

Strategic Conversation 5: Summary

Over 100 district employees, along with members of the Board of Trustees and a dozen students, met on Tuesday October 28, 2003 for Strategic Conversation 5: "Promoting Student Learning: What is your Role?" The conversation was led by Mark Greenhalgh, Administrative Intern, Academic Services at Fullerton College, and began with a short presentation by Joe Carrithers, co-chair of the Fullerton College Accreditation Steering Committee. Joe introduced the concept of Student Learning Outcomes and emphasized how important it is for all employees to be involved in promoting student learning.

The participants were randomly assigned into breakout groups to discuss the question **"What do we want our students to know as they leave any District program with a degree or certificate?"** Some of the most common responses from the groups are listed below:

- Communication skills (both written and oral)
- Sense of value for the discipline
- The ability to articulate what they have learned
- The ability to persist, take criticism, respond to challenges
- Information competency
- The ability to adjust and adapt to people and situations
- Critical thinking and decision making skills
- The ability to listen actively
- To have skills for functioning in the real world
- To have skills to function in this technological society
- To have lifelong learning skills
- To be able to manage time efficiently
- To exhibit quantitative skills
- To understand service to society and self
- To exhibit citizenship awareness
- The ability to write effectively
- To have good employment skills and the ability to pass state exams
- The ability to adapt to different environments
- To have an awareness of self (goals, confidence, self worth)
- To understand the multicultural, global environment
- To be able to put theory learned in college into practice
- The skills to navigate the system
- The ability to be open-minded, with a sense of ethics
- The ability to work cooperatively

At the conclusion of the first discussion group, the responses were filtered down to five core skills that a majority of the participants felt students need to possess as they leave our District. They were:

- The necessary skills to reach their next goal (employment, transfer etc.)
- An understanding of the culture of the workplace in order to survive in the real, multicultural, global environment
- Information competency, communication and critical thinking skills
- An awareness of the importance of lifelong learning and the development of skills to achieve it
- Citizenship awareness/life skills/ethics

During the second breakout session, participants were grouped by constituencies (i.e. faculty, classified, managers, students). In this round, each group was asked to answer the question "**What can we, as _____, do to assist students in achieving the learning outcomes identified in round 1?**" The specific actions, coming from each of the groups, are outlined below:

Classified Staff

We as classified staff, should

- Be role models as we encourage students to study
- Show interest in their studies
- Demonstrate people skills, be positive in our jobs, allow students to learn by example
- Participate more in the shared governance processes in order to add our voices to issues
- Mentor students, particularly support staff who work in counseling areas
- Assist other groups on campus who deal with students
- Educate ourselves in order to better assist students
- Maintain a positive environment and standards of excellence when dealing with students

Faculty:

We as faculty should

- Make better use of our office hours in the support of student learning
- Create learning contracts to clearly identify objectives, and requirements of our courses and programs
- Participate in staff development activities designed to support student learning
- Support mandatory orientation, and enforcement of matriculation guidelines
- Increase cooperative group work in classes
- Sponsor internships and encourage community involvement by students
- Model ethical behavior
- Show a passion for learning of all types; show students that we are lifelong learners
- Support integration of such things as information competency in our courses
- Identify strengths and critical gaps in curriculum
- Reflect and model the qualities we want in our students
- Integrate qualities into all the services we provide and the courses we teach
- Teach practical applications
- Create multi-disciplinary experiences; inform students of opportunities in continuing education
- Encourage and support role playing, alternative assessments

Managers:

We as managers should:

- Support processes that ensure the effectiveness of our programs and services
- Create an environment that leads to student success
- Support information gathering from transfer institutions and employers as to what they are looking for
- Demonstrate citizenship, inclusiveness, ethics
- Provide support for student learning opportunities
- Support consistent, appropriate and legal policies and procedures
- Encourage effective acquisition and allocation of resources
- Mentor students and faculty
- Support the search for outside resources, such as grants and alumni
- Work with outside officials to gather community support for activities
- Model best practices that support student learning

Students:

We as students should

- Assist in developing goals through orientation and counseling
- Stress basic skills and provide support services to attain them
- Support extra-curricular activities, such as student government, service learning
- Clarify critical thinking
- Develop more cultural pluralism classes
- Create a more diverse faculty
- Show better support of student activities and clubs
- Faculty need to realize that students see them as the conduit for information
- Require experiences that broaden learning, that challenge and make us think differently

The conversation ended with a short period of reporting out some of these activities. Overall response to the conversation was very positive. Evaluations included comments like

- "I enjoyed the interactive format."
- "Many good ideas generated in such a small amount of time."
- "Helped me as a faculty understand student needs, and the roles of other employee groups."
- "I found that my concerns as a classified staff member were the same concerns as faculty."
- I was impressed by how much everyone in the group wanted to make the educational experiences better for our students."
- "I gained a better understanding of the perspectives of others."

The only negative comments found in the evaluations were that the conversation was too short. Many participants noted that the ideas generated needed to be expanded upon and that the short time frame really did not allow for an in-depth discussion of how to develop activities to promote student learning. Despite these comments, the overall evaluation of Strategic Conversation 5 was very good.

The Board of Trustees will be receiving a copy of this summary, along with transcripts of all the comments made in the breakout sessions. These notes will become a resource as the Board considers steps the District can take to promote student learning.

Summary provided by

Mark Greenhalgh, Administrative Intern: Academic Services, Fullerton College.