

**From:** Kesselman, Harvey

**Sent:** Saturday, January 12, 2019 7:56 AM

**To:** Davenport, Susan

**Cc:** McGinnis, Patricia; Treadwell, Lolita; Collins, Patricia; Deininger, Madeleine; Hamilton, William; Grullon, Jessica; Hilsin, Toni; Honaker, Lisa; Hutchison, Ron; Jackson, Brian; Santana, Pedro; Kay, Jessica; Carter-Anderson, Shilon; Copeland, Judith

**Subject:** RE: Task Force on Shared Governance - Final report

Good morning members of the Task Force on Shared Governance,

Thank-you, Dr. Davenport, for your hard work as it pertains to co-leading the Task Force on Shared Governance. You and Trustee Deininger have done an extraordinary job with respect to ensuring that the process of implementing shared governance maintains a position of primacy at Stockton. In addition to your leadership, the work of the Task Force has been equally noteworthy and commendable.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Task Force was the development of a university vision statement, the revision of the mission statement, the affirmation of our guiding principle, and the delineation of our values. These activities put into action the process of shared governance and I cannot overstate how difficult an assignment that is for a college or university to undertake.

For more than thirty years Stockton chose not to tackle this task due, in large measure, to the controversy it may have caused at the institution. The redefining of an institutional vision, mission, etc., is a herculean responsibility, and the Shared Governance Task Force was able to fulfill it in a thoughtful, transparent, and collaborative manner. If nothing else was accomplished during the past couple of years, that in it of itself suggests the Task Force was highly successful.

The document and almost all of its recommendations focus exclusively on the role of faculty and staff in shared governance. This, of course, is somewhat expected given the composition of the Task Force as well as the reasons for its existence. But shared governance needs to include all primary stakeholders and that simply is not as evident as it needs to be in order to ensure full community participation.

In this regard, as I read the report, its recommendations, and accompanying alternative recommendation, it became clear to me that one voice is missing throughout the document. That is, the student voice. \* This revelation was particularly disquieting given the significant role of students in shared governance at our founding as well as our current guiding principle of "students first."

Moreover, and just as important, the roles of the Board of Trustees and President are undefined. As we all know, the Board and President are integral to shared governance at public institutions of higher education, particularly given that they have statutory and other legal responsibilities for which they are accountable to the public, legislators, etc. In essence, they are the ultimate decision-makers on matters of institutional policy, and all other shared governance bodies act as advisors to them.

This in no way demeans or lessens the importance or impact of these advisory bodies since the best decisions are often made after assimilating the best advice from those various bodies during the decision-making process. It does, however, provide boundaries as to the

roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability of each constituent group that comprise the shared governance process. \*\*

As we move forward, please know that I support fully and approve the Task Force's recommendation to have the Strategic Planning Implementation Team begin the process of considering, revising, organizing, and prioritizing the remaining recommendations.

However, the roles of students, the President, and the Board of Trustees are to be given more consideration and weight during those future deliberations, and I am more than willing to work with members of the Strategic Planning Implementation Team to ensure that takes place.

In the meantime, and to coin a well-worn phrase, we must remember that shared governance is a journey, not destination, and we must continue to work together in order to effectively carry out the mission you have so eloquently stated and the vision to which we now all aspire. Once again, thanks for your hard work and commitment to moving Stockton forward in a collaborative and thoughtful way.

\* The word "student" only appears three times in the body of the 29 recommendations, and does not appear at all in the alternative recommendation.

\*\* Administrative Working Paper #1, Stockton's founding shared governance document, speaks to my assertions, and I encourage you to read the attached document so that you are familiar with those roles.

Best regards,

Harvey Kesselman  
President  
Stockton University