

# SENATE YEAR-END REPORT

2010-11

ROBERT HELSABECK, SENATE PRESIDENT (2009-2011)

The second operational year of the Faculty Senate resulted in three major types of outcomes: action on a number of proposals, the working out of partnerships with the new provost and the Council of Deans, and the crystallization of structural difficulties in the constitution of the Senate.

## I

### **Proposals Considered**

This past year the Senate considered a number of proposals emanating from the administration, from faculty committees and from individual faculty on and off the Senate. The formal proposals were reviewed by the appropriate Faculty committees before action by the Senate. (The meeting months for each proposal are noted for reference to a fuller commentary in the minutes, when available, and the proposals are listed in chronological order by date of initiation.)

#### ACADEMIC POLICIES

##### Moving "up" the date for students' withdrawal from a course and related issues.

(October 2010 and April 2010) In 2010, the Senate approved a proposal to "move up" the date for late withdrawal from a course from the 13<sup>th</sup> week to the 10<sup>th</sup> week. Prior to implementation, however, administrative considerations resulted in the need for a review of several "linked" policies. One such linked policy is the calculation of the GPA for repeated courses. Currently the College counts in the student's GPA both the original grade and the repeated grade. After considering the alternative of counting only the second grade, the Council of Deans voted to maintain the present method of calculation. Another related matter was the need for some limitation on the number of times a student would be allowed to repeat a course. In the May 2011 meeting, the Senate endorsed Academic Affairs' recommendation to limit to three the number of times a student could repeat a given course. The Senate also passed a recommendation that programs be given the prerogative to adopt alternative "repeat" standards for particular courses. (May 2011) Academic Affairs is nearing the completion of their review of the package of policies and will bring additional policies to the Senate in Fall of 2011.

## NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

- Jazz Studies Minor. A Proposal submitted by the music faculty called for the establishment of the Jazz Studies Minor. It was given first reading in the September meeting and approved in its final form in November. (Sept/Nov 2010)
- International Studies Minor. In keeping with the new emphasis on strengthening international studies, the Senate passed this proposal without dissent. (Sept. 2010)
- Digital Literacy Minor. The idea of an acknowledgment of a student's development of digital competence has been "in the works" for a number of years. This proposal for a formal minor passed unanimously. (Sept. 2010)
- Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BAIS). The idea of a BAIS had been under discussion in Academic Affairs for several years. In September, a proposal (viewable on the Senate site) was brought to the full Senate. Concern was raised about how this degree would differ from the LIBA. Other concerns centered on the lack of faculty oversight and potential problems with the coherence of the degree. However, enough promise was seen in the possibilities of the degree to warrant further consideration. The Senate decided to join the administration in a "working group" to improve the proposal and answer some outstanding questions and concerns. A revised proposal (January 2011) was put before the Senate and the discussion continued. As of this date, the working group is considering further suggestions, including a second type of LIBA, and will report to the Senate in the Fall Semester 2011.
- Sustainability Program. The proposal to offer a B.A. and a B.S. in Sustainability, having been reviewed at several stages by the Senate, was approved by unanimous vote. (April 2011). It is considered a model for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- B.S. in Health Sciences. After a year of considerable discussion and refinement in response to faculty concerns, both in committee and in the Senate, the Health Sciences proposal was approved. (April, May 2011)
- Master of Arts in American Studies. This proposal received a highly favorable first reading and is docketed for a vote in September 2011.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- Concerns over Allocation of Student Scholarship Money. At the Fall Faculty Conference, concern had been raised over an imbalance in the allocation of

scholarship money, i.e. too much allocated to attract good students and not enough for truly needy students. Since September, new money has been raised for needy students and some reallocation has occurred. (In June, 2011, President Saatkamp, in June, 2011, announced the receipt of a major gift to help needy students.)

- Flat-Rate Tuition. A number of faculty members have been concerned over the impact of Flat-Rate Tuition. In the Fall (November 2010) a working group was set up to gather data and to make a report to the Senate. In the April 2011 meeting, the Administration and Finance Committee chair made a report with data from Claudine Keenan, the College Chief Planner. The data seem to indicate the lack of a negative academic effect on those taking 20 credits. (The PowerPoint presentation is posted on the Senate Web site.) Questions remain and the Committee will continue its review.
- Limitations on Distance Education. A long standing issue in the Faculty (first the Assembly, then the Senate) is the matter of whether there should be limitations on students' enrollment in distance education courses and/or on numbers of distance education courses in a faculty member's teaching load. A previous task force called for several limitations on students and some limits on the Faculty. The Assembly approved an unspecified limitation on students but was unable to complete consideration of faculty limits. The matter was sent to the Academic Policies Committee (APC) for another review of the issues, after some passage of time and additional evidence of student and faculty practices at the College. In the April 2011 meeting, the APC recommended requiring that the Freshman and Transfer Seminars be taken in person, but that the college imposes no further limitations on student enrollments. Programs would continue to be empowered to create their own rules about distance education program courses. The Committee further recommended that the matter of faculty limitations be left to each program. The Senate approved the recommendations, but called for a review in two years to ascertain any trends and to reassess the wisdom of the evolved practice. (April 2011)
- Evaluation of Deans. The evaluation of deans by faculty is now fully operational. The only outstanding issue is the handling of the information from the evaluation. Two views prevail: 1) treat the faculty evaluations as part of the personnel process. Consistent with the treatment of IDEA results, this would mean that the data is held confidential with the Provost and used by the Provost or 2) the material is sent to the Provost, but some sort of meeting is held with the respective school faculties to discuss the results. The exact procedure is unresolved and any method is subject to further review and change.

- Advising Awards. A special working group collaborating with the administrators in academic advising worked out an “R&PD like” award process for supporting excellent work by faculty members in academic advising. The first award in support of projects was granted to several faculty members this past Spring 2011. We are pleased that a good process has been developed that has the support of the Faculty.

## II

### **Senate Operations**

- Meetings - Operational Considerations. The Senate membership seems to favor a larger portion of the meeting time being conducted in Executive Session, i.e., meeting without administrators and other non-Senators present. I personally hope that a good balance can be found between the informational advantages of administrators being present and the freer discussions possible in “private” discussion among faculty only. The use of “working groups” involving both faculty and administrators working on short term projects seemed to have been effective on several projects.
- Elections (role of nominating committee). There was no clear consensus that the Senate should propose an amendment to change the current use of the nominating committee to form a slate of candidates for all Senate positions. It was pointed out that one of the primary functions of the Nominating Committee was the need for a diverse senate. Producing a slate that would promote diversity is the purpose of the Nominating Committee. The Constitution is clear that this function is paramount (Article IX, section 1).
- Connections to the Larger Faculty. We, on the Senate, have a concern that the collective Faculty may lose its sense of agency, given a senate. One danger of a senate structure is the alienation of the larger faculty from the governing process. We continue to seek ways to give more effective voice to those faculty members not currently serving on the Senate. The former Assembly structure had the virtue of hearing from the newest members of the faculty as they were moved to speak. We want to preserve that virtue. One idea is the encouragement of “white papers” or “think pieces” from any member of the faculty on a matter of concern to the College. We currently do this periodically through “email storms” on subjects that move folks. We have found these to be useful ways to get a sense of some of the concerns that folks have but we could invite short papers rather than just waiting for e-mail storms to happen.

- Re-accreditation. A number of groups of faculty, administrators, students, and board members have worked on various aspects of our Middle-States Accreditation self study. The first draft of the report is now done and is being reviewed by members of the faculty and staff. The Senate documented ways that shared governance is realized and ways that it falls short. We also indicated that the Senate itself is a result of a year long evaluation of governance at Stockton.

### III

#### **The Need for a Constitutional Amendment**

After two years of operation, the Senate has realized that a tighter relationship between faculty-wide committees and the Senate would be desirable. In the planning year, the Governance Task Force faced the question of how to relate the standing committees of the Faculty Assembly to the new Senate – either leaving the committees as Assembly Committees that report to the Senate or making them Committees of the Senate. The Governance Task Force chose the former. In an effort to link the Committees to the Senate, the Senate appointed Senators to serve as liaisons to each of the committees. This worked moderately well but after two years of operation, the Senate now believes that having a more substantial connection between the committee and the Senate is needed. We want to maintain the faculty-wide nature of the committees but strengthen the coordination of the committees' work with that of the Senate.

The Senate asked Judy Copeland to prepare a report that would make clear the changes we are considering. The following changes in the current committee structure are under consideration:

1. Replace all references to "Committees of the Faculty Assembly" with "Committees of the Senate,"
2. Provide that the Committees are responsible to, and report to, the Senate, rather than the Faculty Assembly,
3. Leave intact the Committees' authority to take up matters on their own initiative, and
4. Provide that the vice chairs of the standing committees will be elected by the Senate, from among its members, and will serve as liaisons between the Senate and the standing committees.

By adding a Senator as a vice chair of each committee, we both increase the presence of the Senate on the committee (beyond a liaison) and we guarantee a continuing representation of the committee to the Senate. More explanation and the detailed language change will be forthcoming. Some minor changes will also be sent out at the

same time. Formal constitutional language will be drafted for consideration by the Executive Committee, the Senate, and the full faculty (The Assembly.)

### **A final Comment**

I consider it a singular honor to have been allowed to serve as the Senate's first president. I believe we have had a good start, trying to balance the partnership relationship with the administration with the faithful representation of the Faculty's perspective and interests. Clearly the Senate is a work in progress and I have every reason to believe we have a good structure and good people to make it work. Stockton has always been committed to giving voice to the untenured faculty and I believe we've done a pretty good job in that effort. I hope we will also continue to draw upon the talent and experience of our senior faculty. The administration is seasoned and we need a reasonable presence of equally senior faculty to make a good partnership. We think that a two year term is an agreeable length of time for us to serve centrally in the governance of the College. Remember that we don't have the usual tier of departmental chairs with the seasoning that is usually associated with that quasi-administrative post.

On still another front, I continue to urge the College to more clearly define itself. Last year I called for an institutional conversation and it bears repeating:

The issue of a "shared vision" continues to be central to the well-being of the College. Everyday decision-making drives the evolution of the college without necessarily reflecting shared vision. What sort of place would we ideally like to be? How does it differ from the initial "dream" of this college? What is the role of liberal arts in a time of job anxiety and a preoccupation with the competitive context in which we operate? If we believe liberal learning is still key, how does that idea manifest itself as programs become increasingly separated from one another? How can we make the best of linkages between liberal learning and career preparation both at the undergraduate and graduate levels? What do we need to do with our approach to general education to more effectively serve our central values as a college? This is a good time to take stock as we celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. I hope this will be a year of renewed imagination!

My best wishes for the successful operation in the coming year and beyond.

Robert Helsabeck, Senate President June, 2011