

SEDA Spring Conference 2024



Session Title: Trusting Educational Developers: Time to Claim the Profession

Session Type: Research paper (20 mins plus questions)

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Session Summary: In this paper we explore how trust in academic/educational development is impacted by the status of academic/educational development as a profession. We present the key characteristics of professions and inquire where academic/educational development sits in relation to these characteristics. Are we trusted professionals? If so, how do we claim our field of work as a profession, if not, what do we need to change?

Session Outline: What can academic developers be trusted to know? What proprietary knowledge claims are made by those who work in academic development? This paper aims to contribute to theorizing the nature of academic development by examining the foundations of academic development as a defined profession. Through consideration of the relationship between commonly cited criteria of the professions (Brien, 1998; Freidson, 1999, 2001; Frowe, 2005; Johnson, 1972; Moore, 1970) and common features of academic development, it explores the unique expertise, moral attitudes, values, standards, and purposes, as well as problems, contexts and conditions of practice that constitute the nature of shared professional identity among academic developers (Dawson et al., 2010; Green & Little, 2016; Taylor & Rege Colet, 2010; Timmermans, 2013). Drawing upon research into the professions (Beck & Young, 2005; Carr, 1999; Hordern, 2017, 2019; Shulman, 1998; Winch, 2022), the scholarship of academic development (Cruz et al., 2022; Felten et al., 2007; Little, 2014), and relevant materials published by international academic development centres and professional associations, the authors examine the distinctive forms of propositional and practical knowledge attributed to academic development, the status of academic development as a profession, and the implications for trust in and through academic development.

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