

THE ROLE OF THE SENATE

The attack by the union executive council on members of the faculty has become a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Perhaps it would help mitigate some of the union's anger and frustration if we clarified the difference between the tasks and methods of the union and the senate.

The union fights for the faculty's wages and working conditions. It uses the grievance process and law suits to do so. The union is the faculty's department of defense.

The senate's job is to protect the integrity of programs and serves as the voice of the faculty in academic and professional matters. Working through the committee system, we use compelling evidence and persistent dialogue to lead, to protect and to improve the college's teaching and learning environment. We are the faculty's department of state.

This year, in less than five months, the senate has accomplished a great deal on behalf of the faculty and the college. We have done this using the tools of statesmanship and not the tools of war.

Budget and Planning

For the first time in College of Marin history, the Institutional Planning Committee and the Budget Committee are working together to coordinate planning priorities with budget. Next year we will be piloting a process that will be instituted in 2008 whereby program review will inform planning and planning will determine budgeting. Under the able leadership of the Budget Committee's co-chair, faculty

member Robert Kennedy, the Budget Committee is studying every dark corner of the college budget and building the budget calendar for the coming years.

Program Review

IPC's writing group, including faculty members Maula Allen, Sara McKennon, and Michael Brailoff wrote our Program Review document, which was approved by the senates and the board of trustees in December. The program review pilot, launched this month, will report out to the full faculty in fall of 2007. Information garnered from the pilot will be used to budget for the growth and maintenance of these programs. Our fast tracking of the pilot will contribute greatly to our being removed from WASC warning. Faculty participating in the pilot include Michael Dougan, Sara McKinnon, Patty O'Keefe, and Derek Wilson.

The Data Advisory Group

A group of faculty research experts will be working with pilot participants to help them frame their research questions and determine the data they will need to collect. The data advisory group includes Patrick Kelly, Eric Dunmire, Patty O'Keefe, and Robert Kennedy. Michael Brailoff will be providing technical assistance in administrative research methods. At COM, review of educational programs will be faculty led and faculty controlled, including the reliance on faculty research experts for data collection.

Facilities Planning

The Facilities Committee, which floundered last year, is engaged in crucial work identifying and prioritizing the repair and upgrade of facilities that will not be affected by modernization. This process is being led by committee chair and faculty member Fernando Agudelo-Silva whose expertise is an invaluable resource for this committee.

Instructional Equipment

The Instructional Equipment Committee, including faculty members Carol Adair, George Hritz, Patrick Kelly, Rob Chavez, and Ingrid Schreck, has the enviable task of prioritizing equipment requests and determining sources of funding. This year the committee's excellent planning and use of resources resulted in funding over \$500,000 worth of instructional equipment.

There is more being done and more to do in the constant vigil that insures faculty participation in decision making. This system of shared governance is far from perfect yet, as witnessed by the continuing saga of the testing center. Mistakes are made and groups are left out of the vetting process and we go back to take account of those whose input we are pledged to consider. Doing this without blaming and rancor opens the doors to continued cooperation and inclusion.

We cannot meet the demands of WASC and of our community unless we cooperate across "tribes." For us to succeed - staff, students, administrators, and faculty - there must be trust, respect and open communication. These are not bad things. They do not suggest weakness, or selling out, or cooperating with the enemy. These are the tools of statesmanship.

Winston Churchill noted that those who can win a war well can rarely make a good peace. Five members of the union executive council sit on the senate. They comprise one third of the senate and their strategies of obstruction and aggression may work well when at war for the union but not when negotiating solutions that favor the academic and professional interests of the faculty.

A senate that tries to imitate the union can manufacture complaints at a fevered pace but it will produce very little, mainly because it will fail at statesmanship. The senate must rely on the tools it has and it must use them well. The senate needs members who understand its mission and are skilled at employing its methods.

A sense of humor helps too.

Yolanda Bellisimo
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