

College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences
"The Tipping Point"
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR BECOMING A LEARNING-CENTERED
COLLEGE

I. Introduction

CLASS is documenting the planning and development of its efforts to be a learning centered college. We must begin with a sense of what it means to be a learning centered college. To this end a learning centered college is one that:

1. Emphasizes student learning as the primary focus of the college and charges the student with taking responsibility for his/her learning.
2. Focuses on what students will know when they leave the institution. (It is this sense that differentiates learning from teaching.)
3. Requires that faculty are prepared and committed to identifying what students know (their preconceptions and possible misconceptions of the material) and effectively communicating so they achieve the learning objectives. It also requires a commitment on the part of students to identifying and overcoming presuppositions that hinder their learning.
4. Focuses on the development of outcomes, the assessment of outcomes, and the use of assessment data for maximizing student learning, faculty and staff development, and the need for programs within the College.
5. Uses a variety of instructional methods, techniques and tools (e.g., group learning, individual student research, independent study, joint faculty-student research, active problem based learning, in-class assessment techniques, lecture and discussion)

The College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences has been actively pursuing these goals since at least 2003. In what follows, we will outline how we have already begun to implement plans for the institutionalization of learning centeredness and how we plan on deepening and widening our commitment to being a learning centered college.

II. Current Learning Centered Activities In CLASS: A Focus on students and faculty

A. Creation of the CLASS Learning and Teaching Committee.

The CLASS Learning and Teaching Committee was created in 1999 to advise the Dean on "policies related to learning and teaching... (specifically) learning outcomes assessment, program assessment, general education assessment, and service learning." As of 2006-2007, the committee assumed responsibility for developing policy recommendations on matters relating to student success, first year experience, and the role of technology in a learning centered environment. The committee serves as a primary means of disseminating information on learning and teaching to the broader community of CLASS. It has read and discussed, for example, *What The*

Best College Teachers Do by Ken Bain. Members of the committee have then gone on to lead faculty circles on topics related to learning and teaching for the Faculty Center for Professional Development. Two members of the committee (Michael Cholbi and Zouyue Wang) served as members of the Learning Community on the Learning Centered University. The committee also has primary responsibility for reviewing both undergraduate and graduate program assessment plans (learning outcome plans) for the College. In addition, the committee is responsible for developing and administering the CLASS Innovation in Teaching award, an award that focuses squarely on recognizing faculty who have tried innovative approaches to increase student learning. In conjunction with this award, each year's winner gives a talk to the college about the innovative approach(es) to student learning. This year the committee has studied the literature on both student and peer assessment of teaching and has made substantive recommendations for revising the current way Departments in CLASS conduct both kinds of evaluations.

B. Program Assessment plans for every undergraduate program in CLASS have been written. The core of each plan is a set of learning outcomes, assessment mechanisms, and a feedback loop for modifying programs on the basis of outcomes assessment data. All but three plans have been approved. Most programs have been collecting data and making curricular changes based on assessment data for several years.

C. CLASS faculty are inherently interdisciplinary and collaborative so what follows is just a very brief discussion of the ways in which CLASS has intentionally created opportunities for collaboration within the campus community.

1. CLASS encourages faculty to take part in activities sponsored by the Faculty Center for Professional Development. CLASS faculty not only participate but also lead reading circles for the center and give brown bag colloquia.
2. CLASS sponsors interdisciplinary conferences such as those hosted by the Department of Philosophy and the Ahimsa Center.
3. CLASS sponsors several interdisciplinary minors, including the Digital Media Arts Minor, the Non-Violence Studies minor (currently being considered by the Academic Senate), and the International Studies Minor.
4. CLASS supported the Department of Philosophy to develop a University-wide interdisciplinary major and minor in Science, Technology and Society.
5. CLASS sponsors a learning centered award for innovative teaching.

The winner of the award gives an all-College talk on the nature of his/her innovation.

6. CLASS has been a consistent supporter and its faculty are instrumental in organizing Campus Forum, a speakers series attended by students, faculty, and staff.

E. In the classroom CLASS faculty are equally committed to a learning centered College. Again, faculty attend workshops on learning centered themes offered by the Faculty Center for Professional Development. Every faculty member is expected to construct a syllabus that clearly states the learning outcomes for the course. In addition the Learning and Teaching Committee has investigated the concept of a learning centered syllabus and encouraged CLASS faculty to experiment with developing such a syllabus.

F. Encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning is an ongoing challenge in the College. This is in part because CLASS faculty teach such a large number of General Education courses. Some CLASS faculty encourage a discussion of the nature and value of General Education in the context of a larger discussion of learning styles and motivations. Many faculty make use of “active” learning pedagogies (small group work, presentations, incorporating students in faculty research projects...) in an effort to ensure that students see that their success at Cal Poly Pomona depends on an active commitment to their learning. Another aspect of students taking responsibility for their own learning is Cal Poly Pomona’s general commitment to learning by doing. CLASS faculty have embraced this view of active learning even in disciplines in the humanities where it is less obvious of how to incorporate learn by doing.

G. CLASS Currently recognizes learning centered activities by way of two annual awards: The Outstanding Advisor Award and the CLASS Award for Innovation in Teaching. Both awards offer a small stipend and the teaching award invites the winner to address the College about his/her insights into learning and teaching.

III. Future Learning Centered Activities in CLASS: Implementing A Learning Centered Plan

A. By the end of Spring 2008, we expect all graduate programs in CLASS to complete learning outcomes assessment plans and begin implementation. The Department of Economics has already completed a draft of such a plan and expects to have external reviewers on campus in the Spring of 2007. The Learning and Teaching committee has taken a lead role in both helping graduate programs understand the nature of outcomes assessment plans and as the primary College level committee of review for such plans.

B. By Fall Quarter 2007, the College will implement a First Year Experience Course required of all majors in the College (see attached expanded course

outline). Several colleges plan to have their courses qualify for Area E in General Education. CLASS intends to join this effort. The course will be taught by tenured and tenure track faculty. Enrollment will be capped at 30 students in order to provide opportunities for writing, active pedagogies, and community building. Student Affairs personnel will be invited to participate in selected sessions of the course. The course serves as the beginning of at least a year's worth of activities aimed at enhancing the students' commitment to their education. The academic departments will construct courses or other activities directed at engaging the students with their disciplines.

C. We will redesign the CLASS website so that it both reflects a commitment to learning centeredness and so that it includes access to internet resources on learning centered concepts. Listed below are a few examples of the kind of sites we will include on the redesigned CLASS homepage.

The Learning Centered Syllabus

<http://cte.udel.edu/syllabus.htm>

<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html>

Learning Centered Instruction

<http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Papers/Resist.html>

<http://www.usc.edu/programs/cet/resources/learnercentered/>

<http://www.usip.edu/lct/Table1%20Characteristics%20of%20learnings.pdf>

<http://www.uml.edu/centers/FTC/lct.html>

<http://teaching.uchicago.edu/pod/>

<http://teaching.uchicago.edu/resources/onlineresources.shtml>

<http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/center/center.htm>

<http://www.montclair.edu/teachingcenter/index.shtml>

D. CLASS will continue to support interdisciplinary programs including the Digital Media Arts minor, the Non-Violence Studies minor, the International Studies minor and the major and minor in Science, Technology and Society. The College has institutionalized support for student activities such as the Ethics Bowl, the Model United Nations, the Organization of the American States, the Panetta Scholarship, the Intelligence Community Program, the Honors Program,

the performing arts ensembles and productions, student publications, and academic advising.

E. With respect to increasing the College's commitment to a learning centered classroom environment we are planning on the following activities in the upcoming year.

1. We think that our faculty makes use of learning centered pedagogy without realizing that they do. We want to develop an inventory of what we are already doing so that we have a better sense of what needs to be done to further institutionalize the commitment to learning centeredness. To this end the Learning and Teaching committee will be developing a web-based survey of instructional activities to be distributed to all faculty in the College. We will use the results of this survey to determine the need for future learning centered activities and to determine what kinds of activities would best serve the interests of our faculty given where they are.

2. Similarly, we believe that CLASS does far more service learning than is counted by looking solely at the number of S-designated courses offered during any given quarter. This is partly because the S-designation requires that all students in the course participate in service learning; thus, courses that make service learning an option but not required are overlooked. To alleviate this problem we will be developing a web based survey of CLASS faculty that asks them to report on service learning activities not captured by the S-designation. This will give the College a sense of how much work needs to be done to increase the College's commitment to service learning.

3. The Learning and Teaching committee has been charged with the task of planning and implementing a celebration of learning centered teaching for the Fall of 2007. This event will invite past winners of the innovation award and other faculty who have been deeply involved with learning centered pedagogy to share what they have learned with the rest of CLASS faculty.

F. CLASS currently recognizes innovative teaching. We are considering two additional kinds of recognition for learning centered activities. First, we are considering offering an award for a Department that is seeking to increase its service learning offerings. Second, we are considering developing a learning centered teaching fellowship award. This award would be given annually to the CLASS faculty member who has a demonstrated commitment to learning and teaching. The winner would be given three courses of release time for the year they are the learning centered teaching fellow and would be required to coordinate the College's learning centered efforts as well as provide workshops and other activities to promote the concept of the learning centered college.

IV: Learning Centered Programs: A Focus on Staff

A. In conjunction with the Office of Training and Development we will enhance our long-standing commitment of supporting staff in their own development as part of the learning centered university. The dean will constitute a staff committee to assist with the planning for actions to accomplish and the means to assess the work our staff do in supporting learning centeredness. Staff already have access to funds for off-campus training and these will be increased if necessary.

V. Budget Resources

A. It is evident that there will need to be a reallocation of resources to support a college-level FYE course. A second issue is to provide incentives for faculty to work during the summer constructing the course. We also intend to purchase one of the books for the students. These will be distributed at summer orientation with the expectation that reading will begin in the summer. The College Budget Advisory and Planning Committee will begin work on the resource issues at their next meeting.