

**Community of Inquiry, Practice, and Action on Second-Year Student Success**

The Academic Success Center (ASC) at CSUSM invites members of the faculty to join the first Community of Inquiry, Practice, and Action (CIPA). A CIPA is a group of faculty who come together as a group to learn about a topic or issue related to student success, work collaboratively to incorporate that learning into their practice, and develop a project to effect change on campus. The inaugural CIPA will focus on sophomore or second-year student success at CSUSM, an under-researched issue on the CSUSM campus and in the wider literature. Even if you do not currently teach second-year students, you can be a valuable contributor to this Community.

A *community of inquiry* is a group of individuals who collaboratively engage in critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and develop mutual understanding ([Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007](https://csusm-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN_ericEJ796848&context=PC&vid=01CALS_USM&search_scope=EVERYTHING&tab=everything&lang=en_US)).

A *community of practice* is a group of individuals who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of interest in order to improve their practice ([Wenger-Trayner, 2015](http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/)).

These concepts have been combined in faculty development to create communities of inquiry and practice, groups with a dual focus on learning and on adapting that learning to influence teaching practice. The CIPA adds a third concept to the mix: the *community of action*, a group that works together to identify and tackle issues head-on. Combining these three frameworks creates a group based around collaborative learning, a focus on local context, and positive institutional change.

The inaugural CIPA will be centered on the second-year student experience at CSUSM. With the combination of frameworks described above, the CIPA’s goals are

* **Inquiry**: to dive into the literature on second-year success
* **Practice**: to understand the sophomore experience at CSUSM and tie our experiences to the research as well as to institutional data
* **Action**: to collaboratively develop a project that directly addresses second-year success for CSUSM students

**Why study second-year students?** CSUSM’s interest in second-year students is driven by a recent finding that although we have made significant progress with regard to retaining students into their second years, attrition remains high during that second year: around 15% of the first-time students who make it to year two do not return for year three. This issue is not unique to CSUSM, however. Although higher education research has long focused on student transitions in college, including the transition from high school to college which comprises literature on the first year experience, recently the discipline has begun to focus on transitional experiences within a student’s college career, with particular emphasis placed on the vital second year of college.

The second year, often referred to as the “sophomore year,” is an important time in a college student’s life, when students face key decisions about their futures without the kind of guided support offered in the first year. At the same time, they may be taking more academically demanding courses as they begin to complete lower division general education and enter their majors ([Tobolowsky, 2008](https://csusm-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN_wj10.1002/he.326&context=PC&vid=01CALS_USM&search_scope=EVERYTHING&tab=everything&lang=en_US)). Molly Schaller writes that academic pathways and student choices merge to create a key developmental phase for these students where they experience a strong tension between continuing academic explorations and firming up choices for the future ([Schaller, 2005](https://csusm-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN_sagej10.1002_abc.131&context=PC&vid=01CALS_USM&search_scope=EVERYTHING&tab=everything&lang=en_US)). Faculty play an essential role in guiding students through the second year while remaining active, energized, connected to their major and discipline, and ready to engage in the kind of deeper learning necessary to succeed in upper division disciplinary coursework ([Schreiner, 2010](https://csusm-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=TN_eblEBL468627&context=PC&vid=01CALS_USM&search_scope=EVERYTHING&tab=everything&lang=en_US)).

CIPA faculty will review the literature on second-year students and compare and contrast it with their own experiences and with CSUSM student data to answer questions such as the following:

* Who is a “sophomore” at CSUSM? Is there a sophomore or second-year identity? Is there value in creating such an identity?
* Is there such a thing as the “sophomore slump?” If so, does it manifest itself academically, developmentally, or in some other form? Does it look different for CSUSM students?
* How do we reach this population of students, both inside and outside of the curriculum?

**What is the role in the CIPA for faculty who don’t teach second-year students?** We expect these discussions will be informed from a variety of faculty perspectives, so direct experience teaching second-year students is not required, nor is a current teaching assignment of second-year courses. Interest in the topic and a desire to learn and explore are the only requirements.

**Overview of the CIPA**: As participants of the CIPA, we ask that you commit to

* Meeting as a community of inquiry, practice, and action about once a week during the Fall semester and every other week during the Spring semester. Community meetings will take place on Friday afternoons from 1:30 to 2:30pm. The total meeting time will be 25 hours over the Fall and Spring semesters. Meetings in the early and mid-Fall will focus on *inquiry*, or investigating and learning about the topic; those in the mid-to-late Fall will focus on *practice*, or connecting the earlier learning to our work; and those in the Spring will focus on *action*, or developing a potential solution to an issue raised during the inquiry. [A tentative schedule is located here](https://www.csusm.edu/asc/faculty/cipa_schedule.pdf).
* Engaging with the literature in preparation of the weekly meetings during the Fall semester. Readings will require no more than 1 hour per week (about 9 hours total for the semester).
* Working collaboratively as a community of action to develop a project focused on second-year student success. Please note that the CIPA will be focused on the development of this project, not its implementation, which will be handled by the Academic Success Center. Faculty who participated in the CIPA may still be involved in implementation, but it is not an expectation of the CIPA itself.

**Who can apply?** Faculty from any discipline and of any rank/status are encouraged to apply.

**How will faculty be selected?** Faculty will be selected based on these criteria:

* Clearly articulated interest in the CIPA’s goals;
* Diverse representation with regard to disciplinary area and years of service;
* Availability for the meeting times.

**What is the compensation?** Faculty who participate in the CIPA will be awarded $750 for professional development or a stipend from the Academic Success Center. Stipends will be distributed toward the end of the Spring semester.

**To apply:** Fill out our [Application Form](https://calstatesanmarcos2.wufoo.com/forms/cipa-application-form-ay1819/). The priority deadline for applications is the end of the day on Tuesday, May 22. We will begin reviewing applications after that date. The application will close on Friday, August 17.

If you have any questions, please contact Dawn Formo, Dean of Undergraduate Studies (dformo@csusm.edu).