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The POD Research Committee

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Research

The POD Research Committee

B. CLAUDE MATHIS

When the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education was formed, the idea of recognizing research through the efforts of a research committee had a low priority among all the plans necessary to giving birth to an organization as eclectic as POD. The Network demonstrated very clearly at the Fourth Annual Conference in Oklahoma during November 1978 that POD is an idea which has survived the personal excitements which helped to create it. An interest in research and the dissemination of research results has emerged with strong support from the membership. The several meetings of the Research Committee at the last annual conference demonstrated that the membership is ready to begin the development of a research agenda for POD.

The meetings in which the POD Research Committee interacted with those who attended the Oklahoma conference were ably chaired by Susan Brock, St. Mary's Junior College, Minneapolis. Susan provided active leadership as chairperson of this committee during its formative months. The session which she organized at the 1978 Annual Conference for the Research Committee—Research Domains in Professional Development—helped to identify some elements of the emerging POD research agenda. The POD members who attended this conference session addressed four questions which the research committee asked. These were:

1. What is our working definition of research?
2. Why do we (professional developers) need to do research?
3. What do we need to research?
4. What are practical options for determining how POD can move ahead in encouraging, utilizing, and disseminating research?

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Discussions of the issues underlying these questions produced the idea of a framework which would be helpful in identifying the domains of research most associated with faculty, instructional, and organizational development in higher education. A corollary to the identification of the framework was the idea of developing scenarios for ways in which POD might conduct, support, recognize, and encourage research.

A rationale for research which became a working statement for the research committee prior to the annual conference best expresses the needs of POD membership for an approach which emphasizes both the demands for using research results as well as doing research. The statement is as follows:

The POD Network in Higher Education is composed of professionals concerned with change and improvement within institutions of higher learning. Because the aim of POD is to help improve higher education as well as to serve its membership, it is important that POD provide resources, encouragement, and direction in research to its members. Most of us in the POD Network are practitioners, administrators, or teachers involved with faculty, instructional, and organizational development within institutions. A large body of knowledge relates to this endeavor, derived from fields such as behavioral and educational psychology, organizational management, and educational technology. Our challenge is to determine how this body of theory and knowledge can best be applied within these institutions. The effectiveness of our work depends in part on the degree to which we utilize systematic investigative procedures to substantiate aspects of our work. These procedures will provide reliable feedback for correcting and improving the process by which faculty, instructional, and organizational development is achieved. Systematic investigation with rigor, controls, and a questioning posture is essential for both the quality of the solutions found within institutions, and for the future progress of this field. By utilizing an investigative or research approach we will be able to supply direction for our work, a more clear orientation for newcomers to the field, and maintain credibility within the academic community.

The chairperson for the POD Research Committee has changed hands for 1979. The membership owes Susan Brock and her committee a vote of thanks for giving the idea of research the push needed. POD Research Committee membership for 1979 will include the present committee plus some additions. The list is as follows:

Claude Mathis, Chairperson
 John Andrews
 Susan A. Brock
 Stephen C. Brock
 Dale Brown
 Joseph Clark
 Michael L. Davis
 James Gump
 Barbara Helling
 Sandra Inglis

Wayne Kirschling
 Robert Menges
 Al Mizell
 Stanley J. Nicholson
 Robert G. Pierleoni
 Eugene Rice
 Clare Rose
 Al Smith
 Robert Young

The committee will be corresponding and planning during 1979 for further initiatives which can be presented at the next annual conference.

University of California
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Candidates must have a distinguished record as an educational evaluator and a knowledge of instructional improvement activities in higher education. They must hold positions outside the public higher education system of the State of California.

Letters of application and resumes must be received by April 16, 1979. Correspondence should be addressed to:

Assistant Vice Chancellor Michael Hoffman
 Office of Academic Affairs
 University of California
 Davis, California 95616
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