

## **Academic Senate Leadership in Faculty Professional Development**

C. Holcroft

Whereas, the Foothill College faculty are rich in expertise and pedagogical excellence and are passionate about teaching, learning, and student success, and in this time of profound challenges and change, the opportunity for collegial collaboration could act as a positive force to help faculty to remain engaged and energized about teaching and learning;

Whereas, the Student Success Task Force recommendations acknowledge that sustained, ongoing professional development activities are essential to improving student success in the California Community College system; and

Whereas Title 5 §53200 designates faculty professional development activities as one of the 10+1 academic and professional matters under the purview of local academic senates, and FHDA Board Policy 2223 specifically lists professional development as an area of primary reliance;

Resolved, that in Fall 2012 the Foothill College Academic Senate take leadership of faculty professional development by drafting an approach to creating and expanding local professional development opportunities, particularly those that could be low-cost or free;

Resolved, that in planning professional development activities and strategies the Foothill Academic Senate consider a wide variety of approaches which may include formal, informal, face to face, and asynchronous opportunities for participation; and

Resolved, that the Foothill Academic Senate also actively strategize ways for positive collaboration with staff and administrators to create professional development opportunities that engage the imagination and expertise of the entire campus community in an effort to reach our common goal of improving student success.

Supporting document: Student Success Task Force Recommendation 6

# Recommendation



## REVITALIZE AND RE-ENVISION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



### Policy Statement:

*The community college system will develop and support focused professional development for all faculty and staff.*

### Need for Professional Development

Ongoing professional development is a fundamental component of supporting systemic change that will improve student success. Without a sustained and focused approach to professional development, individual institutions, let alone an entire educational system, cannot expect to change attitudes, help faculty and staff rethink how their colleges approach the issue of student success, and implement a continuous assessment process that brings about iterative improvement. This type of change will not happen overnight. The end result envisioned by the Task Force will need to emerge through years of refinement.

### History of Professional Development

Support for professional development in the California Community Colleges has been mixed. While recognition was given to the important role of professional development in the landmark community college reform bill AB 1725, the stated goal of providing specific funding to support on-going professional development has never been reached. Today, most colleges attempt to carve out support from the general fund, but financial pressures have continued to erode institutionally supported professional development. Some colleges have relied on outside grants for professional development to faculty, but for the

most part these strategies are limited to boutique programs rather than campus-wide approaches. The Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) has provided some funding for professional development, but these funds are modest. Furthermore, in spite of the best intentions of those hired to provide professional development at the colleges, professional development activities have tended to focus on short-term programs or one-time workshops rather than providing the sustained engagement with ideas and processes that, research has shown, has a greater chance of bringing about real change.

### **Flex Days**

Education Code 84890 (Statutes of 1981) allowed community colleges to move away from the standard 175-day instructional calendar that was a hold-over from the K-12 system and instead use up to 15 days per year for professional development [see Title 5 sections 55720-55732]. Most colleges utilize a combination of fixed and flexible days. Fixed days require faculty and staff to attend mandatory programs determined by the college while flexible days are used for faculty-determined activities, such as conferences, coursework, and research. Today, fixed professional development days are comprised largely of campus-wide activities such as convocations, state-of-the-college presentations, and departmental meetings. Workshops related to effective teaching and student success are also offered, but, as stated above, suffer from being of limited duration and thus of limited effect overall.

Under the current regulations, the following are allowable staff development activities under a flexible calendar:

1. Course instruction and evaluation;
2. In-service training and instructional improvement;
3. Program and course curriculum or

learning resource development and evaluation;

4. Student personnel services;
5. Learning resource services;
6. Related activities, such as student advising, guidance, orientation, matriculation services, and student, faculty, and staff diversity;
7. Departmental or division meetings, conferences and workshops, and institutional research;
8. Other duties as assigned by the district.
9. The necessary supporting activities for the above.

### The Flexible Calendar Program Numbers

In the 2009-10 academic year, the community college system converted almost three percent of its instructional days into professional development days.

The Task Force believes that, as a community college system, we must adopt a more systemic and long-term approach to professional development. Without this change, colleges will be unlikely to achieve the changes necessary to increase the success of our students. Because classroom reform is essential to improving outcomes for students, faculty should be the primary focus of professional development efforts, including part-time faculty, who teach up to 50 percent of the courses on a given campus.

## Recommendation 6.1

Community colleges will create a continuum of strategic professional development opportunities, for all faculty, staff, and administrators to be better prepared to respond to the evolving student needs and measures of student success.

To accomplish major changes in the California Community Colleges, professional development must be at the center of the discussion. In many cases, the changes necessary to increase student success and completion require building new skills or honing existing skills. Faculty, staff, and administrators need consistent, thoughtful, and productive professional development activities that are linked to a state agenda for student success.

The Board of Governors and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office should embrace a statewide, highly visible leadership role related to professional development. As California prepares to address key issues, whether they are instructional, fiscal, safety, or intersegmental, professional development of community college personnel is key. Given the level of responsibility granted to the Academic Senate on instructional matters, the Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office should work with the Academic Senate to identify and put forth best practices related to the use of professional development for faculty.

### Requirements for Implementation

- The Chancellor's Office, in partnership with the Academic Senate on issues related to faculty, will identify best practices related to the use of professional development and encouraging colleges to link locally-mandated professional development activities to a set of statewide objectives and then measure movement towards those objectives.
- Authorize the Chancellor's Office and/or the Board of Governors to recommend specific professional development purposes for flex days.
- Ensure that professional development is equitably focused on part-time faculty.
- The Chancellor's Office should explore the use of myriad approaches to providing professional development, including regional collaboration and expanding of the use of technology.

## Recommendation 6.2

Community Colleges will direct professional development resources for both faculty and staff toward improving basic skills instruction and support services.

In addition to the flexible calendar program for the community colleges, there are allocations directed by the Legislature specifically toward basic skills professional development. These allocations should not only continue but be expanded to provide continuous and thorough support for faculty and staff in the issues related to basic skills instruction and student support services. The pedagogical approaches to be included should respond not only to discipline issues but also within the context of economic and cultural differences of students.

In addition to the specific professional development funds available through the annual Budget Act, California should continue to direct and coordinate special programs in vocational education, economic development, science, mathematics, categorical areas, and others in order to integrate basic skills improvement throughout the entire community college system.

### Requirements for Implementation

- The Chancellor's Office will organize the Basic Skills Professional Development funds to align with the recommendations of the Task Force.
- The Chancellor's Office will include the improvement of basic skills instruction within the various funding sources available for professional development, including vocational education, economic development, and appropriate categorical programs.
- Part-time faculty should be equitably supported by college professional development activities related to basic skills improvement.