

UNIV Task Force

Winter Quarter Report
3 April 2012

The UNIV task force (UTF) met weekly during Winter Quarter starting on January 5th, 2012 through March 22nd, 2012. Members include: Mary Pederson (Associate Vice-Provost, Institutional Planning and Programs), David Conn (Associate Vice President, Institutional Review), Randy Knight (Physics), David Braun (Electrical Engineering), Bud Evans (Political Science), and Margot McDonald (Architecture), task force chair.

Background

UNIV Studies Courses (UNIV) were created in 2004 to increase the number of interdisciplinary course offerings between colleges by addressing one or more of the known barriers at Cal Poly. This included providing incentives such as full teaching credit for all faculty assigned to a common course, centralized recruitment of new course offerings through the Office of Academic Programs, and short-term funding to departments to partially offset the added cost of team teaching.

What the Office of Programs and Planning did not provide was a long-term plan for institutionalizing these courses beyond the initial seed. The UNIV Task Force was appointed for such a purpose. Specifically, our charge is to: *Consider how to decentralize UNIV courses and run through individual colleges.*

Methods and Findings

After a 10 week investigation by the task force, including research into precedents and comparable models at other institutions, evaluation of the merits of UNIV courses offered over the past 8 years, review of similar efforts to establish interdisciplinary courses and programs at Cal Poly, the task force has concluded that decentralization, while possible to meet the short-term needs of managing existing UNIV courses, is not a long-term solution for developing interdisciplinary education to its full potential envisioned by Cal Poly through its mission, vision and strategic plan. Rather, viewing interdisciplinary education as part of a larger agenda to advance whole systems thinking, stimulate integrative approaches to cross-disciplinary problem solving, provide community engagement on local, regional, national, and global scales, and to fulfill the true potential of our uniquely polytechnic nature, we can better position the university by building our institutional resources around a centralized hub. It is the opinion of this task force that the targeted level of collaboration between colleges and integration of student learning and faculty teaching can best be achieved through a shared resource serving all colleges. This resource will be designed to coordinate scheduling, faculty assignments, budget, advancement, teaching, research and service opportunities, and outreach in a way that provides students, faculty, administrators, and staff the organizational mechanism to realize unprecedented growth and progress in student success in the area of interdisciplinary education.

Next Steps

The next step for the UTF is to complete an outline proposal that incorporates the input of faculty and staff involved with other interdisciplinary courses and programs on campus (namely, LAES and HNRS) in order to help shape its definition. In addition, the UTF has scheduled a meeting with the provost in mid-April to insure that there is general agreement with the proposal's direction before offering a formal resolution to the senate for the creation of a new hub. We expect to conclude our work when a decision has been made on whether or not to proceed to the implementation phase with the proposal.