

Interim Report to Higher Learning Commission

In response to the issues raised during the site visit during the Spring of 2018, Johnson County Community College (JCCC) is filing the following report regarding actions taken by the institution to address the concern raised by the site team at the April 30-May 2, 2018 site visit. Specifically the team recommended an interim report “outlining the academic governance structure including academic leadership, academic and faculty committees and faculty including adjunct faculty to include communication processes and protocols between the committees, leadership, and faculty; the outline of shared governance protocols and communication between faculty, academic leadership and JCCC leadership; and an outline of decision-making protocols as well as communication protocols when decisions are final.”

During the summer of 2018 the Chief Academic Officer, wrote a policy statement entitled “Shared Governance at JCCC” which was released to the faculty at large during a public meeting in August. (The complete document appears in Appendix A.) The document positions the institution within a context for what shared governance is within the framework of the college and how the hierarchy of decision making is theoretically designed and should function. Following the meeting with faculty the document was shared at all levels, beginning with the Trustees, using the forum of the Collegial Steering Committee, and with the Cabinet directly thereafter. A final step to placing this framework at the forefront of institutional communications will be to have it placed under the Academic Affairs Branch Policy for anyone to reference as part of the website and communications plan revamp scheduled to be completed by July of 2019.

The second step in dealing with the issue was undertaken from August through October of 2018. A surface scan of the institution was taken, with help from the faculty at large, to examine all currently functioning committees on the campus and lay out a hierarchy chart that details the path of faculty input, from the lowest convening level up through the committees tasked with providing recommendations to the CAO for execution. The survey looked at committee title, composition, and the existing charge. After compiling the total list of committees, the CAO designed two schematics (See Appendix B). The first shows how information flows up to Educational Affairs, the faculty-led body overseeing curriculum, and Instructional Deans Council, the administrative body that works to set college policy around

academic operations. The second enumerates the committees that send recommendations directly to the Office of Academic Affairs. These groups function as bodies whose research highlights best practices, explores appropriate approaches for the constituency served by Johnson County Community College and makes recommendations for operations and policies. These schematics were shared with the campus community at the January 2019 meeting of the faculty and will be loaded onto the redesigned website for reference by the institution at large and the public. The next steps planned in the wake of this effort is to complete similar schematics of decision making for all branches of the college. As of April 2019, a new campus intranet tool was implemented to make clear and easily accessible the communication of the minutes of all committees that factor into decision making, following the schematics referenced in Appendix B. This system will allow greater transparency by housing the minutes of all decision making committees, and will make such available to any interested party in the faculty or staff.

Third in addressing the governance question was the matter of “faculty voice” that was complicated during the visit by a lack of boundaries and understanding of the separate roles of the Faculty Association (FA), which functions as a local arm of the NEA and is the legally designated negotiating arm of the faculty with regard to the collectively bargained Master Agreement between the college and its full-time faculty, and the Faculty Senate (Senate), a younger body that exists outside of the purview of the FA and seeks to act as a sounding board for faculty issues in what they consider to be all non-contractual spaces. The college continues to work toward a resolution to this issue, which confuses the faculty at large regarding governance structure. Beginning in October of 2018 the CAO began meeting with the FA President and the Senate President to discuss and clarify the roles of each group. Those meetings continued monthly until January, with two meetings additional with the Senate president held separately, to discuss the philosophy of each body and the role that they play specific to one another and specific to the concepts of shared governance enumerated within the CAO’s foundational document. In February of 2019 the conversation was expanded to include the executive committee of each group. At this time the work with the two groups is focused on coming to a schematic realignment that will create one body that functions as a stable faculty conduit feeds information from the entire body of the faculty to the CAO and upper administration. No end date has been set for this goal, as the work is delicate and will require:

1) segregation of the concept of arguments to “strengthen the Master Agreement” from the truest concepts of shared governance, which ideas necessitate all party’s acknowledgment of their locus of power and acceptance of decision making authority existing in each sphere (administration, faculty, or staff) where the decisions are of policy, curriculum, or college processes respectively, and

2) a structure that ensures that the entire faculty are considered equally and given full access without regard for issues of membership in a specific body.

These issues will require a broad communication strategy once the groups have been convened for the final time and the plan laid out for moving forward. At this time consideration of an end point of June 2020 is appropriate.

In all, much progress has been made in clarifying the academic governance structure, and the solidification of all of the processes and communication strategies that has occurred over the past year have set Johnson County Community College up for greater future success and a clearer delineation of roles at all levels within the academic branch of the institution.

Appendix A

Shared Governance at Johnson County Community College

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If shared governance is to exist as the core tenet of the construct that is Johnson County Community College, we must first enumerate its values, setting clear parameters for all constituents within the institution, henceforth called “the College”. Without these definitions being clear and well stated, we risk becoming embroiled in multiple debates and arguments drawn from conflicting conceptions of the tenets at stake, and with these conflicts we risk the very soul of the institution and the safe charting of that course which must be undertaken to live the mission of the College to which we have each committed ourselves. In furtherance of this goal, this document will serve as a setting of basic tenets of shared governance at Johnson County Community College. A beginning, not an ending, of an ever evolving and necessary conversation that must shape the institution both today and into the future.

To begin, we must accept two issues that underpin all the conflicts and issues that pertain to shared governance. The first is this:

In seeking to understand shared governance, faculty members often focus on the 1966 AAUP “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.” Boards often turn [in their search] to the 2010 “AGB Statement on Board Responsibility for Institutional Governance.” While distinct in many ways, they are both grounded in the understanding that the board and the faculty share a commitment to educational quality and results. (Bahls 2015)

It is undeniable that we view things from different points along the spectrum as administrators and faculty, but the spectrum that we observe must be the same one, always in service to the College, its success and its vibrancy, and never to other goals that distract and detract from the lofty mission and goals set forth by the institution.

The second underpinning issue is that shared governance must be delicately tailored to fit each institution in which it lives. There can be no “one size fits all” approach to shared governance, as even the AAUP in its initial statements on governance notes that no broadly construed statement can “serve as a blueprint for governance on a specific campus or as a manual for the regulation of controversy among the components of an academic institution...” (American Association of University Professors 1990). There must be a vision for shared governance at each institution in keeping with that institution's beliefs, organization, and charter. While that vision is built upon a foundation shared by all of academe, each institution must live out its vision differently. It is these two realities that create the need for what follows, an enumeration and definition of the tenets that shall direct the commerce of shared governance at Johnson County Community College, giving shape to a conversation that has too long lived in the shadows to only be deployed as a weapon and not as a living, breathing part of the College.

1. Each governance group must play an integral role in the function of the College, understanding both the powers and the limitations of their role and must live within those structures.
 - a. College and University governance works best when each constituency within the institution clearly understands its role and relationship to the other constituents and when communication among the governing board, the administration, and the faculty is regular, open and unmediated. (American Association of University Professors: Committee on College and University Governance 2014)
2. The Board is the ultimate authority within the College. It is from the authority vested in the governing board by the constituents granting the charter of the institution that both the administration and the faculty obtain their authority.
 - a. The governing board of an institution of higher education in the United States operates, with few exceptions, [primarily within Diocesan institutions,] as the final institutional authority... The governing board of an institution of higher education, while maintaining a general overview, entrusts the conduct of administration to the administrative officers—the president and the deans—and the conduct of teaching and research to the faculty. (American Association of University Professors 1990)
3. While we each have a voice in the conduct of the institution, it is not an equal voice in all matters. Each constituent group has a greater or lesser voice in decision making in proportion to the level of responsibility that such group holds for the decisions being made. Thus, it is that faculty have primacy in decisions regarding the curriculum, pedagogy, and conduct of the classroom, the administration regarding the functions of the college with regard to policy, finance, and alignment with governing entities of the government, be they federal, state or local, and the professional staff in matters of the processes for which they are responsible.
 - a. ...Differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand... (American Association of University Professors 1990)
4. While each group must be kept attuned to decisions made outside of their bailiwick, particularly as those actions might have a secondary or tertiary effect upon another unit of the College, it must not be confused that a fair expectation of communication is not a right to decision making authority, even when such effects exist.
 - a. Distinction should be observed between the institutional system of communication and the system of responsibility for the making of decisions. (American Association of University Professors 1990)
 - b. Being responsible for carrying out a task is one thing, however, and having authority over the way in which the task is carried out is quite another. (American Association of University Professors 1990)
 - c. A system of shared governance that focuses on rights may politicize the process instead of taking advantage of its potential value. (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges 2017)

5. The work of the College must be placed at the fore of all decision making within the institution, even when it may be at odds with the will of any single group of constituents.
 - a. ...Governing Boards should expect good intent, even fiduciary-like performance: faculty input that serves the interests of the institution, welcomes diverse opinions within the faculty itself, and responds to the need for timely input and decision deadlines that enable action. (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges 2017)
 - b. A well-functioning system of shared governance makes clear that a wide range of stakeholder groups, not just the faculty, have a right to provide input. In the end, the decision on a matter cannot simply be a democratic vote, but must benefit the institution. For instance, even in the area where faculty bear the most obvious responsibility (the curriculum), the administration must have a voice if a decision will require significant additional resources. Clearly, the board of trustees must be involved if a curricular decision will redefine the institutional mission. (Gitenstein 2017)

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Appendix B: Committee Structure



