Building a New Shared Governance System
To Improve Planning and Decision Making at Delta College

Matt Wetstein, Interim Dean
Planning, Research, and Grants Development

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Introduction: Committee Structure and the Problems of Planning and Governance

For years, the College governance system has been marked by a large number of committees with specialized responsibilities but very little coordinated effort and centralized communication of institutional decisions and priorities. Committees have been added regularly to the College’s shared governance committee system, and incremental changes have been made to memberships and charges with little effort devoted to a systematic assessment of the committee system and its organization. This report seeks to sketch out the organizational structure of the College’s existing committee system, and discusses some barriers that it presents to establishing an effective planning and budgeting process for the College, and proposes some revisions and consolidation of committees in the current system.

Some may question why the committee system needs to be reviewed at this juncture. The argument might be put forward, “why fix something that appears to be working?” One key reason for consideration of change is that the recent accreditation process unveiled widespread sentiment that the current governance structure is ineffective at providing strategic planning for the College, and that the planning and budgeting process is poorly understood by some campus groups. When faculty and staff were asked their impressions of campus planning and budgeting, only a third said the College had an effective planning and budgeting system. While the College has made efforts to develop a Master Plan for instructional services, information services, student services, facilities and resources, the college community does not have a widespread understanding of those documents and the priorities established in them. Rather, it seems that isolated individuals who played key roles in the formation of planning documents have specialized and detailed knowledge of the “vision” sketched out in those plans. Without widespread knowledge and consensus concerning College goals and priorities, the identification of worthwhile spending projects often resembles an ad hoc process, subject to the whims of arbitrariness and charges of favoritism.

Another reason to review the governance system lies in the Accreditation Team’s views of governance structures at the College. The team chair, Chancellor of the West Valley Mission College District, indicated in her closing remarks to the College that Delta College has “a lot of committees, but individual constituencies tend to hold on to whatever ‘power’ they have rather than to participate objectively in the decision making process and utilize their power to consult, encourage, support. As a consequence, everyone feels powerless because the only power they have is veto power.

Team members also perceived that the role of the President’s Council was poorly understood across the campus. This is unfortunate because the membership of the President’s Council makes it a potentially important committee in the overall structure of the College as a forum for discussion of policies, strategic planning, institutional priorities, and dispute resolution.

A third reason to review the committee system stems from the need for streamlining and new thinking about committee charges and responsibilities. Currently, the College has 22 standing committees, six ad hoc committees, three adjudication panels, seven councils or senates, and three executive boards for employee bargaining groups. Campus meeting rooms are often taxed and overbooked because groups compete for meeting space with division and organizational unit meetings. Moreover, the reporting relationship of committees is not uniform across the campus. Some committees report only to one individual supervisor, while most others report to the Board, President or President’s Council. Some committees that should reasonably report to the College’s Planning and Budget Committee do not do so currently (for example, the Instructional Specially Funded Allocation Committee). To the extent that committees do not report to an appropriate supervisor or planning committee, decisions on spending priorities might be made in a forum that does not take other institutional priorities into consideration. An objective observer might question why the College has some committees at all — or might question why certain committees are not folded together to share responsibilities under one committee set-up. Two examples might prove the point: Is the College served well by a separate Facilities Naming Committee (advisory to the Board of Trustees) distinct from the Facilities Planning Committee (advisory to the President and Vice President for Business Services), which is distinct from a Construction Review Committee? Does the College require separate Reclassification Committees to handle the redefinition of job specifications and salaries for administrators and classified staff, or would a joint reclassification committee better serve the institution’s resources and staffing?

Another reason for review of the College’s committee system stems from the fact that the President’s Council is not adequately defined in College documents, policies, and procedures as a standing committee or council. Committees described in Policy 2620 are often listed as “advisory to the President’s Council,” but the council itself is nowhere mentioned in the policy as having a specific charge and responsibility. At a minimum, College policies and procedures should formally incorporate the role of the President’s Council in the formal structure of the College’s governance system. Even the accreditation team recognized the need for a more clearly defined role for the president’s Council in the College’s shared governance system.

Review of the shared governance system at the College is not a new undertaking. In 1998, the College’s Mid-Term Report to the Accrediting Commission indicated that the College held a day-long workshop to address concerns with the shared governance system. The brainstorming workshop was titled “Building Community through Shared Governance.” A Shared Governance Task Force emerged from that workshop, and was charged with formulating proposals for change. Some changes did occur, including the merger of the Academic Research and Institutional Research Committees, and the development of standards of committee behavior. Moreover, an ad hoc committee of the task force solicited information from other campuses on the workings of their committee systems. Highlights of that research indicate that:

- Only one other college (Chaffey College) had a committee with a separate charge to review policies that resembled Delta College’s Policies and Procedures Committee. Chaffey College’s committee combines Policy and Budget Development into one committee.
While the task force concluded that Delta College’s number of committees is not "out of line" with the other colleges surveyed, it did have the second largest number of standing committees at the time (27). The mean number of committees of colleges responding to the survey was 22.

Figure 1 on the following page provides an overarching schematic diagram of the committee structure problem at San Joaquin Delta College. The figure outlines the reporting relationship of the College’s standing committees, councils, senates, adjudication panels, and ad hoc committees. An objective observer would find the graph "busy." Starting at the top left of the chart, one finds several free standing committees that are advisory to the President, with one committee (Construction Review) reporting to both the President and Vice President of Business Services. In the top center of the diagram, some might confuse the President’s Cabinet (a group charged with reviewing items placed on the Board of Trustees agenda) with the President’s Council (a group with overlapping membership charged with reviewing matters related to broad policy and programmatic directions of the College). Several committees (i.e., the program review committees) are advisory to the Planning and Budget Committee, which in turn is advisory to the President’s Council. A few committees in the system are merely advisory to a Vice President, Chief of Campus Police, or Director of Human Resources and Affirmative Action, and provide no avenue for discussion beyond that individual decision maker (at least in a formal sense). The overall picture presented in Figure 1 is a committee system that is excessively complex and inconsistent in hierarchy and reporting relationships.

Widespread concerns about the committee system do not stop there. Several committees have become dormant because of overburdened staff or a desire to allow the committees to remain dormant. For example, for several years, the Institutional and Academic Research Committee was a committee in name only, with rare meetings scheduled (two sessions have been held in the 2001-02 year to establish a research agenda and allow for reports on pending research projects). The Administrative Services Program Review Committee has not met for a year. The Enrollment Management Committee may have lost some of its impetus with the resignation of the former Director of Information and Facilities. The time has come for a widespread review of the...
Consolidate the current Board Committee charged with Facilities Naming with the Facilities Planning Committee and the Construction Review Committee, establishing a Facilities Planning and Construction Committee. This new committee would review and make recommendations regarding long-range facilities plans for the district, review remodeling requests, review matters related to vehicle access and campus beauty, and review the status of construction projects. The committee would also develop and monitor policies for the naming of campus facilities. The committee would be advisory to the Planning and Budget Council.

Consolidate the Academic Services Program Review Committee and Student Services Program Review Committee to establish a unified committee to review the programs and operations of Student Services and Administrative Services. This new consolidated Student and Administrative Services Program Review Committee would be advisory to the Planning and Budget Council.

The existing Employee Health Insurance Committee and Campus Health and Safety Committee would be merged to establish a Health, Safety, and Insurance Committee. The committee charges would be joined in order to coordinate health, safety and insurance issues into one body that is advisory to the CPPC.

The Partnership for Excellence Committee and Instructional Specially Funded Allocation Committees would be merged to establish a unified committee titled the PFE and Special Instructional Funds Committee. The committee would specifically review and make recommendations of special funds like Instructional Capital Outlay, PFE, VTEA, and other grant programs with specialized funding restrictions. Committee charges would be merged and the committee would be advisory to the Planning and Budget Council.

The Faculty and Staff Social Committee and United Way Committee would be merged to create the Staff Social and Philanthropy Committee. This committee would be charged with the dual duties of promoting staff camaraderie through social events, and with campus philanthropy drives associated with the United Way. The committee might also establish a formal mechanism for assisting employees and their families when tragedies occur.
The College Diversity and Cultural Awareness Programs Committees would be merged to establish a unified Diversity and Cultural Awareness Program Committee, with reporting authority to the CPPC.

Adjudication panels like the Parking Adjudication Panel and Student Personnel Conduct Committee would remain the way they are. However, the advisory relationship of the panels would be amended to make all adjudicatory panels dealing with students advisory to the Vice President of Student Services (and not the Campus Police Chief).

The consolidation of committees is represented in Figure 2. These ideas can serve as a starting point for developing a new shared governance system that streamlines the number of committees, provides for a new, well-defined College Planning and Policy Council, and ultimately holds the promise of a more effective and coordinated shared governance framework at the College.