

# SENATE YEAR-END REPORT

ROBERT HELSABECK, SENATE PRESIDENT

The first operational year of the new Faculty Senate was a productive one on three fronts: the consideration of proposals that came to the Senate; the working out of procedures for the Senate's operation within itself and within the larger faculty; and the participation in the consideration of institutional issues of importance (institutional planning, institutional self study, and the choosing of a new provost). Although the Senate seems to have had a good first year, we have political and procedural elements that still need modification. We remain open to the critical insights and suggestions of any member of the Faculty.

## I

### **Proposals Considered**

This past year the Senate considered a number of proposals emanating from the administration, from faculty committees and from individual faculty on and off the Senate. The formal proposals were reviewed by the appropriate Faculty committees before action by the Senate. (The meeting months for each proposal are noted for reference to a fuller commentary in the minutes, when available, and the proposals are listed in chronological order by date of initiation.)

- A. Moving "up" the date for students' withdrawal from a course. (October, April) A member of the Senate was concerned that students were "hanging on" in courses long after they were committed to completing the course. Their presence was felt to be a drag on the course. The matter went to the Academic Policies Committee where a number of unanticipated problems were encountered. The matter is still under review by the committee.
- B. Membership in "Service Members Opportunity College (SOC). (October) The Veterans Affairs Office proposed that Stockton join this group to make it possible for active duty service men and women to complete their degrees while on active duty. The main consideration was to waive the requirement that the last 32 credits must be taken in residence at Stockton. The proposal passed without dissent, was approved by the administration and is currently in effect.
- C. Advertising on Campus. Nathan Long and 30 other faculty members signed a letter of concern about the prominence of advertising in the area of the F-Wing atrium and the broader cultural effects of the "mall" of the College. VP Matt Altier and I had conversations on the matter culminating in a meeting of Altier, the Senate president, the chair of the Administration and Finance committee,

Nathan Long and several additional faculty members. This meeting resulted in a satisfactory outcome. Posters and signs were relocated and assurances were given that the College would not enter into contracts with companies that limit the freedom of speech of members of the College.

- D. Double Majors. (February) Several members of the Senate proposed that the College should allow students to complete two majors short of a second degree, i.e. in fewer than 32 credits beyond the 128. For example, a sociology major could take a heavy concentration of cognates in psychology and complete both majors in only 16 additional credits. The Senate approved the proposal with a voice vote. Two members abstained. The matter is under review by the Administration.
- E. Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership. (November) The School of Education proposed to offer a new program in educational leadership. The proposal was approved 21 yes, 2 No, and 4 abstentions. The Administration and the State has granted approval and the program is accepting students this Fall.
- F. Minor in Behavioral Neuroscience. (December) The Senate approved this minor 18, 0, 2. The Administration has also approved the minor.
- G. Admissions Requirement for Paralegal Program. The Senate approved a proposal from the Administration to admit post-associate degree holders as well as post-baccalaureate students to the program. This puts Stockton in line with most other colleges in the State.
- H. Academic Honesty Policy Change. (January) Formerly, students who anticipated a sanction for academic honesty could preemptively withdraw from the course in question. That will no longer be allowed. The Senate approved the administratively proposed change by unanimous voice vote. It is in effect.
- I. BASK to FRST. (January, February, March) Frank Cerreto, in behalf of the BASK Faculty, submitted a proposal to use a new acronym "FRST" to identify courses which were designed specifically for first year students. Subsequently, Frank withdrew the proposal to give it a re-working in light of some of the concerns. That process is still underway.
- J. Masters in Communication Disorders. A proposal, first submitted to the Faculty Assembly several years ago (1996), was resubmitted with some revisions. The Senate approved the proposal 18, 5, 3. It has been approved by the State.
- K. Limitation on Non-matriculated graduate students. The Administration's proposal to limit non-matriculated graduate students in certificate programs to only 6 credits (instead of 9) was presented. It passed by unanimous voice vote.
- L. Accelerated Dual Degree. (February, March) The Senate voted to limit the credits that can be counted for both the Baccalaureate and the Masters degrees

to 12 credits. No one dissented, one abstained. It is under review by the Administration.

- M. Articulation Agreement with University of Delaware. (February) The Senate approved, by unanimous voice vote, the waiver of the last 32 credits residency requirement for students completing U. of D's Bachelors of Medical Technology. The Administration has also approved this agreement.
- N. Independent Studies Standards. (March & May Retreat) After some consideration over several meetings, the Senate chose to table the matter pending further clarification of the need for new standards.
- O. Evaluation of Administrators. (April & May Retreat) The evaluation of deans is ongoing and the Senate has assurances from Provost Kesselman that the process will continue.
- P. Faculty Advisory Groups – Administratively formed. (April) In light of the advisory group formed for Academic Advising, the Senate voted unanimously to adopt a policy that the Administration should consult with the Senate Executive Committee before it asks faculty to serve on an ongoing advisory committee.

## II

### **Senate Operations**

In the Senate's May retreat, we spent the better part of a morning session considering ways to improve the functioning of the Senate. The material below is taken from the report of that session of the retreat.

- A. Meetings - Operational Considerations. The Senate discussed how it might work more efficiently in the future using internal working groups or Senate Committees and perhaps scheduling additional meeting times other than Tuesdays at 4:30 p.m. The general sentiment seemed to favor working within the current time constraints. The presence of committee chairs either at the Executive Committee meetings or at the Senate meetings when their committee's proposal is on the agenda would be helpful. The fuller use of the Vice President's Constitutional duty to coordinate with committees will also be useful for effective functioning. There was a clear consensus that some regular time for "executive session" at the beginning of each meeting would be helpful for clarifying faculty thinking prior to the introduction of guests to the meeting. Operational fine tuning will continue.
- B. Elections (role of nominating committee). The discussion reflected the split opinions on the operation of the Nominating Committee. The current Nominating Committee was not comfortable with the task of making

qualitative distinctions among good candidates. In particular, the committee questioned the wisdom of requiring a slate of "one nominee for each vacancy" (Article IX, section 2 of the Constitution). However it was pointed out that one of the primary functions of the Nominating Committee was the need for a diversity of candidates. The Constitution is clear that this function is paramount (Article IX, section 1). It was suggested that the purpose of producing a slate is to promote diversity. The Senate then discussed whether a slate might be less appropriate in officer elections than in the at-large senator and committee chair elections that were held this year. Concern was expressed that a slate might discourage self-nominations for officer positions. The Senate agreed, however, to retain the current constitutional language at least through next year's officer election. It asked the Nominating Committee to focus on diversity in preparing the slate of officer candidates. The Senate will take stock after one more year and submit a constitutional amendment as needed.

- C. Committee connections to Senate. After a discussion of the Assembly Committee structure, the general consensus was to leave the committee structure intact for one more year. This coming year, four of the eight committee chairs are also Senators and this will provide a better sense of the effectiveness of overlaps of committee and senate membership.
- D. Graduate School representation. Because the "School Senators" are based upon schools to which faculty are appointed, not the level of courses they may teach and because the group of faculty who teach graduate courses is well represented on the Senate and is likely to continue to be, no action was taken to designate a specific seat for this group of faculty.
- E. Connections to the Larger Faculty. One of the concerns that we on the Senate have is the agency of the collective Faculty. One danger of a senate structure is the alienation of the larger faculty from the governing process. We will be seeking ways to give more effective voice to those faculty not currently serving on the Senate. The former Assembly structure had the virtue of hearing from the newest members of the faculty as they were moved to speak. We want to preserve that virtue.

One idea is the encouragement of "white papers" or "think pieces" from any member of the faculty on a matter of concern to the College. We currently do this periodically through "email storms" on subjects that move folks. I have found these to be useful ways to get a sense of some of the concerns

that folks have but we could invite short papers rather than just waiting for it to happen. The planners for the constitution change considered the use of surveys to get a sense of the Faculty. Although we certainly don't want to govern by referenda, we do want to stay in touch with Faculty concerns.

### III

#### Broader Issues

This past year, the College was faced with three broad issues that are not normally a part of the academic year: the "rollout" of a decade-long plan (2020), the preparation of the ten-year re-accreditation process, and the appointment of a new provost. In addition, the 40<sup>th</sup> year celebration of the advent of the College was being planned and documents retrieved and written. These efforts provided the opportunities for "taking stock" of where we've landed. Where to from here?

2020. An ongoing conversation about the meaning of the "pillars" of the 2020 plan took place during the Fall semester. Brown Bag discussions, private conversations, emails and meetings of the Senate, were among the means used to shape the nature of the plan. The Senate had a productive meeting on December 1 to consider the comments made by colleagues and further thoughts that Senate members had. (The minutes of the December meeting provide a good synopsis of that discussion.) Suffice it to say that improvements have been made in the document that will now guide more concrete planning.

Re-accreditation. A number of groups of faculty, administrators, students, and board members have been constituted to begin work on various aspects of our self study. This effort will be increasing salient as we approach the visit of the accreditation team. The Senate will, no doubt, be called upon to document ways that shared governance is realized and ways that it falls short. We will attempt to ascertain the faculty-wide perspective on the effectiveness of governance with the senate as the critical new element of shared governance.

Appointment of the Provost. The Senate and the Union provided ex-officio participants on the search committee. In addition, the Senate president consulted with the College president on the choice of particular faculty members. Finally, the Senate/Assembly president provided the setting for the appearance of each of

the provost candidates. I believe the Faculty had good conversations with each of the final candidates.

Large Questions. The issue of a “shared vision” continues to be central to the well-being of the College. Everyday decision-making drives the evolution of the college without necessarily reflecting shared vision. What sort of place would we ideally like to be? How does it differ from the initial “dream” of this college? What is the role of liberal arts in a time of job anxiety and a preoccupation with the competitive context in which we operate. If we believe liberal learning is still key, how does that manifest itself as programs become increasingly separated from one another? How can we make the best of linkages between liberal learning and career preparation both at the undergraduate and graduate levels? What do we need to do with our approach to general education to more effectively serve our central values as a college. This is a good time to take stock as we celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. I hope this will be a year of renewed imagination!

Robert Helsabeck, Senate President

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