

COLLEGE OF MARIN ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES

Oct 8, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: 12:47 PM

LOCATION: DH SS 241

Senators Present: Maria Coulson, Gina Cullen, Luna Finlayson, Cara Kreit, Kevin Muller, Caitlin Rolston, Rebecca Beal, Kristin Perrone, LyRyan Russell, Ian Sethre, Shawn Nelson, Dave Patterson, Alex Jones, Logan Wood

Absent: None

Invited Guests: None

- I. **Agenda:** Nelson/Perrone
- II. **Minutes:** Perrone/Nelson amended and approved
- III. **Public Requests:** Danae Martinez recounted her recent experience after offering to teach the two DE sections of Ethnic Studies 112 that remained without an instructor as of October 8, and urged the Senate to investigate and act. She stated that she has taught the course for more than ten years, holds course-specific POOCR approval, and was recommended by her chair. She reported that an arrangement allowing her to teach both sections (Plan B) was contingent on her apologizing to the Interim Dean and admitting wrongdoing for going outside of process; she declined and offered a mediated, restorative justice process instead, which was not accepted by the Interim Dean. Plan B later moved forward but was then reversed in favor of an expedited external hire. She stated that her chair acted in good faith and should be protected, and that above all her concern was for the students and the consequences to them if an instructor is not put in place immediately. *Partway through the statement, a motion (Coulson/Sethre) was made and approved to extend the time for comments to allow for its completion. The full text of Professor Martinez's statement is included in Appendix I of these minutes. Additional print she distributed will be available on the Academic Senate website as supplemental material in PDF.*
- IV. **Officers:**
 - a. **President (Maria Coulson):**
 - i. President Coulson spoke with Cari Torres regarding possible changes to DEC, including a potential redistribution of DE coordinator units into 2 jobs descriptions — one for POOCR compliance, vetting, training, and another for accreditation, policies, and reporting to the senate. The latter could be a senator, following the Curriculum Committee Chair model. Conversations will continue the DE team (Stacey Winkler, Carri Torres, Ingrid Kelly), who are working on AP 4105 and will bring it to Senate for comments. However, the DEC is currently facing the issue that faculty members need to be on zoom but are reluctant to share their locations, which is the underlying reason for a restructure of the committee.
 - b. **Vice President (Gina Cullen):**
 - i. No report
- V. **Committee Reports:**
 - a. **Sabbatical (Luna Finlayson):** The full committee (VP Emerson, Dean Grace Yuan, Dean Alina Varona, UPM reps Shaquam Edwards and Carl Freschl, Senate reps Luna Finlayson and Caitlin Rolston) has met and elected Senator Caitlin Rolston as chair. A structure for the semester was established, the VP Emerson sent the applications to the committee, and next two meetings are scheduled to review and discuss.
 - b. **PRAC (Maria Coulson):** appointed Beth Patel to PRAC.
- VI. **Equivalency Review Committee:** President Coulson shared the draft of a memo of concern. She thanked Senator Russell for his help talking through the content and tone and Senator Muller for the generous edits and new format.. She expressed her disappointment the students have been left in this situation, and the fact that none of the communications she has received — many which have felt threatening to her — mentioned students. She stated that ASCCC Area B representative Mark Edward Osea had advised her to go directly to the Chancellor's office with this matter. However, after some discussion, due to the need for an urgent resolution to this dire situation and a continuing commitment to collegial consultation, the Senate elected to send the memo directly to President Eldridge for immediate consideration and in hopes of student-centered action. A response was requested before 5 pm on Friday, 10/9/26.

- a. 68 students are affected, and many reported they only found out last week that there was no instructor for the class. Students had been telling their counselors that they were worried the professor didn't like them because emails and assignments went unanswered and ungraded. Affected students include those with plans to graduate this winter and transfer this spring, students working full time with little flexibility for in their timeline, students on financial aid and work study whose aid, employment, and housing depend on this class, and basketball players whose eligibility and transfer depend on completing the course this semester. Counselors are currently resorting to advice that involves students seeking courses outside of College of Marin to complete requirements and retain eligibility.
- b. The committee has received materials for an appeal, including new documentation. Regardless of the outcome, any new onboarding will take at least two weeks.
- c. Without specific documentation of minimum qualifications, the committee cannot grant equivalency. The stakes of an error are serious. If equivalency is granted, but cannot be documented, and the college were to be audited, students would lose credit and possibly degrees, even those received beyond College of Marin through transfer.
- d. Senators noted concern that the details of a confidential deliberation made by a senate subcommittee are being freely commented upon, and that the Senate is attempting to fulfill its duties and uphold state standards.
- e. Other institutions do not offer an equivalency review for expedited hires; all problems regarding equivalency at COM have arisen during expedited as opposed to hiring processes with full screening committee reviews. Senators discussed the possibility of eliminating the equivalency review option for expedited hires (any expedited hire would need to meet the minimum qualifications as set forward by the Chancellor's Office and ASCCC). Regardless, the ASEC process may be reviewed when this particular case is resolved.

VII. **Future business:** Following a delay in the Math, Science, and Nursing division, Senators requested that all deans and acting deans be aware of OIM scheduling deadlines each term.

VIII. **Adjourned:** 2:00 pm.

Comments, concerns, or questions regarding Academic Senate Minutes may be directed to the
Academic Senate Secretary,
Caitlin Rolston: CRolston@marin.edu

Appendix I: Statement Read Aloud in full, with time extension, by Professor Danae Martinez, Ethnic Studies Department.

Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Danae Martinez, and I am a Junior ETUM instructor of Ethnic Studies.

I know many of you don't know me, and that's because I usually come here, give my students everything I have, and keep it moving. I'm not someone who goes looking for trouble. But when I see something wrong happening, especially to students, and I know it can be fixed, I cannot simply look the other way. **Standing up for students and those with less power, is my life's purpose—not just my job.**

So when two asynchronous ETHS 112 sections went weeks without stable instruction, I spoke up. I had been available since September 7. I've taught this course many times, I'm POCR-approved, and my chair recommended me. Yet students were still waiting while the District pursued an expedited outside hire. Other experienced faculty had been told they couldn't teach this course without its specific POCR approval. **So why would that requirement suddenly be different?**

Last Thursday, I was preparing to bring these concerns to this Senate when my chair urgently contacted me. His text said:

"Hi Danae, Dana has agreed to plan B-do not go to senate. This is significant thing for us to talk about first. VERY IMPORTANT YOU CALL ME RIGHT AWAY"

Plan B was an arrangement that would allow me to teach both ETHS 112 sections, with another instructor taking one of my existing classes. He asked me not to attend Senate, and because I trusted him, I didn't.

But when we spoke, he told me that receiving those assignments depended on my apologizing to Dr. Emerson **and admitting wrongdoing** for going outside of process.

I was so shocked that I asked him repeatedly, over two telephone calls, whether **my being assigned the two ETHS 112 classes was contingent upon both the apology and the admission of wrongdoing**. He confirmed that it was. A friend heard that conversation and is willing to go on record.

I told my chair that I was worried a written admission of wrongdoing could end up in my personnel file or be used against me when I sought advancement to Senior ETUM status.

He was empathetic and reassured me that he guaranteed it would not be used against me.

I believe he genuinely wanted to protect me. But even with that reassurance, I could not risk putting an admission of wrongdoing in writing when I had done nothing wrong.

I offered a mediated restorative and reparative justice process because I was willing to repair the relationship. I was told that wasn't acceptable to Dr. Emerson.

I could work toward reconciliation. But I could not confess to wrongdoing I hadn't committed.

I checked with my chair again on Friday and was told that things were moving forward, but slowly, and that the District needed confirmation that the other instructor would take one of my existing classes so that I could teach both ETHS 112 sections. The other instructor agreed to take my class. I confirmed that personally. Everything appeared to be moving forward. I heard nothing over the weekend despite the urgent need for an instructor.

Then, on Monday, my chair told me the District had decided to hire externally instead.

I believe I lost those assignments because I refused to admit wrongdoing to Dr. Emerson.

I am pursuing a grievance, but this is bigger than my employment. It is about students, academic freedom, and whether faculty can speak up without fear of consequences.

And I want to say something about my chair. I believe he was trying to solve a problem, and I believe he acted in good faith.

If a department chair was directed to communicate an improper employment condition, he deserves protection, too.

Because what happens when a chair is placed in that position? Does the chair carry out the instruction, or refuse and risk being seen as defiant or insubordinate?

No department chair should have to make that choice. And no faculty member should have to choose between advocating for students and protecting their livelihood.

I am asking this Senate to investigate what happened, demand accountability, and evaluate whether Dr. Emerson acted and is currently acting with the urgency these students deserved and the law requires.

Students first. Protect vulnerable faculty and chairs. Demand transparency, even from those in power.

I am asking you to act—not simply listen.

Thank you.