SAC Best Practices Committee Recommendations

Administrative Response to Recommendations

Introduction:

The Deans of Instruction (DOIs) sincerely appreciate receiving the SAC Chair Survey Findings based on the survey developed by the SAC Best Practices Committee. Below you will find our collective response to the nine recommendations.

The initial request from the DOIs was for the committee to compile a list of best practices that could support the SAC chair and the entire SAC. We hope that the best practices listed on pages 14-15 will be shared with SAC Chairs in writing or shared during the SAC Chair training this fall.

As you know, greater accountability is expected of higher education institutions from external stakeholders (regional accreditation, employers, state and federal government agencies) and most importantly from our students. As a result, PCC cannot reduce and must maintain our expectations as it relates to the many vital functions the SACs perform. Faculty oversight and responsibility for the curriculum and the development of quality student learning outcomes is the most critical roles of your work as faculty.

We acknowledge and recognize the important work SAC Chairs and all contributing members of the SAC do in the areas of curriculum development, student learning outcomes, assessment and program review including the Division Deans. This important work improves the quality of learning that leads to student success and completion.

Responses to the Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement an equitable compensation plan for the SAC Chair position to be effective fall 2015 that includes but is not be limited to:
   - Release time
   - Stipend
   - Paid training associated with the SAC transition of chairs
   - Delegation
   - Administrative support

Make the compensation plan reflect the model of the Faculty Department Chair compensation plan developed 2006-07.

The College has no plans to compensate SAC Chairs through release time or stipends. Currently, each SAC can pay part-time faculty up to 10 hours at the Special Projects Rate to assist with SAC projects including program review and annual assessment work for the Learning Assessment Council. We are intrigued by the possibility of developing a professional development program for all SAC Chairs that could occur during the Summer to help “make duties and responsibilities seem more specific, measurable and clear”. If this training took place during the summer, we could compensate SAC Chairs at a training that would streamline SAC processes through a “standardized template for reporting” and provide “clear basic instructions for the things [SAC Chairs and other SAC members] need to do.” (SAC Chair Survey Findings, p. 17)
2. Allow part time faculty to serve as SAC chair upon the approval of the Division Dean and the Faculty Department Chair. The establishment of a formal written agreement (see Communication/Guidance recommendation) with compensation would make it possible for part time faculty serve in this leadership position.

Serving as SAC chair is an important contribution to college service, and part of the responsibility of full time faculty. Part time faculty are only asked to serve in this role when there are no full time faculty in the subject area who can do so. Currently there are three part time faculty members serving as SAC chair. They do receive some compensation that is based on the particular anticipated workload, which varies from SAC to SAC. Opening the door to allow part time faculty to serve in this capacity raises several concerns:

- If a majority of SACs opted to have one or two PT faculty serve as SAC Chair, the funding needed would be significant, and is not currently available.
- It is not uncommon for PT faculty to take on additional SAC responsibilities hoping to improve their chances for being selected for FT positions; it would be better not to set up false expectations.
- SAC chairs often express frustration in leading a group of colleagues through challenging processes or contentious topics. A PT faculty would likely have an even more difficult time leading without much influence.

3. Provide administrative support and resources to SAC Chairs proportional to SAC duties.

Providing administrative support to the SACs is not possible due to the large number of SACs and limited number of Instructional Administrative Assistants. In addition, the DOIs have found that in the past when Instructional Administrative Assistants took notes, the notes were either too long and cumbersome, or did not reflect the important information from the meeting. The Instructional Administrative Assistants do not have the content specific background to effectively and efficiently assume this responsibility.

We recommend that one of the committee members, not the chair, take the notes. They should include the highlights, action items, and recommendations for future meetings. Our recommendation is that the notes be short and concise, normally only one to two pages. Once the SAC has approved these notes, they should be sent to the office of the Academic Affairs in order to be posted to the SAC Minutes page. Again, this does not need to be completed by the chair, it can be completed by another member of the SAC.

Regarding the request to have an administrative assistant creating and tallying polls, the college has invested in Qualtrics. This tool is available for use by all employees and is a quick and easy way to write, send, and compile the results from a survey. It is no longer necessary to have someone tally the polls.

4. Establish a formal written agreement for the SAC Chair position.

SAC responsibilities and SAC Chair duties are described in the Academic Standards and Practices Handbook, Section S701, and published in a document on the SAC Resources page. http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/degree-outcome/SACResources.html. Any changes to these documents must be recommended by the EAC and approved by the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs.
To assist SACs and SAC chairs in planning and organizing their work, the DOIs are working with the Dean for Academic Affairs to establish a calendar and timeline of major time-sensitive SAC and SAC chair duties across the academic year.

5. Include SAC Chairs in the quarterly Campus Leaders meeting.

Given that the quarterly Campus Leaders meetings are campus-based and SAC Chairs serve at the College-wide level, they have not been included in these meetings. If a SAC is campus-specific, as is the case for some CTE programs, the relevant Faculty Department Chair would already be included in these meetings.

6. Engage Division Deans in the SAC Chair process.

As the SAC Administrative Liaisons, Division Deans are resources for SAC Chairs. They collaborate with the SAC Chair in the development of the agenda, assist in the development of degrees and certificates and in the program review. Providing this support through attendance at SAC meetings on In-service days may be challenging for Deans serving as the Liaison for multiple SACs, so we encourage Deans and SAC Chairs to work together in advance of those meetings. If there are specific issues to be discussed at a SAC meeting at which the SAC Chair wants the Administrative Liaison to be present, please make this request as much in advance as possible. We acknowledge that timely communication between the Administrative Liaison and the SAC Chair is essential for collaboration to be effective.

7. Release a monthly newsletter from the VPASA office that provides information on curriculum changes, current discussions, coming events and changes in protocols.

We appreciate the urge for timely and comprehensive information, but would like to consider further before launching such a project. For many of the topics listed, there are already well-established information sites that are updated regularly: curriculum changes are entirely captured each month in the minutes of the Curriculum and Degree and Certificates committees. Current discussions are generally captured in EAC minutes as well as in the EAC chair’s notes. Assessment plans and reporting instructions/forms/dates are posted on the Assessment website, [http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/learning-assessment/LACAboutUs.html](http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/learning-assessment/LACAboutUs.html)

Coming events and changes in protocols are released in as timely a fashion as possible, and it seems likely that monthly releases would not be as immediate. It is also likely that messages to SAC chairs would not all be funneled into a newsletter. If those other than the VPASA’s office have messages and questions for SAC chairs, they would continue to send them directly.

8. Make it a policy that directives to SAC Chairs come through the managerial chain of command.

SAC Chairs currently receive requests for information through the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs or her direct reports (Instructional Support, Distance Learning, Enrollment Services, etc.). Requests also come through the SAC Liaison and other members of the SAC. If requests are coming from additional offices, please let us know.
9. Develop an ongoing professional development program for all SAC Chairs. This would include training for first year SAC Chairs.

Academic Affairs has conducted training for first year SAC chairs at SAC chair in-service since Fall 2012. In summer of 2012, the Dean of Academic Affairs convened two half-day focus groups of experienced SAC chairs to consider what topics and timing would best meet the needs of new SAC chairs, and landed on a 90 minute session with topics to include: SAC Chair Responsibilities (including SAC vs. Dept. Chair roles), Liaising with your Liaison, Avoiding SAC Chair burnout, Resources and Processes (curriculum, instructor qualifications, Assessment, Program Review, Meetings and Minutes, Funding sources, and Questions/Discussion). We include as many tips and best practices as possible. The PowerPoint (with links) is posted on the SAC Resources website (The resources website is: http://www.pcc.edu/resources/academic/degree-outcome/SACResources.html). The orientation for new SAC chairs PPT is at the bottom of that page, under “Other Resources”). Faculty who have attended this annual session have said it was helpful, and we will continue this practice. We have included some best practices, and have been hopeful that the SAC Best Practices group would provide useful additional content for that session.

The Professional and Organizational Development (POD) department has provided numerous trainings that would be useful to SAC chairs over the last few years, even though they may not have been specifically marketed to this group. Because of the variety of SAC sizes and composition, not all trainings would be useful to all SAC chairs. While some SAC chairs could use “Facilitation Skills for Leaders,” others might find “Save your Drama for Your Mama” more useful. The 2-day training on how to run meeting received such strong reviews from faculty that we have arranged for a special session to be run this Fall term, for which SAC chairs will have priority registration during in-service week for the 25 seats spaces available.

A more involved professional development program for all SAC Chairs that could occur during the summer to help “make duties and responsibilities seem more specific, measurable and clear” is, as noted above is an intriguing idea. The focus group suggested this as an option (from a full day to a long retreat) but expressed concern that it would not be well attended. Still, it would be worth revisiting the idea possibly to incorporate some of the trainings from POD.