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Community Colleges and the
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Developing Guided Pathways: The Importance of Faculty Voice and Leadership
by Julie Bruno, President

Frequently, a creative or fashionable idea attracts attention at colleges across the state. Seemingly independent from one another, colleagues at different colleges and districts engage in conversations about a particular concept—newly conceived or perhaps reimagined from the past—that holds promise for helping colleges to better serve and support students. The latest such concept to garner attention and discussion is guided pathways.

The term “pathways” can have many different connotations. Some colleagues will immediately reference well known pathway models such as CTE career pathways, where courses are sequenced and the program is structured in such a way as to provide students with the optimal experience in achieving a certificate or degree. Another pathway that often comes to mind is the Associate Degree for Transfer that, once awarded, guarantees admittance to the CSU system and 60 units toward a baccalaureate. Others may evoke more recent efforts to integrate high school students into community colleges through options such as dual enrollment or middle college programs that enable high school students to begin college early, thereby showing them the pathway to a college award.

In the past year, another way of thinking about pathways has emerged and has received an extraordinary amount of attention in California. Pathways Project is “focused on building capacity for community colleges to design and implement structured academic and career pathways, at scale, for all of their students.” Three California community colleges joined the effort: Bakersfield College, Mt. San Antonio College, and Irvine Valley College. Other California community colleges interested in guided pathways but not willing or ready to fully commit to the structured AACC model started their own local efforts. These local efforts, at various stages of development, frequently adhere to or are based on the AACC Guided Pathways principles. Additionally, the California Guided Pathways project was launched in December 2016. This new effort is designed to adapt the AACC Guided Pathways model to California community colleges. Initially, the project will include 15 to 20 colleges selected through a competitive application process.

Pathways have not just captured the attention of many of our colleagues; in January, the governor included $150 million in his budget for guided

1 Information on AACC Pathways Project may be found at http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/pathways/Pages/default.aspx
Conceptualizing new and innovative educational pathways for students is exciting and invigorating.

paths. The governor’s budget summary states, “The Budget proposes additional investment in student success. Specifically, the Budget includes $150 million one-time Proposition 98 General Fund for grants to support community colleges’ efforts to develop and implement ‘guided pathways’ programs.” Of course, the budget is not yet finalized and is subject to revision, but by including funding for guided pathways, the governor recognized the significance of pathways to our students and colleges.

In considering the implementation of any pathways program, discussions are and should be collaborative, involving participation from all constituent groups on campus including students, staff, and administrators. However, certain characteristics that are inherent in all pathways establish the obligation for academic senates and faculty to be at the core of the effort. Any pathway designed for students to achieve their educational goals includes curriculum, student preparation, degree and certificate requirements, and program development. In other words, pathways land squarely within the 10+1. Regardless of whether the pathway program is adopted from an existing model or is developed locally, academic senates must take the lead in decisions that involve academic and professional matters. As always, the goal is to ensure that all pathways provide a quality educational experience that enhances opportunity and illustrates the value of learning for all students.

As colleges continue to investigate pathways models, faculty must be thoughtful and deliberative in choosing the design. California community colleges serve populations with a variety of educational needs and goals. Implementation of any pathway program must include discussions about ensuring a comprehensive education that not only prepares students for their jobs and careers but also provides the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in all aspects of life, including their roles as family and community members as well as national and global citizens. Furthermore, all pathways must provide students with wide exposure to diverse thoughts and perspectives and minimize unintended consequences such as constraining student opportunity to explore, develop, and grow in thought and action.

The Academic Senate encourages innovation in education, and to provide support for these pathway efforts, Resolution 9.12 F15 Support Local Development of Curricular Pathways urges local academic senates and curriculum committees to be genuinely involved in decisions regarding any curricular pathway program under consideration. Furthermore, as pathways programs are designed, developed, and implemented in our colleges, the Academic Senate will be investigating and disseminating effective practices as directed by Resolution 9.03 F16 Investigate Effective Practices for Pathways Programs.

Conceptualizing new and innovative educational pathways for students is exciting and invigorating. Pathway models hold tremendous promise, and the appeal of these models resides in the integrated and intentional approach, the holistic focus on the students’ experience from the students’ perspective, and in the flexibility to adapt to our 113 unique colleges. Of course, any pathways initiative at a college must be a collaborative effort that engages all constituent groups on campus, but academic senates and faculty must take the lead and be at the center of all stages of planning and implementation. The Academic Senate for California Community College is committed to supporting faculty as they begin and continue this work for their colleges, their communities, and their students.

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2 A summary of the Governor’s proposed budget may be found at http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/FullBudgetSummary.pdf?utm_source=Ed100
Guided Pathways: One Professor’s Response to Redesigning America’s Community Colleges

By Ginni May, North Representative

With the California Governor’s 2017-18 budget including $150 million for Guided Pathways and the California Guided Pathways Project, guided pathways have clearly arrived in the California Community College System. The California Guided Pathways Project is supported by the Foundation for California Community Colleges, funded by the College Futures Foundation and the Teagle Foundation, and modeled after the American Association of Community Colleges Guided Pathways Project. In response, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges’ Resolution 9.03 Fall 2016, Investigate Effective Practices for Pathways Programs, makes clear the role that faculty must play in understanding and shaping the guided pathways movement.

One important presentation of the concept of guided pathways is Redesigning America’s Community Colleges—A Clearer Path to Student Success by Thomas R. Bailey, Shanna Smith Jaggars, and Davis Jenkins, which was published in 2015 as a response to the nationwide issue of low graduation rates in the community colleges based on research cited by the authors. This text promotes the guided pathways approach in lieu of the cafeteria style of program offerings. The book and its content have been shared among administrators both nationwide and statewide. In turn, college administrative leaders are sharing it with faculty. In particular, the chancellor of the Los Rios Community District offered to provide a copy of this book to all staff members (upon request) provided that they read it. A website was set up for staff to provide comments on the book. One Sacramento City College professor, Dr. Liam McDaid disseminated the following response to the faculty at the college and the LRCCD chancellor:

Redesigning America’s Community Colleges is the latest fad book in education. Corporate fads seem to be passed on like hand-me-downs to government
and education. Oddly enough, it seems the military responds faster to corporate fads than other organizations, but education is usually last on the fad food chain. This book came out this year, so some leapfrogging happened with this book. Perhaps it’s due to the title of the book, being that it’s written “for us.”

Are all the ideas in Redesigning wrong? No. Its comments on the disconnect between the area of counseling and academic programs is spot on and much can and should be done to bridge those gaps. But it suffers from a fatal flaw: it already assumes as true what it seeks to prove, that the “cafeteria model” of community colleges is flawed and a waste of taxpayer money. The question that needs to be addressed is this: are we here for the widest possible access, or the best possible outcomes? Redesigning assumes the latter is true. These two goals are in conflict with each other and Redesigning should be given credit for forcing us to face that. One fundamental question is connected to our values as a community college: do we wish to limit access to get our numbers up? Because any other scenario for increasing our metrics is unrealistic. Also, are the metrics measured even meaningful? Redesigning admits that the jury (and data) is still out on whether its ideas will actually produce the outcomes they claim to seek.

Education has long been in the crosshairs of those who wish to weaponize it (or outright destroy it) through monetization. What GDP do we add to the community? How many jobs do we help create? How much extra (taxable) income do we generate through our activities? Little is mentioned in these discussions about the intangibles of education. This is because they are viewed as side effects of economic impacts—or in the worst case scenario, ignored as irrelevant. Redesigning plays right into this trap.

Education adds measurable economic value because we live in an advanced nation where everything can be measured that way. What percentage of California’s GDP is generated by the arts? Is this the reason for their existence? Education provides worth to individuals in the intangible form of confidence building and group interaction. Being able to inform oneself to participate in the political responsibilities of our society. Being able to discern when someone is trying to fool them and why. Becoming a role model for a family or whole neighborhood by showing what can be accomplished. None of these things can be measured economically. If we limit access, many of these intangibles will be more difficult to achieve.

Sacramento City College has been here for a century because we are here for whatever educational needs our students have. We don’t expect them to show up with a career path already mapped out. We are the last best hope for mass education in the twenty first century, and this is the real reason why the cafeteria model has persisted for so long. It addresses needs that aren’t economic. Make no mistake, we do have a positive effect on our regional economy and we do matter that way. But that is not and never has been why we are here. We are a bridge to a better life and economic improvement is but a small portion of the treasures our students take with them when they graduate or transfer. Our college shows anyone that there is always a way to change one’s life for the better and when students say that SCC saved their life, they do not exaggerate. This fact should be at the heart of our institutional vision and mission.

Whether one supports all, some, or none of the ideas in Redesigning America’s Community Colleges, the ideas contained in the text need to be understood and debated. Faculty, administrators, and other college staff must work together to design and provide the best educational programs and opportunities for the citizens in their college service areas as well as throughout California.

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On September 20, 2016, the Board of Governors approved a change to §55023 of Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations to include SP as an official grading designation. This evaluative symbol is defined as “Satisfactory Progress towards completion of the course (used for noncredit courses only and is not supplanted by any other symbol).” The adoption of this new grading designation was preceded by a substantial vetting process that was initiated in 2009 when the effort of establishing a grading system for all noncredit providers began. The SP designation completes the list of noncredit progress indicators, which already includes P (passing) and NP (no pass). These two grade indicators have been in existence but were insufficient on their own because the progress of noncredit students cannot be divided into passing and non-passing cohorts without losing track of efforts made towards attendance and course completion by students who, for a variety of reasons, cannot complete their courses in a single academic term.

Noncredit apportionment is based on positive attendance, which means that noncredit institutions are reimbursed by the state only for students who are attending classes. Because of the open entry–open exit system of attendance instituted at a majority of noncredit institutions, but not all, students are free to come and go from the class of their choosing. Students with the fewest hours of attendance earn an NP grade because they are not able to achieve the course outcomes in the limited time they attend. Students with P grades normally attend school more consistently and are able to achieve the course outcomes. The SP designation shows that students are progressing and have acquired some of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve course outcomes but still have work to do; they are worthy of the state reimbursement. The SP designation is therefore a reflection of student progress and success.

Noncredit practitioners have been waiting for recognition of the SP for a long time, and its official recognition is a welcome component of efforts designed to keep noncredit programs accountable while also equipping them with adequate tools to reflect their success. The SP indicator is a means of tracking the efforts of countless noncredit students who progress through academic programs in an open-entry system with stops and starts along the way. The SP designation is meant for noncredit faculty to document the effort of their students, to encourage the students to pursue their education, and, ultimately, to be used as a measure of noncredit student success. The noncredit field, just like its credit counterpart, is under growing pressure to standardize itself through systems that will allow for more effective transition of students in and through academic programs into technical or vocational training and an eventual career or employment opportunity. The SP grade accomplishes all of these goals by informing students that while their road to success may be winding, their efforts and progress cannot be denied. In an effort to make noncredit more transparent, standardized, and consistent across the field, institutions offering noncredit programs have been granted an effective tool to accurately reflect on their students’ success.

Note: This article was also published in the ACCE Fall 2016 Journal.
One of the issues that every campus faculty leader faces is finding information: what new laws have passed, the role of the faculty in certain areas, how the faculty should approach an issue with the administration, and various other topics. Many leaders have difficulty determining what they should do or even where to look for resources regarding the issues they must deal with, and that is why the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges communicates with local academic senates throughout the state about academic and professional matters. The ASCCC provides this information through a variety of means—plenary sessions, institutes, regional meetings, Rostrum articles, resolutions, president’s updates, and others. But occasionally issues arise at colleges that require a more specific response or interpretation, and local faculty leaders may need assistance to find answers for such questions.

The logical first step may be to ask a former senate president or curriculum chair, but that is not always an option; sometimes those individuals have left the college or have moved into administration, or for other reasons the current leadership may not feel comfortable asking. The next step may be to reach out to an ASCCC area representative or a member of the ASCCC Executive Committee. The ASCCC is always happy to help when possible, but some specific protocols exist that help to facilitate such communication.

The most effective way of reaching the ASCCC Executive Committee is to email questions or concerns to info@asccc.org. This email address was set up specifically to allow questions to be sent directly to the ASCCC Office, where they can be routed to the most appropriate responder. The result is a more seamless process and a more timely reply on the part of the Executive Committee by cutting out the intermediate step of emailing an area representative or other member of the Executive Committee.

When a question is sent directly to an Executive Committee member from the field, the Executive Committee member first must determine what...
kind of question it is. If it can be answered with a simple yes or no—for example, is spring plenary in San Mateo this year?—or a website reference, such as “Rostrums are found at http://asccc.org/publications/rostrum,” then the Executive Committee member can respond immediately. Questions that involve more in depth answers, however, must be forwarded to the ASCCC President, who then either responds to the question or sends it to the appropriate Executive Committee member. This requirement exists for a number of reasons. First, it prevents any one Executive Committee member from being overly swamped with emails; this problem occurs most frequently with area representatives but can happen with others as well. Second, it keeps work from being duplicated if someone from the field chooses to email more than one member of the Executive Committee. Finally, and most importantly, it ensures that the answer provided is accurate, up-to-date, and consistent. Because ASCCC committee chairs change every year and task force members can change even more frequently, the Executive Committee member who would have been the expert in previous years may have moved on to another area of focus and may not be as current as another Executive Committee member might be on the issue.

This protocol also helps the president and the executive director keep on top of what issues are becoming significant around the state; for example, if the ASCCC receives a number of emails on a particular subject, then the Executive Committee can discuss that issue as a group and prepare a prompt and appropriate response that can be distributed to a wider audience. A recent example of this process involves questions and interest in Open Educational Resources, or OER, which has become more of an issue statewide over the past few years. After hearing from a wide range of constituents about the issue during the 2015-16 academic year, the president made the decision to form a task force on OER which is working on issues such as the Zero Textbook Cost Degrees and other areas around Open Educational Resources. Thus, while this protocol for responding to questions might seem to be more time consuming, it ensures that the answers provided serve the field in the best possible way.

The questions that the Executive Committee receives do more than inform the individuals who initially ask; they help shape Rostrum articles and provide ideas for general sessions and breakouts at regionals, institutes, and plenary. They also provide the ASCCC with information to convey to system partners as well as faculty counterparts in the CSU and UC systems. The Academic Senate therefore encourages faculty statewide to keep the questions coming, and the ASCCC will always work to respond with the most prompt and informative answers possible.
Apprenticeship programs in institutions of higher education include the pairing of coursework and paid work experience for the student. The state and federal government are very supportive of such programs, as students learn a trade while earning college credits and money to support themselves. Each year the California Legislature and the federal Department of Labor set aside money to support not only existing programs but also the expansion of apprenticeship programs into non-traditional fields.

With the expansion of apprenticeship programs a part of the Strong Workforce Program recommendations, the ASCCC began researching how apprenticeship is used throughout the state.

Traditionally, each district enters into a contract with a labor organization. Districts keep approximately 15% of the RSI money and the rest is given to the trade union to provide instructional services. Curriculum must be approved through the regular college processes either as credit or noncredit instruction and the program must be approved by the state. Students can earn certificates and degrees from the college through apprenticeship programs. The curriculum committees are asked to place the course in either credit apprenticeship or noncredit apprenticeship. However, instruction usually takes place off-campus at a union office.
with instructors selected and paid by labor organizations using the other 85% of the RSI money.

In practice, the relationship between the college and industry seems tenuous. Local curriculum committees have expressed concerns that the curriculum submitted for some apprenticeship programs does not meet their local college standards or that the assignment of an appropriate discipline is not based on the best preparation of potential faculty to teach the depth expressed by the curriculum and the breadth of knowledge required to be college level. Faculty leaders have also reported difficulty in maintaining appropriate engagement between apprenticeship programs and college processes, including program review elements such as student equity evaluation, certificate and degree completion rates, and institutional planning.

AB86 (2013 – 14) and subsequent Adult Education Block Grant legislation granted fiscal authority for apprenticeship programs to the California community colleges. This situation has added to the distrust between labor unions and the community colleges as the Chancellor’s Office works to understand the fiscal responsibility and expenditure plans of the labor unions that receive most of the money associated with apprenticeship.

The Strong Workforce Program legislation directed the system to evaluate the minimum qualifications for career technical education instructors, including apprenticeship instructors, as recommended by the Board of Governors Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation, and a Strong Economy. Current law grants apprenticeship instructors and labor organization representatives the authority to recommend changes to the minimum qualifications through the Chancellor’s Office to the Board of Governors via regular consultative processes (Education Code §87357). The California Apprenticeship Council is asserting that because it is the organization that represents the apprenticeship faculty and labor organization interests, it is the organization that should recommend any changes to the apprenticeship minimum qualifications.

**Education Code**

87357. (a) In establishing and maintaining minimum qualifications pursuant to Section 87356, the board of governors shall do all of the following:

With regard to minimum qualifications for faculty, the board of governors shall consult with, and rely primarily on the advice and judgment of, the statewide Academic Senate. With regard to minimum qualifications for educational administrators, the board of governors shall consult with, and rely primarily on the advice and judgment of, an appropriate statewide organization of administrators. With regard to minimum qualifications for apprenticeship instructors, the board of governors shall consult with, and rely primarily on the advice and judgment of, appropriate apprenticeship teaching faculty and labor organization representatives. In each case, the board of governors shall provide a reasonable opportunity for comment by other statewide representative groups.
The instructor must be the instructor of record and therefore meet the minimum qualifications for apprenticeship. Those minimum qualifications are defined in Title 5 §53413:

§53413. Minimum Qualifications for Apprenticeship Instructors.

(a) The minimum qualifications for service as a community college faculty member teaching credit apprenticeship courses shall be satisfied by meeting one of the following two requirements:

(1) Possession of an associate degree, plus four years of occupational experience in the subject matter area to be taught; or

(2) Six years of occupational experience, a journeyman’s certificate in the subject matter area to be taught, and completion of at least eighteen (18) semester units of degree applicable college level course work, in addition to apprenticeship credits.

(b) The minimum qualifications for service as a community college faculty member teaching noncredit apprenticeship courses shall be either of the following:

(1) The minimum qualifications for credit apprenticeship instruction as set forth in this section, or

(2) A high school diploma; and six years of occupational experience in the occupation to be taught, including at least two years at the journeyman level; and sixty clock hours or four semester units in materials, methods, and evaluation of instruction. This last requirement may be satisfied concurrently during the first year of employment as an apprenticeship instructor.


At the October 26, 2016, meeting of the California Apprenticeship Council, a proposal from its RSI Committee to revise minimum qualifications for credit apprenticeship faculty was presented.

The proposal in its current form would significantly reduce the college education requirement for credit apprenticeship faculty.

Finally, reports exist of discussions at colleges about creating apprenticeship programs beyond the traditional trades and into other career technical education areas.

For these reasons, local senates and curriculum committees must understand both the intentional consequences and attempt to identify any unintentional consequences of such an expansion of apprenticeship instruction into non-traditional areas. As part of its ongoing efforts to provide information and guidance on academic and professional matters, the ASCCC will continue to work to understand how apprenticeship can best serve our students in order to identify and provide professional guidance on effective practices for establishing apprenticeship programs.

4 California Apprenticeship Council dates and agendas for meetings and its standing committees are available at http://www.dir.ca.gov/das/dasmeetings.html.

5 http://www.dir.ca.gov/das/DAS_MeetingAgenda/2016/October/201610-CA-Education-RSI.pdf
The educational direction for California community colleges in the last four years has been on an increasingly rapid trajectory; what started with the historic actions of the Student Success Task Force of 2011 has resulted in the current dizzying array of initiatives all aimed at improving educational outcomes. The response from faculty has been nothing short of heroic in shaping the Common Assessment Initiative, the Education Planning Initiative, the Online Education Initiative, the Strong Workforce Program, the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative, a renewed and revised Equity Plan, a refurbished Basic Skills Initiative, a Student Services and Support Program, and a block grant, AB 104 (2015), which aligns the CCC and the K-12 Adult School systems. With the combination of all of these efforts, the California Community Colleges System can be said to be suffering from initiative fatigue. Nevertheless, faculty must now more than ever insist upon a seat at all tables where curriculum, program development, outcomes tracking, degrees and certificates, funding, and planning are being discussed.

While each college has a participatory governance process, the procedures and interpretations of those processes can vary at each college. In the face of rapid deadlines, one helpful practice is to look to the Title 5 language that guides the faculty role in collegial consultation, especially 70901(b)(1)(E), which ensures “the right of academic senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards.” While the subsection appears quite clear on this matter, the language clearly was not drafted with an understanding of the time involved for such consultation.

Friction can occur in the collegial consultation process when a college finds itself under pressure due to the rapidity of an initiative’s timeline; in the panic of a looming deadline that promises fiscal consequences, faculty senates are often asked to give quick approvals to complicated plans to which they have not given sufficient input. Faculty are put in a familiar bind: say no and be viewed as obstructionist, or blindly say yes and abdicate all purview over academic matters. However, none of these initiatives can or should move forward without faculty input. Therefore,
faculty and administration must establish clear understanding of the following issues on their campuses:

- What does collegial consultation with faculty look like at the college, and how should it look? The 2016-2017 academic year may be a particularly good time for this conversation considering the reprieve that colleges have gotten with the temporary suspension of the deadlines for the SSSP plan, the Equity Template, and the Basic Skills plan. This period of respite can allow faculty and administration to sit down and discuss past issues regarding input and planning, promoting a proactive relationship and setting up both constituencies up for higher quality and more collegial interaction. Such a discussion may involve a joint meeting at which faculty and administration look ahead at the initiatives and plans with their accompanying deadlines and schedule backwards to ensure adequate time for participation.

- How are deadlines viewed and treated at your college? If a specific plan has a deadline of December 31, for example, the college must acknowledge that the real deadline is not December 31 or even December 30. The true deadline for finalizing the plan is a significant number of senate meetings that occur prior to the board meeting that occurs prior to the due date, thus allowing the faculty to review and give input before being asked to approve the plan. This process of acknowledging the length of time required for adequate participatory governance has potential to completely change campus calendars, and faculty need to be at the heart of such discussions to ensure that critical decisions do not fall during the classic faculty down times of summer and winter recess.

- Do faculty and administration agree on what requires input by faculty? This point can plague both faculty and administration alike. One of the reasons that faculty are feeling so much pressure and overwork is that a large portion of the 10+1 academic and professional matters is present in every initiative. Senates and their unions may voice workload concerns over depletion of faculty resources, while administrators who are equally overtaxed may view a top-down approach as more expedient. Despite this pressure, faculty must not abandon their roles and must insist on a seat at the table for any discussion involving faculty purview outlined in the 10+1.

At the heart of these issues is an examination of the participatory governance process to ensure that collegial consultation is working effectively, and the present moment offers a good opportunity to engage in a review of local processes. Faculty should look carefully at their district policies for areas where governance processes could be improved. Participatory governance councils and committees should agendize a review of their governance roles and their processes for ensuring adequate dialogue and input and should hold such reviews periodically in the future. A clear delineation of where and when faculty become involved can only serve to help shape these initiatives into tools promote faculty voice and that truly facilitate, and do not detract from, faculty roles as educators.

Faculty should look carefully at their district policies for areas where governance processes could be improved.
While attitudes towards the LGBTQ community have changed rapidly in recent years, the prospect of a dramatic shift in priorities in LGBTQ protections under the incoming presidential administration should prompt community colleges to take stock of how they are treating LGBTQ students locally. LGBTQ students often feel concerned over the attitudes of fellow students towards those who openly express their sexuality or gender identity, and these students are often concerned for their safety due to the unpredictable responses campus public safety or law enforcement have towards acts of violence or intimidation against members of the LGBTQ community.

In short, for many LGBTQ students the academy can be a place of anxiety and fear if they attempt to express themselves openly. Furthermore, many colleges may not even realize that LGBTQ students and their allies see the college as a place that is not accepting to open expressions of homosexuality or transgendered identity.

The ASCCC approved a resolution in 2011 to encourage community colleges to participate in the Campus Pride Index (CPI) project created by Campus Pride, an online community and organization whose purpose and mission is to provide resources, programs, and services that support LGBTQ students and their student and staff allies. To date, only five of the 113 California community colleges have participated in the self-assessment and made their results public on the Campus Pride website. More than five community colleges may have participated, but colleges have the option to make their results public or not. If your college has not yet participated in the assessment, faculty should make the case locally to not only complete the index but to make the results very public.

Encouraging your college to undertake the index survey and make a commitment to publicizing the results can jumpstart student and staff awareness of LGBTQ issues and current trends while opening the eyes and ears of your college’s collective mind to the way LGBTQ students may perceive the college. This experience can be jarring for college leaders, even at colleges that believe themselves to be open and responsive to the needs of all students. Santa Rosa Junior College found this fact out firsthand in 2013 as it went through the process. Santa Rosa’s experiences and response to the index are the subject of a 2014 Rostrum article entitled “LGBT Campus Climate Survey—An Eye-Opening Experience.” For Santa Rosa, making the results public helped to prioritize necessary actions to address deficiencies and unexpected findings and elevated the needs of LGBTQ students in the college’s planning processes.

A college’s involvement in the CPI is not the end of the conversation but rather the beginning of the journey for many colleges. The Campus Pride organization is quick to point out that the assessment questions should not take the place of a comprehensive campus climate survey. On the other hand, many colleges’ student satisfaction surveys do not ask any specific questions about the LGBTQ experience or include students who identify as LGBTQ identified as subsections in the data analysis. If your college does not collect such data, your institution cannot know how or if your LGBTQ students are feeling included and safe in the college community. Participation in the CPI can be the first step toward better communication with this community of students and staff in hopes of breaking down barriers to student success for all.
At its Fall 2016 Plenary Session, the ASCCC approved Resolution 10.01 F16 which changed the process to revise the Disciplines List from a biennial to an annual process. This important process has now begun again: faculty can propose new disciplines or make revisions to those that exist. Proposed revisions to the Disciplines List can be submitted to the ASCCC Office for possible consideration by the delegates at the Spring 2018 Plenary Session.

Information about the Disciplines List revision process, including timelines, required forms, and an FAQ document, can be found on the ASCCC website at http://www.asccc.org/disciplines-list. All submissions require a completed form that includes the approval of a local academic senate or professional discipline organization, evidence of statewide need for the proposed change, documentation that the degrees to satisfy the proposed minimum qualifications are available, and an explanation of the impact of the proposed revision delineated as a list of pros and cons. While the support of a local senate is sufficient for submission, having the support of one or more professional organizations may strengthen a proposal. Local senates must also ensure that proposals to change the Disciplines List originate from the affected discipline faculty.

The following are some important reminders about the Disciplines List revision process:

- Each proposal must be seconded by an academic senate from a different district than the initiating academic senate;
- The initiator or an informed designee is required to be present for both hearings where the proposed revision is presented; and
- If the ASCCC plenary delegates have previously rejected the proposal, it may be resubmitted for consideration if it has changed significantly, such as the inclusion of a new rationale and new evidence.

In order to be considered during the 2017-2018 cycle, completed proposals with all required paperwork must be submitted to the ASCCC Office and received by September 30, 2017. Proposals submitted after the deadline may be held until the 2018-2019 cycle. For assistance in completing a proposal, please contact the ASCCC office at disciplineslist@asccc.org or the Standards and Practices Committee Chair at freitaje@lacitycollege.edu.

The Disciplines List Revision Process is Now Annual and Starts Now

by John Freitas, ASCCC Standards and Practices Committee Chair
Accreditation Reform and the Warren Bill

by Dan Wanner, Accreditation Committee Member, Los Angeles City College

The Accreditation Reform and Enhanced Accountability Act of 2016 (Senators Warren, Durbin, and Schatz) intends to “improve the effectiveness of recognized accreditation as an eligibility requirement for federal education funding and to increase the accountability of institutions of higher education for student outcomes.” According to the senators, the changes would “ensure colleges aren’t cheating students while sucking down taxpayer money” and restrict those “for-profit schools [that] have lured students into taking on huge debt for an education that is essentially worthless.” A major impetus behind the bill is the failure of “fraudulent institutions that remained accredited up until the day they closed,” such as Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institutes. If approved, however, the Warren Bill would impact all institutions, and implications are included for California community colleges. This summary is intended to help local academic senates better understand the proposed changes and additions to the accreditation sections of the Higher Education Act.

THE WARREN BILL

The Accreditation Reform and Enhanced Accountability Act6 offers numerous changes to accreditation criteria. Student achievement standards would change from different standards established by institutions to specific standards determined by the Secretary of Education including retention, graduation and course completion, cohort default, repayment, transfer, student earnings after graduation, job placement, and professional and vocational certification and licensing examination pass rates. Other new criteria would include the affordability of tuition and fees as well as enrollment levels of students receiving Federal Pell Grants.

Operating procedures would require a teach-out plan for those institutions that are on show cause or have lost accreditation and would include an expanded reporting of the results of accreditation. A new requirement would be that within four years of passage of the revised act, accredited institutions must have public credit transfer agreements with all other accredited institutions that provide for the transfer of credit earned for general education courses and for courses that are part of substantially similar programs.

The current Higher Education Act specifies that the Secretary of Education does not have permission to establish any criteria that accrediting agencies must use. New language would state that nothing would prohibit the secretary from establishing such criteria for accrediting agencies. Furthermore, an institution would not be able to change its accrediting agency unless the secretary finds reasonable cause and only if the institution has been reaccredited for two years under the most recent accreditation standards.

Accrediting agencies would also have new requirements. Language would be added that limits accreditors from being family members, lobbyists, former employees, or those who stand to gain financially from accreditation. Accreditors would be fined if they do not notify the secretary that an institution has failed to meet accreditation criteria, has engaged in fraud, was found to have harmed prior or current students, or if the accrediting agency fails to act on an institution. The secretary would have expanded power to enact performance-based reviews to determine the quality of accrediting agencies, and language indicating that the secretary cannot base decisions about accrediting agencies on criteria outside

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those mentioned in the bill would be removed. New language would be added stating that accrediting agencies that do not meet the requirements of the bill would be limited, suspended, terminated, required to take action, or fined, with the fines to be paid equally by all institutions under the accrediting agency. Existing language stating that the secretary shall not promulgate any regulation with respect to the standards of an accrediting agency would be removed.

A number of new sections would be added. The Secretary of Education would set minimum baseline thresholds for standards and student achievement measures including graduation, default, and repayment rates. In order to remain accredited, institutions would need to meet those thresholds for two out of three years. The secretary would provide student achievement data to accrediting agencies, disaggregated by Pell Grant recipients. Institutions being investigated, failing to meet minimum baseline thresholds and measures, or engaging in deceptive practices would undergo an “enhanced review.” In addition, enhanced review, formal action, request for information, or improvement plans would be required if an institution changes ownership, has a rapid change of size, is in poor financial health, has a lowered credit rating, demonstrates financial weakness, or has developed a substantive change to programs or locations. Another addition is the concept of differentiated accreditation status, in that an institution could be “accredited with distinction” or “accredited with risk” if it does or does not meet the student achievement standards and minimum baseline thresholds set by the secretary.

Civil action by an accrediting agency, institution, or individual concerning accreditation would have to be taken to the appropriate US district court. A final addition is that 18 months after the act passes, institutions would be required to display and regularly update uniform language as to their accreditation status on their website, with the language to be written by the secretary.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

In October 2016 then-ACCJC President Barbara Beno forwarded an analysis of the bill by the Council of Regional Accreditation Commissions (C-RAC), which according to Beno articulates the “grave concerns accreditors and higher education organizations have about the bill.” The C-RAC’s concerns focus on the expansion of federal government in accreditation, notably in terms of the increased influence of the Secretary of Education, expansion of accreditation standards, setting of thresholds for student achievement, establishment of enhanced reviews, differentiated accreditation status, and limited ability of sanctioned institutions to change accreditors.

The ASCCC Accreditation Committee shares some of these concerns. Despite the Warren Bill stating that nothing in the revised act would limit academic freedom or provide authority to the Secretary of Education to limit academic freedom, the expansion of federal powers is troubling, notably in terms of the secretary setting the minimum baseline thresholds for student achievement. Most problematic is that an institution would no longer review itself in terms of how well it meets its mission but instead in terms of how well it meets the standards that will be set by the Secretary of Education. The Accreditation Committee acknowledges that positive outcomes could result from increased transparency and accountability of our accrediting agencies, and no question exists that fraudulent for-profit schools have harmed students. Nevertheless, the large number of variables contributing to student achievement in California’s community colleges makes the committee question whether a one-size-fits-all approach to accreditation standards led by the federal government will be in the best interest of colleges and students.

Given that the proposed changes will put additional scrutiny on for-profits schools that receive federal student aid, the Accreditation Reform and Enhanced Accountability Act could receive an interesting reception from the administration of Donald Trump, who ran on a platform of free markets and who supports “productive” competition among schools. Additionally, Trump’s choice for Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, has a long record of supporting for-profit charter schools. Although the future of the bill remains unclear and the legislation will most probably change from its current form, all educators should stay informed as to the progress of the bill and provide appropriate feedback to those involved in its passage.
“Equivalence to the minimum qualifications” sounds very simple. However, the meaning of equivalence to the minimum qualifications for a faculty position in the California community colleges can be complex. Speaking as someone who came from industry, I was blissfully ignorant of what equivalence to the minimum qualifications meant until as a full-time faculty member I needed to hire a part-time faculty member for my career technical education department.

I was an automotive technician for sixteen years before I transitioned to teaching. As I started my job search, I read advertisements for many kinds of teachers. In particular, I looked at the educational requirements for college instructors. Most faculty positions required a master’s degree, but CTE faculty required a bachelor’s degree and two years of work experience or any associate’s degree or and 6 years of work experience. I had plenty of experience but only a diploma in Diesel Technology. I did not even consider the “or equivalent” that followed all of the degree requirements, and I did not think “or equivalent” would apply to me. Instead, I went back to school and earned an associate’s degree before I applied for a faculty position. However, had I looked more into the term “or equivalent,” I would have found it in the Disciplines List, which is a list of minimum qualifications for hiring faculty adopted by the Board of Governors. “Or equivalent” refers to any qualifications that are at least equal to the state adopted minimum qualifications for a particular.7

Again, none of this information applied to me because when I finally applied I met the minimum qualifications as required. It did, however, apply

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7 Equivalence to the Minimum Qualifications, adopted Spring 2016 by the ASCCC and available at http://asccc.org/publications/academic-senate-papers. The current Disciplines List can be found in the Chancellor’s Office publication Minimum Qualifications for Faculty and Administrators in California Community Colleges and can also be accessed through the ASCCC Disciplines List website at http://asccc.org/disciplines-list.
to the part-time faculty I was trying to get hired at my college. I learned many things during this process. First, I learned that human resources has a limited role in determining equivalency. California Education Code §87359 (and Title 5 §53430) states this fact very clearly:

The process, as well as criteria and standards by which the governing board reaches its determinations regarding faculty members, shall be developed and agreed upon jointly by representatives of the governing board and the academic senate, and approved by the governing board. The agreed upon process shall include reasonable procedures to ensure that the governing board relies primarily upon the advice and judgment of the academic senate to determine that each individual faculty member employed under the authority granted by the regulations possesses qualifications that are at least equivalent to the applicable minimum qualifications specified in regulations adopted by the board of governors. The process shall further require that the governing board provide the academic senate with an opportunity to present its views to the governing board before the board makes a determination, and that the written record of the decision, including the views of the academic senate, shall be available for review pursuant to Section 87358.

The district governing board ultimately grants equivalency. Human resources may act as the representative of the local board in determining the equivalency criteria, but human resources does not have authority to set such criteria on its own, and the board’s decision as to whether any individual applicant meets that criteria is to be based on the recommendation of the faculty through the academic senate.

Many times the academic senate appoints representatives to an equivalency committee to ensure the process is consistent and fair. This committee can be a senate subcommittee or a college committee, and it may be comprised of faculty both within and outside of the discipline to ensure the equivalency process is applied consistently and fairly. College administration may also be represented on some equivalency committees, but the majority voice on any such group should come from faculty. The equivalency committee normally sends its recommendations on equivalency decisions to the academic senate, which then makes the recommendation to the local board.

The applicant for equivalency must prove he or she has coursework or experience at least equal to the minimum qualifications for the degree on the Disciplines List. Equivalency can never mean less than these qualifications. An applicant must prove both breadth and depth of knowledge. Breadth of knowledge means knowledge equivalent to the general education requirements of the minimum degree required. Therefore, the applicant must prove that he or she has the knowledge and skills equivalent to the general education requirements in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and language and rationality as if he or she had taken courses in these areas. Depth of knowledge refers to discipline subject knowledge.

An applicant may prove equivalency in various ways, including previous coursework, work experience, and eminence in districts that allow this qualification. No provisional equivalency is allowed; in other words, the applicant must meet minimum qualifications when hired, not through a promise of a degree or coursework to be completed after the hire.
The part-time applicant that I was attempting to hire through equivalency was enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program, so his transcripts demonstrated that he had completed the coursework sufficient to meet minimum qualifications for the general education requirements. Furthermore, this applicant had also been self-employed for fifteen years, so he could have also used his work experience to help prove his equivalency in some areas on general education. He could demonstrate his English skills by submitting examples of written work he had created for his business, such as work contracts, employee handbooks, and other legal matters that may have involved research and critical thinking skills. He could demonstrate his math skills by producing his own bookkeeping records and other documents from the automotive field, such as computational analyses and records involving electrical work. Any such application for equivalency should be based on documented success in using the skills in question, not simply on the assumption that because one has worked in a field one has such knowledge. My applicant was thus able to prove his qualifications were equivalent to the minimum qualifications.

I learned along the way that the same process for equivalency is used for part-time or full-time faculty, whether as part of a regular hiring cycle or in emergency hire situations. No shortcuts are allowed. All community college faculty must exemplify the qualities of a college educated person. General education preparation is therefore critical. In addition, a faculty member cannot be deemed equivalent to teach a single course; if an applicant is approved to teach in a discipline, he or she is approved to teach all courses in that discipline. This mandate is dictated by Education Code §87359.

The local use of equivalencies is an especially important tool for ensuring sufficient numbers of qualified applicants for faculty positions in the CTE disciplines. Therefore, districts must make every effort to make the equivalency process accessible and understandable for applicants. This clarity can be achieved by posting the local equivalency policy process on websites in easily accessible ways and by providing clear explanations to applicants regarding what equivalency is and why they may or may not need to apply for equivalency. The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges also provides a number of helpful resources that provide guidance about minimum qualifications and equivalency. At the end of the day, any applicant who attempts to pursue equivalency, or any department chair looking to hire someone through this process, should become familiar with the district’s policy and should work with the local academic senate and equivalency committee to ensure that the applicant meets Education Code and Title 5 requirements and has the proper material required to prove equivalency.