

REPORT OF FINDINGS

**Valencia Community College
Collegewide
Standing Committee Review
(2001-2002)**

**Communications and Shared Decision-Making
Action Team**

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Collegewide Standing Committees Review (2001-2002)

History

In June 2001 Bill Castellano was asked by President Shugart to coordinate a learning-centered review of Valencia's collegewide standing committees (hereafter referred to as standing committees) with findings to be reported to the College Planning Council. The call for this review was prompted, in part, by two major factors: the implementation of a new Governing Council Structure and an observation made in late 2000 by the Communications and Shared Decision-Making Action Team. That Action Team wrote the President, “. . . *there is little to no institutional confidence in the standing committee structure in place at this time. This no doubt results from an erratic appointment process, one or more committees not meeting for years, and one or more committees with charges that appear to no longer be relevant . . .*”

Because of their current responsibilities and/or past leadership roles on the committees to be reviewed, selected College staff (named below) were asked to convene the last known members of the 10 standing committees and facilitate a review based on the five principles and nine questions that follow.

Career Service Grievance – Nancy Scoltock
Collegewide Curriculum Committee – Paul Kinser
Collegewide Honors Advisory Committee – Ron Brandolini
Equal Access/Equal Opportunity Committee – Silvia Zapico
Committee of Faculty Review – Stan Stone
Health Related Programs Admissions Committee – Paul Kinser
Learning Resources Committee – Silvia Zapico
Collegewide Staff and Program Development Committee – Stan Stone
Student Academic Grievance Committee – Dan Dutkofski
Student Appeals Committee – Rose Watson

Principles Informing the Work of Standing Committees

- ✓ Collegewide Standing Committees will be learning-centered.
- ✓ Collegewide Standing Committees will have a clear, unique, and necessary charge.
- ✓ The membership of each Collegewide Standing Committee will be appropriate to the charge of the group.
- ✓ Collegewide Standing Committees will submit to the President each year an annual report (report to include, but not be limited to, issues considered; decisions made and actions taken; and anticipated opportunities and challenges in the year ahead).
- ✓ Each Collegewide Standing Committee will make recommendations to a specific administrator designated by the President; each committee will receive a response from that administrator within 20 College working days.

Questions to be Addressed by Review Committees

1. Is the “last known membership” of the committee (supplied to the convener of the review committee) accurate? If not, please update.
2. Is the current charge of the committee you are reviewing learning-centered? Please elaborate on your response.
3. If your answer to question 2 was “no,” is it possible to rewrite the charge so that it is learning-centered? If so, how?
4. Is the current charge of the committee clear, unique, and necessary? Please elaborate on your response.
5. If your answer to question 4 was “no,” is it possible to rewrite the charge so that it meets those three tests? If so, how?
6. Are the official membership of the committee and terms of office, as specified in its current charge, appropriate to that charge? If not, please explain.
7. How often has the committee met in the past two years? What resulted? Do minutes exist of any meetings held? If yes, please provide copies.
8. Have any recommendations been made in the past two years by the committee that you are reviewing that have not received attention? If yes, please elaborate.
9. What is your overall assessment of the value of this committee in helping Valencia address its Strategic Learning Plan? Please be as candid and complete in your answer as possible.

In July 2001 the College Planning Council designated the Communications and Shared Decision-Making Action Team as an advisory body to the Council for the review.

Charge to Communications and Shared Decision-Making Action Team

The Communications and Shared Decision-Making Action Team was charged with providing a report of findings to the College Planning Council based on a review of

- the responses from the standing committees,
- the new governing council structure at the College,
- and other relevant information.

The Action Team was given the following guidance from President Shugart: “Standing committees can carry with them a great deal of history and program stability; however, they are only valuable as long as they have a clear, unique, and necessary charge, appropriate membership, and credibility within the institution. At the end of this process we want standing committees that do not meet those three tests to either be eliminated or revitalized.”

Findings

Valencia is in the process of institutionally redefining such terms as *communication, collaboration, and stakeholders*. Making *Learning First* a reality rather than rhetoric, creating and implementing a comprehensive Strategic Learning Plan with identified Indicators of Progress, and creating an authentic “deep in the organization” Governing Council Structure are all examples of a radical departure from business as usual.

With those deep architectural changes underway, any realistic review of the College's standing committee structure can only be undertaken with Dorothy's admonition to her little dog in *The Wizard of Oz*, "Toto, we're not in Kansas any more!"

Why Does The College Have Standing Committees?

Two related questions arose almost from the beginning of our deliberations: Why does the College have "standing" committees? What is the difference between a "standing" committee and a committee that is permanent? A classic example of the irony of the "standing" committee terminology is found in the self-study report of the Learning Resources Committee. In response to one of the self-study questions posed, the response was, ". . . the last time the LRC Committee met was in 1996. For the past two years, the Ad Hoc LRC Committee has been meeting to carry out some of the functions." In other words, the "standing" committee wasn't functional; therefore, an ad hoc group was created to get the job done.

PROPOSAL: It is our suggestion that the College discontinue the practice of designating groups as "standing" committees. Valencia committees should exist only so long as their charge is relevant and they further the mission of the institution. While the College will no doubt continue to benefit from the concentrated, focused work of short-term work teams, task forces, action teams, and other ad hoc groups, a new vision for the role of longer term committees is needed. This new vision should recognize that College personnel have numerous demands for their time and talents. The 59 Action Items in the College's new Strategic Learning Plan are an indication of new, targeted priorities that must be addressed in our learning-centered journey.

That makes it all the more imperative that the new architecture of governance being created provide opportunities for us to work smarter and more deliberately.

It is further suggested that the Executive Council request from the President, vice presidents, and provosts, a listing of all existing committees (current standing committees and other groups) that meet within their areas of supervision. The listing should be divided into two categories: 1) groups with long-term charges and 2) groups with temporary charges. Groups with long-term charges should be expected to begin operating based on the following principles at the beginning of the 2002-2003 academic year. The President, appropriate vice presidents, and provosts should be responsible for ensuring that each principle is addressed for each long-term “committee.”

Principles Informing the Work of Valencia Committees

- ✓ **Valencia committees will be learning-centered.**
- ✓ **Valencia committees will have a clear, unique, and necessary charge.**
- ✓ **The membership of each Valencia committee will be appropriate to the charge of the group.**
- ✓ **Valencia committees will submit to the President or appropriate vice president or provost each year an annual report to include, but not be limited to, issues considered; decisions made and actions taken; and anticipated opportunities and challenges in the year ahead.**
- ✓ **Each Valencia committee will make recommendations to a specific administrator designated by the President, or appropriate vice president or provost; each committee will receive a response from that administrator within 20 College working days.**
- ✓ **Valencia committees will provide input into reviews of the College’s Strategic Learning Plan when deemed appropriate by the committees.**

Is This Any Way To Mediate Differences In A Learning –Centered College?

The 10 existing standing committees include four that are grievance related: the Career Service Grievance Committee, Committee of Faculty Review, the Student Academic Grievance Committee, and the Student Appeals Committee. The Career Service Grievance Committee has not met since August 1995. The Committee of Faculty Review has not convened since the 1982-83 academic year. The Student Academic Grievance Committee in its self-study expressed concern about the adversarial nature of the group's work. The Student Appeals Committee has met only once in the past two years.

It is hard to know why there have been relatively few grievances handled by the Career Service Grievance Committee, the Committee of Faculty Review, and the Student Appeals Committee. One possible thought that has been offered is that lack of visibility has caused a lack of awareness of the existence of the committees. It has also been suggested that the adversarial nature of our formal grievance committees is an intimidating factor that discourages appeals. This would tend to be supported by the more active Student Academic Grievance Committee. In that group's self-study they wrote,

“This committee has been under self-review for several years and the main objection has always been that it is, by its very structure, adversarial. Many cases are presented to the committee because people at the more immediate level were unable to communicate to a certain level of satisfaction what is relevant and fair about the assigning of a grade. There seems to be no apparent trust between the student and the faculty member, or the Dean, or Provost for that matter. We have on several occasions pursued the possibility of establishing an ombudsman position that could intervene more

immediately and, with mediation training, more humanely. This would eliminate some of the ill feelings and misconceptions that many people have about the process as it exists today.”

PROPOSAL: It is our suggestion that the College systematically move toward implementation of an ombudsman model of dispute resolution and mediation of conflicts by the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year. We believe the following two step process would permit a thoughtful transitional process while providing for a venue for dealing with intervening grievances. While we are generally supportive of mediated dispute resolution, we are also concerned about the form such a change might entail. It is critical that any structure that is created have credibility within the College community and that employees and students perceive the process to be truly open and free of administrative pressure. It is our belief that this is a case where the perception of an honest broker being the “mediator” is almost as important as there being an honest broker in that role.

Step 1: Membership of the four existing standing committees that are charged with dealing with grievances should be immediately appointed for terms ending at the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year.

Step 2: A collegewide work team (co-chaired by Bill Mallowney and Dan Dutkofski) should be created to investigate the feasibility of implementing an ombudsman system. The work team report, due to the College Planning Council no later than December 11, 2002, should include an action plan for implementation if the group determines such a system to be feasible. Due process procedures must be a part of such a plan in order for the College to be able to deal with grievances should mediation fail.

“If It Isn’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”

The Collegewide Curriculum Committee meets frequently and appears to have a clear charge. Once selected, the new Chief Learning Officer might want to revisit the composition of the group and review the charge of the committee. The Collegewide Honors Advisory Committee and the Health Related Programs Admissions Committee have regular meeting schedules and narrowly developed focuses.

PROPOSAL: It is suggested that the College continue the Collegewide Curriculum Committee, the Collegewide Honors Advisory Committee, and the Health Related Programs Admissions Committee without major modifications. It would appear that recommendations from these three committees should be acted on by the College Learning Council.

Equal Access/Equal Opportunity Committee

The self-study of the Equal Access/Equal Opportunity Committee was especially compelling in that the group acknowledged that their current charge does not address diversity issues that are so much a part of the College’s Strategic Learning Plan. They felt so strongly about this point that they have begun working on a major revision of the committee’s charge and composition.

PROPOSAL: We applaud the efforts of the EAEO Committee to refine and enhance the charge of the group. A new, more diversity based charge may necessitate serious reconsideration of the name of the committee. Efforts now being undertaken

by the committee to take a leadership role in promoting diversity as an important learning tool are encouraged.

It is further suggested that the proposed new charge of the committee (and new name, if appropriate) be submitted to the College Planning Council by no later than June 30, 2002. The committee thereafter should submit recommendations and reports to the College Planning Council.

Learning Resources Committee

The Learning Resources Centers have been at the center of significant changes in recent years. Though information is central to academic life, the LRC is in an important transformational process between traditional hard copy books and periodicals to massive technological change. Already we see traditional libraries around the country changing in appearance, allocation of resources, and strategic planning goals.

In some ways it might be argued that the inaction of the “official” Learning Resources Committee (the group hasn’t met since 1996) is a reflection of the transition underway. An ad hoc group has been meeting to make critical recommendations and decisions over the past couple of years. Missing from those meetings have been rank and file faculty and student users.

PROPOSAL: It is suggested that the College implement the recommended charge, membership (except as noted below), and term of office for the Learning Resources Committee proposed by the LRC/TRC Coordinators on July 30, 2001. We further suggest, however, that the number of student members be increased to four, one for each campus, and that these members be appointed by the campus student

government presidents. The recommendations of the Learning Resources Committee should be forwarded to the College Learning Council.

Collegewide Staff and Program Development Committee

The Collegewide Staff and Program Development Committee has been defunct for more than a decade. During that same time period, the College has expended millions of dollars on staff and program development priorities based on the Staff and Program Development Funding Guidelines published in August 1988. In addition to collegewide initiatives including tuition reimbursement and conference registration for employees, collegewide divisions and campus committees and departments have been able to support administration, faculty, and staff travel. What has been missing, however, is implementation of the charge of the Collegewide SPD Committee: “The Staff and Program Development Committee has the responsibility for funding innovative projects to improve the educational programs of the College. It encourages the development of new programs, courses, and teaching techniques.”

PROPOSAL: It is suggested that the College eliminate the Collegewide Staff and Program Development Committee.

It is further suggested that the co-chairs of the College Planning Council and College Learning Council convene a representative group of eight Council members (four from Planning and four from Learning) to develop proposed principles for the allocation of staff and program development dollars deemed discretionary by the President. The work of this ad hoc group should be reviewed by all of the governing councils and a conference committee (three representatives from each Council)

convened to work out any differences for resubmission to the Councils for approval and recommendation to the President.

Conclusion

We have no illusions that our observations and suggestions will be enthusiastically embraced by everyone. What we have attempted to do is suggest ways to replace our “antiquated” standing committee architecture with a “new architecture” that practices authentic collaboration, respects the time commitments of everyone, values the work of committees, and ensures accountability for all. It is our hope that we have been successful in articulating that vision.

ATTACHMENTS REFERRED TO IN THIS DOCUMENT CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING BILL CASTELLANO (bcastellano@valencia.cc.fl.us).