

# RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2002 COLLEGE LEARNING DAY WORK TEAM

*Community colleges that take the continuous learning and development of its students as its mission can only be successful if faculty, administrators, and staff understand, are committed to, and live out the notion of learning and development for themselves. Thus, a learning organization is not simply a college that focuses on the learning of its students. It focuses simultaneously on the learning of all the people who work at the institution. The challenge of becoming a learning organization is to create a context where community college students, faculty, administrators, and staff are all involved in the same life task: learning.*

– Charles Claxton, March 2001

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## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Work Team reviewed reports and feedback from College Planning Day 1 (September 2001) and College Planning Day 2 (October 2001) and synthesized the philosophical, programmatic, and logistical considerations suggested by that feedback. We determined that a major driving force in our work must be a strong commitment to the concept that *if we are to close the College and not hold classes, whatever we do must be urgent and compelling enough to warrant such singular institutional attention and priority.*

Another early realization was that our team's recommendations must have their foundation in broad-based, collaborative input. Following the intense discussions of the College calendar held collegewide and the President's e-mail that resulted from those discussions, the Work Team refocused its efforts on **one** College Learning Day in November 2002 and created the following principles to inform its work.

### Design Principles

1. The framework recommended for the day must be learning-centered.
2. Whatever is planned must be urgent and compelling enough to warrant closing the College and canceling all classes.
3. Planning for the Learning Day must be based on broad input from the multiple constituencies of the College.
4. Attention must be given to addressing the unique needs and interests of these multiple constituency groups to make the day worthwhile.

A Flashlight survey was designed to focus on one College Learning Day. The survey was administered electronically with anonymous responses from four groups: administrators, faculty, professional staff, and career staff. Each of these groups reported separately. This separation of responses was deemed critical to understanding the desires and expectations of each group.

The survey was made available electronically from Monday, May 13 to Friday, May 24. Provisions were also made for pencil-and-paper responses from work groups that do not have easy access to computer terminals - maintenance workers, for example. To encourage a high rate of return a targeted group of supervisors and opinion leaders within the College was asked to encourage their employees and frequent contacts to respond to the questionnaire. At the end of the two-week period, 523 surveys had been completed and submitted. A breakout of the number of respondents by employment category follows.

Professional Staff	87
Career Service Staff	233
Administrators	34
Faculty	169

The Work Team reviewed the more than 65 pages of write-in comments, as well as the responses to questions asking for reactions to specific options listed.

(Raw Flashlight survey data by employee category and summary sheets that were used by the Work Team to clarify messages being sent by each of these constituencies were provided to the Executive Council and are available on request to members of the College community.)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**After months of collecting and reviewing evaluations of the 2001 planning days and synthesizing these with the results of the Flashlight survey, our Work Team has developed the following recommendations, which we strongly endorse.**

1. The day should provide a blend of learning opportunities for participants ranging from a big picture keynote to a selection of learning opportunities specialized to meet the needs of the four constituencies. These learning opportunities should be provided in a variety of formats, sizes, and learning styles (i.e., presentations of information, applied workshops, and forums/working sessions).
2. Below is the time framework we recommend for the day. **Some adjustments may be needed as logistics are finalized.** (A description of each component follows.)

**D R A F T College Learning Day (Tuesday, November 5, 2002) D R A F T**

8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	Check-in (Coffee and Juice Provided)
8:45 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Keynote (Statement of Importance/Urgency) Address Sandy Shugart
9:45 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Learning Opportunities – Block 1
11:15 a.m. -12:30 p.m.	Learning Opportunities – Block 2
12:45 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.	Lunch Gathering By Employment Category (Under Discussion); Lunch will be Provided
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Learning Opportunities – Block 3
3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Wrap-Up and Our Just Desserts (Ice Cream Provided)

3. Registration: Our recommendation is that participants pre-register for individual sessions within the learning opportunity blocks in order to best utilize larger meeting rooms and to maximize efficiency in moving more than 1,000 participants smoothly through the day. Registration materials will stress registering early as the number of participants in each session will be limited. Sessions that will be popular will be repeated in each time block. At check-in, participants will receive their individualized learning agenda for the day.
4. Keynote: The President will set the tone for the day in the keynote address. Areas to be covered should include, but not be limited to:
  - Imparting a sense of importance/urgency (Why are we here? What do we intend to accomplish? Why is the College Learning Day important to the College?)
  - Emphasizing the importance of **ALL** College personnel in the learning college mission. For example, a theme might be “Faculty are important players in the learning college, but that’s obvious, what’s not so obvious . . .”
  - What has Sandy Shugart learned in the past three years (message: we are all learners)?

It is our strong recommendation that incorporated into the Keynote Address – perhaps at the beginning -- should be a relatively brief video focusing on “a day in the life of a student.” Such video would remind all participants that our primary reason for being here is to support student learning every day. The visuals might compare and contrast vignettes of facilitating vs. debilitating messages we intentionally (or unintentionally) give students or stress our collective roles as learning facilitators. We are quite confident that the Marketing and Television Teams and others can come up with a very creative story line.

5. Learning Opportunities Sessions: A number of excellent ideas for learning opportunities sessions emerged from the Flashlight survey responses. One way to conceptualize what we are proposing is a massive, learning-focused one-day “Leadership Valencia type” extravaganza. It is our recommendation that a collegewide solicitation (Call for Programs) be instituted as soon as possible. However, in addition to the general call for proposals, the governing councils and other groups (i.e., FACC, the Instructional Affairs Committee, the Diversity Committee, the Professional Staff Forum, and the campus Career Staff Councils) should be directly solicited for proposals. Title 3 and 5 leaders have already made suggestions that should be seriously considered.

**In short, the potential exists for broad-based and powerful sessions if we are willing to make the commitment to seek them out and make them happen. The logistics for such an undertaking with huge numbers of participants is clearly formidable. Yet adhering to our design principles and responding to the feedback from our colleagues, necessitates taking bold action to make this day effective.**

6. Lunch Gathering By Employment Category: The Work Team received several official and unofficial requests for time to be set-aside during the day for specific categories of employees to meet. Our proposal is to have a working lunch by employment category. In that way, the Faculty Association and the Professional Staff Forum can meet to deal with pressing organizational process issues, while the Career Staff Council can clarify its purpose and structure to all career staff at the same time. (There has been no request for a meeting of administrators to date.)
7. Wrap-Up and Our Just Desserts: Following an intensive day of interactive learning, a wrap-up to the day, along with ice cream, will bring necessary closure to the meeting.
8. Logistical Support and Coordination: What the Work Team envisions will require extensive logistical support. Some of that support can be anticipated within the existing staffing and resources of College and Community Relations and Plant Operations. However, these resources can only be realistically expected to handle some of the massive undertaking being proposed. It is our recommendation that a Coordinating Committee for the 2002 College Learning Day be designated. The Coordinating Committee would serve as the steering committee for the 2002 College Learning Day. We believe it should be composed of faculty, professional staff, career staff, College and Community Relations and Plant Operations personnel, as well as appropriate administrators. This Work Team is interested in continued involvement in planning and coordination, is willing to serve on the Coordinating Committee, and would be a logical place to look for some of the staffing of that committee.
9. Budget: We further recommend that the College commit to supporting the work of the Coordinating Committee by providing stipends or funding to support reassigned time, and commit to supporting the hiring of temporary help to assist the College and Community Relations staff with the additional workload this learning day will create from soliciting, receiving, and processing of individual staff requests for learning sessions and from the creation of the individual learning agendas for each participant.
10. A Final Thought: We believe the lessons learned by our Vanguard Learning College colleagues at Sinclair Community College are very instructive. After devising three different models for learning days over three years, they reported . . .

### **Conclusions Or “We Should Have Known”**

- Faculty need to initiate the plans for Collegewide Learning Days. Include members of resistant departments on planning team.
- Self-determination is essential for adult learners, AND it’s a Principle of the Learning College (!)
- We have a great deal to share with each other. Time to talk is our greatest luxury.

If we substitute the word participants for faculty, it appears that we have learned those same lessons in only one year. **The question remains: Are we willing to commit the effort and resources necessary to put into action this plan for a College Learning Day? We hope the answer is yes and we strongly urge the adoption of the recommendations contained in this document.**

**Revised  
7/30/02**