

NCSPOD Institutional Merit Award 2008: Delta College

“Recognizing that the Delta (College) culture models all employees as learners with opportunities for continual growth, the Center for Organizational Success was formed in 2005 to promote collegiality, initiative, and creativity through lifelong learning so that individual employees, work teams and the College as a whole will be successful. (In 2005) the idea of a center that would provide professional and organizational development learning opportunities for all employees was a somewhat foreign idea for our staff members. Today, just three short years later, the COS has become a household name at the College. Its mission is simple: to provide professional and organizational development opportunities and support for all Delta College employees and work teams.” So says Dr. Jean Goodnow, Delta College President and a strong supporter of the COS.

Delta College’s Center for Organizational Success (COS) serves all Delta College employees by providing professional and organizational development that is relevant for individual work needs, aligned with the College’s mission, vision, and values, and responsive to the College Strategic Plan. The Center for Organizational Success (COS) has heightened all employees’ awareness to their own role in service to students and their learning, and how each employee contributes to student retention. A significant part of COS responsibility is to serve as a bridge between employees, building community and trust, as they seek to effectively teach and work in a system that is ever-evolving, facing greater accountability and fiscal demands and changing student needs. The COS accomplishes this support through a variety of program offerings, as-needed technology assistance, the COS technology resource center, and the COS professional library.

The COS originated in 2005 as an outgrowth of the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence (FCTE), which has served faculty professional development since 1990. The newer “umbrella entity”, the COS, was designed to broaden its base to include all Delta College employees without minimizing or reducing the professional development for faculty, and formed to elevate the professional development available to all. That worthy goal has been realized. Yet though we have come a long way in satisfying the original vision for the COS, we realize that we are only at the beginning of our journey; we have far to go. Noteworthy professional development programs for staff include the Leading and Learning Together program, Leadership Experience, and the Support Staff Series.

Leading and Learning Together was designed for Delta College staff as a comprehensive three-phase continuous quality improvement professional development program that includes an orientation to College standards, systems and processes; ambassador training; and leadership culture development. Delta 101, the first phase, orients employees to College standards, systems, and processes necessary for job success; introduces Delta College culture, mission, vision, and values; assists employees in understanding the importance of professional and organizational growth; and has participants begin an employee portfolio. In the second level, Staff Ambassadors, participants job-shadow and are mentored; they observe vital College processes, and learn about Delta’s departments and systems from representatives of those departments. Leadership Culture, the third phase of Leading and Learning Together, teaches participants leadership practices for empowering “leading from your desk”. Two of the three phases are offered as ED 300-level professional development courses, the first professional development courses developed specifically for Delta staff.

Leadership Experience, a program for mid-level managers at Delta College, is based on the American Association of Community College Competencies for Community College Leaders. Topics include communication and collaboration; coaching, mentoring and developing staff; organizational strategy; professionalism; resource management; and community college advocacy, all described with the Delta College culture in mind.

Support Staff Series professional development sessions are offered twice each month, as repeat sessions, to accommodate varying work schedules of administrative office professionals. We alternate monthly topics between technology-focused and soft-skills offerings. The most popular event of the year occurred

last December, a GIFTSS session. All GIFTSS presenters were support staff, and most of them had never led a work presentation before.

Delta's ED 300 professional development course series was initiated to support the professional development of faculty and staff in a convenient, tuition-supported, colleague-instructed and in house format. These courses aim at helping faculty and staff to integrate specific curricular programs and learning-centered values of the College. Each course is guided by academic course learning Outcomes and Objectives for the faculty and staff enrolled in the course.

The ED 390 course "Best Practices" is required for all new first-year full-time faculty and is paid as part of the new faculty member's first year courseload. The ED 390 course was created to "hone teaching practices that foster active learning, reflective practice, and collegial modeling of best pedagogical practices. In addition, its aim is to acknowledge the value of institutional history and culture, and aims to sustain and build on positive elements of Delta's organization that can serve as building blocks for our ongoing growth into the future." Having retained nearly 100% of our newly-hired full-time faculty over the course of the three years, most of whom are moving smoothly through the early stages of the promotion processes and serving widely on College learning and service initiatives, we see the positive impact of the program. We have added a "Faculty Friends" Program for faculty in the second and third years of employment, recognizing that support and collaboration among faculty aspiring to their first promotions and tenure is a continuing need.

"The Seasons Project" is another outgrowth of the need for sustained development of faculty at various stages of career life. Seasons supports mid and late career faculty. "Seasons" participants now serve on a presidential task force to improve and refine rewards and recognition for faculty and other employees, and another "Seasons" initiative has been a study and recommendations regarding emeritus status for faculty.

An innovative faculty and staff funding opportunity is found in our Endowed Teaching Chairs Program, which is administered through the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence (FCTE) and funded through endowments in the Delta College Foundation. These one-time \$5,000 awards (of which we have three, with a fourth nearly funded) support innovative projects that result in unique learning opportunities for students and faculty who develop them.

In addition to these focused-audience programs, the COS/FCTE offers a dynamic monthly calendar of professional development sessions open to all employees.

Helen Burnstad said of the COS, "The creation of the Center for Organizational Success (COS) at Delta College was a major step toward moving the college toward a comprehensive staff development program. It has become the umbrella site for technology training, faculty development, staff training and development and, most recently, the leadership development program. It is a model for other colleges who have the vision and leadership to create an organizational structure that truly results in organizational change." Helen Burnstad and NCSPD have been instrumental in the founding and growing of the COS.

Don Halog, Delta's Vice President for Instruction and Learning Services, is fondly dubbed "the father of the COS". It was Don's vision of building on the success of Delta's Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence to create an entity that would provide professional development for all Delta College employees. Don, when asked to describe a powerful result of the COS, said, "Because the Center for Organizational Success has been established and is creating, facilitating, and leading the professional development of our employees, Delta College has demonstrated its commitment to valuing people." And why is this important? "Employee engagement is indispensable to meet our mission of academic, professional, and personal excellence."