

Cal Poly Parent Program Advisory Council Meeting

November 5, 2000

Veranda Café

Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA

MINUTES

Attending:

Council Members – Kirk Brewer, Ginny Gribben, Jerry Holcombe, Sally Holcombe, Ellie Jorritsma, Barbara McRae, Gary Pechersky, Rosalee Pechersky, Renne Sutter, Bob Sutter, Diane Ryan, Tony Ryan, Christine Young

Staff – Dr. Bob Detweiler, Polly Harrigan, Judy Nussbaum, Nicky Nickelsen

Welcome/Introduction

Jerry Holcombe called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. He introduced new members, Ginny Gribben and Barbara McRae. Each council member introduced him/herself.

Dr. Detweiler extended his thanks to Polly Harrigan for her work in the Division of Student Affairs and with the PAC. He announced Polly's appointment to a new position, planning the University's Centennial Celebration. He welcomed and introduced staff Judy Nussbaum, Director of Advancement for Student Affairs and Nicky Nickelsen, Parent Program Coordinator.

Dr. Detweiler announced that he is aware of Council Member concerns regarding the future of the Parent Program, given the history of staff changes. He indicated the University recognizes the potential of the Parent Program and assured the Council that resources have been placed into the program in hopes of increasing communication and the exchange of information with parents as well as support for the University.

Minutes

The April 15th meeting minutes were approved with an addendum. Bob Sutter and Renne Sutter were added to the list of attendees.

Council History, Structure and Communication

Jerry Holcombe

- ◆ The coming year is a transition year for the council.
- ◆ In the past few years, tremendous work has been put into organizing and developing the council's structure. Recognition was given to all of the founding members of the council, including Gary and Rosalee Pechersky, for their work in this area. Gary and Rosalee have offered to remain on the council one year over their terms in order to provide continuity to the Program's Advisory Council.
- ◆ The current Council has the opportunity to build on the foundation in place very effectively through "friendraising," fundraising and strengthening the Council sub-committees.
- ◆ Improving communication has historically been the focal point of the committee's efforts.
- ◆ He suggested the current Council continue its mission to act as a communication vehicle, letting parents know there is always a place for them to go prior to the arrival of their student at Cal Poly and throughout their child's time as a student.

Committee Reports

Ambassador:

Rosalee Pechersky indicated she and Carol Alhem are co-chairs of this committee with Rosalee coordinating Southern California activities and Carol coordinating Northern California activities. She reviewed the objectives of the committee, which are to:

- ◆ Serve as a resource for parents
- ◆ Thank parents
- ◆ Co-host dinners with Cal Poly Program staff and
- ◆ Participate in events

Rosalee indicated it has been a struggle increasing interest in Southern California. She indicated more parent volunteers as well as direction from and action on the part of the Parent Program are needed.

Several Council members offered comments regarding attendance at events. Many agreed if parents believe they will be solicited at an event, they may choose not to attend. Council members discussed ways to communicate to parents that solicitation will not occur at Parent events and receptions. It was suggested “no solicitation” be printed on invitations. Polly Harrigan indicated doing this implies that there are University events where solicitation occurs when in fact, the solicitation does not occur at any University events.

Dr. Detweiler acknowledged the Council’s concerns, but emphasized that fundraising is an important goal of the Parent Program. For clarification purposes, Dr. Detweiler explained that, in the President’s eyes, the Parent Advisory Council and the Parent Program function to do three things:

- ◆ First, communicate to parents about the institution and to gather from parents, information about ways to improve the University,
- ◆ Second, raise friends of the University and,
- ◆ Third, raise funds that support the programs the University provides.

Dr. Detweiler acknowledged the generosity of parents, citing that after alumni, the parents group is the largest single group raising discretionary funds for the University. Fundraising efforts support the existence of the University and communication and “friendraising” are important steps that create a desire to give.

The Council members entered a discussion about how to improve communication and “friendraising” efforts. Their thoughts are as follows:

- ◆ Gary Pechersky – The more we serve parents, the more parents will give of their time and money.
- ◆ Bob Sutter – The effectiveness of a group is determined by its communication. More outreach can be done to parents of returning students.
- ◆ Renne Sutter – Serve parents by meeting their basic needs for assistance. For instance, find local dentists and physicians we can refer parents to – any Cal Poly grads practicing in the area? Perhaps they could provide some sort of support to the University in exchange for the referrals the school sends.
- ◆ Christine Young – The Council and the committees need more parents. The first step to enlarging our group is to encourage parents to volunteer for small things. We should be asking parents to be ambassadors to other parents first. If they enjoy their first experience, they will likely volunteer to do more. Christine suggested

additions be made to the website such as “happy icons” that catch the attention of parents browsing the web, or an e-card on the website just for parents – anything to “break down barriers.”

- ◆ Barbara McRae – Parents want a place to go with questions. Some parents have inquired about the existence of a parents group that might be able to assist them. An article in the newsletter on the “value” of a Cal Poly education might assure parents Cal Poly was the right choice. Parents of junior transfer students need to feel well connected. Are we serving them?
- ◆ Kirk Brewer - E-mail is an easy and effective means of showing that we have a caring attitude. Keeping an updated e-mail list of parents for each area of the State is important. E-mails can be sent easily at any time for receptions, events, as follow-up to mailings from Cal Poly, or just to let parents know there are resources available to them.
- ◆ Jerry Holcombe – It’s important to show parents we have a “first things first” caring attitude. One way to do this is to maintain an appropriate amount of distance between “friendraising” and fundraising efforts.
- ◆ Diane/Tony Ryan – A database of e-mail addresses needs be set up for each region. Its important to get the word out that local events are not “just fundraisers.” Written guidelines for answering frequently asked questions would be a good resource for Council members to have when talking with parents. Council members receive questions ranging from housing to making contributions to the University. Perhaps each Council member could become “an expert” on a particular topic. Ambassadors for each region could refer questions to the Council member who is the expert in the particular area about which the parent is calling. Personal phone calls, even if their goal is simply to welcome parents and ask for an e-mail address, can add that personal connection parents are wanting. If a mailing went out to parents and the Council members knew ahead of time, they could e-mail parents a message to “look for information on such and such...”
- ◆ It was mentioned that WOW has a list of “FAQs” Council members could use as a resource for answering questions.

ACTION ITEM: The Council requested that a WOW package be made available to them prior to the next meeting so that members may make suggestions regarding its content on behalf of parents, at the January Council meeting.

ACTION ITEM: The Council requested the Director of WOW be asked to speak at the next PAC Committee meeting.

Career:

Jerry Holcombe indicated this committee needs evaluation and attention. He is the chair and the only member of the committee and has nothing to report on, except for the Danville event, which will be discussed under an agenda item later in the meeting.

Host:

Gary Pechersky reported he has three objectives, all of which he has brought to the attention of the staff and Council several times previously, that he would like to see put to fruition before the end of his term. They are as follows:

- ◆ Parent involvement from LA to help assemble the Rose Bowl Float on December 27th or 28th.
- ◆ An LA/San Fernando Valley parent gathering at a Cal Poly/CSUN basketball game.

- ◆ A change in the format of Parent Appreciation Day to draw parents of returning (sophomore, junior, senior) students. Programs focusing on health, careers, safety and other issues were suggested.

Christine Young passed around a copy of the Parents' Appreciation Day web page for San Diego State University. On it was a detailed description of their activities.

ACTION ITEMS: Parent Program to research formats for PAD's at other Universities. Nicky Nickelsen will follow-up on the Rose Float objective and Judy Nussbaum will check the Cal Poly basketball schedule to determine if a Cal Poly/CSUN game is planned at CSUN.

Alumni:

Christine Young reported on discussion from the Alumni Board meeting

- ◆ Swanton Pacific Ranch may be developed into a "family camp" for Cal Poly alumni and family.
- ◆ The Parent Program/Alumni Program Memorandum of Understanding was reviewed by the Alumni Board and minor changes were made. Christine distributed a copy of the changes to the Council members.

Additional items discussed included:

- ◆ A Western States Parent Program symposium will be held April 1 – 3 at Cal Poly Pomona. Christine indicated she will visit SDSU's Council and encouraged other Council members to do the same at a University in their area if possible.
- ◆ The Engineering Department is having an event March 3rd. She suggested we attempt to get Cal Poly parents of Engineering students involved.

Parent Outreach Efforts

Mailings:

A concern was raised about whether or not mailings to parents are actually reaching them, and if they appear to be "junk mail." It was suggested mailings be placed in official Cal Poly envelopes. Even if this is more expensive, one Council member felt these envelopes are rarely ignored. Stamping a key phrase across parent mailings, such as: "Attention Parent Information" was suggested.

Send Off Picnics:

Most agreed the picnics were very well received and extremely informative for those families who attended. Attendance was low at some, even with all of the effort put into personal phone calls to families ahead of time. It was suggested the weekend chosen for the picnics might have conflicted with the start dates of other Universities. Parents with other children attending different schools may have been busy moving them.

WOW Reception:

The WOW receptions seemed to be an overwhelming success. Christine Young suggested a WOW icon be added to the Parent Page along with a calendar.

ACTION ITEM: Council members, please send Jerry Holcombe your written comments regarding the results of Send Off Picnics in your area and WOW week by **November 30th**. Comments will be shared at the next Council meeting.

Danville Event:

Jerry Holcombe reported a wonderful success at the Danville Parent Event. Jerry passed around the invitation for the event, which was held at a local railroad museum. 150 people attended and the reception had to be divided into two parts due to the overwhelming response. Dr. Detweiler and Rich Equinoa from Career Services spoke and a representative from the Business Department was available to answer parent questions.

Jerry attributes the success of the event to the fact that it was well organized and “had an obvious draw.” Having a draw at our parent events and tailoring our guests and speakers to the audiences attending may well be a key factor in the level of attendance at our events.

Out of State Parent Involvement:

Ginny Gribben discussed several issues relating to out of State parent involvement.

- ◆ A stronger link needs to be established with out of State parents.
- ◆ She requested Idaho and other States be listed on the Send Off Picnic brochures.
- ◆ There seems to be an issue with losing out of State parents because mailings may not reach them once students move to California and change their permanent address.
- ◆ She would like to see Cal Poly represented at career fairs and students linked with information on career opportunities in Idaho. (Example: Micron)

Newsletter Topics:

The Council voiced the following suggestions for Cal Poly’s next Parent Newsletter:

- ◆ University housing issues addressed and strategies suggested for finding housing
- ◆ A calendar
- ◆ Parent services advertised

Acknowledging the Council’s concerns regarding adequate housing, Dr. Detweiler provided the following information:

- ◆ Housing in the City of San Luis Obispo is not dense housing.
- ◆ The City and residents are hostile to significant increases in housing.
- ◆ Housing is not supported by State funds; therefore, Universities must find private funding for this purpose.
- ◆ The State recognizes that Cal Poly turns out graduates in fields that are critical to California’s economy. In order to meet industry demand for certain types of graduates in the future, the State has mandated that Cal Poly increase enrollment.
- ◆ Within the next decade, Cal Poly will increase its enrollment of FTE’s (full time equivalents) by 10.5% or approximately 3, 000 students.
- ◆ The increase translates into a growth in total student population from 16, 500 to 19,500.
- ◆ Cal Poly will accommodate the growth in two Phases:
 - ◆ Phase I involves building 800 new beds by September 2000. This is an ambitious goal simply because, with the increase in construction around California, it is often difficult for contractors to get crews out to construction sites in a timely manner.
 - ◆ Phase II involves building 900 new beds. Cal Poly is considering searching for an outside for-profit company to build and manage a housing complex on campus. This sort of arrangement is less costly for the school.

- ◆ In sum, the school does intend to grow, but does not intend to do so without the facilities to accommodate the growth.

Jerry Holcombe thanked Dr. Detweiler for his clarification of the housing situation.

University Update

Dr. Detweiler described Cal Poly as a leader in the CSU system, a University that competes with UCLA and Berkeley for the “best and the brightest.” He acknowledged; however, that every good University has areas for improvement and discussed those areas which require the attention of administration.

- ◆ Bottleneck classes: the University requires students to take certain classes each academic year and then does not provide enough sections to accommodate everyone.
- ◆ Senior project: approximately 5% of Cal Poly students do not complete their senior project, keeping them from graduating. The University is looking at alternative ways to satisfy the senior project requirement, including encouraging former students to complete their degrees and assisting them in doing so.
- ◆ Diversity: the University needs to make a greater effort to diversify its student body. Representation of African Americans and Latinos is especially low in comparison to other CSUs. The University is recruiting in schools with underrepresented populations in LA, the Bay area and the Central Valley.
- ◆ Transportation: the President approved University supported free bussing for students for one additional year. Fees are paid to the City from parking tickets, but additional monies are required to meet the total cost of services. Expansion of transportation options, including campus shuttles, is being discussed.
- ◆ Change of major: it is often difficult for Cal Poly students to change their major. Students are often required to continue to take classes in their current major for a period of time and maintain a particular GPA in those classes prior to transferring. While most Universities see the largest drop out rate in the first 6 weeks of the Freshmen year, Cal Poly’s drop out rate tends to be higher in the sophomore and junior years. Difficulty changing major may be a contributing factor here.
- ◆ Alcoholism: alcohol seems to be the drug of choice among Cal Poly students. Binge drinking is most common; however, there is a smaller group of students who do not graduate because of alcoholism. The University has funding for and is currently recruiting a person to fill a position in Health and Counseling Services to address this problem.
- ◆ Childcare: the University is hoping to expand its childcare services.
- ◆ Library services: the University hopes to extend the evening and weekend hours of the library and make available a study room that remains open until 2 AM.
- ◆ Leadership and community services learning: more opportunities for students to become involved in community and leadership activities are being planned.
- ◆ Re-entry students: about 10% of Cal Poly’s student population consists of re-entry students. The University is looking at ways it can meet the needs of these students by offering more evening and weekend classes.

Cal Poly’s Centennial Plans

Polly Harrigan announced that a number of special events are being planned for the University’s Centennial Celebration. A formal schedule is to be announced in the near future. Polly requested the Council members consider how they would like to involve

parents in the festivities throughout the year. When a schedule is announced, the Council will have a better idea of what plans can be made for parent involvement.

Student Affairs/Advancement

Judy Nussbaum expressed to the Council her enthusiasm about working with parents and raising support for the University as Director of Advancement for Student Affairs. She briefly described her model for connecting alumni throughout the State and suggested the Parent Program hook parents into Cal Poly's established group of alumni contacts. The alumni "Stay Connected" model is in the form of a map and divides California into four regions, each with Vice Presidents who oversee their regional alumni contacts. The regions are: Northern CA, Southern CA, Central CA and Coastal CA.

Judy referenced the Student Affairs booklet, "Strengthening Our Advantage" to explain to the Council the mission of the Student Affairs Division and what it hopes to accomplish.

Suggested Winter Meeting and Agenda Items

The Council members agreed to set the next meeting for Saturday, January 20 at 12:00 PM. Lunch will be provided.

Jerry Holcombe thanked the Council members for their energy, enthusiasm and ideas. He predicted that, in compiling minutes from the meeting, several themes would appear from the day's discussion. Acknowledging that the Council is anxious to see some deliverables, he cautioned against staff attempting to accomplish everything at once. He suggested that staff direct their energy toward selective issues.

Adjournment

The Parent Advisory Council Meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.