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From the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

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The role of faculty in the governance of community colleges—local and state level.

In all of *higher* education, unlike the K-12 system, the faculty members join with administrators in what is commonly referred to as “shared” or “participatory” governance. How the shared governance plays out may vary depending on the state’s regulations and laws, on the segment (two- and four-year institutions) or on the tradition and culture of the institution. In California, both laws and regulations establish the roles of community college faculty in college governance as active, contributing participants.

Education Code §70902 (b) (7) requires that “The board of governors ... ensure ... the right of academic senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards.”

Elsewhere in Education Code, the faculty, through their academic senates are given responsibilities in such areas as the minimum qualifications of faculty (§87359), hiring policies (§87360) and degree requirements (§87615). Section 70901 establishes “Minimum standards governing procedures established by governing boards of community college districts to ensure faculty, staff, and students the right to participate effectively in district and college governance, and the opportunity to express their opinions at the campus level and to ensure that these opinions are given every reasonable consideration, and the right of academic senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards.”

The Board of Governors for California Community Colleges, through Title 5 regulations, grants authority to faculty in more than ten distinct areas. Here are a few citations that illustrate the role of faculty through the academic senates:

- The Governing Board shall adopt policies delegating authority and responsibility to its Academic Senate. (§53203)
- Academic Senate means an organization whose primary function is to make recommendations with respect to academic and professional matters. (§53200)

- Section 53200 lists the specific areas
 - Curriculum, including establishing prerequisites
 - Degree & Certificate Requirements
 - Grading Policies
 - Educational Program Development
 - Standards & Policies regarding Student Preparation and Success
 - College governance structures, as related to faculty roles
 - Faculty roles & involvement in accreditation process
 - Policies for faculty professional development activities
 - Processes for program review
 - Processes for institutional planning & budget development
 - Other academic and professional matters as mutually agreed upon
- Section 53200 states: District Governing Board is required to consult collegially with the Academic Senate and develop policies on academic and professional matters through either or both:
 - Rely primarily upon the advice and judgment of the Academic Senate
 - Reach mutual agreement with the Academic Senate by written resolution, regulation, or policy

Local community college districts develop Board Policies which spell out the local agreements between the Board and the academic senate regarding governance responsibilities.

There are many examples of faculty exercising their responsibilities in the areas above. Here are just a few:

- Faculty develop new curriculum in all disciplines and recommend approval by the local board. They oversee all curriculum development and renewal through their curriculum committees, which are under the academic senate.
- Faculty revise graduation requirements, such as requiring an ethnic studies or diversity course for graduation. At the state level, the Academic Senate recommended that the Board of Governors modify the state level graduation requirements such that in 2009, all graduating students had to complete freshman composition (e.g., English 1A) and Intermediate Algebra.
- Faculty play an integral role in program review, accreditation self studies, program initiation and discontinuance.

All colleges have participatory governance committees such as a college council where faculty and administrators participate jointly in the decisions of college. The academic senate is an organization distinct from the union or faculty bargaining association. Senates focus only on academic and professional matters and not on issues related to bargaining. All community colleges in California have an academic senate and nearly all have a union or bargaining association.

In addition to the fact that faculty work in their academic senates on myriad academic matters and that faculty participate and often lead college-wide governance groups, many colleges have faculty serving as department or division chairs. These individuals retain faculty status and are often reassigned from some of their teaching responsibilities to lead operations of their department or division. These faculty chairs

work alongside deans and vice presidents, providing the essential instructional perspective to management decisions.

At the state level, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) is led by a 14 member Executive Committee elected by senate representatives from each of the colleges. Their responsibilities are to represent the faculty voice on academic and professional matters at the state level, including the Consultation Council, which provides advice to the Chancellor and the Board of Governors and an array of advisory groups and initiatives. Examples of some initiatives led by the ASCCC:

- The implementation of the curricular changes mandated in SB 1440 to develop new associate degrees for transfer to CSU.
- The recommendation to improve the determination of course prerequisites, endorsed by the Board of Governors in March.
- The Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) which brings together the faculty senate leadership from the UC, CSU and the CCCs to oversee such academic matters as IGETC, the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum.

The roles of faculty via the academic senates in the 112 California Community Colleges are well established in Education Code, Title 5 regulations and local policies. A passage from a book about college administration summarizes the overall role of faculty well:

The teacher in an institution of higher learning is an officer of the corporation. . . and not an employee or hired person in the usual sense. To misconceive the basic nature and role of the college or university faculty member threatens the whole concept and function of the higher learning. . . . The college or university is fundamentally different from business, military or governmental organizations. In a college or university, the faculty members are responsible members of a self-governing community whose relative autonomy is crucial to the nature and process of the higher learning. This point is extremely complex and very difficult to make clear, yet on its acceptance may hang the welfare and perhaps even the survival of institutions of higher learning....the individual faculty member is a self respecting officer of the organization who after proper evaluation by senior members of the community becomes a permanent part of the organization. (*Principles & Values for College & University Administrators*, by Pulias & Wilbur, 1984).

How does the broad mission of CCCs affect classroom instruction? Benefits and challenges of open access? The state's policies on adult education.

The broad mission for California community colleges makes classroom instruction the most challenging type of teaching – and the most rewarding. Our students are diverse in every way – and we have to find ways to connect effectively with all types of students – students who vary in background, goals, preparation, commitment, etc. Beyond the classroom, the broad and varied missions create an environment where students can develop and find the path that best suits them. The developmental learner

can become a transfer-ready student, and the university-ready student can discover a career technical education (CTE) pathway that perhaps suits his/her interests and goals better than the educational course he/she originally had envisioned. A CTE student can further develop his/her job-related skills and/or prepare for study at a university. The structure of the community college brings all types of students to a college environment – where they can then get what they need – be that basic skills, job skills, or preparation for transfer. The California community college is an environment prepared to meet the needs of students of all ages and goals.

Community college faculty in California are not only accustomed to the diversity of our students, but are welcoming of the range of backgrounds, needs and abilities. Faculty are committed to the promise of the Master Plan for Higher Education which said that community colleges would serve all who can benefit. The benefits of open access far outweigh the challenges. Every other institution of postsecondary education is restrictive in admissions. Community colleges are the only opportunity for postsecondary education and a second chance for a large segment of society. While colleges always have and will continue to serve those who are already well prepared for college and economically advantaged, serving the rest of our community is an important part of our mission and one which not only benefits the individual but also the society.

The list is long of the success stories from students who say that going to community college changed their lives. Sometimes they only need a few courses to get a promotion at work. Sometimes if they come for one or two classes, they end up staying and earning a degree. The data that suggest that although X students enrolled but only a fraction earn a degree often provide incomplete information. Did each student who enrolled plan to earn a degree or transfer? Did the student take a few classes, then leave to start a family and return a couple years later? Did a student take a few classes then decide to go to another college to finish? Or, as is the case in urban areas, is the students simultaneously enrolled in more than one college and not completing at one college is counted as a failure? Because our students are not traditional, residential, full time students, they are more transient than university students. While we know that evidence is growing to suggest that students would do better to attend full time rather than part time and while finding ways to provide incentives for such behavior for many students is logical, it is important to realize the complex nature of community college students, who cannot be compared with the 18 year old attending a university full time. If the State of California is to meet the projected needs for an education citizenry, it is critical that that the educational pipeline be open at every entry point. Only community colleges can do that.

However, the problem of underprepared students arriving at colleges needing multiple years of remediation has grown, and faculty have seen the effects. They require support services such as counseling and tutoring; they require several semesters or years to catch up, and in the meantime many drop out. An additional effect we have seen is that because faculty have not been able to attach appropriate prerequisite courses to the transfer level courses (such as requiring completion of English 1A before taking a history course where a research paper is assigned), students have been enrolling in certain classes prematurely, lacking the needed knowledge and skills to succeed. They then drop out, repeat the

class or fail. All of these behaviors are bad for the student, the college and the state. Fortunately, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recently succeeded in convincing the Board of Governors to modify the requirements for applying prerequisites, and it is our hope that students will be given a better signal about the preparation needed before enrolling in the most challenging courses. We will not see the effects of this change immediately, however.

The ability to serve adults of all ages is a strength in our system because the students can have a place to come to change careers or begin a career, for example after raising a child or serving in the military. The great range of abilities is a particular challenge, however, and there are discussions underway between the California Department of Education and the community colleges about the adult education function and where it should reside. Community colleges, if funded appropriately, can serve the range of adult needs very well, as evidenced in a number of successful programs in the state. Presently the local college districts have the option to coordinate with K-12 districts and determine who can best serve that population.

We believe it is vital to remember why the name of our colleges changed from “junior” to “community.” It is because we serve our local communities and respond to their needs whether they need workers for a new industry or whether the large immigrant population needs to learn English. The function of “junior colleges” remains in our mission—to prepare students for universities. But we are much more than that.

Does the system need more uniformity/centralization? What are current initiatives?

There are several state initiatives underway whose aim it is to centralize and coordinate the 72 community college districts. These will establish some level of “uniformity” in curriculum –and promise to identify and label commonalities, and simplify movement between CCCs and the CSUs. Efforts are also underway to centralize some functions of the institutions. However control needs to be at the local level to ensure responsiveness and sensitivity to local needs. We are community colleges – and, therefore, control must rest in the community.

The initiative getting the most attention today is the implementation of SB 1440. It was signed into law in September and requires each college to develop new 60-unit associate degrees designed to transfer to CSU, which will grant the student CSU admissions priority and guarantee upper division status as well as a promise to complete the baccalaureate degree with 60 additional units. The state Academic Senate determined that although the bill did not *require* coordination of efforts, the students (and state) would be better served with a coordinated response. As a result, the faculty from CSU and CCCs are developing “Transfer Model Curriculum” or TMC in each of the transfer majors. The TMC establishes a common structure for a community college transfer major and seeks to identify common community college coursework for a given transfer major – so that a student can prepare for multiple CSUs with a given course of study. After just a few months’ work, four TMC are being used as the basis of new associate degrees and more than ten more are in the pipeline. Associate degrees aligned with the TMC will mean that students will have a clearer pathway and faculty will be assured about the level of preparation of

transfer students. While it is not *required* that colleges follow the TMC, it appears that most are choosing to do so.

Several pieces of legislation over the years have called for “common course numbering” in higher education. Although it is evident after a cursory examination of the intricacies of curriculum that switching every course to using the same number is impossible, what can be done is to add a supra number to existing courses so that that supra number tells the student that completing a course at college X will be accepted in lieu of a course at college or university Y. Previous numbering systems (Course Articulation Number-CAN-System and CSU’s Lower Division Transfer Pattern—LDTP) have been abandoned and a new system is currently in place: the Course Identification Numbering system or C-ID (www.c-id.net). The faculty from the three segments are implementing the new system, which is functioning as the foundation for implementing the new associate degrees for transfer. The heart of its success is the involvement and commitment of faculty to develop and implement the system.

Another effort under development is called CCC Assess, which is identifying assessment (for placement) instruments in mathematics, English, reading and English as a Second Language (ESL) for centralized delivery. Centralized delivery at the system level can offer a reduced cost to colleges and prevent students from having to re-take an assessment if they attend a second college. While colleges will not be required to use these assessments, the financial advantages and benefits to students will be very attractive to colleges, incentivizing greater commonality in the assessment tests that they use.

In addition, efforts to improve data collection and transcript information are being developed through the Chancellor’s Office.

In short, there are important and beneficial ways to coordinate and encourage uniformity. These systems above do that while providing appropriate local flexibility.

Benefits/challenges to having students enroll in a program of study?

The term “program of study” has been used various ways, and in order to respond to this question, one would have to distinguish between definitions.

The more generic use of the term would refer to a program with aligned curriculum and specific outcomes such as a certificate or degree. Colleges are accustomed to serving cohorts of students in a set number of programs or majors with uniform curriculum such as several health occupations and police or fire science but it is not common for there to be programs of study outside occupational fields. However, the new associate degrees for transfer, if they carry the best admissions guarantees at CSU, likely will have the effect of channeling students into clearer pathways or programs. Many college students in their first year especially, take general education courses which are intended to give them a broad, general education but also serve to allow students to explore possible areas for a major.

There is growing evidence that students succeed better when they have more structure to their college studies and there are advantages to providing incentives to encourage colleges to provide more structure.

I doubt that faculty would recommend a rigid tracking of students too quickly. While some students enter college with a clear focus, most need some opportunity to be exposed to several options. Once students take some college classes, the curriculum and faculty can ignite a flame in students who previously had not been exposed to the discipline. It would not be beneficial to rigidly narrow students' options such that they cannot have opportunity first to learn, grow and then identify their path.

A different use of the term has been advanced by the Community College Research Center (CCRC -- <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>). In a new publication, they have suggested that colleges begin tracking student progress according to milestones achieved, based upon the course-taking patterns (or programs of study) of the student. The subject of measuring student success according to milestones is under discussion in the CCC Student Success Task Group, which will make its recommendations at the end of 2011.

Funding

The current funding system is based on access, and while it appears inevitable that some changes in funding methods will be enacted, it is important that a new system not eliminate the sometimes only opportunity for higher education for many citizens. Performance-based funding has had very mixed success and a recent report at the Community College Research Center (CCRC -- <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>) concluded that half the states that have tried it have dropped it. The most serious academic concern with performance based funding is the effect of favoring the students most ready to succeed and discarding those who may need more time reaching their potential. In other words, if colleges are funded primarily on the number of students who transfer or earn a degree, there will be an incentive for the colleges to only educate and provide support for those who are already best prepared. Universities are selective in their admissions. Community colleges must not be.

One issue with funding that confounds planning is the lack of predictability. Community colleges need guarantees in the same way as K-12. Of course the current demand for college greatly exceeds the capacity and the funding being provided. Community colleges could be expanded to serve a greater number of students whether they are university-bound, workforce-bound or whether they have adult education needs, if adequate funding were provided.

The Student Success Task Group that has been convened by the Board of Governors, as a result of the passage of SB 1143 last autumn, has as one of its charges to identify metrics that could be used to modify the funding model. Given that the group will make recommendations at the end of this year, it would make sense to see what their outcomes are.