

AS President Report to Academic Senate
November 1, 2023
N. Persons

Statement Regarding Recent Deliberations of the Academic Senate and Agendas:

I would like to address several compelling issues which have recently arisen at our senate meetings as well as others occurring in between them. As a body, our Academic Senate should be solution driven, responsive to the needs of our students, and collaborative in our work. Rather than getting stuck in our corners, we should be gravitating toward a central goal.

Recent conversations among this body have called into question the expertise of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC). The ASCCC is a non-profit organization recognized in California Government Code as an authority. The ASCCC is also recognized by faculty, staff, administrators, unions, and senates throughout the 116-district California Community College system as an authority providing expertise on academic and professional matters, including interpretation of the Brown Open Meetings Act. It is disturbing to see the expertise provided to us through the ASCCC and the well-informed advice provided by our ASCCC coach questioned regarding their interpretation of our limited ability under the Brown Act to take this body into closed session. We used a great deal of time debating this issue here at our last meeting.

Moving on, as the District has taken up the matter of Guided Pathways and engaged in a series of inclusive and collaborative Town Halls, the ASEC has come under fire, experiencing insinuations about hidden agendas and lack of transparency. This is extremely disturbing to me, as integrity, transparency in communication, and careful deliberation regarding our right to discuss 10+1 matters have been and continue to be my top priorities.

I have served on the executive committee of our senate under the leadership of former presidents Barbara Croteau, Terry Shell, Robin Fautley, Eric Thompson, and Julie Thompson. During this time, I have seen senate presidents variously work with our union partners in a wide spectrum of models ranging from collegial collaboration inclusive of the full executive committee and transparent to this body, to one in which the academic senate president consulted on their own with union leadership and with little to no consultation with the executive committee. When discussing models of collaboration with our union partners, we need to take the long view.

I strive to be open, honest, authentic, and consistent in communication in my role as Senate President. I know that the ASEC as a group is united in this approach to our work. The source of distrust may be attributed to the fact that historically, the District has allowed the academic senate to control development of Guided Pathways at our institution. The problem is that Guided Pathways is by its very nature an initiative that must be administered and implemented by the District and should involve multiple constituent groups. Consultation and collaboration with our Academic Senate should occur at points where 10+1 issues are involved. This lack of ownership on the part of the District has resulted in the Academic Senate's valiant but limited efforts to start up some Guided Pathways projects and see them through. A districtwide

coordinated effort is needed, though, if we are going to properly serve our students. This has been acknowledged widely in our discussions at the senate over the past year.

Behind the scenes individuals have questioned our work in a manner that sometimes suggests suspicion rather than clarification. When a *senator* has a request for an issue to be brought forward for discussion, and they are making that request in their role as a representative of their constituent group, they should bring that matter up publicly during an Academic Senate meeting. The ASEC has an obligation to place such concerns on future agendas. When an *individual* makes an inquiry speaking on their own behalf, and not as a senator, they may do so at Open Forum or in communication direction with the ASEC, which has the right to choose whether to respond publicly or privately. You will see both come into play here today.

We have much compelling work to accomplish in this body, and the list of agenda items has grown while we debated the closed session issue, which expertise and advice have already spoken to. We have brought forward issues for discussion which we, your Academic Senate Executive Committee, strongly feel are rightful 10+1 topics for discussion. These matters are on our agenda due to longstanding and ongoing requests of faculty members serving on shared governance committees. All concern the future success of our students and we faculty, all of us, need to unite in this effort.

We recognize that some of these issues overlap with our faculty union partners. To this end, the ASEC has developed a survey regarding issues of overlap between academic senates with independent union representation such as we have, to learn more about how other California Community College academic senates and unions forge collaborative working relationships. We will be sending the survey out by the end of this week and will also share with the AFA Executive Council. Once collected and analyzed, we will provide the results of this inquiry with this body and AFA. I also want you to know that I have been extending invitations to collaborate to our union partners since early last spring, suggesting that we work together to develop a process for handling issues of overlap between our two faculty groups. I will continue to do so and know that eventually we will establish a fresh approach.

Introducing our new AA II, Dorothy Stuebner:

- Please join me in welcoming our new AAll to the Academic Senate, Dorothy Stuebner. Dorothy's hire will be officially confirmed at the SRJC Board meeting on Nov. 14th. She started work last Thursday, October 26th, and has already completed an amazing amount of work including updating our website and many other essential tasks. Welcome, Dorothy!

Thanks to Dean, Dr. Mary-Catherine Oxford:

- I would like to acknowledge Dr. Mary-Catherine Oxford for her extremely efficient, timely, and tireless work to support and co-chair the recruitment and hiring of our new administrative assistant. Her efforts were instrumental in getting our new AAll on board as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mary-Catherine!

New College Council Survey:

- You may already have seen that the SRJC College Council has issued a new survey for all SRJC committee and council members to fill out. Unlike the spring 2023 survey, we ask that each committee/council member fill out the survey individually, rather than the group submitting a single group response. In addition, the survey has a different set of questions and should provide us useful data for assessing our shared governance structure and working toward our goal of effective two-way communication.

College Council:

- Under our new tri-chair model, chairs Debbie Weatherly (Classified Senate), Dr. Angelica Garcia (Superintendent/President) and myself (Academic Senate President), the College Council continues revision of primary Board Policy (BP) and Administrative Procedure (AP) 2410, the first step toward a streamlined process for updating APs. As we work on the revision of administrative procedures the tri-chairs and the council are identifying information that belongs in a governance manual rather than in BP and AP. Together with the results of the committee and council survey, this will aid the Council in addressing the shared governance reorganization and clarifying processes at SRJC.

Call for Donations for Academic Senate Coffee and Snacks:

- The Academic Senate Exec Committee hopes you find the coffee provided at each meeting to be helpful. The funds used to pay for beverages and snacks is drawn from a donation fund. Please consider contributing to this fund if you are not already. A link to the donation form can be found on the Academic Senate website by clicking on the "FORMS" link on the blue ribbon along the top of the senate homepage, or by [clicking this link](#).