

Academic Senate Research and Professional Development Committee Fall 2008 Quarterly Report

Since a new chair for the committee was appointed at the beginning of the F08 quarter, the first meeting was held on Nov 14, followed by another one on Nov. 21. This report briefly describes the issues discussed in the meetings.

Support for Research and Professional Development at Cal Poly

The Nov. 14 meeting focused on the discussion of a report to the provost by the committee completed in the previous year. Due to changes in the provost office as well as in the committee, the context of the report is somewhat different now from when it was completed. The committee decided to continue pursuing the goals identified in the report. In the meeting on Nov. 21, the committee decided to request a meeting with the new provost, Dr. Koob, to discuss the report. The document will be revised in order to reflect issues discussed in the meetings, such as an emphasis on the aspirational intent concerning the allocation of money and release time to faculty, the decisions on criteria and processes for the allocation of funds, and the connections to the RPT process and professional development plans of faculty members. In addition, the senate president will be informed about the committee's plan on this. It is the intention of the committee to present a revised version of the report as a resolution to the senate.

Conflict between R&PD and Cal Poly's Mission

Another major topic discussed at the Nov. 14 meeting was to deal with potential conflicts between research and professional development activities at Cal Poly, and the university's mission statement. Steven Rein presented a request from the executive committee of the senate to examine the need for a process or review board for such situations. This generated a very animated discussion in the committee, addressing issues such as academic freedom, relevance of existing laws and guidelines, and possible effects on the workload of such a board or committee. The decision of the committee is to act on a temporary basis as a review board for such issues. A statement to that effect was drafted by Steve Rein, and with help from Eric Fisher, the wording will be revised in order to clarify the intentions.

In addition to a continued discussion of the two topics above, the purpose of the Nov. 21 meeting was to identify the main issues the committee wants to address in the current academic year.

Status of R&PD at Cal Poly

At present, it is difficult to get a representative overview of R&PD activities at Cal Poly, and we discussed activities such as surveys to gather relevant information. The committee decided not to pursue this issue right now. This was mostly based on related activities currently pursued by other campus entities such as the WASC committee, which is expected to issue a report on this topic next year. An informal list of activities related to the review of scholarship, research, and professional development at Cal Poly is being compiled by the committee.

Infrastructure, Community, and Culture for R&PD at Cal Poly

The committee briefly discussed the current status of the infrastructure and community for R&PD at Cal Poly. While there have been efforts in the past to enhance related activities, overall

their success seems to have been limited. The committee decided to keep this topic on the agenda for the coming quarters.

Student Involvement

The committee agreed that while some work done by students is valuable with respect to research and professional development, almost all of it has a very limited lifetime and scope of attention (mainly the respective course and instructor). This topic was discussed only briefly, but the committee decided to keep it on the agenda.

Committee Organization

We are currently using a Wiki as a repository for committee documents, see [<http://wiki.csc.calpoly.edu/senate-research-prof-def/wiki>]. In general, this seems to work well, but there are some usability and functionality issues. Available through the Wiki are this report, as well as meeting agendas and meeting notes. The Wiki also contains more detailed information on specific issues on the agenda, but those documents are restricted to committee members only.

Franz Kurfess

Chair, Academic Senate Research and Professional Development committee

December 15, 2008