

CSU CHANNEL ISLANDS

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES | NON-FUNDED WORK

Project OLAS (Optimizing Learning, Achievement, and Success) Critical Learning Collective (CLC)

Strategic Initiatives and Actions

Educational Excellence

1.10 Provide increased support for faculty development that enhances the quality of teaching, research and creative activity.

Capacity and Sustainability

4.8 Expand professional development opportunities that cultivate leadership skills and enhanced career success for faculty and staff (e.g., mentorships, CI Connect, etc.).

Project Summary

The Critical Learning Collective (CLC) promotes cultural change to increase the use of high impact and culturally responsive practices in and outside the classroom known to increase student retention. The Critical Learning Collective (CLC) promotes cultural change by increasing the use of high impact practices in and outside the classroom known to increase student retention. CLC faculty, staff, and administrator cohorts work together as “critical friends,” raising and workshopping problems of professional practice, sharing ideas, and growing knowledge and skills for increasing student engagement and promoting student success through active learning and culturally-responsive practices.

The purpose of the CLC Faculty Fellows Program is to grow CI’s capacity to provide focused professional learning communities for faculty, staff, and administrators that:

- create a safe space for learning where risk-taking is possible and discomfort is valued, where courageous questions about our work as educators can be asked and methodically examined by “critical friends”
- offer opportunities to learn and practice high impact practices at the classroom level (e.g., how to build an engaging and safe classroom environment for students, where risk-taking is possible and discomfort is valued; how to design active learning experiences in the classroom)
- provide community and concrete support for faculty who “reaffirm their embrace of equity and inclusion; their commitment to diversity as a source of renewal, vitality, strength, and enhanced collective intellectual capacity; their commitment to facilitating learning in the classroom, on campus, and in the community; and their roles in securing a safe learning environment for all our students” (excerpted from Academic Senate Resolution #16-02)

SASEI supports professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators that advance the values of inclusive excellence and serve our purpose as an HSI to examine student success and close equity gaps. In 2017, SASEI launched the Critical Learning Collective (CLC) to support student success through professional development for faculty/staff/administrators. The use of the word “Collective” is intentional, designed to evoke associations with the active, community-organizing energy of the word.

For faculty cohorts, priority consideration is given to applicants who are full-time faculty in their first two years at CSUCI. For staff and administrator cohorts, priority consideration is given to full-time staff and administrator applicants who work directly with historically underserved students and/or are directly involved with campus student equity/HSI initiatives. All faculty and staff interested in CLC values (e.g., critical, inclusive, safe space for taking risks as teachers and learners) are encouraged to apply.

The success of any learning community requires commitment to shared values. For the CLC initiative, these include:

- investment in students' and colleagues' success and desire to be of service to others' learning and growth
- the importance of safety to risk-taking and the importance of discomfort to learning
- the willingness of individual group members to share genuine questions, dilemmas and successes and to be open to learning from them with each other
- the reliability and commitment of each member to full attendance and active participation in building a genuine critical learning collective

Baseline Data

The total number of CLC participants since this initiative began is now 48, including 28 faculty members representing 14 disciplines, 14 staff members representing 9 offices/programs, and 9 administrators representing 6 offices/programs. Reflections on the experience are uniformly positive, with completers consistently noting productive changes in their communication and problem-solving strategies and/or their pedagogical practices. The following is a representative comment from a faculty member, demonstrating the practical impact of the CLC experience: "I have experienced pedagogical impact in that the [CLC] protocols are great tools for me to use in my classes to teach difficult topics like race, gender, ability, and more. I've implemented the [CLC] protocols in my classes and they have worked very well in creating discussion among the students.... This has helped me in the development of my classes and tying my in class teachings to larger ideas on theory and practice."

Qualitative data such as this can demonstrate attitudinal and cultural shifts. A qualitative research project is being planned and will be conducted during the 2019-2020 academic year for the purpose of understanding how CLC participation is impacting participants in the 6 cohorts that worked together in their year-long learning community, from Spring 2017 through Fall 2019.

- Cohort 1: 9 Faculty (January-December, 2017)
- Cohort 2: 7 Staff (August 2017-May 2018)
- Cohort 3: 9 Faculty (January-December, 2018)
- Cohort 4: 7 Staff (August 2018-May 2019)
- Cohort 5: 6 Administrators (Sept 2018-Sept 2019)

Cohort 6: 10 Faculty (January-December 2019) Goals

AY 2019-2020 Goals:

1. To assess and evaluate project impact to date. A qualitative study will be conducted by the Project staff over the 2019-2020 academic year to determine the impact that CLC participation has had on participants.
2. To support previous CLC participants in utilizing their newly-acquired CLC coaching skills, as each completer is qualified through their year-long experience in the program to lead a new cohort. Supports will be provided in two ways: (a) Potential stipends could be provided for up to 6 new CLC coaches (working in pairs as a strategy for supporting individuals in this new role) who launch a CLC cohort of new participants; (b) A CLC Coaches' group will be formed, led by an experienced CLC facilitator, to provide an ongoing forum for problem-solving and ongoing development of coaching skills.

Project Status

Implementing Phase

Key Leaders and Divisions	
Lead Division	Division of Academic Affairs
Collaborating Division	N/A
Action Champions	Amanda Quintero, Associate Vice Provost, Student Success & Community Engagement and Kaia Tollefson, Professor of Education
Action Project Leads	Kaia Tollefson, Professor of Education
Action Collaborators	Michelle Hasendonckx, Assistant Director, Student Academic Success & Equity Initiatives and Betty Ortiz, Project OLAS Coordinator