

Shared/Participatory Governance

A Position Paper

By

California Community Colleges Classified Senate (4CS)

What is shared governance? Specifically, Education Code Section 70901(b) required the Board of Governors to adopt regulations setting “...*minimum* standards governing procedures established by governing boards in community college districts to ensure faculty, staff, and students the right to participate effectively in district and college governance, and the opportunity to express their opinions at the campus level and to ensure that their opinions are given every reasonable *consideration*...” shared governance, then, is a complex web of consultation and decision-making and responsibility that translates goals into district policy or action.

Currently it is widely agreed that the term “shared” governance is not truly descriptive of the process as the implementation intended. “Participatory” governance is more descriptive of the actual process. Ultimately liability continues to remain with the local governing board. Although the term “participatory” is replacing the term “shared” governance, we will, for clarity, use the original term in this position paper.

AB1725 (1988) and Title 5 of the California Education Code bring the force of law to the concept of shared governance. However, shared governance, as outlined in AB1725, is not a new concept. Title 5§53203 directs district boards to delegate authority and responsibility to district faculty, through their academic senates, in the shared governance process as it relates to academic and professional matters, i.e. curriculum, degree/certificate requirements, grading policies. AB 1725 also defined a role for student participation in governance. Title V of the Education Code was amended to ensure that students would have the opportunity to participate in college governance and to make recommendations concerning College policies and procedures that would have significant effect on students. [Sec. 510723.7] The 4CS applaud this action and strongly supports the role of student participation in governance.

In less detail, classified staff, referred to as “staff” are guaranteed the opportunity to provide input in all areas that affect staff, “...for staff participation in governance outside of the arena of collective bargaining.” (Minimum Standards for Staff Participation in Governance, Board of Governors, California Community Colleges, September 13-14, 1990.) AB 1725 directs boards to provide opportunity for input, and ensure that the recommendations and opinions of faculty, students, and staff receive reasonable consideration. Moreover, it charges the faculty to assume a degree of responsibility and active participation in shared governance not previously exercised, and it institutionalizes the roll of classified staff and students. Shared governance brings to institutions a total quality management model that includes all employees in the successful operation and accountability of that institution. This form of participatory government provides a unique model of governance that has resulted in the potential to serve institutions well.

Perhaps, in the beginning, the term “shared” governance created an atmosphere of expectation of greater control by all constituents. Perhaps it threatened those who had, up to that time, made unilateral decisions without adequate input and research. Whatever the case, in some institutions

there were those who resisted the change. Using the vernacular of the time, paradigm shift was truly descriptive of the atmosphere concerning shared governance. Change was coming, and was not welcomed by all.

Though many classified senates (also called councils) existed prior to AB 1725, the law resulted in the development of many more classified senates across the state. A few classified unions strongly resisted the growth of classified senates, viewing them as a threat to their control of classified issues. The classified staff at each college found it necessary to evaluate the ability and effectiveness of its union/negotiating body to assume participatory governance responsibilities. Some institutions recognized that there were working limits to the role of classified unions. Limits the districts were unwilling to expand. In these cases, classified staff found it advantageous to consider senates or another body to fill their role in participatory governance. In many cases, the unions, already pushed to their limits by the negotiable and legal aspects required of them, were unable to separate union issues and tactics from those appropriate to shared governance. It is recognized that some districts have found the relationship between unions and administration to be one of such cohesiveness that their unions met the needs and responsibilities of participatory governance well. It is important to note that the California Community Colleges Classified Senate (hereinafter referred to as 4CS) is representative of the shared governance interests of all community colleges, their unions and senates/councils, whereas no single union represents all classified staff across the state.

In some districts, unions continued to misunderstand the role of a classified senate and they resist the development and operation of classified senates, resulting in the division of classified staff over the issue. After years of discussion on the division of duties and responsibilities, many classified staff groups had decided that large numbers of them *are* members of the unions and their choice of representation in participatory governance should be respected. As a result, the vast majority of districts have senates/councils (71 at last count). In some colleges and districts classified staff have their union represent them in both governance and collective bargaining. Others have both a senate and union. Yet some colleges have only a senate or council with no formal union. Each district has dealt with the shared governance requirement in order to meet their needs.

It is the position of 4CS that the best scenario is for two classified bodies, a union and a senate, each with unique skills and knowledge to best concentrate on their respective group for dividing up the work, effectively utilizing the skills of individuals, delineation of the intent and purposes of the individual issues of collective bargaining and participatory governance. Two bodies are better than one. The goal, of course, is for those two bodies to work in unison to promote not only all the concerns of the classified staff, but the *betterment of the institution* as a whole and a *successful learning environment for students*. Ultimately, however, the role in participatory governance is not to look out for the “best” interest of a constituency group, but of the institution and its mission. Our role in participatory governance is to strive for what is best for the students, institution, and its mission - not what is in the "best" interest of individual groups.

Shared governance has many definitions. There are a multitude of variations of governance structures and local policies. Each district has evolved individually in regards to shared governance. Some have evolved positively; some have stagnated, depending on their administration and leadership. There are also those districts that have struggled to understand and accept the participatory governance ideal or are struggling among their faculty, students, and staff to establish their roles. Shared governance has had its time to evolve - now it is time to revisit its successes and

failures and to redefine and improve it. Using the term "participatory" rather than "shared" is a beginning step to clarify this difficult concept.

The 4CS supports the strengthened role of faculty and students, particularly academic and student senates, in community college governance. The 4CS similarly supports classified staff “. . . opportunities to participate in the formulation and development of district and college policies and procedures, and in those processes for jointly developing recommendations for action by the governing board, that the governing board reasonably determines, in consultation with staff, have or will have a significant effect on staff.” [Sec. 51023.5(4)]. It should be made clear that the 4CS endorses classified senates as the representative bodies for all classified staff in professional matters other than those in the collective bargaining arena. However, the 4CS supports each district’s model of shared governance as it meets the needs of input for their classified staff and allows them an institutionalized voice in the decision-making processes at the college.

Participatory/shared governance is in the best interest of the institution and it’s students and creates and endorses a spirit of collegiality among all groups concerned with providing quality education. Shared Governance legislation has led to increased involvement of all segments of the college community as participation on committees from representative groups and has been encouraged and institutionalized.

“However, the term ‘shared governance’ implies more than information sharing; it demands from those who most frequently make the decisions (the Board of Trustees and the Administration) the belief that by giving all groups a valued and respected voice in decision-making processes, the college will be governed more effectively. Only as the Board and Administration demonstrate shared governance in its purest sense by opening up these processes and sharing them with a cross-section of all constituencies will any model of shared governance function significantly differently than that structure which currently exists.” (Perspective on Shared Governance, Butte Community College District, 1991)

Participatory governance is a responsibility and classified senates/councils, and other classified governance bodies have eagerly risen to that challenge. The 4CS strongly believes that classified staff participation is essential in providing valuable information and input because of their expertise and experience. Classified staff are involved in every area of our colleges and are committed to the belief that input from classified staff, the people in the trenches, provide essential contributions to the institution’s ability to make sound "educated" decisions with the best available information. It is also essential that support for participatory governance be recognized and practiced at the state level on councils, task forces and groups as well as at district/college levels.

The 4CS believe that the driving force behind shared governance must be first and foremost, the student. The student is our reason for being, and true “shared governance” must never lose sight that our primary mission is a successful learning environment for students.

ADOPTED: October 14, 1999