

January 13, 2016

To: Tim Peterson, Chair
Academic Affairs

From: Jake Agatucci and Chris Rubio  
Co-chairs, Learning Communities Committee

Subject: Downgrade LCC from Committee to Task Force

We write today to recommend that the Learning Communities Committee, formed in AY 2013-2014, be downgraded from a committee to a task force falling under the purview of Academic Affairs. We make this recommendation primarily based on a lack of administrative support regarding the development of a Learning Communities Program, which was the primary mission of this committee at its inception. Specifically, this recommendation is based on the fact that there has been no movement from administration relative to offering faculty a formal load-based pay structure to justify the workload demanded by coordinated learning community classes.

Though there remains considerable faculty interest in teaching learning community classes (as noted in a recent survey of COCC faculty), there is a profound lack of interest from faculty to do so without compensation. There are faculty who have had some success teaching within linked learning communities, but the ideal model, relative to achieving the potential of learning community classes, is the coordinated model. The work-load of the latter simply demands of the instructor a time allocation that faculty are unwilling to take on without proper compensation.

Over the last three years, our efforts to both generate faculty interest in participating in learning communities, exploring the most effective learning community course structures, and surveying faculty interest in participation has been significant. We held a campus-wide training led by a former Learning Communities Program director, we facilitated a teaching academy workshop, we solicited faculty participation through department chair coordination, and we have, most recently, surveyed faculty to see where they stand on their interest in learning committees and what they would expect in return for their participation.

Until a campus commitment to learning communities (perhaps through a first-year program) and until administration is willing to buy-in to the learning community idea--rather than simply hoping faculty will take on more work without compensation--we do not believe our presence as a committee structure is justified. In other words, we do not believe our committee mission to develop a Learning Communities program has enough support from administration to justify our mission and though faculty interest is high it is contingent on the aforementioned support. At this point, our sole work-load has dwindled to reviewing 1-3 applications every term, and we are happy to continue reviewing applications as a task force.

With this in mind, we think it prudent to downgrade the Learning Communities Committee to the Learning Communities Task Force. Both of us are more than willing to attend the next Academic Affairs meeting to elaborate on the grounds for making this recommendation if you desire. Thank you.