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Focus Groups Planned, Case Studies Sought for 'More Than a Motto: Learn by Doing at Cal Poly' Project

Endeavor includes plans for new book on the Learn by Doing Culture in 2016

SAN LUIS OBISPO — A campus team is seeking student, faculty, staff and alumni opinions and illustrative examples showing the power of Cal Poly's Learn by Doing culture, as part of a broad, multi-year project that will include a new annual conference and publication of a new book on the university's signature educational approach.

For Cal Poly students, faculty and staff, Learn by Doing has evolved to become more than simply a motto. Learn by Doing permeates all aspects of academic and campus life, and a team of Cal Poly colleagues have set out to document the meaning of the educational approach through an expansive project that includes publication of a signature book, development of an e-book and dedicated website, an annual conference, and an academic journal.

The idea for the book, "More than a Motto: The Meaning Behind Cal Poly's Learn by Doing Signature," originated with lead authors Brian Greenwood, an associate professor in Recreation, Parks, & Tourism Administration (RPTA) and Dawn Janke, director of Cal Poly's Writing & Rhetoric Center. While serving together in a leadership capacity with the Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology (CTLT) from 2011-13, Greenwood and Janke came in contact with many new faculty interested in enhancing their teaching and increasing Learn by Doing opportunities in their courses.

The pair realized the need for a book not only to help promote Learn by Doing for new faculty but also to highlight Learn by Doing for current and prospective students and parents, alumni, donors and industry partners.

Keri Schwab, assistant professor in RPTA, and Lorraine Donegan, professor in Graphic Communication, join Greenwood and Janke on the project team. Schwab brings a new faculty perspective and extensive writing and publishing experience. Donegan's expertise in linking technology with book design matches perfectly with the project. As creative director, she will work with student assistants to help develop the design for the signature and e-book.

The team spent the last year building support for the project and developing an advisory board. Members include Phil Bailey, dean of the College of Science & Mathematics; Joi Sullivan (president, Associated Students, Inc.; University Librarian Anna Gold; Keith Humphrey, vice president for student affairs; Bob Koob, former provost and a community representative; Mary Pedersen, associate vice provost for academic programs; Jeff Hess, interim associate vice president for marketing and communications; and Dustin Stegner, associate professor of English and Academic Senate appointee.

Deborah Larson, dean of the College of Engineering, former ASI President Jason

Colombini, and Royaa Silver, assistant vice president for creative services, served on the board in Academic Year 2013-14.

Plans for the project in the coming academic year include focus groups with students, faculty, staff and alumni. Groups will be designed to examine the impact on and perspective toward Learn by Doing from these critical stakeholder groups.

"We have a very good idea what Learn by Doing means to us," Greenwood said, "but we want to hear from students, faculty, staff and alumni to understand what it means to them."

The book will center on case studies highlighting Learn by Doing at Cal Poly. The authors will choose case studies in consultation with the advisory board and through a call for proposals for the inaugural Learn by Doing conference slated for Spring 2015. The call for proposals will be released in late fall 2014.

The project team hopes to finalize content for the signature and e-book in Academic Year 2015-16, with tentative plans for publication in fall 2016.

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