

Academic Senate's Time Sensitive Issues Taskforce

On April 5, the Mt San Antonio College Academic Senate passed Resolution 2012-12 Academic Senate Process for Responding to Time Sensitive Issues. The resolution asks that a task force be created to examine and provide recommendation regarding the "pace of Senate business" and the "facilitation of the Senate's processes and timeline for time sensitive matters."

The task force met on May 2 to discuss the definition of time sensitive issues and the implications of the resolution. Generally, it was the impression of the task force that the Senate could take steps to improve the pace and efficiency of our own work while also creating a new strategy to handle critical, unexpected matters.

After discussion, the task force concluded that their recommendations are focused in three areas:

- 1) The need to authorize the Senate President to move time-sensitive issues forward and create taskforces and work groups pending approval of the Executive Board,
- 2) The facilitation of Senate business including the professional responsibilities of Executive Board members, Department Senators, and Committee Members,
- 3) The existing provisions that exist in Robert's Rules, our Senate constitution, and our Standing Rules.

Definition of Time Sensitive Issues

The task force recommends that "time sensitive issues" are unanticipated and consequential matters generated by local (Board or CEO) or state governance structures. This is broad definition and must be taken with caution. A lack of planning or consideration of Senate timelines is not justification for declaring something "urgent or time sensitive." The taskforce also reminds the faculty that the Academic Senate is a deliberative body where thoughtful, purposeful discourse generates outstanding work while also providing a series of critical checks and balances.

Authorization to the Senate President

The Senate president, as the "elected representative voice of the faculty" on academic and professional matters, is in the best position to determine issues that require urgent attention. The Executive Board, however, should remain attentive and is expected to further inform the Senate President of unexpected issues or concern. The use of Robert's Rules of order exists to protect the minority voice, yet – in some instances - may also inhibit the president from taking action of issues of urgency.

Recommendations:

- The Senate President is authorized to include issues of urgency on his/her report (without the issue being on the agenda) and, if needed, request direction from the Executive Board. This direction may include (but is not limited to): the creation of a task force or work group to research, discuss, and make recommendations for action, a statement to the CEO or Board of Trustees, or a letter to state officials. Upon approval of the request by the Executive Board, the Senate President will inform the full Senate of the Executive Board's direction and the Senate President's action
- When the faculty Senate is not in session, the Senate President is authorized to use ASCCC documents and resolutions as tentative positions until such a time that our Senate creates its own stated position. The Senate President is not permitted to declare these documents and resolutions as the opinion on the local Senate, but may use them as references when responding to the District on issues when the faculty body is not able to respond in a timely manner.

- The Senate President is also permitted to request the creation of task forces or work groups through the President's report that are not controversial (such as degree task forces) with the approval of the Executive Board. The Senate President will then inform the full Senate of the creation of such work groups and recruit faculty participants. Senators-at-Large are reminded that their constitutional duty is to serve as chair of task forces, although other Executive Board members are permitted to serve as well.

Facilitation of Senate business

Councils/Committees

The Academic Senate has two oversight Councils, Student Preparation and Success and Curriculum and Instruction. Each Senate committee reports to one of these two councils. Every faculty representative on a council and/or committee is expected to be fully aware of the academic and professional matters under the Academic Senate's purview. Each committee's membership is responsible for fully vetting an item in preparation for the Senate body to take action. This includes preparing background and/or rationale information to accompany any documents forwarded to Senate. The oversight councils are also expected to ensure that items are fully vetted by their membership and to ensure that the rationales are clear.

An item brought forward by a council is sent to the Executive Board as an action item. The Executive Board does not amend items coming from a council, but it may send the item back to the Council to request additional information or suggest revisions. If the item is not supported by the Executive Board, it is the members' responsibility to provide an alternative in writing to the full Senate to consider as an amendment – if appropriate. It is important that Department Senators and Executive Board members recognize the diligence with which the Senate councils and committee do their work. Therefore, it is important for the committees and councils to provide all relevant information to the Department Senators and Executive Board so that informed decisions can be made.

Recommendations:

- Committees and councils should make every effort to provide a written background and rationale for forwarded items, with the exception of regular business (course approvals, committee memberships, etc) unless an item is unusual or particularly large in scope of impact.
- Committees and councils should make every effort to provide electronic documents of plans, policies, procedures, and other action items electronically prior to the meeting of the Executive Board so that members can review in advance, and seek any clarification that is needed.

Responsibilities of the Department Senators and Executive Board Members

- The workload of the Senate has dramatically increased as we have responded to changes in Title 5, accreditation requirements, Chancellor's office mandates, and legal recommendations regarding Board Policies (BPs) and Administrative Procedures (APs). Department Senators and Executive Board members are expected to review all discussion and action items prior to action at the Senate. It is expected that the Senators solicit concerns and issues on discussion items with their department members using a variety of means. The task force recognizes that a detailed discussion at the department meeting is not always possible. Questions will arise and the Senators should seek clarification before coming to the Senate to take action whenever possible. We also recognize the Senators are not always "elected." When elected, the members of the Executive Board take on

additional responsibilities to help the Senate President perform his/her duties. The work done by Senators and Executive Board members goes beyond attending Senate meetings, and these faculty are encouraged to log this work as supplemental hours.

Recommendations:

- Include the name of a contact person (including email and/or phone extension) on each discussion item. This will permit the debate to be more productive and allow the senators and the departments that they represent to be more fully informed.
- Executive Board will meet for two hours every other week beginning spring 2013. Executive Board should expect to attend additional meetings (as needed) during primary terms, winter, and summer to work on urgent items, reduce any backlog of existing items and participate in the faculty hiring prioritization process.
- Department Senators will meet for two hours every other week beginning fall 2013. The additional meeting time reflects increased workload and is reflective of other committees' time commitments.

Existing Provisions

Each Senator and Executive Board member is expected to be familiar with the Title 5 53200, also known as the 10+1. Each faculty member is encouraged to do the same. Every Senator and Executive Board member is permitted to send items to the Senate through any member of the Executive Board or the Senate President. Robert's Rules of Order provide for the options to set items aside, move urgent issues to from Discussion to Action, and to motion that items be reordered on the agenda.

Recommendations:

- Faculty committee members, Department Senators, and Executive Board members should attend an annual orientation to become familiar with the academic and professional matters under the Senate purview, our standing rules, the constitution, and Robert's Rules of Order that provides the provisions for which senate business might be facilitated.