

## **Participatory Governance Review Spring 2008**

**The review of our participatory governance structure and processes is being undertaken based upon the following:**

- **Our Accreditation Self Study Planning Agendas:**
  - Develop strategies to better communicate the planning and budget processes (IVA1).
  - Through College Council, evaluate the committee structure and number of initiatives undertaken in any one semester (IVA3).
  - Through College Council, develop streamlined communication processes to keep college constituents informed (IVA3).
  
- **Accreditation visiting team commendation and recommendation related to participatory governance:**
  - **Commendation #3:** The team commends the college's very high level of trust, collegiality and participative governance that results in a college atmosphere marked by institutional pride, enthusiastic collaboration among constituency groups, and sincere aspirations for a bright future for Skyline College.
  - **Recommendation #8:** The team recommends that the college develop and implement a policy that specifically evaluates the institution's governance and decision-making structures on a regular basis to assure their integrity and effectiveness. The results of these reviews should be widely communicated to the college community and used as the basis for continuous improvement. (Standard IV.A.5)

**The ultimate outcomes of the review process will be these:**

- **Modify the governance structure** based upon the above. This modification will go through the usual review and approval process via our constituency groups and the College Council.
- **Develop a policy for regular review of the college's governance and decision-making structures.** This will also go through the usual review and approval process via our constituency groups and the College Council.

**The approach that the College Council is taking to doing the review includes these steps:**

- **Open Forum** held on April 7, 2008, to get more detail on views of our governance in these categories:
  - Planning and budget
  - Communication processes
  - Committee structure and initiatives
  - Governance structure overall.
- **College Council** reviewed the resulting information (provided below) at its April 2008 meeting and agreed that the Forum notes would be shared with the

constituent groups in the late spring and early fall in order to identify additional Recommended Actions.

- **The College Council will then** propose any needed modifications to the governance structure and draft a policy for regular review of the college's governance and decision-making structures. As noted above, these will go through the usual review and approval process via our constituency groups and the College Council.

## **Planning and Budget**

### **Summary of input to date**

The subjects of planning and budget are both complex ones that involve a learning curve. The connections between planning and budget decisions are sometimes unclear and may not seem systematic. Freeing up classified staff to participate fully is sometimes difficult.

Some strategies that have helped the participants include these:

- Availability of budget minutes online.
- Our systematic way of planning, including a cyclical process which includes reviewing, evaluating and implementing, such as on the strategic plan.
- Information including data and research reports are readily available on the website.
- There is active participation from all constituent groups and divisions, particularly on the College Budget Committee (CBC).
- There is good training for new members of the CBC.
- Synopses of meeting minutes are provided the same week in *Skyline Shines* to make them more broadly available and to assist members quickly with key information.
- There is good integration of some key planning efforts and budget, i.e. FTEF Allocation Committee and program review.

### **Recommended Actions:**

- The Co-chair of the CBC should attend the District Committee on Budget Finance.
- Improve the connection between budget and planning.
- Consider appointees who have some experience, particularly with budget.
- Consider two-year appointments for many constituent groups as some committees need continuity because of the learning curve.

## **Communication Processes**

### **Summary of input to date**

The representative structure is only partially working. The constituent groups need better ways to communicate with their members and vice versa to ensure a good flow of information. There is a "Niagara Falls" of information. The way it is organized, there is too much information and people cannot read it all and they have to make choices about things.

Things that help with this situation are the following:

- *Skyline Shines*, the president's weekly email update to the college, including synopses of meetings of the College Council, the College Budget Committee and the Institutional Planning Committee.
- Posting of minutes/agendas for many committees.
- Proactive approach to getting student feedback: research which is regular, varied, broad and also narrowly focused.
- PIO provides regular announcements.
- Events calendar on the college website.
- Willingness and availability of committee chairs, administrators or managers to come to Classified Council to make a presentation, answer questions, or address concerns.
- There are occasions for broad engagement and opportunities to receive information and provide input.

#### **Recommended Actions:**

- Communicate clearly about the origins and context of ideas as they travel through the governance process.
- Utilize the web site even more to organize, archive and communicate information.
- Create a document management system for tagging documents.
- Provide a more regular version of the College Council Annual Summary update (Annual Report), perhaps at the end of each semester.

### **Committee Structure and Initiatives**

#### **Summary of input to date:**

There seem to be too many committees. There are too many meeting conflicts for those who need to attend district meetings. It is sometimes not clear what the relationship is among committees. There is a need to encourage individuals to take personal responsibility for becoming informed and participating. There are people who participate in many committees and others who do not at all. Minutes go out too late for participant review, and are often too long to be absorbed. There is insufficient leadership mentoring/training for those chairing a committee. The committee meeting schedule is sometimes challenging for students with changing class schedules term to term.

Things that help with this situation are the following:

- The master calendar of standing committee meetings that is available to help groups work around those times in scheduling other things.
- Some groups put out their minutes for review by participants at least a week or two ahead of the meeting.
- The IPC minutes template with brief background, then action items or decision points is a way to provide succinct information on meetings.
- The fact that we have initiatives means our system is working. There is a framework of what we are doing in a focused way.
- There is administrative support for classified staff attending retreats and developing leadership.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Review our array of committees to see if there is any way to consolidate some without undermining anyone's particular interest.
- Consider less frequent meetings or shorten meetings when possible, but this idea needs to be tailored to the group.
- Produce concise action minutes wherever possible. List ideas as bullet points. It would expedite the workload at the production end and improve absorbability of the information by the members.
- Find ways to better integrate committees (people, processes and actions).
- Call and ask people if they want to continue to serve on a particular committee.
- Structure leadership mentoring in a more systematic way to get new representatives ready to carry out their roles.
- Engender a sense of connectedness for appointees.
- Create a matrix of committees versus member names, find out who is not doing any, and maybe ask them if they want to help.
- Issue recognition certificates for serving on participatory governance committees or providing committee leadership.
- Consider a newsletter or email to engage students to participate in governance process.

**Governance Structure Overall****Summary of input to date:**

There is a lack of connection between district and campus issues and the information flow is not clear. The set calendar may not always work for students with their schedules even though they have interest in the committee. This also is a problem for faculty.

Things that help with this situation are the following:

- Having a set meeting calendar established by the beginning of the year.
- Skyline's governance process is very transparent because we put all the information out on the website.
- There is a lot of trust and openness throughout the college and it showed during the accreditation self-study process. The rapport that the administration has with faculty and staff is there. It works both ways, a lot of two way communication, with constituency leadership communicating with administration too.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Look at options for reaching students to get them involved. It may not be in a traditional way. Perhaps it can be done electronically, key information only, no vendor promotions (except the bookstore).
- Implement college hour to free up students for greater participatory governance participation.