



The Senate Brief

Bridging the Divide

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September 4

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“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

At Convocation this year, President Jeff Marsee made a concerted effort to extend the olive branch to faculty. Some faculty were convinced by his gestures; others were not; however, his rhetoric about the importance of working collectively to clear the ACCJC accreditation sanctions makes considerable sense. If our institution wants the ACCJC to remove these sanctions, it will require a meaningful, mutual effort from faculty and administrators that will both improve and sustain the institution for the long haul.

But that begs the question—where did faculty and the administration get stuck last year? And what will it take to resolve those conflicts?

The Academic Senate suggests that the sanction dealing with Recommendation 1 (2008) Program Review, although it must be dealt with and extremely quickly (for it has to be resolved by January 2010), is not the key source of conflict. In this area, what is necessary is to complete as much of the Program Review process as possible (so that data really does inform decision making) and to move forward with an Assessment process by which all faculty can assess Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in their courses—and then for the future to establish an on-going faculty presence in Assessment so that key faculty can train their peers in how to assess SLOs.

Rather, it is Recommendation 1 (2009) that elaborates the more serious issues. Not only does the ACCJC expect (as ACCJC President Barbara A. Beno indicated in her letter of June 30, 2009) that the “college undergo a review of roles and responsibilities of each constituent group,” but also (and more seriously) that “the college should develop means by which trust can be enhanced and respect increased among the constituent groups to create an environment that supports empowerment, innovation and leads to institutional excellence.”

So how can trust be re-established between faculty and administration? For faculty the key is to eliminate what appears to be arbitrary decision making. For instance, in a number of critical areas decisions were made

without discussion or explanation. In each of these cases, by utilizing meaningful shared governance, we can find solutions that will address our mutual concerns, as well as resolve the ACCJC's sanctions:

- **The Program Revitalization and Discontinuance Process Proposal.** The Academic Senate crafted and approved a proposal that was forwarded to College Council. Unfortunately this proposal stalled at the College Council level, which is particularly troubling given the administration's move to transfer the Marine Science instructor from Mendocino to the Eureka campus. The Academic Senate and College Council need to finalize a procedure so that program discontinuance follows a clearly recognized and agreed-upon path. This way faculty, staff, and community members will know what to expect and why. In addition, there are other Senate approved procedures that were stalled at College Council, including the Course Grade Challenge proposal.
- **Faculty Position Prioritization Process.** Last year the administration chose not to use the current approved process but a new process was created that was unwieldy and confusing. Either we need to return to the approved process, or we need to create a process that is acceptable to both faculty and administration.
- **English & Math Faculty Hires:** Last year the Math and English departments were told that they had to write business plans for developmental programs at Humboldt State University before any further Math or English faculty hires could occur. Since this is outside of faculty prioritization, this obstacle needs to be removed. Two of our largest departments should not have hiring freezes because of issues that are unrelated to faculty prioritization.
- **MyCR & Tutor.com:** These systems were chosen without faculty consultation. At a minimum, administration should have spoken with faculty about these systems before they were implemented. Instead unnecessary conflict is arising for faculty and students over the hasty implementation of these systems.

In these and other areas, trust must be re-established through shared governance and mutual respect for one another. The faculty welcome Dr. Marsee's Convocation efforts and look forward to the actions that will make his rhetoric become a reality.

The Senate Brief is prepared in the interest of supporting communication between the Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees.