

## El Reporte de Presidente de Senado Académico

Dieciséis de octubre, 2019

### **On Which Rely Primarily, With Which Reach Mutual Agreement: Toward a Common Understanding**

#### 3 Events and a Conclusion:

##### **Events**

- At the Board of Trustees meeting last Tuesday (October 8) AFA president Karen Frindell-Teuscher registered a protest in her report to the Board that in the aftermath of “Summergate” and the resolution of no confidence, although the Board conducted the college president’s evaluation by the book, it was disappointing that faculty leadership were not included or consulted in the evaluation. Board president Jordan Burns gave a response to her, saying that, although the Board had not formalized inclusion of the Senate or other faculty leadership, they had been gathering feedback informally through listening to reports at various meetings and incorporated what they heard in their decision.
- At DCC/IM yesterday (October 15) preliminary drafts of reorganization were presented for Academic Affairs by VP Jane Saldaña-Talley, and for Student Services by VP Pedro Ávila. Both presentations, it was emphasized, are preliminary, and subject to change under the mandatory scope of bargaining and Senate 10 + 1 purview. Both presentations demonstrated some attention to suggestions and critique from the college community, especially faculty. Both emphasized places of proposed elimination/reduction of administration, and called attention to the inclusion of information related to workload that had been requested by faculty.
- Thursday October 3, the President and the Vice President met with the Faculty Staffing Committee, at their request, to discuss the Committee’s ranking of faculty staffing requests. This has never happened before. The conversation, in my view, could be described as an example of collegial consultation. They asked for our reasoning, gave us theirs, there was give and take, and a promise to provide to the committee a rationale in writing if they departed in any way from the committee’s ranking, which they in turn did before they sent out the announcement. Another first this year was that the committee heard from department chairs about their department’s requests rather than just deans. The deans were there, largely to offer support, but the leading voices were the chairs.

##### **Conclusion**

One of the problems shared governance has had at SRJC for a long time is that we have no shared understanding (or in some cases we might have that but haven’t practiced it) of what “rely primarily” or “reach mutual agreement with” mean. The aforementioned three events illustrate a range of practice. In the first example, decisions are made by a select elite behind closed doors, but if asked, have “consulted” with stake holding and rights-holding constituents around the water cooler, as it were, here and there, ad hoc gatherings from individuals who might not even realize

they are giving “consultation.” This is a species of direct dealing. It used to be the way things operated in general.

The middle example is considerably better, but not all the way there. In that model, input is more systematically gathered and considered, and the decisions constitute a preliminary draft only, subject to revision in the face of rights-holding input. Again, this is considerably better. But still not what “reach mutual agreement” in collegial consultation is supposed to mean, as I understand it. It would be even better if there were mutual, at the table input from constituents into the draft at the outset.

The final example is getting close to the “reach mutual agreement” stipulation that defines a certain amount of the Senate’s purview. It seems to me we are in the throes of a cultural change toward a better understanding of shared governance as it was intended by AB 1725, but we are still in the early part of that change. A task I have set for myself is to seek clear, mutual understanding of what “rely primarily” and “reach mutual agreement” look like, and when exactly each one applies throughout the governance of the college, including the allocation of categorical funding, the nexus between Academic Affairs and Student Services, and all the rest of it. I have seen encouraging signs lately, but old habits are hard to break and aren’t gone yet.

**On another note: Curriculum**

The curriculum office has compiled a considerably long list of courses that have not been actually offered for two years and more. One course on the list has not been offered since about 1985. Many have not been offered for 5 or 7 years. There are many reasons for this. The CRC has requested the Senate’s view of what we should do about this, so look for it on the Agenda in the near future.

Eric Thompson