

Feedback on the Teaching Innovation Center (TIC) Proposal

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Summary:

I am supportive of the concept of what is often called a Center for Teaching-and-Learning - and is here called a Teaching Innovation Center (TIC) - on our campus, and believe that developing an institutionalized structure for ongoing faculty professional development is essential for ensuring an engaged and supported faculty, and achieving our mission of student success with equity. My recommendation for the current 'TIC' proposal and accompanying brief is to consider working in conjunction with the Academic Senate to revise the proposal, before moving it forward to Administration, some of the reasons for which are outlined below.

Primary Areas of Concern

Relation to the Academic Senate:

"Faculty Professional Development" is #8 in the Academic Senate so-called '10+1' list of areas for which local Academic Senates are required to make recommendations to the administration of a college and to the governing board of a district with respect to academic and professional matters, under California Code of Regulations Title 5 § 53200. Thus the center's focus is one of the areas in which the Academic Senate is charged with making recommendations to our college administration and our Board of Trustees. As the purpose of this center is to provide opportunities and support for continuous, ongoing faculty professional development, it should have unambiguous language that aligns its activities and choices with the faculty's professional development needs, as recommended by the Academic Senate. This proposal provides no such language, other than the Senate President's appointment of the Faculty Coordinator for the Center. The proposal needs clear language explaining *how* the coordinator, after appointment, will remain aligned with the Senate's charge in this area.

Given the proposal passed by the Senate this year to create a standing committee for faculty professional development, with a faculty Chair who would be part of the Academic Senate, one possibility and a logical linkage between the center and the Senate would be to have the Faculty Coordinator of the Center be the same individual as the Chair of the Faculty Professional Development committee.

In addition, as instruction is primarily the domain of faculty, the section on 'Educators at Porterville College' undermines the faculty's central role and the Academic Senate's purview in this area by describing 'everyone who comes into contact with students as an educator'. Everyone at the college has a role in supporting our students' education and academic success, but if the center's focus is on faculty professional development, then it needs to be explicit about this to ensure that its activities and organization remain under the purview of the Academic Senate's charge and that the control over faculty professional development opportunities remain in control of the college's faculty.

Notably, this includes our adjunct faculty, who often have the least access and support for professional development opportunities, yet comprise the majority of our faculty. While support for adjunct faculty is mentioned in the proposal, it would benefit from clearer discussion of how we will ensure they will be able to participate or a discussion of why adjunct faculty often do not participate and how this center will attempt to rectify this common lacuna. Mention of such a plan for the center would strengthen the proposal.

Integration with Guided Pathways:

Pillar 4 of Guided Pathways is to 'ensure that learning is happening with intentional outcomes'. More than any other part of the Guided Pathways model, this area is predominantly within the domain of faculty and classroom instruction. As Guided Pathways is part of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Vision for Success, the absence of any Guided Pathways language and goals (as well those of the CCCC's Vision for Success) in the TIC proposal is a missed opportunity to link the center's objective of providing faculty professional development support, and the connection between that and ensuring learning. We are helping to ensure learning for our students by creating a Center that provides faculty with continuous, ongoing faculty professional development opportunities that will produce an informed, engaged, and supported faculty. Page two's inclusion of 'Guided Pathways' as one of four pillars (a confusing overlap with the actual Guided Pathways language of four pillars) is insufficient, as it is nowhere further explained.

Staffing Plan & Budget:

The main TIC proposal contains a staffing plan and budget that is not feasible for this college at this time. We are deficient in multiple faculty positions, and this plan devotes a single full-time position to a faculty instructional designer, and an additional .8 release time position to another faculty member as the center's coordinator. The latter is also almost a whole position, which would require staffing for that faculty member's load, and eliminate many faculty from consideration for the position simply because there may be no one else to teach their classes. A more realistic release time for the position is likely to be in the range of .2 to .4, but still requires negotiation with the College President (Note: Bakersfield College has a Flex coordinator position that chairs their professional development committee and receives a .1 release).

The \$25,000 budget for faculty stipends is also quite large, and is described as providing stipends for 50 faculty. The only explanation for what they will receive stipends for is "professional development workshops and seminars" (p.10). This is problematic in part because faculty are already required to participate in professional development as part of their contract, but also because there is no discussion about how it would be distributed equitably – as well as the absence of a funding source for this amount.

Note that Bakersfield College provides stipends to faculty who develop and lead professional development workshops on campus, in addition to giving them credit toward their flex requirements for this activity. As fewer faculty lead such workshops than participate in them, it enables the limited funds to be more fairly dispersed for work that is beyond contractual obligations, yet draws from and rewards local expertise. This may be a better model for the use of limited stipend funds, and was part of our own Academic Senate's proposal for meeting our contractual flex requirement.

The 'brief' version of the TIC proposal contains an entirely different budget that starts out smaller in the first year, but in a three-year span grows beyond the budget in the original proposal significantly. The stipend budget is much smaller (reduced to \$10,000), however, and without explanation for the difference. The reason for the two different budgets in general is not explained.

Justification:

The draft is in the form of a charge for the proposed center, but would be stronger with a justification for its existence from the start of the document. Why do we need it? What benefit will it provide? What are we not currently doing that the center will do for us? What problem will it solve? My recommendation would be to start with an introduction that provides this. The sections on 'Data' and 'Quality of Programming' in the proposal somewhat address this issue, but as they arrive on page five, they are in a sense 'burying the lead' and at times unclear in the linkage between the center's activities and the evidence and measures of student success to which center should lead.

Space:

The proposal states the TIC will exist at first primarily online, but does not note that the college already has a dedicated physical (as well as virtual) space for a Center for Instructional Technology (<https://kccd.instructure.com/courses/24513>). Faculty have long sought a dedicated common space for themselves for meeting, and in fact in Spring 2020 – before the campus closure of mid-March 2020 - I and Vice-President of Student Services Primavera Arvizu were working on a plan to create such a ‘faculty learning space’. Such spaces show that the college places a primacy on supporting continuous faculty professional development. This is a missed opportunity here that I would recommend be reconsidered. We should be attempting to improve our existing space as we expand our investment in teaching-and-learning.

Incentivization Plan:

The incentivization plan in the TIC proposal is limited, yet such a plan is critical to ensuring that faculty actually make use of all of the planned activities of the center. If most faculty are disinclined to participate, there will be no impact on instruction and no change to student success and equity goals. The only forms of incentivization listed in the proposal are stipends for participating, certificates, and teaching awards. In addition to the concern with using stipends as an incentive noted previously, these may not be sufficient to ensure participation and need further explanation and thought. In the context of the Academic Senate’s plan for faculty professional development, the activities of the center could be applied to the already contractually required flex hours, which might be a stronger incentive. Aligning with the Office of Instruction to link faculty participation and the evaluation process might also create an incentive. This area would benefit from additional development to ensure that faculty seek continuous, lifelong professional development as an expectation of currency in one’s field.

Evaluation and Outcomes:

The main proposal does not provide goals or outcomes for the center that clearly explain how we will know if it is effective in what it does. The ‘brief’ version does list Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) that the larger proposal does not, and it is not clear why it is there and not also in the other proposal. However, these SAOs are vague, and do not make clear how we will know that the services provided will lead to measurable changes in the quality of instruction, and thereby in achieving student success with equity.

The SAO listed are:

- Faculty members will utilize and report satisfaction with the professional development options in the Teaching Innovation Center.
- Faculty members will contribute to and utilize the Teaching Innovation Center’s Repository of Expertise.
- Administrators, classified staff, managers, and faculty members will report being informed of the goals, outcomes, initiatives, and grants affecting various areas of campus through the Teaching Innovation Center’s services aimed at cross-college communication.

But will ‘satisfaction’ with the options lead to measurable improvements in instruction? Will contributing to and utilizing the center’s repository of expertise lead to such improvements? Will people on campus being ‘informed’ about the center’s services lead to these? My recommendation is to reconsider these SAOs in favor of ones more clearly linked to the goals of the center.

Timeline:

A 9-page timeline for the center is included in the main proposal, but the logic behind the steps in the rollout was not explained. Fall 2023 lists 'Flex Days revamp', but this is not discussed elsewhere, and the Academic Senate has already proposed a plan for this. 'Open Campus Hour' is listed for Spring 2022, and 'work with Judy to re-enact', but this was previously tried in a major overhaul of the scheduling matrix in the Enrollment Management committee a few years ago, and failed due to the conflicts it created in key divisions that would not support it. Such a change is a major process that falls outside the purview of the center. Discussion of such a plan, if it was going to be included, should have been provided due to its contentious history on this campus. A simpler timeline with fewer specifics and based on consensus with the Academic Senate might be preferable here.

Conclusion:

The idea of this center is laudable and in my view the best route for ensuring that the faculty side of our institutional goals of ensuring student success with equity are achieved. The plan itself, however, contains many areas that are either problematic, unclear, or insufficiently explained. At the forefront of it all needs to be the focus on *how* what it does results in improved student success with equity. Additional revision, editing, and discussion may yet produce a draft that will demonstrate this more clearly, while also aligning with the Academic Senate's expectation that this work remains under the Senate's purview, as required in its charge, yet provide assurances for our administration that the plan is also within our resources, achievable, and will lead to measurable improvements for our students.