

Learning Community Taskforce Description and Guidelines

Core Commitment to Institutional Capacity:

The institution functions with clear purposes, high levels of institutional integrity, fiscal stability, and organizational structures and processes to fulfill its purposes. (WASC Handbook, p.5)

The college President will chair a Learning Community Taskforce (LCT) to focus on capacity and preparatory issues raised by Theme One (Learning Community). The LCT will establish a sustainable campus-wide commitment to thoughtful assessment, and the President will ensure that this culture begins with the Board of Trustees and cascades down through his office to all areas of campus. Most important, the LCT will put in place a permanent mechanism for carefully reviewing and acting on the evidence that is collected in the Program Reviews. (Institutional Proposal p12)

Taskforce Members: as approved by Administrative Council, August 26, 2007

- Richard Osborn (Chair), College President
- Ed Moore, (ex officio) IR Director
- Aubyn Fulton, Chair, WASC-PC; Professor of Psychology
- Leo Ranzolin, Professor of Religion
- Tammy McGuire, Assistant Professor of Communications
- Jan Wood, Associate Dean of Student and Director of Residence Life
- Janet Ivey (Secretary), Administrative Assistant
- Student Association President

The Learning Community Taskforce (LCT) is one of three campus bodies created to implement PUC's Institutional Proposal and to prepare for both WASC's Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR; due in the Fall of 2009) and its Educational Effectiveness Review (EER; due in the Spring of 2011). A detailed timetable and work plan for all accreditation activities can be found on the PUC WASC Accreditation Page at: <http://www.puc.edu/PUC/accreditation/>. The LCT will remain active until the CPR is completed; it is responsible for establishing permanent systems and policies to address ongoing mandates. The LCT will

- report periodically to the WASC Planning Committee (WASC-PC), which is responsible for coordinating campus accreditation planning and work;
- work closely with the WASC-PC writer to prepare working drafts of one of the five essays that are part of the CPR Report;
- coordinate work on Theme One of the Institutional Proposal.

Theme One focuses on two things: first, strengthening and institutionalizing PUC's culture of evidence, and second, assuring that each aspect of the PUC community is organized to support student learning.

Work on the culture of evidence will include

- placing a greater emphasis on systematically and efficiently gathering and analyzing evidence to support our assertions about our learning community;
- ensuring that the knowledge generated by this evidence is used in making campus decisions.

Organizing to support student learning will include

- asking each department on campus to think intentionally and creatively about its role in the learning community.

The LCT will coordinate research and campus discussion of several questions identified in the Institutional Proposal. (See pp. 7-8). Specifically:

1. How can we ensure that all campus decisions are evidence based?

2. How can we ensure that student learning outcomes are published and assessed at all levels (class, program, campus)?
3. What are students learning outside the formal curriculum at PUC, and how do we know?
4. What are the factors affecting our graduation rates, and what can we do to improve successful completion rates for all our students?

Three tasks should take center stage as the LCT does its work: 1) developing and implementing the Program Review process for the non-academic departments; 2) identifying, collecting and making accessible a standard data set for all important campus decisions, and 3) understanding our graduation rate data, and identifying the necessary steps to improve our graduation rate.

1. Developing and Implementing Program Review Process

The Program Review process will be one of the main tools the LCT uses to accomplish its mission. For all non-academic departments, the LCT will supervise and coordinate both the process and the content of the Program Reviews. Most of the process for the Academic Program Review has already been put in place, and the content is the responsibility of the Academic Dean and faculty governance system. The LCT's role for Academic Program Reviews is to work with various academic entities --the Academic Dean, The Educational Effectiveness Taskforce (EET), CECOM and ASGE-- to ensure that the Review process includes two things: first, new emphases identified in the Institutional Proposal and second, adequate resources and institutional support.

In doing its work with non-Academic Program Reviews, the LCT will:

- Develop a tool similar to that used by CECOM for academic Program Reviews;
The instructions for academic Program Reviews can be found in "Appendix E", pp 43-47 of the *Institutional Proposal*. A very preliminary set of non-Academic Program Review guidelines can be found in "Appendix N", p 91.
- Create a job description for a permanent body staffed by senior employees from each Vice-Presidential area to coordinate and evaluate the Program Reviews. This committee will essentially do for the non-academic Departments what CECOM does for Academic Departments. Time spent attending and preparing for the meetings of this body should be part of the employees' regular work schedule;
- Devise a method of appointing members to this committee to staggered terms. Members may initially be appointed by the LCT and the President, but eventually the process should be integrated in the Faculty and Staff Handbooks with members elected by the Nominating Committee. The initial committee should be ready to function and give guidance to the first departments under review as soon as possible and no later than early November, 2007;
- Establish a 5-year review cycle that includes a scheduled date for each non-Academic Department;
- Ensure one department reporting to each Vice-President completes its Program Review by May, 2007;
- Ensure all employees have an effective means to give input as part of their department's Program Review process;
- Emphasize intentional thinking about student learning as a priority across campus;
- Ensure each department addresses and assesses relevant diversity issues. Each member of the LCT should read the WASC "Statement on Diversity" in either the *WASC Handbook of Accreditation* (pp 71-76) or on the PUC WASC Accreditation Page;
- Ensure each department addresses core educational themes of "A Culture of Service," and "Conversations About Faith, Learning & Adventist Identity." (See Institutional Proposal, pp 10-11;
- Ensure each department both identifies its mission and specific objectives, as well as collects and uses appropriate evidence relating to these;

- Ensure each department evaluates how successfully it meets its objectives and identifies effective steps for improvement;
- Ensure appropriate and adequate evidence is gathered and analyzed;
- Ensure concerns/recommendations from previous reviews are adequately addressed;
- Develop and implement a procedure that ensures Program Review recommendations inform budgetary and other critical institutional decision making.

In doing its work with Academic Program Reviews, the LCT will:

- Ensure a structure is in place to collect and publish information to be used in updating a department's Program Review;
- Ensure that adequate financial and institutional support is in place.

2. Identifying and Collecting a Standard Data Set

- Determine what data are already being gathered about our learning community.
For example: Senior Survey, Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), UCLA Spiritual Survey
- Explore alternatives to current assessments of the student community and put in place those that will yield the best information.
For example: NSSE, CLA
- Develop additional indicators as necessary.
- Work with the IR Director to develop a Standard Data Set for our learning community. This should include data that is part of the Common Data Set used at other similar institutions, as well as data that are determined to be of unique significance at PUC.
- Ensure data is analyzed appropriately, accessible to all relevant decision-makers, and used to make decisions.

3. Understanding and Improving Graduation Rate Data

- Consult closely with the IR Director.
- Review current data about PUC's graduation rate, and compare it with other similar institutions. (See the Educational Trust institutional data base at <http://collegeresults.org/>, and footnote #5 on p. 7 of Institutional Proposal.)
- Understand accurately and comprehensively how graduation rates are formally calculated.
- Ensure all relevant data is being collected and reported.
For example, do students who matriculate at PUC but later complete pre-professional programs at other institutions as part of their normal program count as PUC graduates for this purpose? If so, do we have access to this data, and do we report it?
- Ensure the accuracy and validity of numbers PUC currently reports.
- Disaggregate graduation rate data by ethnicity, gender and other relevant variables such as incoming GPA or ACT scores.
- Identify steps needed to raise graduation rates.
For example: better advising, better tracking, increased persistence

As each body at PUC prepares for the Capacity Review, its members should continually ask these three questions:

1. Have we established clear objectives?
2. What evidence will help us determine the degree to which these objectives are being achieved?
3. What actions are we taking to improve performance based on this evidence?

(WASC Handbook of Accreditation p. 42)