



Foothill College Academic Senate
Executive Committee 2020-21

December 11, 2020

Dear Foothill College Student Leaders Jayme Albritton, Josh Contreras, Moremi Mabogunje, Abhiraj Muhar, Mariam Touni, and Priya Vasu:

This letter is in response to your [October 2020 Open Letter to Foothill College Governance](#), which we understand has been approved unanimously by the Associated Students of Foothill College (ASFC). On behalf of the Foothill College Academic Senate, I want to again thank you so very much for this remarkable letter. As I have shared with you previously, I am truly wowed by your passion, research, commitment to social justice and racial equity, and your ability to connect what can often feel like out-of-reach goals with very tangible steps we can take locally to get us closer to where we want to be. You have really made a significant contribution to Foothill with this effort, and I thank you for your leadership.

Your letter has been shared with all full-time and part-time faculty at Foothill College, and the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate has dedicated time on our agendas to share and discuss constituent feedback. We also benefited greatly from the discussion you led on October 26, further deepening our understanding of your priorities and demands. Last, we authorized an ad hoc group of Senators, Officers, and Senate-appointed faculty representatives to the Equity & Education Council to review faculty feedback and draft our formal response to you. This draft was approved unanimously by the Executive Committee at our December 7 meeting. This letter shares with you our formal response to date.

To help provide some context, I want to make sure you are aware that the Foothill College Academic Senate has a unique role among the constituency groups participating in shared governance at the College and in the District. This is stipulated in Legislation (e.g. AB 1725) and Education Code ("the law") as codified in the California Code of Regulations (e.g. Title 5). We recognize our responsibility in the operation of the College and District in areas which are largely under the domain of faculty, often referred to as "faculty purview," which are further defined by our district [Board Policy BP2223](#). We also share the responsibility alongside the other constituent groups at the College (students, staff and administrators) to participate in our shared governance processes that further the [mission of our College](#).

It is in this context that I present to you the Academic Senate's response to your letter. We have organized this response in two parts: the first part addresses more a general response to your letter, including some self-reflection that your letter "to governance" has prompted in our discussions, and which I personally find to be potentially quite transformative in how we think

about the equity work we are committed to so deeply at our College. The second part addresses each of the twelve demands you have presented us with. Per your guidance, we have made our best effort to identify work that is already underway in these areas, work we as an academic senate would like to commit to (including specific timelines) and work we would like to see the broader College and/or District community engage in, and for which we will advocate.

General Response:

- We are fully supportive of the spirit of your letter and the twelve demands.
- We appreciate the leadership all the student authors have taken to advocate for students and make sure student voices—even/especially those voices not necessarily in elected positions—are considered (placed front and center) in governance conversations.
- We recognize this student letter has spotlighted some institutional challenges we have that create barriers to doing equity work:
 - How to anchor the work and provide leadership and guidance? How to coordinate and consolidate the conversations and the effort in a siloed institution? (e.g., would have liked to see a coordinated effort to respond to the letter).
 - What’s the relationship between the senates and governance councils in addressing these demands?
 - How to work across the “purview” of different constituencies (e.g., administration, faculty, staff, College, District, etc.).
 - For example – who takes the leadership on even discussing the demands around training, campus safety, etc.?
 - How to prioritize this work, which will require a substantial time investment, while continuing to meet contractual obligations (workload issues). Who will be tasked with performing this work? How can this work become part of our jobs?
 - How to foster a supportive atmosphere and collaborative spirit (reducing sense of blame), and build a sense of community working together while also acknowledging the need for individual, cultural, and structural change with the urgency this work demands.

Demand-Specific Responses:

#1 Ethnic Studies

- We have already committed to this effort, and to taking a leadership role to work with the administration in support of a new Ethnic Studies Department (resolution of June 2020).
- We initiated work at our first meeting of the fall quarter, creating two Ad Hoc Work Groups: Steering Committee & Advisory Committee.
- Five new course proposals are going through the curriculum pipeline, with a target date of Fall 2021 (potentially even Summer 2021) to offer the first of the new courses.

- The request for a full-time faculty position has been submitted and is being ranked in a prioritization process.
- We are participating in ongoing conversations about ways to support the student desire to house this new department in an autonomous division, and we recognize a need to understand better the needs of students, faculty and administrators, and consider resource constraints.

#2 Diversifying Curriculum

- We fully support the spirit of this demand and recognize (based on specifics of demand and conversations with the students) that this item addresses four areas: curriculum, pedagogy, course policies and faculty evaluation. The first three are areas squarely within the purview of the Academic Senate, so we take ownership and leadership for responding. The fourth, faculty evaluation, is a shared responsibility among Administration, the Faculty Association, and the Academic Senate, and is ultimately a negotiated item between the Administration and the Faculty Association. We welcome the opportunity to engage in dialogue in a review of our existing faculty evaluation policies and procedures.
- In our June 2020 “Equity Resolutions” the Academic Senate committed to:
 - Engaging in open and frequently uncomfortable dialogue about structural racism at Foothill and our roles as faculty agents within that system.
 - Producing a vision of inclusive classrooms and anti-racism curriculum and pedagogy consistent with the suggestions proposed by the students of Foothill College and the CCCC.
 - Working with administrative leaders to develop an action plan (that will be included as part of our campus’ Strategic Equity Plan) to implement our vision.
- The leaders of Academic Senate and its two subcommittees, the College Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Online Learning have been agendizing conversations in support of the above commitments at every meeting to date in 2020-21, with a goal of developing our action plan in support of Equity 2.0 for all three areas (curriculum, pedagogy and course policies) by June 2021.
- We emphasize the purview of faculty, and specifically, the discipline experts, in the creation and review of their curriculum.

#3 Mandatory Training

We fully support the demand for frequent and ongoing voluntary professional development opportunities for all full- and part-time faculty (especially to accomplish #2 above). Professional development activities for faculty fall within the purview of the Academic Senate, so we take ownership and accountability for this part of the demand. Furthermore, we are aware of research that suggests mandating diversity trainings does not lead to successful outcomes of individual and cultural change.

- We support the demand to ensure the topics of implicit bias, systemic racism, white supremacy, white privilege, and social activism are addressed in professional development opportunities for faculty.

- Contractually-mandated trainings are not within Academic Senate purview.
- We will work with the Faculty Association and the Administration to ensure faculty are supported (i.e. compensated) to attend these trainings and professional development activities.

#4 Faculty Diversity

- We fully support the spirit of this demand and agree with the premise that “increasing faculty diversity is helpful in reducing academic disparities for students of color.” We also support expanding this demand to include an effort to increase diversity among College and District administrators and classified staff.
- We recognize that the hiring of faculty is a shared responsibility among many constituencies and offices and does not fall directly within the purview of Academic Senate except to appoint faculty to hiring committees and to DDEAC/HRAC (the joint District Diversity & Equity Advisory Committee and Human Resources Advisory Committee), which is the committee tasked with making recommendations on hiring policies and procedures. We continue our commitment to ensure faculty appointments are done timely and equitably, with invitations to volunteer announced broadly.
- We appreciate the focus on both hiring and retention and support the strategy of formalizing a mentorship program for new faculty, including identifying resources to compensate faculty mentors.
- We will create an Ad Hoc work group of the Academic Senate to further analyze this demand in Winter 2021 and develop proposed strategies by no later than June 2021.

#5 Outreach to Black & African American Students

- We fully support the spirit of this demand, and we will recommend to the College President that a Study Group be formed under one of the governance councils and/or the Guided Pathways Team to further analyze this demand and some of the proposed strategies. We recognize the potential for a (stronger) partnership between Counseling faculty and our Outreach offices that we would be excited to explore further, if the appropriate resources are identified to compensate this work.

#6 Supporting Indigenous & Native Students and Communities

- We fully support the spirit of this demand, and we will recommend to FHDA leaders (College Presidents and Chancellor) that a Foothill Study Group under one of the governance councils and/or a Districtwide Task Force be formed to further analyze this demand and some of the proposed strategies.

#7 Mental Health

- We fully support the spirit of this demand and would like to further acknowledge that we recognize that many of our students (and faculty!) are suffering because of COVID, and we also recognize that our students of Color are *always* subjected to chronic, ongoing stress by virtue of being non-White.

- We will ask our faculty via a Resolution (which we will seek to approve during Winter 2021), to be mindful of the above, and to be aware of the growing numbers of students reporting mental health issues and suffering from context-specific anxiety, and ensure faculty are provided with resources and are offered professional development opportunities that promote the role of faculty in supporting student mental health.
- We will recommend to the College President that a Study Group be formed under one of the governance councils to further analyze this demand and some of the proposed strategies.

#8 Basic Needs

- We fully support the spirit of this demand, and while basic needs do not fall under the purview of an academic senate, we recognize that students must have their basic needs met as part of their “preparation for success,” an area which does fall under faculty purview.
- Academic Senate has already passed a resolution (June 2020) in support of directing Measure G funds towards affordable housing for students and faculty.
- We fully support the District proposal to create a Basic Needs Task Force and upon invitation of the Chancellor, we will participate enthusiastically with Academic Senate-appointed representatives to this task force.

#9 Financial Literacy

- We fully support the spirit of this demand and recognize that the component of this demand that calls for the potential creation of new curriculum and student learning outcomes, and/or revision of existing curriculum, would fall within purview of the Academic Senate.
- We are mindful that the College does have certain initiatives in place to partially address some of the demands brought forward in the letter:
 - The Counseling Department offers CNSL 1: College Success and CNSL 56: Lifelong Learning Strategies and these courses cover many aspects of financial planning in the context of decision making, time management, wellness, family and goal setting. These courses are most frequently packaged for participants of the learning communities, e.g. Puente, Umoja and EOPS, and Academic Senate would support the recommendation to make these courses more widely available to all students.
 - The Foothill Library faculty have created a [guide to library resources](#) and selected websites to promote financial literacy. Front and center are campus resources like the Financial Aid Office and existing courses like Business 45 (Fundamentals of Personal Finance) and Business 61 (Investment Fundamentals). As workshops are scheduled, the Library faculty have committed to adding them to their guide and also promoting them on their social media channels.
 - Interim Dean of the Business & Social Sciences Division and Business & Accounting faculty member, Jose Nava, will be partnering this year with the Financial Aid Office in the creation of Financial Literacy Workshops.

- We will create an Ad Hoc work group of the Academic Senate to further analyze this demand in Winter 2021 and develop proposed strategies by no later than June 2021.
- We emphasize the purview of faculty, and specifically the discipline experts, in the creation and review of their curriculum.

#10 Reimaging Campus Safety

- We fully support the spirit of this demand, and while campus safety does not fall under the purview of an academic senate, we recognize that all students must feel safe, supported and welcome on campus as part of their “preparation for success,” an area which does fall under faculty purview.
- We fully support the District proposal to create a Campus Safety Task Force and will participate enthusiastically with Academic Senate-appointed representatives to this task force, upon invitation of the Chancellor.

#11 Observing Juneteenth

- We support districtwide conversations around the Juneteenth holiday to explore options to add this observance to the academic calendar, and we also recognize that holidays are a negotiated item.

#12 Student Activism

- We fully support the spirit of this demand, and we will recommend to the College President that a Study Group be formed under one of the governance councils to further analyze this demand and some of the proposed strategies.
- The Kinesiology & Athletics Division would like to share this division-specific response:
 - The Athletics and Sports Medicine Departments support our student-athletes, and we encourage and support any student-athlete who engages in any form of non-violent protests prior to or during athletic competitions. We will continue to initiate and encourage conversations within our groups and support our students' desires to express themselves.
 - We respect the ASFC open letter requests and will work directly with ASFC, coaches, staff, and student athletes to make sure we encourage our students have the right to voice their support for any social justice movement now or in the future.

In closing, I would like to express to you my personal commitment as Academic Senate President to prioritize the work of the Senate in support of our College’s Strategic Objective for 2020-21 to:

“Build on a culture of equity, inclusion, and diversity to propel the campus community to become a racially equitable college. Revise and complete the strategic equity plan (Equity Plan 2.0) by February 2021 so that it is structured within an institution-wide equity framework that centers race, includes a definitive scope for the equity work, and guides the college to action....Deep reflection of how operations impact equity at the

individual, cultural, and structural levels forces us to engage in a comprehensive conversation towards how the campus will share the responsibility of providing a supportive student experience and more equitable outcomes for students of color.”

In this work, I also look forward to ongoing collaboration with you and ASFC to bring student voices, perspectives, priorities and demands to our Academic Senate. I value you greatly and am excited to see the transformation of our College under your leadership and legacy.

With deep appreciation for all of you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathryn Maurer" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathryn Maurer, PhD.
Foothill College Academic Senate President