   ] Program.

If I have any questions or concerns now or in the future, I understand that I should
consult with my financial counselor or the Director of the Program (phone number).
I certify that this form has been fully explained to me, that I have read it or had it
read to me*, and that I understand its contents.

_____	_____
Client (1)	Client (2)
_____	_____
Date	* Translator / Counselor

Fig. 4.7 Counseling consent and release

When a financial counselor is not sure how to handle a particular situation, it
should be discussed only with a supervisor. Information is not released to anyone,
including faculty, administration, parents, or creditors without written consent from
the client. The only exception to confidentiality would be when a counselor suspects
immediate threat of the client's harm to self or others. In this instance, the counselor
is to notify his or her supervisor and the authorities when there is imminent risk to
the client's physical health or safety.

Ethics

It can be helpful to support the program's ethical stance by incorporating a code of conduct or adhering to a code of ethics by an outside source. Compliance with the ethical standards set forth by an organization is crucial. An ethics agreement is recommended. For illustrative purposes, we use the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE) Code of Ethics. Accredited Financial Counselors:

- Take responsibility for conducting themselves in a credible manner, striving for excellence in providing services with competence, diligence, promptness, and care to the best of their abilities
- Continue to grow in professional practice, keeping abreast of industry developments and striving to improve professional competence through continuing education
- Exhibit personal and professional honesty and integrity in advising and counseling clients
- Maintain high standards of ethical conduct according to the objectives of the institution with which they are affiliated
- Recognize their limitations, referring clients when appropriate
- Respect client privacy and the confidentiality of the client-counselor relationship in all matters pertaining to the course of professional service and revealing client information of any kind to others only with the expressed consent of the client
- Establish compensation that is fair and reasonable and assist clients in finding other services if their fees are not affordable (AFCPE 2009, reprinted with permission)

Having an ethics training program and requiring staff to sign a code of ethics can go a long way in conveying the importance of confidentiality and ethics and in creating uniform standards throughout the program.

Training Manual

The various topics of the training can be reinforced through assembling a training program and manual. Each of the aforementioned training topics should be covered in the training manual; the importance of such a document cannot be overstressed. For example, a training manual clearly circumscribes what guidance can and cannot be given to clients, which is imperative to address liability concerns. Staff members should be cognizant of the boundaries of their responsibilities (e.g., confidentiality) and of limitations on the financial information they give to clients (e.g., investment education and general advising rather than specific mutual fund recommendations). Finding ways to incorporate continuous learning opportunities through on-the-job training may be beneficial.

Training Format

The level of training required for staff will be driven primarily by the type of individuals who are hired or recruited to provide services (e.g., internal or external professionals or students), as well as the type of academic programs that are available. If financial planning programs are offered at the respective institution, students in these programs will likely take an introductory course in financial planning and possibly a financial counseling or communication skills course. According to Certified Financial Planner Board of Standard's website (CFP Board, n.d.), at the time of publication, there are 326 CFP Board-registered financial planning programs across certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs. These are most frequently located in academic units of human sciences or business. The skills and knowledge acquired in these courses foster substantial preparation for work as a financial counselor.

If no related-content academic program exists and a peer-to-peer model is chosen, the degree of training required increases substantially. A resource for training if no academic program exists is an online credit or noncredit program or workshop from another college or university. For additional training, one might choose to enroll in a national certification exam (discussed in Chap. 12).

Training Duration

A one-time training workshop is not recommended. Financial services are rapidly changing, so staff members (particularly those working directly with clients) need to stay abreast of relevant regulations and pertinent news. A common method for providing the initial training is through a credit-based course at your college or university. A quarter of the programs surveyed for this book require a credit-based course before staff members or volunteers are allowed to provide services to clients. Recommended courses for this requirement include introduction to personal financial planning, financial counseling, and/or a helping relationships course. Keep in mind that financial counseling may not be (and probably is not) entirely financially driven. Regardless of the personal finance content familiarity of staff, new program recruits need interpersonal skills training prior to facilitating client sessions or presentations. This training would typically cover topics such as program policies, procedural measures, expectations of staff or volunteers, technology usage, facilitator-client role plays, case studies, touring of facilities, emergency protocol, liability issues, presentation tips and outlines, and common difficult scenarios and questions from clients. Knowledge of financial content is a necessary prerequisite, but communication skills and procedural understanding are equally as important in providing diligent services.

Outside of requiring a credit-based course, one-time training may also include half-day or full-day training for new staff members on the content, process, and procedures of financial counseling. The program director does not need to lecture the staff members for several hours to be effective; use interactive learning to best capture

the audience. Bringing experts in to talk about different subjects is an enjoyable way for staff members to learn about topics common to your financial education program. For instance, inviting a financial aid officer in to talk about their role within the university and common questions they receive from students would help prepare financial counselors and educators for questions they are likely to hear.

We recommend you mimic the practices of existing programs and offer ongoing training for your staff members. Periodic continuing education and training seminars are recommended to reinforce content or introduce new content. It allows for presentation of changes in the external environment (e.g., legislation changes affecting higher education and consumer finances). Requiring continuing education is an expectation of most professional associations and is good practice for life after college for any students you may have on staff. Ways to enhance the professional development of staff members include inviting guests to speak, requiring distance education courses, and participating in webinars, teleclasses, or podcasts. We encourage you to check with your college librarian for other training resources that may be available through your institution. Sources of webinars include professional associations, state guaranty agencies, and nonprofit and governmental organizations. Attendance at local, state, or regional conferences is also encouraged. The Appendix provides a list of some professional associations that host national conferences. In addition, some universities may allow faculty and staff to take credit or noncredit courses as an employee benefit. These benefits may consist of tuition reimbursement, tuition waivers, and/or the opportunity to audit courses.

Continuing education serves to keep staff and volunteers apprised of the evolving laws that affect consumer financial decision-making and acts as a tool to allow the individual staff members to learn from each other's experiences. For example, client cases and presentation experiences may be discussed and used as a tool for learning. By meeting frequently and sharing previous experiences with each other, the entire staff is able to stay abreast of the financial issues that are most relevant to the student population. If a volunteer is unable to attend an established number of continuing education trainings, it may be beneficial to have him or her perform alternative service duties to stay current in the key role responsibilities.

Frequent continuing education is beneficial for several reasons: (a) it creates a sense of program unity; (b) each staff member can be exposed to the sessions of the larger whole instead of solely their own clients' situations; (c) current concerns can be addressed on a systematic, continuous basis; and (d) directors can monitor the needs of the staff. If meeting weekly, for example, it is helpful to have a portion of each training session devoted to staff debriefing. Financial counselors are given the opportunity to share lessons learned from previous sessions and to learn from one another. Having staff members write a tip of the week for the general student population is an effective way for leadership to provide relevant, timely content that they must first research on their own. As an example, "The tax due date is approaching! Have you claimed the educational credits you may be entitled to receive? If you are paying for college with cash or loans, you may be eligible! Schedule an appointment with Your Financial Education Program's Name to learn more!" These tips can then be shared through various outlets: Your website, blog, social media, e-mail, or newsletters.

Teaching Methods

Now that you have ideas on how to structure your initial training and/or continuing education, it is time to consider how that education will be delivered. A variety of teaching methods can be employed as a means of staff training. Methods employed will depend on factors such as your training objectives and resource or time availability. Some of the more successful methods reported by current financial education program directors include the following:

- Invite guest speakers who are experts on topics relevant to both financial counseling and education. Local experts, video chats, conference calls, and webinars may be scheduled for speakers who cannot present in person.
- Have "lunch and learn" meetings where staff members bring their lunch and share stories on what is going well or is challenging for them. The problem-based learning model (Duch et al. 2001) can be used with client case analysis, which allows opportunities for the counselors to share their experiences with other staff members. Together, they can brainstorm alternative approaches to the situations presented.
- Use tools such as Google Docs, Facebook, and blogs to create web forums where questions can be answered and strategies and techniques can be shared with staff members in your program and other programs.
- Permit the opportunity for staff members to train the rest of the staff on certain topics. This method allows the presenting member to become an expert on a topic and the go-to source for future questions on this topic. It also helps staff members obtain more experience presenting to an audience.

Presentation Training

Many of the training topics previously mentioned are aimed at financial counselors who deliver individual client sessions. However, most financial education programs also offer group outreach in the form of presentations. In order to facilitate the development of competent and confident presenters who feel equipped to deliver professional presentations, ongoing training should also be offered for this staff or volunteer group. Items for inclusion in presentation training can be grouped around two major themes: presentation preparation and presentation execution.

Presentation Preparation Training Topics

Being forward thinking is absolutely critical for group presentations. The first element is to ensure that details regarding the presentation (requested time, location, contact person, length, topic(s), particulars about the audience, how many will be in attendance) are checked once and checked twice the day of or a day before the presentation. Program directors surveyed for this book also enforced the necessity of

being prepared. Room or time changes are not at all uncommon in a college setting.

Visiting the presentation room prior to the presentation enables the presenter to determine the setup of the room (e.g., auditorium, classroom, boardroom, u-shaped, rounds) and the amenities (e.g., chalk/whiteboards, podium). A visit also allows the presenter to note what equipment will be needed (e.g., laptop, projector, remote clicker, laser pointer, microphone). If using a computer already in the room, security features may prevent the presenter from accessing it without assistance. The presenter may also want to check for wireless connectivity. Be sure to build in extra time before the presentation to address any last minute technical difficulties. The best advice we can offer is to prepare for the worst. Bring a printed copy of the presentation that you can refer to in the event the electronic copy fails.

Another more micro-level training topic is to remind presenters that they need to rehearse their presentation. If using computer visuals, check website URLs and video links to make sure they are working. Be sure the room has audio so any videos that are used can be heard. There is nothing more annoying than a presenter who is unprepared. Respect the audiences' time. A 30-minute presentation should last 25 minutes with 5 minutes for questions from the audience. Also, if handouts will be used, be sure to account for the time necessary to distribute the handouts to the audience. Finally, especially for student presenters, it is wise to have a dress code for presentations. Some programs provide shirts for staff and students to wear during program events. These can be in school colors or with a program name or logo.

A final recommendation for presentation preparation is to think about many of the frequently asked questions that may be received in a presentation. Talk with other presenters and ask them about questions they have received. It is recommended that presenters have answers prepared for some of the most frequently asked questions about the financial education program and personal finance matters.

Presentation Execution

During the presentation, as mentioned above, the speaker should plan to arrive early. Although the presenter should have prepared for technical difficulties, it is hard to predict what new issues might arise.

Presentation training needs to include time for presenters to practice their *elevator speech*, which is a brief 1- to 2-minute introduction of who they are, what the financial education program does, and why they are involved with the financial education program. The more presenters practice their introduction, the smoother the delivery.

Next, presenters should come prepared with an icebreaker or energizer that allows them to create rapport with the audience. This could be a quiz or a game. During the presentation, tell stories. Audiences prefer to hear personal stories or other practical applications of the material that is being presented (Kotter 2008). Chapter 6 of this book provides ideas for financial education programming content.

Questions are a good way to engage an audience. Ask questions throughout the presentation to gauge the audience's level of knowledge and comprehension and call for the audience's questions either during or after the presentation. Respond effectively to questions from the audience. If an answer is not known, simply be honest with the audience. Tell the inquirer that an answer will be found and communicated to the inquirer after the presentation.

One of the best ways to improve presentation techniques is to instill more confidence in the presenter. An effective way to do this is to educate presenters on the topics that will be included in presentations. This can be accomplished through formal coursework, continuing education sessions, attendance and presentations at regional and national conferences, and one-on-one training with the presenter. Another resource to enhance presentation and speaking skills is a Toastmasters club, some of which can be found on a college campus (Sterman n.d.) The more knowledgeable the presenter, the more likely he or she will be in demonstrating confidence and polished presentation skills.

Tough Questions Training

The importance of giving accurate information in an increasingly complex world of personal finance is paramount. One helpful method for staff is to revolve the content of continuing education training around the tough questions that get asked by clients. It is in financial education practitioners' best interest to be prepared to effectively answer these tough questions. The more comfortable staff members are with the most frequently asked questions, the more confidence that will be portrayed in the individual session and the more likely the staff member will be comfortable with questions from a group presentation audience.

TQT (tough questions training) is a problem-based method grounded in experiential learning theory to help financial educators and counselors effectively answer questions. At the foundation of experiential learning lies the belief that learning takes place when a person is actively involved with an experience (Kolb 1984), which is an integral step in the TQT process. The response of a presenter to difficult questions can either promote or hinder a strong rapport with an audience. Myths and misinformation are commonly associated with personal financial information, consequently making the wide array of questions potentially posed quite challenging.

The TQT method allows program staff to apply what they have learned in their training and leads to an informal mentoring process. TQT may also be used as an ongoing refresher training method for experienced financial counselors and educators by addressing the most current questions asked by audiences. The questions used are generated from ongoing experience with clients. Current and accurate information concerning financial issues is critical, as is the consideration of the needs of a particular audience. Utilizing the TQT approach results in multiple benefits. First, the process builds collaboration among trainees. Through the group process, opportunities for future training and development are revealed. When TQT

is used as a continuous training process, constant feedback for quality assurance is provided. The process of discussing strategies for answering difficult questions fosters learning for educators and counselors. The art of handling difficult questions with multiple approaches is acquired and honed through the TQT method. Lastly, self-confidence is experienced among financial counselors and educators as they become better equipped (Goetz et al. 2004).

Mentoring

A mentoring program is a way to gain transfer of knowledge and skills within a group (Mason and Bailey 2003). A student staff member or volunteer can be paired with a returning student staff member or volunteer, a nonstudent, or other staff member in a mentoring program.

Because there are some aspects of financial counseling that are best learned through experience, new staff members should have the opportunity to observe their mentors in active financial counseling sessions and, therefore, receive hands-on training without feeling overwhelmed. In some programs affiliated with clinical training programs, rooms may have equipment for recording sessions so that supervisors can review and provide feedback to trainees. Alternatively, the rooms may be designed for observation capabilities to assist in training and mentoring.

Some beneficial requirements of a mentoring program might include:

1. Before new program staff will be assigned clients, they must observe at least one of their mentors' sessions.

   • The mentor will have the added responsibility of meeting with the new student staff member and discussing the session that was observed. A record of the meeting should be turned in to the program director once the meeting is adjourned. An observation write-up might include the following: What was the presenting problem? What are the solutions that were generated by the client? By the financial counselor? What were the techniques the mentor used? Why did he or she choose those techniques? What are other techniques that could have been used? What were some general observations of the session? Are there any questions the new counselor may have?

2. After the new staff member has begun to offer program services, it is advantageous to have a required meeting with the mentor every 2 weeks. The mentor should take notes from the meeting, including:

   • When did the meeting take place? What questions did the new financial counselor have? What suggestions did the mentor make? What other information does the mentor deem relevant?

3. The mentor should also observe at least two of the new staff member's first few sessions. This will allow the mentor to evaluate the mentee's progress, as well as serve as an extra resource during those sessions.

Summary

This chapter covered the nuts and bolts of training financial education program staff. Training must be oriented around the role of your various staff members; training clerical staff on presentation skills is probably not an efficient use of time, but training all staff on confidentiality is essential. Other basic competencies needed for staff members include financial knowledge, interpersonal skills, university policies and procedures, and support resources available to students. Training staff members on these core competencies can occur over the course of a day or an entire academic quarter or semester. Common trainers include university faculty members, financial aid office staff, and external financial counselors.

Training for staff members who work directly with clients should revolve around the key issues clients bring to individual financial counseling or common questions asked at group presentations. Cash management/budgeting is the most frequently requested topic for individual and group financial counseling and education sessions. Budgeting can be made fun by having students give examples of the most ridiculous item they can think of to plan for in a budget. Other programming ideas are provided in Chap. 6.

Finally, seasoned staff members provide a valuable mechanism for developing newer student staff by transferring their learning and experiences through a formal mentoring program. Actively learning by observing peers giving presentations or providing individual financial counseling is an effective way of teaching new staff members. We encourage you to utilize the methods and resources presented in this chapter to develop your own training program and accompanying training manual.

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