

# University Learning-Centered Task Force

## Meeting Synopsis

January 26, 2006

Attendance: All members the University Learning-Centered Task Force, except one, were present along with guests: Dr. Tomas Morales, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Lynn Turner, Vice President for Student Affairs; members of the Faculty Learning Community on “What is a learning-centered university?” and Task Force student assistants Diana Balesh and Coleen Thorndyke.

### AGENDA ITEM 1: FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY

Members of the Faculty Learning Community on “What is a learning-centered University?” were introduced. The Faculty Learning Community and the University Task Force share some objectives, in particular to advance the principals of a learning-centered university at Cal Poly Pomona. Members of the Faculty Learning Community gave a brief overview of past activities. The Faculty Learning Community has organized and sponsored several university-wide events, including the Student Exchange Lounge, the All-University Exchange, and two retreats, one for faculty, students and staff and another for university leaders on transforming CPP into a learning-centered university. These activities generated a great deal of discussion, but did not reach the majority of Cal Poly faculty where there is confusion and resistance about the learning-centered initiative. To reverse this, the Faculty Learning Community has identified two primary activities for Winter and Spring quarters:

1. **A Conversation with our Colleagues.** The Learning Community will reach out to all faculty by giving a presentation at department meetings on the role of faculty in a learning-centered university. The main points of the presentation were described and members of the Task Force provided feedback and ideas for the presentation.
2. **Cal Poly Learning-Centered Website.** The Learning Community is developing an easy-to-navigate web site where learning-centered events (past and future) and resources (on and off campus) are available. The website address is <http://www.csupomona.edu/~learningcentered> and is now active. The Learning Community recommends that Cal Poly have only one learning-centered website and invited the Task Force to be co-developers of the website.

### AGENDA ITEM 2: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Student Assistants Diana Balesh and Coleen Thorndyke each conducted informal surveys of seniors asking them what worked well and what didn't work so well during their studies at Cal Poly Pomona. Diana handed out a summary of the responses she collected (Title: How has Cal Poly Pomona helped and hurt their students?) and the results from Coleen's survey are attached. Although both surveys have anecdotal, non-normed responses and were relatively small samples, some issues (problems) emerged that the Task Force may wish to consider in order to promote 'continuous improvement,' one of the prime principals of a learning-centered university:

1. Poor Class Availability, including the following factors:
  - a. Insufficient number of required courses offered (Core and Support)
  - b. Scheduling Conflicts prompted by:
    - i. Required courses offered at the same time, particularly upper division classes
    - ii. Required courses offered infrequently (1 section/1 time per year)
    - iii. Many courses offered in the same scheduling module
2. Some service offices are not helpful

Dr. Laurie Starkey suggested that students could be required to give feedback after attempting to register, reporting which classes they could not register for and courses they did not attempt to register in because it was already filled. This would provide departments with the data to better monitor course availability.

Provost Morales pointed out that Cal Poly Pomona participated in national student survey (NSSI) and the results will be available from IRAP soon. Since Margaret Kasimatis, the Executive Director of IRAP, is also a member of our Task Force, she has agreed to present the findings at our next Task Force meeting on February 16.

### AGENDA ITEM 3: SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 9 GROUP BRAINSTORMING

The following issues emerged from the team brainstorming activity:

- o Need a simplified, easy to understand definition of a Learning-Centered University

- Need a MOTTO
- Need a single reference or resource to read and to recommend to colleagues
- Need to survey current awareness and understanding on campus
- Need to address restraints: time, resources, fear of accountability, and too many initiatives

Task Force members reconvened into teams and brainstormed how to simplify the definition of a learning-centered university. Suggestions included:

1. A Learning-Centered University supports learning for everyone on campus and uses assessment for continuous improvement.
2. A Learning-Centered University supports learning for all members of the campus community by fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
3. A Learning-Centered University fosters learning and improvement in all aspects of the university.
4. A Learning-Centered University fosters a culture of learning, reflection and collaboration for continuous improvement. (LRC=I)

Proposed Mottos included:

1. LRC=I (Learning, Reflection, Collaboration leads to Improvement)
2. Learning, first and always
3. Learn, learn and learn some more
4. We are all learners
5. Keep learning
6. Keep moving
7. Look around and learn
8. Learning is never done

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4: TOO MANY COMPETING INITIATIVES AT CAL POLY POMONA**

Teams were asked to brainstorm Task Force Outcome #5: Propose ways to connect/integrate the university's 3 main initiatives: Learning-Centered Transformation, Prioritization/Recovery, and WASC Accreditation. To assist teams in their discussions, Provost Morales provided copies of the Proposed Prioritization and Recovery Criteria Matrix for Academic Affairs. Suggestions included:

1. Learning-Centeredness is the core that connects all university initiatives, goals and objectives.
2. The solution is effective communication and coordination. One way to accomplish this is to have high-level leadership that acts as a common calibration point. With President Ortiz leading, this executive group would make sure that all initiatives are headed in the same direction.
3. Suspend all classes and meetings and have a 2-day retreat for all faculty, staff and students to focus on learning-centeredness, prioritization/recovery and WASC issues.
4. Identify common themes:
  - a. Do all units contribute to learning?
  - b. Are all units focused on institutional effectiveness?
  - c. Do all units engage in assessment?
  - d. Are results shared for organizational learning and improvement?

The common denominator for all initiatives is that of **constantly assessing** what the university is doing, especially teaching and learning effectiveness, and using assessment data for exploring how it might be done better. In other words, a continuous cycle of assessment, improvement and sharing of findings/successful models.

#### **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: EXAMINE LEARNING-CENTERED CULTURE IN YOUR UNIT**

1. **Complete before February 13 and email your report to Gil.** Team members will conduct an internal investigation on the level of awareness and understanding of learning centeredness in their own units and gather examples of learning-centered Best Practices.
2. **Complete before the February 16 Task Force Meeting:** In an effort to identify a single resource to recommend to our colleagues to read on learning-centeredness, read the following articles:  
<http://www.doiit.gmu.edu/Archives/feb98/potter.htm> (David L. Potter)  
 The CSU Northridge transformation process paper (see Gil's 2/1/06 email)

**NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING: FEBRUARY 16, NOON-1:30, HERITAGE CONFERENCE ROOM**