



Learning & Students

I had the pleasure of attending the 2011 Research and Planning Group's [Strengthening Student Success Conference](#) in San Francisco, CA. Special thanks to the [Basic Skills Coordinating Committee](#) for supporting my attendance. I chose to focus on one strand for most of my sessions – **Learning from Students**. The following is a brief overview of the presentations and generally what I learned.

Randy Brown, Marilyn Abad-Cardinalli, Jessica Hooper, Karen Warren and Fran Lozano from Gavilan College shared how they listen to students' voices. "A group of researchers, staff, students and faculty set out to document the experiences of a sample of English basic skills students over the course of a term." Their final product was a **Student Voices: Are You Listening** video that was powerful. The video clearly showed how students were thinking about their courses and their work.

Another session looked at **Inviting Students to the Table: Involving Students in Decision-Making** by Elaine Cole of Las Positas College and Cleavon Smith of Berkeley City College. The presenters not only shared how they accomplished their work with students (through focus groups), but they also asked the attendees to go through some exercises to understand the process of engaging students in decision-making while using the framework of inquiry. The duo demonstrated that students can be involved in all steps in the assessment process.

Filling Up the Half-Full Glass: Students Teach Teachers about Students was presented by Monique Williams of the Faculty Inquiry Network and Sean McFarland from Acceleration In Context. Monique and Sean focused on how to make meta-cognition fun - & it was fun.

Other presentations included:

Helping Students Follow Instructions: A Faculty Inquiry Experience by Alan Razez, Melinda (Mindy) Shirey, Angela Prelip & Rebecca Nelson of Fresno City College

Students' Perspectives about Success in Developmental English: Dreams of a Common Language by Lauren Halsted of Cuyamaca Community College

Maintaining the Momentum: Student Engagement in Each Step of the Action Inquiry Cycle by Elaine Cole, Las Positas College & Cleavon Smith of Berkeley City College

Addressing the Fear Factor Inside the Classroom by Rebecca Cox of Seton Hall University

What did I learn from these sessions? Faculty members demonstrated that they have provided opportunities for students to be engaged in and be part of the inquiry process for outcomes assessment. The examples showed both an engagement from the start of deciding an outcome to how to measure it and to examining what the results mean. Faculty members become guides for students throughout the process, but once the students knew what they were doing they were very productive on their own. The faculty members became the data/teaching/research coaches. The presenters' enthusiasm of how they did the process and how engaged students were in it showed in their discussions and their desire to have us learn how to do it too.

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