



Phase III CCN Post-Convening Surveys Now Available. Your feedback is essential.

[ASCCC CCN webpage \(/common-course-numbering-ccn-development-and-faculty-engagement\)](/common-course-numbering-ccn-development-and-faculty-engagement)



ACADEMIC SENATE
for California Community Colleges
LEADERSHIP • EMPOWERMENT • VOICE

Honoring Student Voice: Ensuring Students' Effective Participation in Governance

April 2018

[Julie Bruno \(/directory/julie-bruno\)](/directory/julie-bruno), President

Students are, and should be, the primary and central motivation for our work as educators. Everything we do, from academics and instruction, to support services, is focused on the success of students. Most, if not all, of the initiatives and programs California community colleges have developed in the past few years have a clearly defined purpose in serving students. Programs such as Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS), Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS), the Puente Project, and Umoja have served our students well for years, as have more recently instituted programs and initiatives such as the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP), Student Equity Planning, the Foster Youth Success Initiative, and Veterans Services. When one adds to that mix the guided pathways frameworks and college promise programs that our colleges are designing and implementing, our strong commitment to the success of our students is without question.

Critical to the success of any effort to improve student success is ensuring that the student perspective is honored, embraced, and valued. We may too easily fall into thinking that we know what our students want or need to be successful in college. As educators, we interact daily with students, formally in the classroom and our offices, as well as informally when we see students around campus: relaxing in the quad, having coffee at the café, or studying in the library. As we spend significant time with students, we might come to believe that we know them well. Consequently, and with all good intentions, we might make assumptions about what would be good for them based on our perceptions and our certainty in our ability to anticipate their needs or wishes. Unfortunately, assumptions can lead to faulty and flawed decisions. When the urge to assume strikes, we are often wise to check ourselves, step back, and seek out the student voice.

Our governance system in the California community colleges is designed to ensure that all perspectives are represented when we engage in decision-making at our colleges. When discussing effective participation in governance in the California community colleges, administrators, classified staff, and faculty are usually aware of the role that the academic senates hold in governance at both the local and state levels. Less familiar is the

role of students and student senates. Just as statute and regulation define the role of faculty and the academic senate, so too is the role of students and the student senate defined in regards to effective participation in governance at the local and state level.

Participation Matters

Education Code

In establishing effective college governance, participation matters. State law and regulation are clear that all campus groups are to be provided the opportunity to participate in college governance. Education Code §70901 and §70902 requires the Board of Governors to establish “minimum standards” and local governing boards shall “establish procedures not inconsistent” with those standards to ensure faculty, staff, and students the right to participate effectively in district and college governance, the opportunity to express their opinions at the campus level, 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.

Further, Education Code §76060 provides the opportunity for the governing board to authorize the students of a college to form a student association, most commonly referred to as the student senate or student association.

Title 5

The Board of Governors codifies the implementation of Education Code through Title 5 regulations. Just as Title 5 recognizes the role of faculty and the primacy of academic senates and requires collegial consultation regarding academic and professional matters, it also recognizes the role of the student senates and students in college governance and requires governing boards to provide the opportunity for students to participate in decision-making processes.

Title 5 §51023.7 identifies the associate student organization as the representative body of students to offer recommendations and opinions and requires that “students shall be provided an opportunity to participate in the formulation and development of policies and procedures that have a significant effect on students. This right includes the opportunity to participate in processes that involve jointly developing recommendations.” The regulations also state that the recommendations and positions developed by the students shall be given every reasonable consideration.

In this same section, the policies and procedures that may have a significant effect on student are defined as follows:

1. grading policies;
2. codes of student conduct;
3. academic disciplinary policies;
4. curriculum development;

5. courses or programs which should be initiated or discontinued;
6. processes for institutional planning and budget development;
7. standards and policies regarding student preparation and success;
8. student services planning and development;
9. student fees within the authority of the district to adopt; and
10. any other district and college policy, procedure or related matter that the district governing board determines will have a significant effect on students.

Clearly, many of the student “9+1” overlap with the academic senate areas of purview in the 10+1. The fundamental difference within the college governance is in the definition of “consult collegially” so that the governing board must either rely primarily on the advice or judgment of the academic senate or reach mutual agreement between the governing board and the academic senate, whereas the students must have the opportunity to participate in governance matters that affect them. Despite this difference, Education Code and Title 5 establish a clearly defined and important role for students in college governance.

Board of Governors Standing Orders

Participation by the Student Senate for California Community Colleges in system-wide governance is outlined in the Board of Governors’ Standing Orders[[1](#)]. Consultation with the Chancellor’s Office and the Board of Governors is described in Chapter 3, Article 3 of the Standing Orders. Article 3 specifically calls out the roles of the Boards of Trustees, the Chief Executive Officers, the Academic Senate, and the Student Senate as well as defining of Consultation Council. Section 333 recognizes the representative role of the Student Senate by declaring the following:

The Board of Governors recognizes the Student Senate as the representative of community college students in conjunction with the associated student organizations in the Consultation Process and before the Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office.

As such, the Student Senate has a clearly defined role in the consultation process at the system level to ensure that their elected officials represent the voices of students throughout the system.

Implications

Our established governance processes offer an excellent mechanism through which students may be heard and included in both local- and system-level decision-making processes. Designed to ensure that the various constituency groups are represented, our governance structure is well designed for thoughtful engagement. However, as local and statewide leaders have a responsibility to ensure that the promise of collegial consultation and effective participation is realized, we cannot ask students to let us know when they have something to say; rather, we must seek out and honor their voice throughout our processes.

If we are truly committed to the success of our students, then we must seek their guidance in providing what they need to meet their educational goals. Trusting our governance processes to work through the issues at hand, including the implementation of guided pathways, AB 705, and college promise programs, as well as

other present and future efforts, will ensure the success of our current and future students in all their academic and career endeavors.

[1] The Board of Governors Standing Orders may be found on the Chancellor's Office website at:

<http://extranet.cccco.edu/SystemOperations/BoardofGovernors/ProceduresS...>

(<http://extranet.cccco.edu/SystemOperations/BoardofGovernors/ProceduresStandingOrders.aspx>).



©2025 Academic Senate for California Community Colleges