

# Introduction of Learning Communities to Cal Poly Pomona

## Project Personnel

Total Award Amount \$ 100,000

### Project Director

Name: Victor Okhysen  
Title: Associate Professor  
Department: Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering

### Co-Project Director

Name: Claudia Pinter-Lucke  
Title: Associate Vice President  
Department: Academic Programs

### Co-Project Director

Name:  
Title:  
Department:

## Project Description

The objective of this proposal is to fund the design of learning communities for first time freshmen. Learning communities are a powerful mechanism to improve retention and increase six year graduation rates, particularly among underrepresented students who are less likely to voluntarily engage in the types of activities undertaken in learning communities. Georgia State reported first year retention increases of 7% for all students and 9-12% for black students who participated in Freshman Learning Communities in various years from 1999 to 2007.

Learning communities can involve students grouped into teams engaging in co-curricular activities, freshman seminars, block scheduling into specific courses, or a thematically coordinated year of study. Careful study of learning communities before implementation is warranted, given the wide variety of successful models of learning communities in place at institutions across the country. In addition, detailed coordination by faculty and staff and significant financial investment will be necessary for the initial implementation. Thus, a detailed design developed with thorough consultation prior to implementation is warranted.

Preparation and planning activities will include:

- Formation of a Learning Communities Planning Committee (LCPC) to research different types of learning communities and recommend the model to be implemented. This committee may continue during implementation to oversee the assessment of the communities.
- Travel to conferences, workshops, and other institutions that have successfully implemented learning communities.
- Meetings with faculty, staff, and students to collect ideas for implementation and develop buy-in with the campus community.
- Design of a learning communities model and a project schedule that will address the general format and themes for the inaugural year, as well as practical issues such as student recruitment, scheduling and enrollment, use of support services, etc.
- Collection of resources for use by the learning communities.
- Recruitment of faculty/staff to lead and participate in the learning communities.

-Training for faculty/staff who will participate in the learning communities and other interested faculty/staff. This will be led by the LCPC and may involve speakers from other institutions.

Building on the success of this effort, the Graduation Initiative Committee will research other high impact practices, such as sophomore learning communities, synthesis courses as capstone experiences, and increased use of service learning, internships, and undergraduate research.