

Organizational Structure and SWOT Analysis - Palomar College

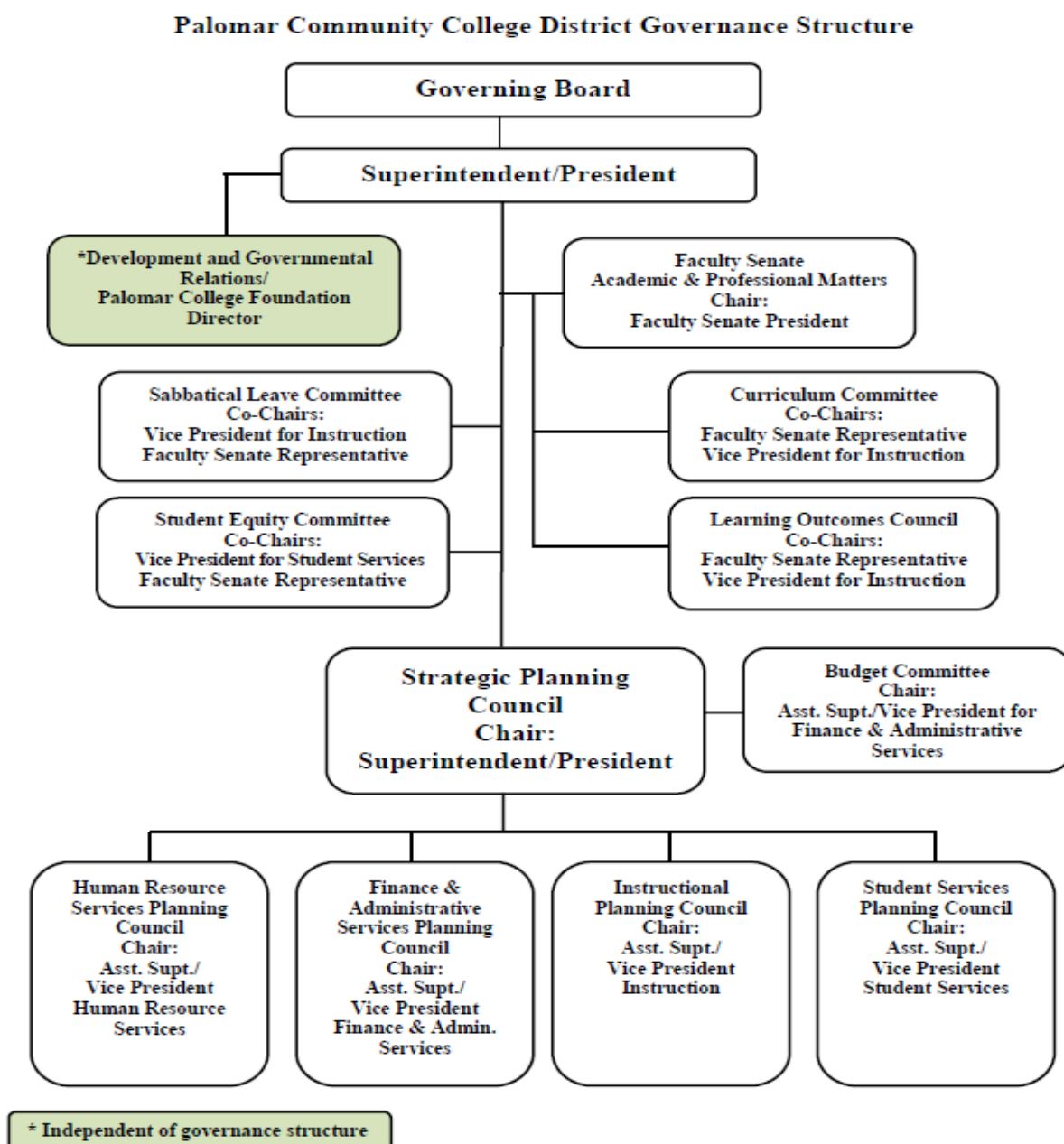
Organizational Structure

Palomar College's organizational structure invites faculty, staff, administration, students, individuals from the community and constituent groups into the decision making process. The incorporation of the input from the various constituencies differs from typical community college governance structures in the fact that Palomar College does not have a Classified Senate.

Under the Superintendent/President in the decision making process, is the Strategic Planning Council (SPC) with the various councils beneath SPC, which are chaired by the vice presidents (Finance and Administrative Services, Human Resource Services, Instruction, and Student Services). While in the governance structure, the vice presidents report to the Superintendent/President, the vice presidents also receive recommendations from their councils and can make recommendations to the President. Whereas this structure is common, there are a few differences from other community college structures.

While Faculty Senate (Academic Senate at other institutions) reports to the Superintendent/President and can make recommendations to the various councils, the Classified Senate seems to be absent. Palomar College does not have a Classified Senate which stands alone as a decision making entity. Instead, Palomar College integrates classified staff into the committees. Palomar College has a Council of Classified Employees (CCE) which is also combined with the classified union (AFT), and it has a Confidential and Supervisory Team (CAST) which consists of supervisors of classified staff. Many committees call for a member from CCE/AFT and from CAST in addition to members amongst faculty. So, although the classified staff do not have a unified voice in the decision making process, classified staff are integrated

into the decision making process. This allows for greater collaboration within departments and divisions across faculty and staff. At the same time, the lack of a Classified Senate deemphasizes the significance of the classified staff's contribution to the college and the importance of their role in the education of the students. Below is a diagram of Palomar College's governance structure from the Strategic Planning Web site (<http://www.palomar.edu/strategicplanning>).



SWOT Analysis

The **bullets in red** are from the SWOT summary on Palomar College's Web site. The other bullets are my contributions to the SWOT analysis. Weaknesses and opportunities were placed next to one another because of the closeness in relationship.

<p>Strengths (internal, positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of class offerings (time, method of delivery, fast track) • EAP – • Proximity to CSUSM • Strong strategic planning Web site • New buildings • Escondido Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) • Number of satellite locations • Diversity of services and students • Comprehensive programs • Competence of faculty and staff – accreditation SLO technology online • Focus on Students 	<p>Threats (external, negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proprietary university competition • Competition of online programs • Larger Generation Y influx to campus • State legislation (50%, 2/3 vote, etc.) • Accreditation • Transfer constriction • State and federal economy • Middle class squeeze
<p>Weaknesses (internal, negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing relationship of cc with student • Paradigm of hand-holding • Lack of engaging teaching strategies • Lack of student-faculty interaction outside of class • Challenge in changing culture of campus to initiate interaction with students • Lack of workshops and fairs for students • Cut back of class sections • Student access • Faculty /staff diversity • Diversity training • College attitude of blaming the student • Retention • Engagement • Student preparedness • Staffing and growing/aging of staff 	<p>Opportunities (external, positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting better technology in the classrooms • Restructuring opportunity during budget crises • Partnering with local companies, business, City of San Marcos, City of Escondido. • Strengthen service learning opportunities • Community building and community volunteering • More grant writing • To do more with military, veterans, Camp Pendleton • Technology when used appropriately/effectively • Local k-12 and university partnerships • Interested in faculty to faculty interaction • Budget and accreditation requires us to think and do things differently • Growth

Opportunity or threat organization is facing

Palomar College has the opportunity to address one of its weaknesses through the development of additional learning communities. The SWOT summary on the Palomar College strategic planning page listed student engagement as a weakness. According to the internal scan results of the college, the engagement of students was lower than at comparison colleges. Using CCSSE benchmarks, the internal scan revealed that Palomar College marked below other comparable extra large colleges. In the area of collaborative learning, Palomar scored 45.5, which was 3.7 below the average. In the area of student-faculty interaction, Palomar scored 44.4 which was below the average by 3.9 points. While Palomar students believed in the importance of various services such as tutoring and counseling, not many students made use of those services.

By increasing the student-faculty interaction, especially outside of the classroom, student engagement can be increased, which leads to positive student outcomes. Students and faculty unintentionally may be creating a “culture of disengagement” which is contradictory to theories of involvement or of engagement for positive student outcomes. The key to changing the culture of disengagement is to change the behaviors of both the students and the faculty. The change includes a change in attitude and a change in commitment to student success, and student-faculty interaction practices (Laird & Cruce, 2010). The creation of learning communities changes the traditional interaction practices by having faculty initiate the student interaction while collaborating across departments.

Context

Palomar is currently in its second year of the implementation of the first-year experience (FYE) program through the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) grant. The FYE program is in

combination with the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), obviously funded by BSI monies. So, there is one committee called the BSI/Title V HSI committee.

The FYE program included the implementation of learning communities during both semesters. While the learning communities were a great success, not all faculty supported the learning communities, especially because they seemed to serve only a handful of our students who were mainly in basic skills courses. At the same time, professors were in need of more professional development in the creation of collaborative syllabi and activities across the disciplines. In addition to that, there were various obstacles in the creation and logistics of the learning communities. The learning communities were created, but they could have been stronger.

Intervention strategy

In order to have stronger learning communities realized, Palomar needs additional outside support. Therefore, my intervention to increase student engagement would be to implement additional learning communities through Puente and through a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) collaboration. Through these programs, there are embedded tutors, counselors and mentors available to the students. Also, the Puente program would have the necessary outside professional development for faculty and staff to support the learning communities' success. The Puente program has a proven track record over the past 25 years. With the presence of a successful program to model after, the FYE learning communities will have a greater rate of success. And implementing STEM learning communities would allow for additional student participation in and outside of the basic skill courses in addition to additional participation from other disciplines. STEM learning

communities would address faculty's concerns about specialized programs. At the same time, Palomar would be transforming its teaching and interaction practices across campus. Also, because Palomar is a Hispanic serving institution, creating a program that speaks to 25% of the student population invites student engagement in an underserved population.

Theoretical rationale for the intervention

As already mentioned, Palomar College's engagement of students falls below the averages of comparable colleges. Addressing student engagement through the creation of learning communities is in line with Palomar College's mission, values and goals. The first words of the mission state, "Our mission is to provide an engaging teaching and learning environment for students of diverse origins, experiences, needs, abilities, and goals." Learning communities are considered to be high impact activities in terms of student engagement.

The learning communities also address three of the nine values of Palomar College. Those values include excellence in teaching, learning and service; diversity in learning environments; and creativity and innovation in engaging students, faculty, staff and administration. The learning communities also fit nicely into Palomar's goal to strengthen programs and services in order to support our students' education.

By increasing student engagement, we are increasing positive student outcomes. In order to increase the student-faculty interaction piece of student engagement, the colleges need to initiate that interaction. In the internal scan by Palomar College, students found services to be important, but the use of those services was low. The services are available to students, but students are not taking the initiative to engage themselves in the services. Therefore, the college needs to address how they are making its services available to students

and how it is interacting with the students. Does the college wait for the students to come, or does the college go out to get the students? “Without knowing and understanding how teacher-student relations influence motivation, teachers may limit their abilities to improving instruction” (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009, p. 18). Faculty often underestimate the potential impact they can have on students. The learning communities change the way faculty interact with students and change the way services are provided to students while increasing student engagement.

Specific Goal

The learning communities address student engagement and the broader goal of strengthening programs and services in order to support our students’ education. A more specific goal relevant to the intervention is to transform student-faculty interaction. An objective under this goal is to change the ways and changing how often faculty interact with students. Another objective is to provide faculty with additional resources in teaching, collaboration and interaction. A third objective is to incorporate embedded tutors and counselors in the classrooms. A fourth objective is to implement a mentor program.

Process for assessing the success of your intervention

Objective 1: Change the way faculty interact with students

To assess the way faculty interact with students, faculty will complete a pre and post survey on how they interact with students.

Objective 2: Provide faculty with additional resources in teaching, collaboration and interaction.

Objective two will be assessed by the completion of such activities and by an open-ended question after the activities such as, “Have you learned anything new in regards to teaching, collaboration and interaction?”

Objective 3: Incorporate embedded tutors and counselors in the classrooms.

Objective three will be measured by the completion of the activity. A student survey of the use of the tutors and counselors could be conducted as well to gauge student engagement. Tracking systems will be implemented as students make appointments with tutors, counselors or mentors.

Objective 4: Implement a mentor program

Again, a student survey will be given inquiring about the number of times meeting with the mentors and the most helpful component of the mentor program.

In addition, surveys will be given to the tutors, counselor and mentors to see how the students utilized their services. The numbers of student use of services will be compared to use by students not in the learning communities.

Likely systemic effects: possible unintended consequences

The logistics of coordinating learning communities can be challenging and may have unintended consequences. This includes low enrollment due to the scheduling of linked classes, lowering of counseling appointments available to general population due to an increase in teaching loads, and a limited pool of faculty teaching in learning communities limiting the number of learning communities that can be made available. While the learning communities

have a positive effect on students, the learning communities draw a lot of resources such as time from the faculty and bodies to commit to collaboration.

References

- Laird, T. F., & Cruce, T. M. (2010). Individual and environmental effects of part-time enrollment status on student-faculty interaction and self-reported gains. *The Journal of Higher Education* , 80 (3), 290-314.
- Rugutt, J., & Chemosit, C. C. (2009). What motivates students to learn? Contribution of student-to-student relations, student-faculty interaction and critical thinking skills. *Educational Research Quarterly* , 32 (3), 16-28.
- Strategic and Master Planning*. Retrieved June 21, 2010, from Palomar College.
<http://www.palomar.edu/strategicplanning>.