



May 22, 2020

Dear Senate Colleagues (Academic Senate Executive Committee):

Thank you for your May 1, 2020 letter regarding concerns about decision-making processes on campus and your reaffirmation of a “commitment to a strong partnership.” I appreciate our subsequent Zoom meeting which provided an opportunity to better understand the concerns expressed in the letter and to discuss ways we can move forward together.

As you requested, this letter is my written response to the concerns expressed and the recommendations you enumerated as possible solutions for a better partnership.

Thank you for being open to “engaging in conversations to refine these and/or identify additional ones that will best serve our college.” I especially look forward to the upcoming weekly meeting with Academic Senate and President’s Cabinet. Thank you as well for being open to a facilitator next year. In light of the looming severe budget reductions, I would also like to engage with you and the larger college community on a process that strategically aligns with Chancellor Miner’s newly created Consultation Task Force, as the anticipated fiscal challenges must be addressed district-wide (in contrast to past budget reduction efforts when the cuts were addressed at the college level and by Central Services).

Even before the May letter, President’s Cabinet and I have been studying a prior draft version to better understand faculty concerns. As you stated in the May letter, “[t]he events of last Friday’s College Advisory Council meeting, centering around your announcement to hold positions deemed critical to uphold existing organizational structure, further reinforces our concerns.” The district-wide hiring holds on a limited number of positions is an effort to honor the governance process by informing the Advisory Council of the looming budget reductions in the Fall and implementing a management strategy of slowing down hiring processes to afford the college governance more time while the details of budget reductions become clearer. (See the attached copy of the Governance Memo to the Advisory Council.) It is my fiduciary duty to protect the college and be accountable to the Chancellor and Board of Trustees.

Nevertheless, the fact that my decision regarding the hiring holds was not given the benefit-of-the-doubt usually provided to a college president, especially during a pandemic and fiscal crisis, suggests a more deep-seated issue of trust that has been chipped away these past two years – as expressed in your letter. This is indeed a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

More specifically, your letter highlighted two major areas:

- “Though these decisions affected multiple stakeholders, including faculty and students, they were made without including these closely affected stakeholders at all or early enough in the decision-making process.”



- “We have heard time and time again from a growing number of faculty constituents that their valuable expertise and insight has not been solicited, and their concerns have been too easily dismissed. The increasing amount of faculty that do not feel heard or valued is disconcerting.”

I regret that any member of our college family does not feel valued. To the extent I made faculty feel this way or enabled executive leadership to do so, I apologize.

Please also know that I understand your sentiment about the need to involve “closely affected stakeholders at all or early enough in the decision-making process.” I am glad we were able to provide convincing information for the continuation of the hiring process for one of the faculty hiring positions initially identified for district-wide hiring holds. In retrospect, although there were no faculty positions among the four hiring holds, the newly created Dean of LRC position could have simultaneously been addressed with the faculty and staff in the division while at the same time, placed on the agenda for the Advisory Council so the larger college community could be informed. As you know, I have asked the Advisory Council to advise me on whether to lift any of the four hiring holds at this time (or when the budget reductions are identified in the Fall, as originally planned).

It is this particular standard of engaging “closely affected stakeholders” as early as possible that will guide me and our President’s Cabinet. This standard, along with an overall need to build a more collaborative partnership, serves as the foundation in which I respond to your recommended strategies. Many of your recommendations try to figure out where decisions are actually made. The answer is that decisions are made either at the governance level or at an operational level. Members of our Cabinet and I look forward to meeting with you weekly to identify operational proposals that may involve faculty. (Recommendation 1 & 2.) I also look forward to our weekly meetings, not only to refine our strategy but also to provide a forum for Classified Senate colleagues and ASFC representatives to be equally engaged.

Thus, I have asked that all matters that go to governance must also include a report on the feedback from “closely affected stakeholders.” The inclusion of affected stakeholders will become standard practice. (Recommendation 1.)

The Advisory Council (previously, PARC) has served as the governance process for budget reductions. The hiring-holds serve to give more flexibility to the Advisory Council when it must deliberate budget reductions in the Fall. For instance, if the Advisory Council recommends placing holds on faculty positions at this time, the Advisory Council would be able to use the vacancy budget lines in the Fall as part of its budget reductions. Such was the case in the last budget reduction that the Advisory Council (and previously PARC) recommended. The Revenue & Resources Council has never engaged in college-wide budget reduction conversations, but instead is focused on how to expend resources such as bond funding, College Promise, and bookstore expenditures. The R & R Council resembles the past OPC which recommended budget expenditures. Nevertheless, I appreciate the Advisory Council’s tri-chairs reaching out to R & R Council for help with studying the budget and offering solutions, and the Joint Councils’ meeting today seems promising. It is not the first time that two councils jointly met on a



limited basis to synergize the strengths of both governance councils – especially to answer the need for these challenging times. (Recommendations 1 & 3.)

As you know, I have requested our Cabinet to include both generally funded and categorically funded faculty positions to be analyzed as part of the faculty prioritization process. More importantly, faculty prioritization is no longer an “information-only” agenda item at governance, but instead is part of an inclusive process that invites faculty leadership into the deliberations – even though faculty prioritization is not a 10+1 Academic Senate matter. I greatly appreciate that the Deans, Associate Vice President, and Executive Vice President have been able to engage with you in the past two years on faculty prioritization.

In that similar vein, the Executive Vice President and the academic Deans have discussed your Recommendations No. 2 and 4, and have the following responses:

“Due to the desire for transparency and for a shared understanding of the complexities of strategic enrollment management and scheduling, the college agrees with this request to form a strategic enrollment management study group. The study group would be led by the Senate President and the Executive Vice President with a co-chair model. The group would include one classified representative from the Office of Instruction, each of the Academic Deans, the three senate officers, and three other senate representatives. The protocol and guiding principles for the study group would be collaboratively developed but would not override contractual policies.”

“The Office of Instruction and the academic deans will continue to invite faculty Academic Senate representatives, to participate in conversations when appropriate, for example, on topics such as faculty prioritization and scheduling. The instructional deans will also continue to communicate and work closely with faculty in their divisions on matters that require faculty attention/participation, communicating decisions in a timely manner.”

Our upcoming weekly meetings will give us an opportunity to refine further the idea of a strategic enrollment management study group, including a request that the study group report to the Equity and Education Council. Also, we need to discuss how to engage students and the Student Services operational team in the conversation.

Regarding Recommendation 5, the Parliament indeed was created to provide college-wide communication on governance. The marketing team has in the past requested reports from the governance tri-chairs. The marketing team will seek advice from you as faculty leaders for ways to improve the Parliament.

Also regarding Recommendation 5, I again offer to do a five-minute report at Academic Senate meetings. In addition, I would like to appoint all Cabinet members with responsibilities directly related to faculty to serve as President’s liaisons to the Academic Senate: Executive Vice President (who currently serves as administrative liaison), Associate Vice President of Instruction, Associate Vice President of Career Technical Education, Associate Vice President of Student Services, and Dean of Institutional Equity.



Please know that I welcome all faculty members to contact me directly whenever there are concerns. It is inevitable that there will be occasions when we will disagree. I am hopeful for a process in which we can agree to disagree collegially and with mutual respect. Indeed, we need to lean on the “Courageous Conversations” equity protocols of “speaking one’s truth” and “accepting non-closure” at times. Thank you for “staying engaged.”

I am heartened by your recognition that there have been areas of improvement recently. Your recommendations have an underlying sentiment: faculty’s desire to be more engaged. I welcome it, and thank you for it.

Of Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thuy".

Thuy Nguyen
President

Cc: Dr. Judy C. Miner, Chancellor
Foothill College

Attachment: Governance Memo with Excel list of hiring positions