

May 31, 2007

To: Innovation Panel Participants

Re: Innovation Panel Report

Robert Brodnick, Ph.D.
Assistant Provost

Colleagues,

Office of the Provost
3601 Pacific Avenue
Stockton, CA 95211
Tel 209.946.2553
Fax 209.946.2063

In early May 2007, we hosted a panel of three experts to assess our culture, readiness, and capacities for innovation at Pacific. A forum was held at the conclusion of their visit and the panel has just sent me their final report, which I have attached. I wanted to highlight the recommendations and share what I consider some of the important take-aways from the consultation.

Recommendations from the written report:

1. Broaden participation in innovation initiatives, involving staff sooner in the creative process, and communicate innovation efforts more fully while expecting feedback
2. Define the term innovation and clarify what an innovation could be and what it may not be for Pacific
3. Enhance the risk/reward environment, providing incentives and support increasing their comfort taking risks for improvements
4. Focus innovation efforts on top priorities while deciding what to stop doing – audit current efforts and eliminate as necessary to balance workloads and resources
5. Assess and remove obstacles to innovation to improve services, providing leadership for issues that bridge organizational boundaries

Additional important observations from the visit and forum:

6. Continue to balance strong traditions and new initiatives
7. Seek to balance the freedom to create and the controls to manage
8. Look beyond our day to day work and outside the university for opportunities to create competitive advantage, while conducting analyses of the market and competitors to sharpen and prioritize innovation targets
9. Seek training and professional development to build capacities

The panel visited at an opportune time with the recent adoption of *Pacific Rising* and ongoing planning on the details of the related *Strategic Action Plan*. I wanted to share with you a number of activities planned to follow up on these recommendations.

- With a focus on innovation and the panel's recommendations, engage the academic leadership and the President's Cabinet in a refinement of the goals and actions in the *Strategic Action Plan* over the summer, preparing a third draft of the *SAP* for a broader review in August
- The Institutional Priorities Committee will work over the summer in a significant redrafting of the University's Planning Assumptions and Budget Guidelines, rebuilding the document around the six Commitments and in consideration of the panel's recommendations as appropriate. This will align next year's budget request system with the structure of *Pacific Rising* and allow the community to bring forward requests for innovation.
- Provide a brief white paper for the University community on the definition of innovation for Pacific.

These three tools are necessary steps, but it's the next action that will really begin to propel us forward.

- The innovation initiatives (CVTs) that were begun in tandem with the *Pacific Rising* planning process were intentionally focused on collaborative, multidisciplinary academic programs. This left two additional innovation areas to be dealt with in the future – innovation in the disciplines and innovation in administration and services. It is time to convene work groups in the fall to consider implementation actions for moving innovation forward in these two areas.

While this work is only beginning, I believe these actions will bring us closer to the vision set in *Pacific Rising* and further build the capacities we need to succeed. I welcome your thoughts and input along the way.

Thank you all for your participation!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RBh', written in a cursive style.

Robert Brodnick

cc: President's Cabinet

**UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
INNOVATION PANEL SUMMARY
MAY 2-3, 2007**

Margaret Miller, James Morley and Walter Robb presented their findings and recommendations regarding University innovation and the implementation of *Pacific Rising* on May 2nd and 3rd at a concluding open community forum at the University of the Pacific. The following summary captures those thoughts, plus other comments that were either conveyed in other meetings with Pacific leadership or added as this summary was prepared.

The organizing framework of this summary is determined by the expectations that guided the work of the panel, which were to explore Pacific's commitment to innovation and to assess institutional readiness. Because many recommended actions logically follow from findings, those suggestions are placed with the findings.

SUMMARY

We talked with a wide range of the Pacific faculty, staff, and senior leadership. We did not meet with students as a separate group, but a student leader did attend one session in his role as a member of the ISPC.

Those who had had long tenure at Pacific attested to the great progress made on all fronts in the past decade and the impact and importance of the quality and continuity of the senior leadership team. There was also recognition that much remains to be done in order for Pacific to meet the goals of *Pacific Rising*, the university's plan for 2008-2015. The competitive environment of today and the future were seen as a window of opportunity that requires new ideas and actions.

In our conversations with administrative staff, we generally found them feeling left out of the loop regarding the impact of innovative activities on their operations. They expressed frustration that they often learned of new work requirements and needed process changes too late to give beneficial input into how such procedures might be handled. At times they also felt unaware of the changes taking place at Pacific.

Recommendation:

Early in the planning process, each new initiative—whether from a CVT or not—should engage in conversation any administrative departments that

will be affected—typically in the finance, registrar, financial-aid and facilities areas.

Communications with faculty, staff, and students should be evaluated for their effectiveness in conveying the excitement and extent of progress and change. Leadership should also develop occasions for staff, faculty, and students to mix with and meet each other, as well as celebrations of accomplishments.

Each group we met with commented on the importance of relationships at Pacific. Relationships are a key reason for student satisfaction with the university and faculty and staff effectiveness and retention. On the other hand, a comment was made that some people on campus are more likely to receive resources because of the strength of their relationships with key decision-makers.

Recommendation:

During times of staff and faculty turnover and rapid change, emphasis should be placed on the maintenance of existing relationships and the creation of new ones. Employee surveys and subsequent meetings in small groups for feedback are two strategies the institution might consider. Requiring the formal inclusion of more staff and faculty in innovation planning and implementation could be another. This effort will probably require some resources.

EXPLORING PACIFIC'S COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

There was general agreement that the environment for innovation at Pacific has continued to improve. The latest round of innovation strategies has been well received and is seen as clear evidence of support for academic creativity, especially regarding interdisciplinary programs. The conversation with the deans gave strong evidence of their ability and authority to take independent action and risks and to guide innovations within their schools and departments.

As the conversations moved to mid-level administrative staff, there was less agreement about opportunities for innovation and creativity. We heard general agreement that the term “innovation” was not well understood. Similarly there was criticism that innovation was only being applied to new academic programs, to the exclusion of administrative process improvements. This was tied to a sense of the administrative staff's being underappreciated for their efforts. Most of their work is

aided, or constrained, by the capability of the data systems they have to work with. They reported that these systems are at various levels of dysfunctionality. The lack of modern ERP systems greatly constrains the staff's ability to respond to the needs generated by innovation in the areas they serve, especially in academic and student services.

Recommendation:

Carefully define how the term "innovation" will be used at Pacific: Is it still innovation if it is new at Pacific but already being done someplace else? Is it new if it has been done before at Pacific but is being tried again? Can a process improvement count as an innovation? What about pedagogical innovations? There should be recognition of creativity and innovation in processes as well as programs. It may be best to more highly focus on very specific and participatory innovation efforts prioritized by the six Commitments in Pacific Rising.

Senior and middle management should study the risk/reward environment for administrative staff. If the penalty for making mistakes is high and the reward and recognition for success is low, there is no incentive for change. To increase the administrative staff's willingness to take risks and be creative, Pacific's senior leadership should provide a management environment that recognizes good work, innovation, and suggestions for improvement and that provides clear incentives to be creative. In general, more celebration of staff's good work is recommended.

ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL READINESS

In any organization, readiness starts with clear mission, goals, and values. The innovation panel thought that the twenty Strategic Directions and dozens of actions of *Pacific Rising* were too broad and numerous. While this amplitude provides great latitude for creativity, it also dilutes attention to the core values and mission of Pacific and prevents Pacific from establishing its distinctiveness in the higher education market.

So many parameters and goals also created a sense of uncertainty regarding assessment and evaluation.

Recommendation:

Goal setting, assessment, and performance could be improved by narrowing the focus of Pacific's efforts to its core of "student-centered learning" (education of the whole person, education for leadership) and "linking liberal learning with professional studies." Both of these suggest

the importance of including pedagogical innovations among the projects that are funded.

Pacific is a small private university with limited resources. In today's highly competitive environment, the university cannot be all things to all people. Making difficult choices creates tension and conflict, but the alternative is an unclear identity and mediocre programs. Pacific should strive to do a few things well and sustainably. As noted above, focusing on specific innovation efforts selected specifically to enhance the Commitments and Strategies in Pacific Rising.

Pacific should do a systematic audit of everything that is currently in place to support its core mission and also do a market analysis of its chief competitors for students. This will help it see which of its existing activities (e.g., service learning, ethics across the curriculum, scholarships of teaching and engagement) it wants to enhance, where the gaps in its services to students are, and what it may want to stop doing.

Academic leadership and faculty expressed frustration regarding the lack of essential administrative support for the changes they want to make. But as already mentioned, the data systems, especially in student services and financial aid, often do not meet today's needs, let alone the new requirements of innovative academic programs that cross departments and schools. As a consequence, there is much manual "work-around," added work load, and criticism of the staff who work in these offices, who must also consider regulatory constraints. This is not a formula for sustainable innovation.

Recommendation:

The underlying staff structure and systems issues must be addressed if Pacific is to move ahead. Innovation must result in improvement to student service. While much progress has been made on the IT front, the administrative service problem is very complex and systemic and cannot be solved with small incremental steps. The full engagement of the provost and vice president for finance and administration will be required to assess and solve the problems involved.

The innovation panel suggests that a "goal-oriented" strategy be used to do so. A steering committee with the above leadership and the involvement of other key officers of the university should be established. This committee would prioritize tasks such as a "one-stop shopping" for students, develop and implement a plan to complete them, and resolve issues as they occur during the process. The results of this work should be measurable, and they should be carefully monitored.