

Designing Knowledge Communities:

Improving Faculty Community on the Polytechnic Campus

Executive Summary

This report is the result of the 2015 Faculty Senate Presidents Summer Project sponsored by the ASU Office of the Provost. The goal of the report is to identify strategies for building faculty community on the ASU-Polytechnic campus then extending those community building efforts across all of the ASU campuses. Community building efforts at Poly provide an opportunity to explore the strategies with a smaller faculty group and on a campus with faculty members who value the opportunity for building a close-knit faculty community.

In recent weeks, we have been discussing our faculty community across the campus and our faculty members have indicated a significant interest in becoming involved in a greater Polytechnic Knowledge community. Polytechnic faculty tend to be very loyal to the university and the campus. This provides an opportunity to strengthen connections and communication between the administration and the faculty at ASU. In fact, faculty identify communication and active participation in the development of our campus as a critical component to feeling like they are part of a larger ASU community and a strategy for reducing faculty stress.

Three strategies are proposed: Learning circles, mentoring and professional development, and Collaborative project teams. **Learning circles** are the first step. The learning circle allows us to bring together diverse faculty groups to discuss community building, understand our capacities and vulnerabilities, to identify effective strategies that are equitable and inclusive, and to encourage collaborative problem solving that supports communication between administration and faculty.

The learning circles proposed in this report will support a deeper understanding of our capacities and vulnerabilities in relation to the success of our campus, efforts to build a collaborative knowledge community, and to further strengthen the ties between different stakeholders in our faculty community. Faculty at Poly are excited to be playing a role in

The image contains three vertically stacked callout boxes. Each box has a dark red header with white text and a light pink background with a rounded bottom. The first box is titled 'Strategy One: Learning Circles' and lists four bullet points. The second box is titled 'Strategy Two: Mentoring and Professional Development' and lists four bullet points. The third box is titled 'Strategy Three: Collaborative Project Teams' and lists two bullet points.

- Strategy One: Learning Circles**
 - Seeks to identify real and perceived barriers and challenges to community building
 - Engages faculty in collaborative planning
 - Supports a culture of cooperation
 - Promotes faculty commitment to institutional interests
- Strategy Two: Mentoring and Professional Development**
 - Provides opportunity for inclusion of FAs and Instructors in the community
 - Supports student success
 - Transforms ASU society
 - Socially embedded
 - Enables the emergence of peer networks.
- Strategy Three: Collaborative Project Teams**
 - Enables the identification of opportunities for interdisciplinary research and course offerings at each campus.
 - Promotes a collaborative and cooperative culture over a competitive culture

developing our vision statement and the momentum that has been building on campus this year will promote our ability to implement the cost-effective strategies proposed in this report .

Mentoring and professional development has been identified as an issue by contract faculty at the Poly campus. By developing volunteer networks for mentorship and expanding professional development opportunities beyond orientation ASU promotes a deeper connection amongst contract faculty. Some of this work will need to be done at the unit and college level; however, professional development opportunities organized at the campus level will support smaller units who may not have enough faculty to organize mentoring and professional development activities for contract faculty.

Collaborative team projects are designed to enable campus-wide organization of stakeholders to seek solutions to campus specific issues, identify opportunities for collaboration to develop cross college/unit degree programs, research opportunities, and to provide a mechanism for identifying expertise to support our connections with the Mesa, Gilbert, and Chandler communities. Collaboration teams should be organized to be mission-specific. Including research faculty from each unit will support our ability to identify opportunities for collaboration on research. Similarly, inclusion of research faculty in teams with a mission to support the surrounding communities would provide a foundation for potential projects, however, including teaching faculty would support our ability to identify strategies to support the academic needs of the communities. Ideally, representatives from the surrounding communities and businesses would become members of relevant teams. Collaborative teams focused on identifying the potential for cross college/unit degree programs would be most successful with the inclusion of deans and unit heads, but also include teaching faculty at different academic levels.

The Polytechnic campus already has an engaged community, many units identify as members of a strong community, meanwhile, other faculty members self-identify as excluded and marginalized. Often, there will be members of the units that report having a strong sense of community who report feelings of marginalization. There is certainly room for improving, however, the foundation has already been under construction. Additionally, continued efforts need to be organized through the faculty senate to support the extension of the effort across the ASU campuses. By duplicating these efforts on each campus, we provide the catalyst for building cross campus networks to promote the ASU faculty culture while maintaining the individual personalities of each campus.