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**Abstract**

Located between senior management and academic staff, the role of the Associate Dean in universities appears to be growing in number, complexity and importance in recent years. A role arguably fraught with complexity, it remains largely undefined and under-researched. While little is known about the role in general, less still is known about their leadership development experiences. This paper reports on a Leadership Foundation funded UK study to explore what training and role preparation Associate Deans have had. Data was collected from 15 interviews with Associate Deans from five different institutions and a follow-up online survey of Associate Deans (n=?172) throughout England and Wales. The study found that 60 per cent of respondents had received little or no formal management training and that 24 per cent of those who had received training reported it to be only moderately useful or of little or no use. In contrast, however, the respondents identified the establishment of informal learning and support networks with other Associate Deans as being a vital

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source of support. The paper argues that an alternative model of management development, based on relational and social learning theories, might be a more appropriate way to help support this group of academic middle leaders.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)