

# The Academic Senate in California: A Brief History

A more full account of the growth and development of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges can be found on our Website and in several publications authored by Edith Conn, who served as the Academic Senate's archivist. Briefly stated, however, this organization has its roots in an Assembly Concurrent Resolution adopted in 1963, asking the State Board of Education (which at that time had a junior college bureau) to establish academic senates "...for the purposes of representing [faculty] in the formation of policy on academic and professional matters ...". While there were at the time local academic senates, this resolution gave senates legal recognition and a specific jurisdiction—academic and professional matters. At that time there were also several statewide faculty organizations: the unions, California Teachers Association (CTA) and California Federation of Teachers (CFT), and what is now Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) (then called CJCFA - the California Junior College Faculty Association). There was also the California Junior College Association (CJCA), now the Community College League of California (CCLC), which then had a faculty component, though it now represents the CEOs and Trustees at the state level. Many of these organizations supported the formation of local senates, and in 1967, legislation was enacted to create the Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office for the California Community Colleges.

In 1968 Norbert Bischof (Math and Philosophy, Merritt College), called the first statewide meeting of local academic senate presidents to explore ways to create a state senate to represent local senates at the Chancellor's Office and before the Board of Governors. Working with Ted Stanford (now deceased), Bischof wrote a constitution for the Academic Senate, which was adopted in May 1968, ratified statewide, and approved by the Board of Governors in October 1969; the Academic Senate incorporated as a nonprofit organization in November 1970.

These organizational milestones, and many others detailed on the Website, prepared the Academic Senate for the new responsibilities to arise out of the 1986 report of the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education, focusing exclusively on the community colleges. This document, *The Challenge of Change: A Reassessment of the California Community College*, led the way for the great reform legislation, AB 1725 passed by the legislature in 1988, giving many new responsibilities to both local senates and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. Subsequently, the remarkable document California's Faces, California's Future (1989) supported this community college reform and contextualized the Master Plan within California's shifting demography.<sup>1</sup> The legislation resulted in the July 1990 adoption of Title 5 Regulations, "Strengthening Local Senates." The Academic Senate and the trustee's organization the Community College League of California (CCLC), issued a Memorandum of Understanding that offers a joint interpretation of these regulations. This document was adopted at the 1992 spring session of the Academic Senate. Subsequently, a revised Q&A document was jointly produced with CCLC and adopted by the Senate at the Fall 1998 Plenary Session; this document appears on the Academic Senate Website. A companion document applies the interpretations to specific scenarios. Those earlier legislative actions and their subsequent codification in Title 5, as well as the legal and interpretive documents that emerged provide the framework for the discussion below.

In the landmark legislative package that was AB 1725, the California community colleges were uncoupled from K-12 and given status as institutions of higher education. In so doing, the legislature substituted pre-and post tenure reviews, lengthened the tenure period, and strengthened the role of the local academic senates as central to the effort of institutional development. Contained on the Academic Senate Website's Leadership page is the remarkable piece of legislation—and its significant intent language or what the legislators wished to see accomplished under the official chapter language of the law. All college leaders should be familiar with this document.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more extensive treatment of the significance of California's Master Plan, see "Why the Master Plan Matters," *Rostrum*, April 2001.