

“University-wide” Domain Delegates
from all Colleges & “Community Stakeholders Group”

DOMAIN #4: ENSURING SUCCESS IN STUDENT LEARNING

Domain Reporter: Debra L. Valencia-Laver, Associate Dean, CLA
e-mail: dvalenc@calpoly.edu

Major Premise: Cal Poly is at its heart an institution of student learning. As such, it is a learning community that reaffirms the importance of “learn by doing” in its role as a comprehensive polytechnic university within the CSU.

Proposition 1 of 5:

Student success needs to be defined as an *integrated* experience, involving student learning in the major, in GE, and in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Actions:

- Promote a culture emphasizing student learning among all involved in the learning community: students, faculty, staff, and the larger community.
- Improve campus learning spaces and supportive technology.
- Increase opportunities for students to engage in active learning via research, study abroad, internships, and other experiential, learn-by-doing activities.
- Secure the resources to support these actions.

Some ideas:

- For all (students, faculty, advisers), promote a culture of student learning as an interrelated whole that seeks connections and shares learning objectives among GE, the major, support courses, and co/extra-curricular activities.
- Emphasize learning and thinking, not just ‘getting the right answer’ in classes or checking off courses on a curriculum list.
- Seek funding for increased project-based learning, Study Abroad opportunities, etc. – coordinated with learning outcomes.
- Enrich both the graduate and undergraduate educational experience by partnering with our graduate programs.
- Partner with Career Services, International Programs & other campus entities to develop and promote internships and other experiential, learn-by-doing activities.
- Partner with alumni to gauge the success in their careers, and inform our curricular changes.
- Partner with industry to validate and identify changes that would enhance student success (entrepreneurial, leadership, communication...)

Proposition 2 of 5:

Cal Poly and the CSU need to decrease those barriers to quality student learning and increase access to the programs and resources that will enhance student learning, especially in the areas of advising and retention.

Actions:

- Enhance advising and develop retention improvement programs.
- Enable comprehensive advising from entry through to graduation.
- Provide timely, accurate information for progress to degree.
- Secure the resources to support these actions.

Some ideas:

- Increase the number of personnel in advising and student records.
- Coordinate with campus communities (GE, Student Life, Career Services, etc.) to promote shared student learning objectives that can be used to guide advising.
- Use trained student peer advisers to help fill the gap (current recommendations from the Sixth National Survey on Academic Advising suggest a 285-1 ratio of students to professional advisers).
- Increase the quality of the information provided to students and advisers (e.g., better websites, more training, access to consistent correct, and current information).
- Give faculty credit for taking an active role in advising and other student-oriented support activities.
- Coordinate campus clubs and organizations, dorm programs, Student Community Services, etc. to foster learning communities as a path to increase retention and student engagement.
- Partner with campus support services (e.g., Student Academic Services, Disability Resource Center, Writing Skills Program, and more) to provide at-risk students with the services they need.
- Partner with P-14 to make sure students arrive prepared to succeed at Cal Poly.

Proposition 3 of 5:

We need to communicate clearly to our constituencies (students, alumni, employers, and other stakeholders) that Cal Poly is a center of academic excellence.

Actions:

- Create clear objectives, assessment tools, and feedback mechanisms to promote excellence in student learning.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to help define the Cal Poly graduate of the future.

- Secure the resources to support these actions.

Some ideas:

- Focus assessment on student learning and support innovative ways of measuring and communicating outcomes.
- Encourage programs to develop benchmarks across the curriculum for gauging student learning and communicate these programs and tools clearly to students, faculty, and others.
- Provide training and support for faculty in learning outcomes assessment. Identify campus best practices as models.
- Examine ways to assess both in-class and out-of-classroom experiences. Work with career services and other entities to establish more internship-like experiences for all majors. Build in ways to assess how well these experiences prepare students for the job market and/or grad school.
- Use alumni, advisory committees, and industry to help critique and promote our programs.

Proposition 4 of 5:

There are several immediate, internal solutions to problems that Cal Poly can undertake to improve success in student learning.

Action:

- Identify campus-specific internal problems regarding student success and seek innovative and sustainable ways of resolving those problems.

Some ideas:

- Support the following of prerequisites.
- Effectively integrate GE into major program flowcharts.
- Partner with alumni to gauge the success in their careers and use that information to inform our curricular changes.
- Improve collaboration among the colleges for course planning and curriculum development.
- Improve the course proposal process to encourage exploration of current topics, interdisciplinary connections, and innovative teaching methodologies.
- Examine the relationship between teaching methodologies and their fit with student learning styles and desired learning outcomes.

Proposition 5 of 5:

Early experiences about and in the major will give both prospective and current students more realistic expectations about the majors and thus increase success in the majors.

Action:

- Provide more information about the current majors in order to increase retention in the majors, especially for students who enter as freshmen.

Some ideas:

- Use STEM and other outreach programs to help potential students make informed choices about majors.
- Update department websites to give current and prospective students more information about the possible career paths and co-curricular opportunities within one's major. Include samples of student works (as permitted) and alumni comments.
- Use 1-unit "Intro to the Major" courses for easing the transition of transfer and potential at-risk students.
- Strengthen the core identity of programs by creating community within the major and better connections with university support programs, especially SAS, the career center, the Living/Learning program, and the library.
- Increase interactions with students and the workplace by promoting activities such as shadowing professionals, starting tutoring programs, joining planning meetings, and joining co-curricular activities.