

Collegiality And Academic Senates
The Academic Senate Pall Conference 1980

by
Leon P. Baradat

To begin with, I'd like to describe the Academic Senate in historical terms. In fact, the Academic Senate is a modern version of the oldest of collegiate institutions. Originally, a college was a gathering of scholars who came together to study and to teach. The college and the faculty were indistinguishable; the faculty was the college. Colleges, in other words, began as collective enterprises. They were cooperative efforts to do education; indeed, the Latin word from which college stems is "collegium" meaning partnership.

These early colleges were governed by the faculty members themselves. Although they had leaders, the basic decisions were made by the group. Gradually these governing bodies began to institutionalize, becoming academic senates. Consequently, the Academic Senate reaches far back into the medieval period and is, in fact, one of Western Civilizations oldest democratic institutions. Democracy, it is clear, is fundamental to the concept of higher education in Western Civilization.

Although informally administered at first, colleges gradually became more complex. As their problems and structure became more complicated and intricate, more and more professorial time was being absorbed by administrative duties. Finally, the need for full-time administrators became compelling.

This development stimulated a separating process. Most faculty remained in the classroom, while a few gravitated toward full-time administrative functions. Those who became administrators were drawn to that role by their administrative talent, their leadership ability, their fund raising prowess, because they were poor teachers and unhappy in the classroom, or for a multitude of other reasons.

This separating process was slow and drawn out. Until recently, it was thought essential that college administrators must have been teachers prior to assuming their administrative role. Indeed, it has not been until the past decade that we have witnessed the development of a significant number of administrators who have had little or no teaching experience. This development is, I submit, a rather sobering fact . . . one which we should regard with caution and suspicion

In any event, the point is that professional and full-time administrators are a relatively recent development in higher education, while faculty governance has existed since the beginning of colleges themselves. Even today, however, universities do not entirely accept the concept of professional administrator. University presidents are drawn from the ranks of eminent professors. They are full time, but not permanent, since they are on loan from their teaching department. Hence, while they are full-time administrators, they are not professional administrators. Only at the community college do we find the professional administrator an accepted component in higher education.

Aggravating the struggle for control between the two principals was the fact that their perspectives grew to be very different as their role in the college became dissimilar. While the faculty remained concerned with their classroom and the intricacies of developing and conveying knowledge,

administrators became concerned with broader, less particular aspects of education. The gap dividing them widened into a chasm which at times seems virtually unbridgeable.

Nowhere in higher education is the gap between administrator and teacher greater than at the community colleges. The faculties at the universities and the four-year colleges, buttressed by history and tradition' have surrendered as little deliberative authority as possible to their administrations, reserving ultimate control of the institution to the teaching staff.

The situation is radically different in the two-year institutions. The existence of professional administrators, coupled with the evolution of the community college from the secondary system, has stifled faculty governance to the extent that, until recently, claims that faculty should have more than a perfunctory, supportive role in developing educational policy were viewed as radical and even seditious.

Administrators, developing authoritarian bureaucratic structures, have jealously husbanded power, denying a meaningful policy-making function to the faculty thus detracting from the collegial model. Faculty have been too timid, or perhaps too lazy, to demand and assume their rightful role. Or, perhaps, community college faculty and administration have not understood the traditional and appropriate role of a collegiate faculty. After all unless one has a particular interest in it, how would one be exposed to the traditions of collegiate governance? In my view, of course in the history and philosophy of higher education should be a requirement for a community college credential. We owe it to the profession to be aware of the full implications of the positions we hold.

During the last decade, the community colleges movement away from the secondary system built momentum and velocity until now it is ineffably gravitating toward the collegiate model. Collegiality, however, no longer means simply faculty governance. Surely no reasonable person could deny that the administration rightfully plays a crucial role in the development of educational policymaking. Today, collegiality must mean shared governance. Yet [faculty in community colleges has long been denied its rightful place in the governing process. Hence, the faculty is now demanding its share.

The administration, for so long dominant in the area of policy formulation, has come to think this power rightfully its own. Consequently, faculty actions to the contrary have been resisted as unreasonable and impertinent. And, as the Academic Senates become increasingly assertive regarding their rights under the collegial model, the anxiety level will grow, thus making conflict likely if not inevitable.

Title 5 specifically grants faculties the right to organize Academic Senates to represent them on academic and professional matters before the administrators and the Board of Trustees. It goes on to give the Academic Senate the right to bring matters of concern to the Board of Trustees, and it requires the Board to respond to the Academic Senate. In addition to Title 5, SB16G, the law creating collective bargaining in community colleges, specifically states that nothing in its provisions is to hinder or limit the Academic Senates.

These legal protections are indeed extensive. They accord about as much legal recognition and protection to Academic Senates as can be reasonably expected. If the Academic Senates are not as

strong as one would wish vis-a-vis the administration and Board, the reason must lie somewhere other than in legal prescriptions. The problem stems from a lack of awareness and acceptance. Most Boards, administrators, and, indeed, most faculty are not cognizant of the Academic Senate's rights and authority under the law. Once aware, many Boards and administrations, hoping to continue their dominance at the community college, refuse to accept the rightful role of a college faculty.

Clearly an educational task lies before us. We must educate our faculty, our administrators, and our Boards of Trustees on the matter of collegiality until it is an understood and accepted feature in community college education.

Ideally, the Academic Senate should become a second and equal advisory arm to the administration, helping the Board of Trustees select enlightened educational policy. As the faculty representative on academic and professional affairs, the Academic Senate should be the central institution in educational policy. It should be the parent institution of committees dealing with educational policy, curriculum, and scholarship, admissions, grading, graduation, articulation, and professional development, etc. Similarly, faculty, through the Academic Senate should dominate accreditation teams and processes. All too often, however, we find these committees dominated by administrators. That is, all of these educational matters are dominated by non-teaching personnel.

But now faculty is awakening to its rightful role, which means more work and more responsibility for faculty. These remarks no doubt sound like heresy to persons who perceive their faculty role as limited to teaching classes, sponsoring campus clubs, and supporting the athletic teams.

The positive aspects of collegiality must be emphasized. Administration, Boards and faculty must be educated about collegiality until it is understood and accepted.

Clearly the time to act has come. Basic policy is in flux and may impact our profession for the next decade. Local campuses will be asked to implement the Board of Governor's policies on grading and credit/non-credit, and they are going to have to adjust to CSUC's new policy regarding General Education. In addition, the quality of our transfer programs, the quality of our degrees, and the comprehensive mission of the community college have been questioned.

But we can address these issues and help shape our future. We have the right by law and tradition to do so. Success in these endeavors demands that the individual faculty member participate. The level of commitment demanded at faculty by advanced collegiality will require time, energy and patience. But the result will certainly be a rich harvest of benefits for education. These are exciting times. We can make a significant contribution to education and to the teaching profession itself. Therefore, I invite you in the vernacular--Let's go for it! Let's insist on collegiality as the correct mode of conduct. Let's raise our profession to a new height. Let us assume the leadership in developing educational policy to which history and law entitle us.