RESOLUTION ON THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AT CAL POLY

WHEREAS, The long term welfare of a university relies on its ability to maintain an active, knowledgeable, and competent faculty; and

WHEREAS, The professional vitality of the faculty is essential for the goal of excellence in teaching; and

WHEREAS, The faculty of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo would like to see the state support a program for maintaining the professional competence of its faculty; and

WHEREAS, The implementation of such a program may be facilitated by a statement of common interest and agreement among the diverse elements of the faculty at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo representing the General Faculty, accepts the following document as its statement on the role of professional growth and development here.

INTRODUCTION

The long term welfare of our university rests on its ability to obtain and maintain an active, knowledgeable, and competent faculty. In addition to improved ability to provide students with current and useful knowledge, the interest and stimulation displayed by the faculty is also transferred to their students. Scholarship and teaching are mutually supportive activities. The better educated can become better educators, and a campus environment that includes independent professional activity exposes students to active, creative, and current practice in their fields.

Inasmuch as the entire state benefits from the knowledge received by those attending its public universities, it is in the best interest of the state to maintain the quality of these educational programs. This requires adequate support for professional activities; in order that faculty maintain competence and currency in their fields. Policies dealing with such activities should be designed to reflect the wide variety of standards and practices appropriate to the wide variety of academic programs and faculty professional interests at the university. Just as it is the responsibility of the state to provide this support, it is the responsibility of the faculty to see that their professional activities are an asset to the university community.
In recent years, such state support has been seriously inadequate, and this has impaired our academic programs. Continued neglect will cause further deterioration. The lack of state support in this area makes it difficult for faculty to maintain a reasonable level of professional vitality. In trying to stay active, faculty must do so on a voluntary or overload basis, and many must look elsewhere for resources and support. These pressures tend to remove these vital activities from the university community. It creates conflicts of interest, breeds frustration and cynicism, causes attrition of faculty to jobs more rewarding of these activities, and displays to the students and the public the hypocrisy of a state which advocates quality in public education, but will not support the programs that are necessary to achieve this quality.

In drafting this statement regarding professional growth and development at Cal Poly, we are aware of the history of deficiency in this vital area. Nevertheless, we hope that support may soon replace neglect, and we are willing to work toward this end. We hope that this statement may help facilitate this transition by clarifying the faculty's needs and wishes in this area.

In this document, we explore the common ground in the diverse spectrum of professional interests at Cal Poly. We hope it reflects the appropriate balance between the ideal and the practical aspects of professional growth and development.

DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development is the acquisition and utilization of experience, skill, knowledge, or information, which enables one to perform at a higher level of proficiency in his/her profession.

THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT CAL POLY

Excellence in teaching is the primary goal of the faculty of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Professional growth and development is essential in meeting this goal.

AVENUES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Members of the faculty are teachers, who have expertise in a wide variety of academic areas. Any activity by a faculty member that either enhances teaching skills or enriches professional expertise would be considered as professional development. A few examples of such activities are included in the following list:

1. Contributions to the teaching profession. Examples of this type of activity would include papers on pedagogy submitted to professional journals, papers presented at professional meetings, presentations on pedagogy given in invited talks, seminars, and workshops, the development and production of audio-visual aides, and the development and publication of textbooks or manuals.
2. Contribution to the general body of knowledge in some academic area. Examples of this type of activity would include consulting, colloquia, creative productions, invited talks, papers presented at professional meetings, papers submitted to professional journals, research, and seminars.

3. Other avenues of self-improvement. Examples of this type of activity would include classes taken or conferences attended to enrich or update professional knowledge or skills, leaves of absence for professional development activities, job experience or residencies, professional participation in national and international programs, projects undertaken to improve teaching skills, and the pursuit of advanced degrees, professional licenses, or additional advanced studies. Also included would be participation in institutes, seminars, and workshops with alumni, colleagues, industry, and trade associations.

This list is not a guideline for faculty to follow, nor is it exhaustive. Rather, it provides only a few specific examples of the broad range of professional development activities in which faculty could engage. This university has a faculty of diverse interests, whose professional pursuits cannot be neatly categorized in such a modest list.

**APPRAISAL OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In addition to the diverse spectrum of activities resulting from individual interests, different avenues for professional improvement are found in different professions. Therefore, both the value of the avenue(s) chosen, and the quality of the work done are usually best appraised by the faculty member's immediate colleagues.

It is the responsibility of the individual faculty members to ensure that their professional activities are an asset to the university and supportive of its educational mission. It is also the responsibility of the individual faculty members to document those activities they wish to have appraised in personnel actions. It is the responsibility of their colleagues to appraise these activities in a manner consistent with established departmental criteria. Such criteria should be periodically reviewed by the tenured and senior faculty and made available to all tenure-track faculty in the department. The department head, upon consultation with the tenured and senior faculty, has the responsibility to inform individual department members to what degree their professional activities are meeting these criteria.

**THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE IN MAINTAINING FACULTY EXCELLENCE**

In order to create an atmosphere in which faculty can strive for excellence in the classroom and professionally, a university must actively provide two necessary ingredients. These are: (1) An academic environment that encourages pride in one's work; and (2) An opportunity to do that work well.
Professional growth and teaching excellence must not be made adversaries. Because of the present heavy teaching load, time devoted to professional development activities must often be taken from time that would have been spent preparing for classes. Since the class preparations are already suffering from lack of sufficient time, professional growth activities may often lead to further deterioration of immediate classroom performance. Similarly, shortage of space, equipment, clerical help, etc. presently puts the two kinds of activities in competition for these resources as well.

Furthermore, the faculty member is given the undesirable choice of either pleasing present students but disappointing future ones, or maintaining a modest program of professional growth to benefit future students, at a cost in the quality of teaching to present students. The university should strive to guarantee that the faculty has sufficient time and resources to do a good job of both, so that these two activities may always be complimentary rather than competitive.

Below is a partial listing of some of the areas in need of attention and measures the university must take in order to facilitate faculty professional development and teaching excellence.

1. Time

   It is imperative that the teaching load be reduced. The present heavy load is such that faculty sooner or later must compromise the quality of their work in order to meet their class schedule.

   In addition, release time should be available for appropriate professional activities.

2. Facilities

   The present scarcity of facilities impedes our basic teaching activities. Faculty are reluctant to exacerbate this shortage by using some of them for their professional endeavors. Adequate facilities should be provided for both types of activities.

3. Other Resources

   More funds must be available to support travel, publication, equipment purchase, clerical assistance, library facilities, and other necessary expenditures incurred by faculty pursuing avenues for improving their professional expertise.

4. Personnel

   We must make the working environment sufficiently attractive that we can acquire and retain faculty who can carry on professional development activities. Such improvements in the working environment would include higher salaries and private offices in addition to the improvements mentioned.
above. Other reasonable amenities would include expanded library services and privileges, full fee waivers, and provision for adequate clerical, technical, and student assistant help.

Furthermore, a pool of substitute faculty should be maintained, along with funds to pay their salaries, in order that faculty may be freed to engage in short-term professional activities without compromising academic offerings. The present policy of shifting the temporary teaching load onto the shoulders of already overburdened colleagues must be discontinued, because concern for both colleagues and their students discourages faculty from considering such activities.

This is only a partial list of some of the areas the university must explore if its faculty is to sustain currency and expertise. The current policy of "maximum students at minimum costs" does not provide an academic environment that encourages pride in one's work nor does it provide the opportunity to do that work well. If we are to encourage faculty professional development and vitality, we must restore both of these essential ingredients.