

University 498 Task Force Concluding Report and Recommendations

Submitted to Dean Ashish Vaidya, April 2008

University 498 Task Force Members:

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I Background:

The University 498 Task Force was established in the fall of 2007 by Dean Vaidya to implement a series of pilot courses initiating the University 498 program. The 498 concept (from Dean Vaidya) was for a course organized specifically around faculty research projects where small groups of students (3-6) would assist faculty with their research, and would be designed to produce outcomes in the form of faculty publications or creative projects. Students would gain valuable experience through their participation in actual research, but UNIV 498 courses would be distinct from other advanced research courses organized around *student* research (e.g. capstones).

In the fall of 2007, the task force conducted the following activities: developed a course proposal that was accepted by the Curriculum Committee; developed an RFP, solicited proposals, reviewed proposals (with the assistance of faculty volunteers), and made recommendations for funding proposals. In the spring of 2008, the committee monitored the courses (meeting twice with current 498 faculty), and has worked toward the integration of 498 student presentations into the end of the year Celebration of Excellence.

At this point, the task force has largely fulfilled its original mandate to develop and pilot the program, and is recommending transition to a standing committee, reporting to the Dean of Faculty. Through this report, we document some of our main conclusions and recommendations with the hope that it serves as a useful foundation for moving the program forward. Below, we present an enumeration of committee responsibilities; recommendations concerning the institutionalization of the committee; issues and recommendations for the future of the 498 program; and a statement of our vision of how the program should articulate with other faculty research initiatives.

II Enumeration of UNIV 498 committee responsibilities:

The following is a list of the primary responsibilities that must be assumed by the UNIV 498 Committee. Additional responsibilities may arise, but those listed below will be the central tasks to organize their work:

1. Advertise and serve as an information source for faculty who are potentially interested in organizing and implementing a UNIV 498 course. This should include:
 - a. facilitating ongoing communication between faculty, administrators, and students regarding the UNIV 498 program;
 - b. development and maintenance of a web-based presence that identifies the UNIV 498 Program and its guidelines, and describes current and past UNIV 498 projects.

2. Solicit, review, rank, and recommend faculty proposals to the Dean of Faculty for funding.
3. Assist in coordinating any necessary issues among 498 faculty during the duration of their courses. For example, pending faculty interest, organize and schedule skills-based training workshops for all students participating in UNIV 498 (e.g. conducting library research, PowerPoint presentations, designing poster presentations, etc).
4. Coordinate an end-of-the-year University 498 Symposium. (This year, that will be held in conjunction with the annual Celebration of Excellence, which seems to be an appropriate match.)
5. Assess and account for the UNIV 498 Program's ongoing quality and attainment of identified goals.
6. Publicize success stories about collaborative efforts between CSUCI faculty and student researchers, potentially working with the campus community to promote such publication externally.

III Recommendations for institutionalizing a UNI 498 committee:

The ad hoc task force recommends the following procedures for establishing a more permanent University 498 committee.

1. Members shall be appointed by the Dean subsequent to a formal nomination (or volunteer) process.
2. The committee should be constituted of approximately six members. Members should be selected to represent all of the major areas of study within the university – e.g. physical sciences, social sciences, arts & humanities, business, and education.
3. While the committee should be responsible for all of the tasks identified above, we recommend that the review process be conducted by a separate (or only partially overlapping) group of reviewers. Reviewers should consist primarily (though not necessarily exclusively) of previous University 498 participants. (Note that the previous application process included consent to reviewing subsequent proposals.) We also recommend that the chair of the committee serve as a non-reviewing facilitator of the review process.
4. The solicitation and review process should be facilitated by Faculty Development. The online process that they have established for the Faculty Mini-Grant (FMG) program provides a reasonably well-working model.

IV Issues and recommendations for UNIV 498 committee:

During the spring of 2008, the task force held two meetings with faculty who are conducting 498 courses. Below are some of the insights that we feel would be helpful for the full committee (and the Dean) to keep in mind as we move forward.

- The initial intended purpose of the UNIV 498 program was to facilitate faculty productivity. There are inevitable tensions between the emphasis on faculty productivity and on student training/research, and there are a variety of institutional pressures that press toward the latter. The committee will have to be

diligent if it aims to keep faculty research as the primary emphasis of the UNIV 498 program.

- Several of the current 498 faculty suggested that a one-semester course is not sufficient to produce adequate returns in the form of research assistance relative to the time investment in student training. This is going to be an ongoing issue, but might be addressed both by emphasizing the necessity for discrete projects in the proposal and review process, and by considering ways to expand funding in the future such that two-semester courses are possible.
- There was wide variation in the appropriateness of projects for the 498 format. It is still difficult to determine which factors seem to make more or less appropriate, but given the above points, it is clear that in the current format the committee will have to encourage and select for proposals that identify a very limited component of a larger project which might be reasonably accomplished within a semester.
- The Director of Faculty Development should facilitate the proposal process including distributing the RFP and arranging for an online submission tool for proposals. Faculty Development should provide crucial support for the UNIV 498 program, but should not run the program.
- Faculty generally expressed the need to be particularly selective in choosing students to participate. That should be more greatly encouraged in the future – perhaps integrated into the proposal review process.
- Faculty 498 participants were somewhat ambivalent about the utility of pairing a one-unit skills-based component with the substantive 498 courses. To the extent that such a skills-based component is implemented and useful, this will require substantial foresight and planning.
- Faculty generally would like some way of linking students across 498 courses. One idea for that was an end-of-semester gathering for students to do a dry run of presentations, which might include pizza, etc.
- The committee and faculty participants are collectively unsure of the potential for the Celebration of Excellence to attract community members, and thereby be an effective means to publicize and generate external support for the program. Suggestions for additional publicizing and soliciting support included some kind of booklet or mailing, and/or web presence, all of which might include testimonials from students about the experience.

V UNIV 498 and broader initiatives to promote student and faculty research:

The task force strongly supports the institutionalization and expansion of the UNIV 498 program as an innovative means to 1) support faculty research in the context of heavy CSU teaching loads, and in a manner that fits well with our underlying institutional mission, and 2) to provide a specific form of research training to students to help them to understand actual processes of academic research and creative activity. Here, we would like to make two very specific recommendations concerning the role of UNIV 498 vis-à-vis other research initiatives at CSUCI.

Faculty research initiatives: Given the current context of budget cuts throughout the California State University system, this is a difficult time for developing and institutionalizing new initiatives. Future funding for UNIV 498 should rely on external

sources and, as the budget crisis resolves, additional funding to faculty affairs through state funding mechanisms.

Collectively, the task force feels strongly that the Faculty Mini-Grant (FMG) program is essential to faculty success in maintaining a vital research agenda at CSUCI. The UNIV 498 program will best serve our faculty as a supplement to the FMG program – *not* as a replacement or a competing program. We believe that the integrity (and popularity) of the 498 program will suffer tremendously if it is even perceived as competing with (much less replacing) the very popular and essential FMG program. Consequently, we advise that all efforts are made to avoid even the perception of the 498 program as a competitor to the FMG program.

We are impressed with Dean Vaidya's initiative in securing outside funding for the program for the 2008-09 cycle. We recommend that the permanent committee, in conjunction with the Dean, explore the possibility of making external funding a central part of the UNIV 498 program. We believe that the program might be promoted as an attractive target for external funding, as well as a good opportunity to strengthen links to the community.

Student research initiatives: Over the course of organizing the 498 pilot program, it became clear to the committee that there are a lot of tasks that need to be accomplished to encourage and promote student research. Some of those tasks include: advertising presentation venues and funding sources, and other opportunities for developing undergraduate research; disseminating materials encouraging collaboration between faculty and students (pedagogical research, motivational texts, grant notices, etc.); and encouraging undergraduate researchers to present their work at regional conferences and to participate in the California State University Student Research Competition. The committee should also maintain an active relationship with the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR).

The committee also believes that those tasks go far beyond concern with the UNIV 498 program specifically, and would stretch the 498 committee to include those tasks in its mandate. Consequently, we recommend the formation of a Senate Committee on the Promotion of Student Research to tend to the tasks noted above (and related tasks as they emerge). In the event that this recommendation is accepted, we would find that committee to be the proper "parent" committee for the UNI 498 committee.

VI Continuity and transition:

We would like thank the Dean for his initiative in this innovative program for assisting faculty research, and for the opportunity to help establish a promising program for the faculty at CSUCI. The current task force is willing to offer any assistance in the ongoing project to institutionalize UNIV 498. That includes discussing any of these points in more detail with the Dean or with the permanent committee. We offer our collective hopes that it becomes an additional unique, innovative, and valued aspect of our university community at CSUCI.