PROPOSAL

TO IMPROVE THE DISTRICT’S COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

SUBMITTED TO:
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AND DR. KEVIN BONTENBAL, ACADEMIC SENATE PRESIDENT

SUBMITTED BY:
THE LEADERSHIP RETREAT SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MEMBERS: KEVIN BONTENBAL, LINDA FONTANILLA, LISA GRAY, CATHLEEN GREINER, MARIE LARSEN, ALLISON MERZON AND PAMELA RALSTON

DECEMBER 14, 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Cuesta College Board of Trustees approved the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan at the regular board meeting in October 2010. At its next meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee formed a subcommittee and assigned strategic goal 1.B to that subcommittee. Goal 1.B states: “Cuesta College will review and update the College-wide committee structure, in order to improve committee efficiency and effectiveness related to participatory governance and decision making” to oversee the planning and execution of action step 1: “Convene a College leadership retreat with representation across constituent groups to develop and propose a revised institutional committee structure and committee composition”.

In preparation for the leadership retreat, the strategic planning subcommittee invited retreat attendees to one of two preparation sessions held November 15 and 18, 2010, for which they were to read the strategic plan and the Accreditation Follow Up report. At the session,
attendees were asked to respond to a series of questions: 1), “What is your understanding of participatory governance?” 2) “What is your role in and how effective are you in governance?” and 3) “What are the strengths/challenges of leadership and governance at Cuesta College?” Not only were these results used to help individuals formulate their thoughts on Cuesta’s governance, they also helped inform the following document.

On January 13, 2011 the Strategic Planning subcommittee held a Leadership Retreat to assess committee work and participatory governance. Attendees formed six groups to propose six models for the new committee structure. Themes that emerged as a result include: a central committee to which all committee work is reported; the need for integration; separation of planning and budget; the need for chair training; more dialogue about “what does it mean to be a representative on a committee?”. Following the retreat, a survey was sent to attendees to gain additional insight as to what is recommended for the new committee structure, and those have also results informed the work in this document.

OBJECTIVE

Review and update the College-wide committee structure, in order to improve committee efficiency and effectiveness related to participatory governance and decision making as described in Strategic Goal 1.B of the San Luis Obispo Community College District 2010-2013 Strategic Plan.

CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPACTS

The leadership retreat subcommittee met throughout the Spring and Fall 2011 semesters to consider the six proposals from the retreat, review committee structure models from other colleges and develop the following proposal. The subcommittee’s goals in the committee restructuring process include: developing means for quality assurance, determine where possible to combine committees, establishing accountability, building trust while neutralizing silos, mitigating the “two by two”, clarifying committee roles and reporting lines, considering “or designee” in membership when specifying a particular position, simplifying the committee structure, and identifying committees no longer functioning as committees and recommending their discontinuance.

This recommendation is expected to bring clarity to accountability and reporting requirements, improve communication between committees, initiate a more robust assessment and improvement process for committees, including evaluating the number and effectiveness of committees.
Other Considerations:
During the process of creating the recommendation, the committee members learned that the college could improve the collaborative decision making process in other ways. Best practices that were suggested by retreat attendees and survey results and those that emerged during the subcommittee’s work this year include:

- **Agendas (next steps / reporting)**
  - Creating a central location to post all committee agendas and minutes

- **Training**
  - Chair training
    - Sample agenda and minutes
    - Agenda development and vetting process
    - Expectations of chairs
    - Setting ground rules
    - A committee assessment model and procedure is provided to chairs
    - Committee ineffectiveness
      - Recognizing & addressing ineffectiveness
      - New committee member training
        - Reporting back to the group represented
        - Absences / designee?

- **Committee Descriptions**
  - Are committee descriptions sufficiently clear?
  - Guidelines for clarifying committees’ roles

- **Assessment**
  - Goal development and timelines
  - To whom are goals reported to?
  - Critical self evaluation process
  - How do the committees’ goals fit into the big picture? Connect committee goals with the Educational Master Plan and organizational plans.

Best Practices are outlined below...

OTHERS?? We need to review notes... Committee process for absenteeism and ineffectiveness

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Cuesta College Committee structure can be described as a set of concentric circles grounded by the college's mission, vision and values, and focused on institutional effectiveness and student success. All 112 California Community Colleges maintain their unique committee structures in order to perform governing responsibilities of the institution.
The college's committee structure ensures compliance for shared-governance stated in AB 1725 and offers opportunities for individuals to learn more about and participate in such activities.

The committee structure also supports the institutional process of dialogue, the foundation of the standards of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The Commission gives dialogue a central place in the college's focus on learning and its particular mission and history. It states “that if an institution is to ensure that its resources and processes support student learning and its continuous assessment, as well as the pursuit of institutional excellence and improvement, an ‘ongoing, self-reflective dialogue' must become central to institutional processes.” Committee work and actions support student learning, planning and resource decisions and ongoing improvement for the short and long term sustainability of the college.

Committee Structure

The Board of Trustees (Board) “develops policies that establish the general direction of the college’s programs and services, quality standards, and legal, ethical and prudent parameters for college operations.” In addition the Board “monitors performance of the institution to ensure that it is meeting current community needs and anticipating future trends.” The Board also “monitors adherence to the legal, ethical and prudent expectations defined in policy related to college operations.”

As the subcommittee understands, the Board expects the superintendent/president to establish and maintain an effective committee structure to facilitate college-wide dialogue and shared governance in decision-making and policy development. To that end, the subcommittee recommends the following adjustments to the committee structure effective Fall 2012.

College-wide Central Committees

Cuesta College committees are structured in a concentric overlay pattern that begins with College-wide committees Central Committees. These committees include: College Council and Planning and Budget and the Academic Senate. These Central committees represent broad perspective, vision, and impact. As they make recommendations these committees work with the college’s mission, vision, values, and college-wide operational plans in mind.

College-wide Central committees have final authority over specified college-wide matters unless otherwise prescribed by Educational Code, Collective Bargaining Agreements or other legally binding statutes. Additionally, these committees are advisory to other committees, such as the Superintendent/President and/or the Board. Each committee is charged with identifying its mission, goals and value statements while integrating their
functions to the College's Educational Master Plan, Strategic Plan and other operational plans. Thus, decisions that will have a college-wide impact need to be funneled through one or more of these committees. Determination of process is based on the committee's description. It is expected that these committees work in a synergistic and complimentary manner. For example, any item that has a fiscal impact should be agendized at Planning and Budget, and may need to go to College Council for review prior to consideration by the Board.

The College-wide Committees are:

- College Council
- Planning and Budget
- Academic Senate

**Topic Focused Content Committees**

Continuing in our overlay pattern are those committees that are more narrowly focused, in terms of content, than the previously described College-wide central committees. These committees serve to inform the work of College-wide central committees by providing their expertise in matters that have College-wide or specific stakeholder impact. Via formal reporting lines, each of these committees informs the work of one or more College-wide central committee. Moreover, College-wide central committees can task members of its committee or members of the informing committees with specific requests pertinent to the focus of that committee's work. An example is the Planning and Budget Committee could task its members to develop a plan and schedule for budget reduction impacts.

- Accreditation Steering
- Cultural Diversity and Student Equity
- Distance Education
- District Calendar
- Student Support and Success
- Enrollment Management
- Technology
- IPPR
- Strategic Planning
- Institutional Effectiveness
- Did we list them all?—need to double check…

**Stakeholder Representative Committees**
The final layer in our concentric circle overlay consists of committees that represent a specific stakeholder group (the President’s Cabinet, CCCUE, CCFT, Management Senate, and ASCC) as well as divisional / department groups. These committees work within the totality of the committee structures, but are often directed by agreements beyond the committee structure itself, e.g. a Collective Bargain Agreement. Although the impact of these committees may be far-reaching, these committees work through College-wide and Topic-focused committees only when other binding agreements are not in place.

Approval Process

The process for approval is directed by the concentric layering of the college committee structure and by utilizing each college committee description.

Questions to Ask

• Does this have campus-wide impact? If yes, go to the appropriate College-wide central committee.
• Does this have negotiated pieces? If yes, inform the correct stakeholder representative committee.
• Does this pertain to academic and professional matters as described in BP 2305 the Academic Senate? List: 1) curriculum, including prerequisites, 2) degree and certificate requirements, 3) grading policies, 4) standards regarding student preparation and success, 5) College governance structures, as related to faculty roles, 6) Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation process, 7) Policies for faculty professional development activities, 8) Educational program development, 9) Processes for program review, 10) Processes for institutional planning and budget development, 11) Policies regarding student preparation and success, 12) Other academic and professional matters as agreed upon? If so, contact the Academic Senate.
• Is there is a student interest? If so, contact the Associated Students of Cuesta College.
• Does this impact another committee? If so, contact the committee chair.
• What is the integration with Core Principles of the Educational Master Plan?
• What is the integration with Goals of the Strategic Plan?
• How does the work of this committee integrate with other operational plans?
• What current goals, initiatives will be achieved by having the committee complete its work?
• Think critically, in what ways will your proposal impact other areas and contact the chair of that group.
Deactivation Process
A proposal to deactivate the committee is made to the governing body.

Best Practices

Reporting – A clear reporting structure is necessary so committees understand why their work is important to the institution and how the committee's work fits into the overall college goals. By having a reporting structure it becomes immediately clear to all members of the committee how their efforts will help move the college forward.

Calendar – Effective committees, no matter where they are located in the concentric circles, create calendars and timelines to carry out their work. These calendars not only ensure timeliness but will help committee members focus on their work and how it overlaps with the work of other committees. These calendars ensure that deadlines will be met and is a body of evidence for accreditation purposes that work carried out in a manner that is described in the institution’s self study.

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i Guide to Evaluating Institutions, ACCJC, July 2011, page 5
ii Chair Handbook, Community College League of California
iii Chair Handbook, Community College League of California