

Cal Poly Parent Program Advisory Council Meeting

January 20, 2000

The Alumni House

Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA

MINUTES

Attending:

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

Staff – Dr. Bob Detweiler, Judy Nussbaum, Nicky Nickelsen, Andrene Kaiwi-Lenting

Welcome/Introduction

Jerry Holcombe called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. He introduced and welcomed Gary Gribben.

Minutes

The November 5th meeting minutes were approved as written by Kirk Brewer and Ginny Gribben.

Rose Float Report

Nicky Nickelsen reported the Rose Float event was a wonderful success. Invitations were mailed to freshman parents in select Southern, Coastal and Central California counties who completed the WOW surveys. Approximately 70 students, parents, their families and alumni attended the three-hour event. Parents were welcomed by Rosalee Pechersky and Judy Nussbaum and escorted back by Gary Pechersky to the float to begin work. A reception followed with Rose Float Club students briefly speaking about their duties and the mechanics of planning, building and decorating the float. The event was a great start and has tremendous potential for the future. Parents and alumni were given complementary carnations.

Gary Pechersky expressed his appreciation for having the event and indicated there was a wonderful turnout of interested parents. Kirk Brewer suggested that sending invitations for events via e-mail would be a cost-effective way of inviting parents in the future.

Goals

Jerry Holcombe indicated, in preparation for the meeting, he spoke with Nicky and Judy about extracting the major themes from the November meeting. He indicated the Council had a number of great ideas, but that it was agreed all can't be done, and all can't be done well. Considering the ideas discussed during the last meeting, Bob suggested a list of program goals or "minimum deliverables" be in place for the year. Jerry presented to the Council the goals that were subsequently created, and Nicky provided an update regarding the program's progress thus far in each area:

- ◆ **Participate in/organize four on-campus events including 2 WOW sessions, Parents' Day and Open House**

Update: Staff participated in Winter WOW, which was a day-long orientation for new students entering for Winter quarter, most of whom are transfers. The day including a welcome session with icebreakers, campus tours, a lunch, and informational breakout sessions. The Council members expressed an interest in attending and assisting next year. Bob indicated a Summer Wow is being discussed. Staff is hoping to create a committee of campus representatives to advise on the coordination and planning of Parents' Day 2001. Planning has not yet begun. Staff is investigating a venue for the New Admitted Students' Pancake breakfast that allows for a rain plan. Options besides the pancake breakfast are being discussed. Planning will begin when the venue issue is resolved.

◆ **Plan four off-campus regional events, 1 in each of the four regions of the State**

Update: The Rose Float event was planned. The Alhem's, in conjunction with the Modesto Alumni Chapter would like to involve parents in their event. Christine Young offered her SLO home for a Central Coast event. Ginny Gribben indicated that she and Gary will host an event for Idaho parents and alumni on March 1st. Thanks to these Council members for their leadership, time and generosity in hosting these events. Bob suggested partnering with the Alumni Association in order to pool resources and attract larger groups.

ACTION ITEM: Nicky will work with the Alhem's, the Gribben's and Christine Young to plan the upcoming festivities.

◆ **Publish two newsletters**

Update: Nicky is currently working on the text for a newsletter targeted for the end of March. Articles include: a letter from Jerry, the Centennial Celebration and Open House, the library coffee table book, the Orfaea gift, and an insert including a Parent Calendar and list of frequently called numbers.

◆ **Rewrite and redesign the web site**

Update: A web designer has been identified.

◆ **Improve the visibility of the Parents' Helpline**

Update: The Program is looking for ways to accomplish this, as the Helpline has logged only 20 calls since November. Bob Sutter suggested sending a simple postcard to all parents advertising the Helpline number.

◆ **Establish leaders in regions and out of state**

Update: We hope create a plan identify parent leaders in each area of the state and out-of-state in the coming months

◆ **Contact/involve parent volunteers from the WOW surveys**

Update: Volunteers are listed by region in workbooks. An action plan for contacting and involving them needs to be devised

◆ **Fundraise**

Update: Judy Nussbaum asked the Council members to consider accompanying her on thank you/cultivation visits. She asked the Council members to refer people to her who may have leadership giving potential.

Council Structure

Jerry indicated the program staff evaluated the structure of the sub-committees to determine how best to meet the goals above while ensuring council members have ways to get involved, make a difference and feel good about what they have accomplished. He indicated that most council members might agree they currently do not have enough action items and there is not enough going on between meetings. As a result, he reported that Nicky is proposing an adaptation of the current sub-committee structure. Focus groups were created based on themes that emerged from the last meeting. If

this structure is adopted, members could sign up for an area of interest, conference calls would be held/e-mails sent between meetings and a spokesman for each group would report on progress quarterly. Jerry encouraged feedback on the structure and indicated that he anticipates the need for new council members to be the biggest challenge.

Nicky reviewed the focus groups with the Council. Focus groups included: communication, fund development, campus events, off-campus events and leadership development. She explained the structure is similar to that of the sub-committees with the career committee eliminated, the communication and leadership development focus groups added and the host committee split into on and off-campus events focus groups. The Council advised combining the events committees and made the following additional recommendations:

- ◆ **Communication Focus Group:** All council members were interested in volunteering. Communication suggestions included:
 - ◆ a Helpline postcard,
 - ◆ an online message that travels across the web site advertising the Helpline or other topics of interest,
 - ◆ a thin readable handbook for parents
 - ◆ electronic communication to parents regarding events and topics of interest
- ◆ **Fund Development Focus Group:** Interested council members were asked to sign up. The program would like to call upon members to assist in visiting parents and/or to begin to identify prospects. It will be the responsibility of the program staff to make the “asks.” Carol Alhem suggested the program consider foundations for sources of funding.
- ◆ **Events Focus Group:** Council members would like to see recruitment of Central Coast parents for the Council and for on-campus event planning. The program will take responsibility for identifying and involving local parents. Though not all members will be involved in event planning, all would like to continue to being invited to the events and assist in greeting parents and answering their questions.
- ◆ **Leadership Development Focus Group:** Interested Council members were asked to sign up. Suggestions included:
 - ◆ having meetings for volunteers in various regions
 - ◆ involving staff and faculty who have Cal Poly students
 - ◆ having new volunteers start by making phone calls for events
 - ◆ considering attendees of the send-off picnics for volunteer positions
 - ◆ have volunteers take a leadership role in locating venues for regional events
 - ◆ ensure that Council members have staggered terms and fairly represent all of the geographical regions
 - ◆ ensure new Council members are well oriented
 - ◆ recommend parents for the Council that current members meet or already know

A Council member nomination form was distributed to the members.

Nicky explained that volunteers from the WOW surveys have been entered into spreadsheets by region. They have not yet been contacted, as we do not have a structure for maintaining their involvement and interest yet. The Council members expressed interest in having copies of those lists as soon as possible. Nicky indicated the information needs to be proofed a final time and a distribution system for the

information needs to be established. The Council suggested that the program give the Council members copies and iron out the details at a later date.

Jerry thanked the members for their patience in reviewing “another” structure and added that we want to have in place a system that makes it easier for Council members to be active between meetings and for the program to achieve greater results.

ACTION ITEM: Nicky will organize tasks for the groups and contact everyone regarding conference calls and/or e-mail discussions.

University Update

Bob Detweiler announced that Paul Orfalea, the founder of Kinko’s, gave a generous gift of \$1 million to the ASI Childrens’ Center. A reception will be held in February dedicating the Center. The name of the Center will be changed to The Orfalea Family and ASI Children’s Center. A \$15 million gift was also made to the College of Business, which will also be named in Mr. Orfalea’s honor. Bob shared with the Council how the gifts came about and how they will be used.

Bob briefly discussed the facts surrounding the death of Cal Poly student, Kristina Hogan.

In response to requests from Alumni, the University has decided to bring back Poly Royal as part of this year’s Open House Celebration. Concerns in doing so were discussed and steps have been taken to avoid disturbances. Classes will continue on Thursday and Friday of that weekend as they have during Open House. (Classes were out these 2 days for Poly Royal) The University is working with the SLO Police Department and Campus Police to ensure safety. The emphasis will continue to be on academics. While the University is not inviting disruption and is taking steps to avoid disturbances, it felt the Centennial would be an opportunity to bring the spirit of Poly Royal back to campus for alumni.

Campus fundraising is on track; contributions are up and the University is seeing a substantial increase in the number of parents contributing.

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

- ◆ The housing crunch in San Luis Obispo is due to the population growth at Cuesta and the overall population growth the California is experiencing in general.
- ◆ Cal Poly has not yet increased its enrollment, and, in fact, enrollment has gone down slightly from its peak in the 1990’s.
- ◆ Housing is not supported by State funds; therefore, Universities must find private funding for this purpose.
- ◆ Cal Poly will accommodate growth in two Phases:
- ◆ Phase I involves building 800 new beds by September 2002. 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 1,300 new beds, up from the original number of 900, by September 2004.
- ◆ In sum, the school does intend to grow, but does not intend to do so without the facilities to accommodate the growth.
- ◆ The University hopes to see some relief in the housing crunch by Fall 2002.

- ◆ There are plans for 50 units for faculty housing.

Applications from Hispanics and African-Americans are on the rise. Cal Poly is not reducing its entrance standards, but is putting emphasis on getting information out to underrepresented students who do not know about Cal Poly, but are up to our standards. Although applications are up, the real measure of diversity at Cal Poly is graduation rates. An increase in graduation rates for these students does depend on our ability to get more underrepresented students enrolled, however.

Beyond the classroom, Cal Poly is making efforts to involve students in volunteering. The number involved in Community Service Learning has doubled and the program has funding and good staff. A Technology Park is planned for use by private industry and Cal Poly students.

Alcohol abuse continues to be a problem. Some of the steps taken to guide students include letters to offenders and counseling.

Cal Poly's graduation rate is the highest in the CSU system. However, Cal Poly compares itself not to other CSU's, but to Berkeley, etc. Issues that hinder success for some are change of major, the senior project requirement and bottleneck courses. Again, success is measured by graduation.

Student Affairs/Advancement

Judy Nussbaum announced that the Parent Fund callers are doing well. She distributed a bar graph illustration of the increase in gifts from parents thus far.

- ◆ New donors are up 54% to \$82,758.
- ◆ Returning donors under \$100 are up 38% to \$13,350.
- ◆ Returning donors over \$100 are up 42% to \$105,775.

Judy thanked the Council Members for their "friend raising" efforts. The experiences students and parents have influence their giving choices. She passed around a form for members to use in the event they identify potential donors.

ACTION ITEM: Council members refer potential donors to Judy by faxing back the appropriate form or calling her.

Judy distributed a schedule of events for the Centennial Celebration year and encouraged the Council to keep checking the web site for updates. The Parent Program hopes to have a booth at Dexter Lawn next to the Alumni Association's Booth.

WOW Parent Communications

Andrene Kaiwi-Lenting, the Assistant Director of Orientation Programs presented information on the Orientation Programs Cal Poly offers to students and parents in order to ensure they have a smooth transition as they start Cal Poly. Events for parents include: Parent Orientation Weekend held the week prior to WOW with workshops and receptions during WOW, and activities during Open House, Summer Advising and the off quarter start up periods. This year WOW presented "Be Aware," a program that highlights what students go through, to parents.

ACTION ITEM: Andrene requested ideas and suggestions from the Council on ways to involve parents and ease the transition. E-mail suggestions to Nicky at nnickels@calpoly.edu and she will forward to Andrene.

The Council provided the following feedback on the Parent Handbook:

- ◆ The idea of a handbook is a good one, but the Council thought a short, thin booklet would be more effective
- ◆ Hint section and list of hotels is helpful
- ◆ Font and design was visually overwhelming
- ◆ Cleaner, sharper font and more open space was suggested
- ◆ Poly reps should be added to the “Poly Terms” since they are ambassadors
- ◆ Consider titling the handbook something along the lines of “From Parents to Parents”
- ◆ Check for spelling errors, type breaks and use of the first person.
- ◆ Under housing, consider talking about what students are charged for when they leave the residence halls.
- ◆ Add a paragraph about off-campus housing
- ◆ Talk about when payment on students accounts should be made so registration is not delayed.
- ◆ Have access to local numbers or sources for a phone book.
- ◆ Send the handbook out prior to WOW so parents have time to look at it and so it can actually function as a resource. (Cost is an issue to deal with on this item)
- ◆ Consider whether this should be exclusively a WOW document
- ◆ Reconsider dating the handbook

Should a new Parent Handbook be created, Ellie Jorritsma and Sally Holcombe offered to be involved in the proof reading process. It was explained that with this handbook, the various departments are responsible for content updates each year and Andrene’s office does not write the text. It is a student project printed annually.

Ellie Jorristma, Barbara McRae and Diane Ryan offered to proof read the newsletter.

Andrene appropriately handed everyone a stress ball designed after the earth and thanked them for their comments. She would like to see parents do book reviews for new parents and assist in providing speakers for programs.

Thank you, Andrene for taking time to come, talk and listen to our feedback.

Closing Remarks

The Council’s Spring meeting was tentatively scheduled for the morning of Saturday, April 21st.

**ACTION ITEM: A survey of times will be sent to the Council at a later date.
Council involvement in Open House will be announced as well.**

Adjournment

Jerry Holcombe adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm and the Council met at Upper Crust Trattoria for dinner.

Please forward additions or corrections to nnickels@calpoly.edu. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicky Nickelsen

