

History

In Spring of 2010, the Learning Council was developed from discussions that originated in the Basic Skills Committee. The committee was organized and formal structure was put into place under the Leadership of Scott Sandler and Edward Cervantes as facilitators, and Dr. Kathleen Rose as Administrator. The Learning Council is a sub-committee of the Academic Council and, according to BP and AP, (4600) reports to both Academic Senate and the President's Council.

Mission Statement

Learning Council is an advisory group committed to the development, promotion, and advancement of a student success agenda for prospective and enrolled students at Gavilan College. The Learning Council recognizes that there are varying definitions of student success. Learning Council will create an in-depth forum for discussing various categories of student success, identifying existing and new pathways, and creating a campus climate unified behind the goals of student success. Our primary methods would be to find ways of minimizing barriers to student success and making recommendations based on discussions and findings from external and internal best practices and research. The Learning Council is committed to the following:

- Promoting a collaborative community of inquiry, awareness, and change around learning by means of bridging Student, Academic, and Administrative Affairs.
- Identifying and addressing barriers to student success to increase persistence and retention levels of the college.
- Fostering and promoting opportunities for Faculty and Staff Development to meet the diverse needs of our students.
- Exploring and implementing various pedagogies that meet students' diverse socio-cultural learning needs.
- Empowering members of the campus community in becoming advocates for learning.
- Creating a safe, welcome, inclusive campus environment centered on student success, empowerment, and engagement. This mission is embedded in the Gavilan College mission statement and reflects the shared beliefs and values of faculty, staff, administrators and students.

Overview

From 2015 to the spring of 2017, the Learning Council was co-facilitated by Annette Gutierrez and Dr. Doug Achterman. In the fall of 2018, Ryan Shook then assumed the classified co-chair role and Annette stepped down. Learning Council continued to use Focused Inquiry Groups (FIGS) to complete work focused on student success. Student participation remains central to the work of the council, as is membership and participation from all staffing levels and disciplines.

All members are genuinely committed to student success; and a central goal of the Council continues to be creating collaborative and inclusive dialogue about student success. The members understand the needs of students and they actively engage to ensure that true change occurs.

Given that the Learning Council highly values respect, each member is treated with equality regardless of campus role. In addition, the Learning Council strives to include a wide cross-section of campus constituency groups, including full-time and part-time faculty, students, support staff, administrators, and supervisors. This diversity in the membership and combined skills and talents are fundamental to producing results. Members of the Learning Council report being energized by the “can do” attitude of the group. There is a unique collegiality that is actively open to the ideas of others.

2015-2016 was a transition year for the Learning Council. Much time was spent examining our core principles and values and looking at the best ways to organize our time together to continue to be productive.

The following FIGS operated during the 2015-2016 year:

- Information and Resource
- Communication
- Instructional Improvement
- Early Alert/Early Connect
- Veterans
- Academic Support Services
- Habits of Mind
- Professional Learning

During its spring retreat at the end of the 2015-2016 year, the Learning Council decided it would adopt a focus on first-year students at Gavilan for the 2016-2017 year; fewer FIGS would operate, and the Learning Council sponsored and/or supported several activities aimed at deepening our connections to each other on campus and in our community. In the fall, the Learning Council sponsored a gratitude event leading into Thanksgiving. A trio led by music instructor Dahveed Behroozi played jazz standards, and members of our Gavilan community were invited to express their gratitude on paper versions of fall leaves, which were then affixed to trees drawn by Drama Department students. Below is a Wordle representing words most used in the gratitudes:



The Learning Council sponsored several lunchtime sessions in the cafeteria, too, inviting students to talk to a Learning Council member and find out about our FIGs. Ever eager to play with words, Learning Council members gave out fig bars during these noontime occasions. In the spring, several Learning Council members rolled up their sleeves to pitch in to the High School Outreach events at our feeder high schools. Parents and high school seniors were invited to an evening on their home campus to hear about Gavilan and get an introduction to the college. Dr. Rose began each event with a welcome and framed the evening with her comments. Afterward, Gavilan community members—staff, faculty, and students, gave small presentations at tables and shared information about various elements of our campus, such as financial aid, admissions, student life (ASGC, activities, clubs, etc), and academic support. These are representative activities that Learning Council members engaged in to help strengthen the connections within and across our community.

Below are the FIGS that operated during the 2016-2017 year:

- Information and Resource
- Communication
- Academic Support Services
- Habits of Mind
- Guided Pathways

In addition to meeting with the total Learning Council group, members of each FIG met to conduct business related to its focused inquiry. Below is a summary of those groups' work for the past two years.

Focused Inquiry Group Reports

Information and Resources

2015-2016

The Information and Resource (I&F) FIG consisted of one classified staff, one administrator and one student. Collectively the I&F FIG met to continue to develop ways for students to obtain information and increase access to community organizations. During fall 2015 term we piloted the Fresh Cargo Truck, bringing fresh, local, uncut fruits and vegetables to campus. While the Fresh Cargo Truck did not generate the traffic needed to sustain that effort, it was well-received and provided additional drive to pursue other efforts toward improved food security.

During the spring 2016 term the I&F FIG collaborated with over 11 agencies to continue Information & Resource Days on campus. The community organizations were on campus on Thursdays from 11am-2pm located in the student center to provide Gavilan College campus community with information regarding the services their agency provides.

The I&F FIG partnered with the CalWORKs program to bring a food pantry onto campus. The food pantry opened early May 2016, joining approximately 22 other California community colleges to support a food pantry on its campus.

2016-2017

The Information and Resource FIG continued to work with the pantry to highlight on and off campus resources to the Gavilan Community. The food pantry served 1,433 unduplicated students during the 2016-17 academic year.

The Information and Resource FIG worked in collaboration with the Associated Students of Gavilan College and conducted a hygiene drive. Equity dollars were used to purchase hygiene bags and the items donated were used to fill the bags. Hygiene bags are now available to any Gavilan College student on a referral basis. The Information and Resource FIG will continue to collaborate with on and off campus parties to provide invaluable resources to the Gavilan College Community.

Early Alert/Early Connect

2015-2017

This group changed its name to “Early Connect” due to some negative connotations around the term “alert.” This FIG began with the intention to scale up to work with more classes, but a reduction in funding and administrative support resulted in a scaling back of its efforts.

Although this FIG was more or less in limbo for the 2015-2016 year and did not operate in 2016-2017, Guided Pathways has revived interest in the Early Connect concept, validating the groundwork this group did when it piloted a system for connecting with students at the earliest

point of need, whether that need be personal, academic, or financial. In 2018, a working group has been formed to create a new early alert system that best serves our students.

Instructional Improvement

2015-2016

The Instructional Improvement FIG created a flyer for student and academic support services that is available to attach to course syllabi and is updated each semester. The FIG also structured a best practices component for part-time faculty orientations, consisting of four introductory presentations by selected faculty on a variety of best practices. Topics for this orientation included

- Classroom instruction, including DRC issues
- Emotional and social learning
- Hybrid/online instruction
- Kinesthetic learning and ESL learners.

Members of the FIG concluded that there are several efforts on campus now focused on instructional improvement, and that the structure created for the part-time faculty orientation is easily replicable; therefore, the FIG chose not to continue during the 2016-2017 year.

Professional Learning

2015-2016

The Professional Learning FIG met throughout the first semester of the 2015-2016 year, with an emphasis on exploring ways to enhance professional learning through FIGS. At the end of the first semester, membership in the FIG grew and changed, and the professional learning liaison participated substantially in facilitation of the group. At this point, the FIG moved out from Learning Council sponsorship and operated independently. This group met no fewer than eight times in the second semester and developed well-articulated principles for creating and sustaining robust professional learning.

This work can be viewed on an iLearn site available to any Gavilan community member (faculty, staff, students, administrators, board members, etc).

The group has developed a plan to conduct a statewide study on professional learning practices to inform Gavilan's continuing efforts. Because Professional Learning efforts showed promise of continuing, no FIG was planned for the 2016-2017 year.

Veterans

The Veterans FIG did not meet on a regular basis during the 2015-2016 year, due to a variety of challenges beyond its control. New veteran representatives attended the last meetings of the year and the Veterans FIG planned to continue in 2016-2017. However, previous key Gavilan staff

connected to the Veterans FIG transitioned away from Gavilan, and the FIG was not active in 2016-2017. Efforts are underway to recruit Veterans participate in the Learning Council, whether or not there is a FIG connected to this group. Our Veterans have provided a perspective on campus life and student success that has been invaluable in the Council's work.

Habits of Mind 2015-2017

Scott Sandler, a key leader in our local Habits of Mind efforts, participated in the development of a statewide Community of Practice for Habits of Mind sponsored by 3CSN, a state community college professional development organization. He continues in a leadership role in the state. The Learning Council participated in a wide variety of professional learning activities in the past two years that included Habits of Mind elements, with important contributions from Mr. Sandler in the planning. He facilitated the use of Johari Windows in many contexts at the Gilroy, Hollister and Morgan Hill campuses. This is an activity that helps identify what populations in our community know, have heard of, have need of, or dream of in relation to student life and success.

As the college plans its own version of Guided Pathways, there potential is for Habits of Mind to become a powerful tool in providing academic support across the curriculum. While there is no active FIG planned for Habits of Mind for 2017-2018, as the campus turns more attention to the elements of Guided Pathways, interest in Habits of Mind may resurface.

Communications 2015-2017

The Communications FIG was very active in this time period. Here is a summary of the efforts it supported and/or headed:

Accessibility of Committee meeting minutes (plus Board packets and policies, etc.) [IN PROGRESS]

- We attended a virtual demo for BoardDocs.com
- There are two different subscription levels, Plus and Pro
- There would be a significant one-time investment to set up, but once things are in place everything is accessible and searchable, and would only require routine updates

Institutionalizing remote participation for meetings [COMPLETED]

- Use instructions from District Tech
- Any room with smart technology can be used to set up online participation via WebEx or other software (phone line not necessary)
- This will be moved to the District Tech Committee for further action

Automatic waitlisting in Banner [IN PROGRESS]

- Banner has automated waitlisting as a feature that is turned on for all courses
- After classes begin, all courses would then require an add code, even those that are not full
- Candace Whitney will speak with Banner consultant to investigate options for turning on automated waitlisting for only courses that fill up

Student newsletter [COMPLETED]

- From Jan, weekly “What you need to know this week” email blasts to all@gavilan.edu
- Feedback has been positive

Promoting new tech tools/resources [IN PROGRESS / COMPLETED]

- GradGuru smartphone app: lots of students have it, use it; push notifications about deadlines, campus events, ASGC announcements, etc.
- Student Health 101: online magazine
- EAB Navigate: in progress

Academic Support Services Group

2015-2016

The Academic Support Services Group (ASSG) began meeting in late 2014 in order to coordinate efforts, share best practices, and strengthen collaboration among programs that provide academic support (e.g. tutoring, SI, peer mentoring, library, DRC, Learning Commons, etc.) and other student-staffed services (e.g. new student center). In 2015, a Learning Council FIG was formed to support this work. This group met regularly in 2015-2016. Early collaborations produced through the ASSG include the creation of a certificate for tutors who build expertise through a combination of tutoring and SI courses; “tutor jams” that bring together peer educators from different parts of the campus, and an evaluation of student tutor pay. This group continues to meet monthly through 2018 but is not active as a FIG.

Guided Pathways

2016-2017

The Guided Pathways FIG was formed to promote exploration of the Guided Pathways model as a model for undertaking systemic change through a series of student-centered best practices around four key areas:

- Create clear curricular pathways to employment and further education.
- Help students choose and enter their pathway.
- Help students stay on their path.
- Ensure that learning is happening with intentional outcomes.

Over the course of three meetings and a summer workshop, a nationally-recognized Guided Pathways proponent at the spring convocation, and planning sessions with the Career Ladders organization, this group continued to gain strength throughout the year. Its three key goals included

- Educating ourselves and the campus about how pathways can be developed in order to increase student success and close equity gaps
- Participating in the shared governance process to support the development of guided pathways as a key component of Gavilan's planning process
- Bringing resources to the campus to share best practices and provide strategic assistance in this process.

The Guided Pathways FIG continued in 2017-2018 and has positioned the college to take full advantage of the state-wide funding that became available this academic year. FIG members are among those who were selected to attend a regional workshop for writing the Guided Pathways funding application. For a more complete picture of the activities of this group, visit the Guided Pathways web page at http://www.gavilan.edu/academic/guided_pathways/index.php.

Learning Council 2017-2018

The Learning Council approved working FIGs for 2017-2018 at its May meeting. These included

- Information and Resources
- Communications
- Guided Pathways
- Homelessness

The Council continued to seek ways to build its team and work together to build stronger connections within our community. Information and Resources and Guided Pathways FIGS continued their work from past years. The communications group did not continue its work. Early work on a homelessness FIG began but the group met only sporadically.

The greatest challenge facing the Learning Council lies in renewing its core purpose and connecting to faculty, students, and staff in a more meaningful way. In the past year, attendance at Learning Council was sparse; two of the initiatives it had helped build and sustain— Guided Pathways and the Academic Support Services Group—were operating more or less independently of the Learning Council—and work continued in Information and Resources with one or two individuals assuming the majority of the efforts.

Historically, Learning Council met for a few hours once a month on a Friday. This schedule became difficult for members to adhere to; a shorter meeting on Thursdays was tried after a survey of best times was conducted. Attendance, however, continued to lag. While the Learning Council continued to serve as an incubator of new ideas that valued diverse, cross-functional

input from across our campus, we faced ongoing challenges getting people together for our meetings.

In May 2018, Dr. Achterman is resigning his position as co-chair of the Learning Council. A new faculty chair is needed to work with co-chair Ryan Shook to lead new efforts and directions for Learning Council.