Overview:
The Basic Skills Committee at Fresno City College believes that there are many ways to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and student access/services. This year we would like to focus on one that we believe shows special promise. An inquiry-based approach, where faculty design ways to understand why and how their students are (or are not) learning and succeeding is known as Faculty Inquiry Groups or FIGs. The following points illustrate the effectiveness of FIGs as listed on the cfkeep.org website.

- Create professional communities in which educators can share what happens in classrooms and student services.
- Articulate and negotiate the most important outcomes for student learning.
- Use the tools of classroom research to understand the experience of students more deeply.
- Share insights and findings.
- Examine a wide range of evidence, from examples of student work to campus-level quantitative data that describes patterns of student performance and access.
- Invite, and offer, critical reflection and peer review.
- Collaborate in the design of curriculum, assignments, and assessments.
- Build trust as an essential component of ongoing improvement.
- Support professional identity and responsibility among educators.

The Basic Skills Committee proposes to pilot five (5) to eight (8) FIGs for spring 2010 with three faculty members per FIG maximum. There will be a $500 stipend per faculty member. Proposals are to be submitted by December 1, 2009 to the Basic Skills Coordinator, Donna Cooper (ext. 8120). The committee will use a rubric for evaluating proposals and will vote on submitted proposals on December 9th, 2009. FIG participants will be paid in June 2010 only after all work is completed and a plan for sharing information has been submitted. Please use the attached worksheet as a guideline for your proposal. Be as detailed as possible in your answers. FIG members must focus on three major tasks in one of three research strands:

Three major tasks:

a. Develop a question – Questions that generate inquiry almost always start with noticing - noticing where student learning often falters, noticing that students seem to be struggling with the same issues in each section of a course. Along with noticing, a question is always driven by the values and hopes of the teacher/counselor/staff member.

b. Conduct research (e.g., implement pilot of a best practice; research what contributes to success or failure rates in a particular course/department); determine what worked, what didn't, and why. What does the literature say? Has anyone else researched this? Gather and evaluate data.

c. Share implications/conclusions of research (e.g., Faculty will consider eliminating those efforts that do not seem to have a positive effect on student learning, persistence or retention). Examples of sharing are: flex day, lunch and learn, regional workshop, etc.
Three research strands (select one):

Strand 1: Discipline or subject level
Examples:
- “Why do Basic Skills students struggle with word problems in Intermediate Algebra?”
- “Why do so many math faculty members find Intermediate Algebra onerous to teach?”

Strand 2: Department or division level
Examples:
- “Should the math 260 series be eliminated?”
- “Are students that are concurrently enrolled in English 125 and Criminology 1 successfully completing Criminology 1 at the same rate as those students that are either concurrently enrolled or have completed English 1A?”

Strand 3: Student Access/Services
Examples:
- Are our “First Year Programs” meeting the needs of current first year students?
- Retention & Persistence: What are the gaps in the areas of Retention & Persistence that keep students from being successful?
- Tutoring Services/Access: Are the students who use these services improving year to year in their college career? If not, what can we do to improve this?
- Library Services/Access: Are there effective practices that would assist students and improve success that we haven’t tried?
- Counseling Services/Access: How can Counseling provide the most efficient and effective means of services for students? Do all students have access to counseling services? If not, why not?

Once you have chosen a research strand, then you will need to complete the following steps:

Initiate:

a. Share purpose and process in department meeting and/or with colleagues (including adjuncts).
b. Department/colleagues self-select FIG members through volunteers.
c. FIG members begin the questioning process and begin to develop proposal.
d. FIG members may receive technical assistance from the Basic Skills Coordinator.
Proposal Process:

a. FIG groups complete proposal packet.
b. All FIG groups submit proposals by December 1, 2009.
c. Basic Skills Committee evaluates proposals based on a rubric and votes on December 9th to approve proposal or not.
d. At least one FIG member from each group should be present at the 12/9 meeting to represent the proposal.
e. Once approved, FIG participants sign an agreement and receive training.
f. Stipends will be paid in June 2010 after completion of work and a written proposal for how the FIG team will present their findings is submitted.

Research, Data Collection, and Reporting:

Research
   Developing a question
   Designing a plan for research
   Gathering Evidence

Data collection
   Evaluating Evidence

Reporting
   Present and Review findings