

Academic Senates and Student Governments: A Critical Partnership

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Academic senates and student governments can create a critical partnership in addressing systemic changes to support equitable student success. Through the guided pathways framework, colleges have learned to design with students in mind. The best way to keep students at the forefront of discussions is to partner with student governments. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) and the Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) have begun to model these partnerships with expanded communications and taking opportunities to work together in support of student success.

10+ 1 AND THE 9+1

Similar to academic senates, student governments have their own legally designated purview areas, colloquially known as the 9+1 in parallel to academic senates' colloquially titled 10+1 under Title 5 §53200. Title 5 §51023 identifies that associated student governments are the representative body of students and that they shall "be provided the opportunity to participate in the formation of policies and procedures that have a significant effect on students." The regulation further defines these areas, which include the following:

1. grading policies;
2. codes of student conduct;
3. academic disciplinary policies;
4. curriculum development;
5. courses or programs which should be initiated or discontinued;
6. processes for institutional planning and budget development;
7. standards and policies regarding student preparation and success;
8. student services planning and development;
9. student fees within the authority of the district to adopt; and
10. any other district and college policy, procedure or related matter that the district governing board determines will have a significant effect on students.

Clear overlap exists between the academic senate 10+1 and the student government 9+1, including in the areas of grading policies, curriculum development, processes for planning and budget development, and standards and policies regarding student preparation and success. These aligned areas provide local senates and student governments with opportunities to work with and support each other.

STRATEGIES FOR WORKING TOGETHER

With these overlapping areas involving local senates and student governments, developing standard communication strategies and practices can help build avenues for collective collaboration. Faculty can pursue creating these avenues by taking steps such as regularly attending student government meetings, being involved with student government trainings and retreats to help familiarize student leaders with their academic senates, making space for student leader representatives to present at academic senates, creating positions on academic senate workgroups and committees to include students' perspectives and input, and partnering with student governments in events like town halls, campus life, and club activities outside of the classroom.

Partnering with student governments on shared areas of purview can strengthen recommendations to college or district offices. Joint resolutions can provide a powerful statement of unity and collaboration. Academic senates and student government leaders should engage in open and regular communication. At the state level, the SSSCC president is invited to ASCCC Executive meetings and invited to speak on student government concerns. Student government leaders are also encouraged to attend ASCCC events, and the ASCCC has partnered with the SSSCC on events like the 2019 Academic Academy.

A PARTNERSHIP IN EQUITY

The SSSCC has released an anti-racism student plan of action that includes recommendations for how faculty and staff can support diversity, equity, and inclusion work in the classroom. These recommendations include guidance on reforming class structures and course syllabi, diversifying curriculum, and encouraging dialogue components that enable a closer connection of students, particularly those of color and other minority groups, to the lessons they are learning. This document, Anti-Racism: A Student Plan of Action, as well as more background information on its creation can be found on the SSSCC website at studentsenateccc.org.

While Anti-Racism: A Student Plan of Action provides initial guidance and ideas, faculty and staff are encouraged to use this guide as a foundation for expanding their own exploration of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom. Furthermore, faculty senates are encouraged to share this guide at large and encourage additional feedback from the students in their colleges' classrooms. As a model of collaboration, the ASCCC has endorsed the SSCCC Action Plan and will continue to work with the SSCCC on its implementation.

When local academic senates and student governments work together, they are a strong force for systemic change. The SSCCC's Anti-Racism: A Student Plan of Action is a great place for local senates to start intentionally collaborating with student government organizations. Faculty can invite students into their conversations, ask them to present on the plan, and work together to address systemic barriers for students. Once these critical partnerships have been formed, increased collaboration will follow.