

## Academic Senate Annual Report 2016-2017

The Monterey Peninsula College (MPC) Academic Senate has been busy this year. We have worked hard to improve understanding of our role on campus, to review, revise, and establish policies and procedures relevant to academic and professional matters, and to support our continued provision of excellent teaching.

### I. Defining Roles

As defined in the California Education Code (California law), the role of the Academic Senate is to “assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards”. This year, the Academic Senate at MPC has worked hard to fully understand this role; to understand its boundaries but also to understand where and how the Senate can represent faculty and positively contribute to the betterment of the College.

We started the fall semester with a retreat where Senators deliberated over the role and purview of the Academic Senate and the 10+1 list in Title 5 that further defines that purview. Early in the fall, the Senate endorsed the Campus’ new Resource Guide for Institutional Decision Making. This document was a result of the work done by the governance workgroup created by the Collaborative Brain Trust consulting firm. In part derived from our campus’ Committee Handbook, this is an important document which clarifies the roles of the various committees on campus and explains the players in operational versus governance processes at MPC. In this guide, it is clear that the Academic Senate and the Curriculum Advisory Committee are the groups that enable faculty to directly contribute to governance issues on the MPC campus. In part to accentuate the importance of this role, the Senate meetings were moved to the Sam Karas room on campus--a venue that is more prominent than its previous location in LTC216.

This year, the Academic Senate has demonstrated its function as a governance body by weighing in on and making recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding policies which pertain to the 10+1, by supporting the work and relevant policy or procedure recommendations of Senate subcommittees, namely the Equivalency Committee and the Learning Assessment Committee, and by endorsing the efforts of faculty to form new committees pertaining to 10+1--the LGBTQIA+ Diversity Committee and the Students First Committee. Most recently, the Senate has put efforts into writing a resolution regarding the imminent restructure of Academic Affairs on the campus. As we hope will be true of all Senate recommendations, the intention is that this resolution will bring to the attention of the administration constructive recommendations expressed by faculty experts across campus.

Finally, during the fall semester, the Academic Senate invited two representatives from the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) to the campus. These representatives met in two sessions. The first was a discussion with members of the

Equivalency Committee and the Senate to review equivalency issues and procedures and answer any questions we may have had. The second session was open to the campus at large and was attended by faculty, both union and non-union, classified staff, and administrators. The purpose of this session was to more clearly define the roles of the various bodies on campus and specifically the roles of the Academic Senate or Curriculum Advisory Committee versus the Administration versus the Faculty Union (MPCTA) in decision-making.

## **II. Policies and Procedures**

It is clear that one of the main functions of the Academic Senate is to make recommendations in regard to policies and procedures that affect the 10+1 issues. Such policies and procedures are essential for the campus to function in a professional manner free from confusion, obstruction and misunderstanding. In order for these policies and procedures to be effective, they must be written and clearly available so that they are understood and agreed upon by all parties on campus. They additionally must be reviewed and revised as necessary--also to assist with understanding and agreement. And, most importantly, they must be followed. If there is lessening of understanding of procedures or, more seriously, a disregard for the procedures agreed upon on the campus, intense feelings of distrust and frustration will certainly abound.

Such has been the case on the MPC campus. Board Policies and Administrative Procedures are often difficult to find and not as well understood as they could be by administrators nor by others on campus. It seems clear that the campus governance bodies are primarily responsible for verifying that policies and procedures are established and transparent. The operational groups are generally responsible for executing those procedures.

This year, excellent progress in posting of Board Policies has been made by the MPC Board. The Academic Senate has done its part to review and to make recommendations on the Academic Affairs Board Policies and, most recently, on the Student Services Board Policies. Many of these policies are very similar to recommendations made by the Academic Senate in 2011 and 2013. Currently, these recommendations are being reviewed by the Board of Trustees. A collaborative effort between the Office of Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate has lead to a review and minor revisions of these policies and they are being resubmitted to the Board. Some of these policies have already been posted and others are still in the pipeline. The Academic Senate is very please that Board Policies are now readily available to the public on the Board of Trustees webpage on the College website.

Determining new faculty's minimum qualifications or equivalency to minimum qualifications is primarily the purview of the Faculty. Thus, this duty is an important part of the Academic Senate purview and the Academic Senate has set up a subcommittee called the Equivalency Committee as the experts who perform this task. At the start of the fall 2016 semester, the Administration advised the Academic Senate that the issuing of equivalency to a single course ("select course equivalency" or "single course equivalency" or "emergency equivalency") versus

a full discipline was no longer an acceptable action on our campus. As such, Board Policy in this regard would have to be changed and faculty who were working under single course equivalencies would have to be reassessed. With the support of Human Resources, the faculty with single course equivalencies, their Division Chairs and the Equivalency Committee contributed tremendous effort to reassess all of these single course equivalencies appropriately. Their contribution over the course of this semester has been outstanding. In addition, the Senate and the Equivalency Committee have reviewed, revised and clearly posted the equivalency procedure. To support the policy of not accepting equivalency to only a single course, the Board Policies needed updating. One policy, in particular, fully stated that we accept single course equivalency. The Academic Senate has made a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for a new Board Policy regarding equivalency. All of this has been done with the guidance and support of the ASCCC. This process has additionally served to confirm the quality of our faculty.

Lastly, the Academic Senate endorsed a Board Policy recommendation written by the Learning Assessment Committee. This was returned to the Senate from the Board Policy screening subcommittee and has now been revised by the Learning Assessment Committee and re-submitted to the Board of Trustees. This was an important and timely policy as it addressed and clarified the purpose of learning assessment. Assessment of all of our courses is a required standard of the ACCJC and as such must be accomplished for MPC to be removed from probation. It was the hope of the Learning Assessment Committee that acceptance of this policy would relieve any faculty apprehensions about evaluation that may be serving as barriers to assessment. This policy was returned to the Senate by the Board and the Learning Assessment Committee has worked diligently to alter and resubmit this policy to the Board of Trustees. An administrative policy, that includes portions of the text that were left out of the board policy, is still pending.

Although sometimes hard to find, most administrative procedures are established across campus and are understood by campus community members who have participated in these procedures in the past. Part of the function of the Academic Senate is to review those that apply to the 10+1. Academic Senate has done so this semester, although the number of procedures reviewed or the speed with which they are reviewed must be increased in the future.

An additional role of Senate is to convey understanding to a wider base of the campus-wide community. Administrative Procedures are only effective if they are understood, agreed upon, followed, and revised as needed. With Administrative Procedures in place and more broadly understood, the campus should be able to move away from discussions about "perception" and "assuming positive intent" to more concrete conversations either about optimizing procedures or about whether or not procedure was followed.

#### **IV. Maintaining Excellent Quality of Instruction**

Certainly the academic and professional matters included under Senate purview must include a consideration of instruction and student success. In addition to equivalency mentioned above, the Senate has a number of subcommittees that play instrumental roles in maintaining the excellence of instruction and of student experience on our campus.

Number 5 of the 10+1 items of Academic Senate purview reads "Standards or policies regarding student preparation and success". This year, the Academic Senate once again endorsed the formation of a goal group, now called the Students First Committee. This is a collaborative goal group which serves to increase communication between instructors and counselors. The Senate was able to endorse this committee's recommendation to change the catalog rights defined in the MPC Catalog.

Number 8 of the 10+1 items of Academic Senate purview reads "Policies for faculty professional development activities". Faculty have chosen to have a few programmed flex days prior to the start of each semester. Scheduled events on these days are open to all of the campus community. These flex days serve as an important time for faculty to engage in professional development in regard to teaching as well as for the campus at large to have cross disciplinary or cross department conversations. The Flex Committee, a subcommittee of the Senate, has worked diligently to put together 3 days of scheduling for the faculty and the campus at large. This year, they have added an online option to submit requests to present at these flex days.

Finally, number 7 of the 10+1 items of Academic Senate purview reads "Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes". In the spring semester, a big challenge emerged for our campus--that of answering to the recommendations of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). Three months after the October ACCJC accreditation team's site visit to our campus, MPC was placed on probation. At that time, our campus was issued 22 recommendations for improvement that must be met in order to lift the probation imposed. Of these 22 recommendations, two were determined by the Administration to fall under faculty purview, recommendation #3 and #21.

In regard to ACCJC recommendation #3, the Academic Senate continues to offer its support and endorsement to the Learning Assessment Committee. This committee has come up with numerous tools and trainings to facilitate faculty assessment of courses. More discussion of assessment and support is planned for the fall flex day.

In regard to ACCJC recommendation #21, the Senate had already done considerable work to contribute to this recommendation prior to probation being imposed (see "I. Defining Roles" above). One further step that is being considered by the Senate Executive Committee is a possible memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Senate and the MPCTA.

While probation does not mean that the campus has lost accreditation, having a probationary status does mean that the campus faces some restrictions. One example of such a restriction that affects 10+1 issues is that during probation, the campus cannot seek permission for new

certificates nor new programs of study that appear to be substantive changes. For this reason, it is of utmost importance that the entire campus collaborate with the Administration to have this probation lifted. While the number of courses being assessed on campus is climbing, work will continue into the fall in order to meet the ACCJC standard.