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# SENATE ROSTRUM

ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES NEWSLETTER

## THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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# In the Beginning: The Role of Community College Faculty

BETH SMITH, GROSSMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE, ASCCC PRESIDENT

**A**s we start another academic year, we finally have some additional funding to support our efforts, collaborations and partnerships that keep the system moving forward, and we renew our hope that our students will achieve their dreams. Once again, there is promise in the air, and new beginnings provide an opportunity to review an understanding of our roles as individual faculty members. The ASCCC has many “role” papers and publications for senates and groups of faculty, but finding one singularly about our profession and the role of a single faculty member is difficult because aspects of our job are hidden in a variety of places. This article will bring new attention to the basic responsibilities of every faculty member and common standards for our profession.

Faculty in community colleges have a role that is different from both K-12 teachers and university faculty. Teachers in elementary and secondary schools survive in a culture where decision making occurs at the top level and trickles to classroom. In some instances, teachers are engaged in decision making, but standards for grade level work or expectations for earning a diploma may occur at the local board of trustees or even the state superintendent of instruction. University faculty are expected to conduct research, and for that reason, often spend less time in class with students. Community college faculty land in the sweet spot where the focus is on teaching and assistance to students, and have the responsibility to develop and propose solutions for curriculum, degree requirements, and other aspects of student learning rather than have those solutions come down from top administrators. Faculty in community colleges also have responsibilities and

professional duties with respect to governance and academic matters through the academic senate which has been described in several ASCCC publications.

Many faculty who apply to work at community colleges know these differences in roles and expectations, which is why they select community college teaching as a career. We want people who make the choice to work with our students and focus on teaching and who also understand their responsibility for contributing to academic programs and success of the college. However, their role does not end at making the choice to focus on teaching and engage our students. Our faculty are also committed to one another through our further responsibilities to improve not only our own teaching but that of others, as well as to improve the overall college experience for students.

## COLLEGIAL CONSULTATION

We have a responsibility for collegial consultation, and not just the type that is spelled out in Title 5 for senate purview with academic and professional matters. Collegiality occurs when we help our colleagues understand our perspectives and experiences just as we would help students understand our course content and subject area. Luckily, our place of work is a learning environment for faculty as well as students, where learning is the goal and where mistakes will be made by well-intentioned people. As we all know, learning from mistakes takes patient and supportive teachers, and when the learning environment is a committee or department/division meeting, we focus on understanding for good decision making. Helping colleagues learn about new approaches to teaching,

the new system in the library, or challenges to students with basic skills needs are just as important as helping our students prepare for required assessments in our classes. Our profession demands that we develop ways to help each other achieve greater success in our respective assignments.

## OFFICIAL JOB DESCRIPTION AND COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

Our role as faculty is to follow our job descriptions as negotiated by our collective bargaining groups. Some faculty in the state have obligations beyond our primary assignments with students which may include committee work, service to the college, or other professional assignments. For classroom faculty, we are hired each term to teach specific courses, each of which has an official course outline of record (COR) associated with it. Each COR has been developed by faculty in one or more disciplines and then at a minimum approved by the college curriculum committee before being officially approved by the board of trustees. As a result, that course is owned by the discipline(s) that wrote it, but more importantly, it's owned by the college and board of trustees. The course is then advertised in the catalog and online to students who read the course description and enroll in the class with a general understanding of the course content, which requirements it fulfills, and if it transfers to a university. So much is riding on the integrity of the COR that all faculty teaching the course have a responsibility to abide by it. The COR serves as a contract between the college and its transfer partners and students guaranteeing the course content it describes will be addressed and evaluated.

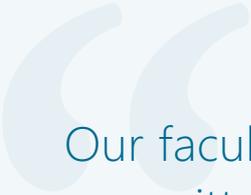
Counselors and librarians also have job descriptions that indicate the specific ways they will contribute to student learning and success. Just as classroom faculty are held to the COR, librarians and counseling faculty also have professional responsibilities to uphold in their respective realms on campus. The ASCCC has separate publications on the roles of counselors and the roles of librarians.

## SYLLABI

Each faculty member designs his or her own syllabus for the class based upon the COR and any guidance or requirements established by the department or academic senate. Given those parameters, faculty can decide to create online modules for the class, “flip” the classroom, require certain instructional materials, and design assignments and assessments. In order to help students, some departments ask all faculty teaching a particular course to use one common assignment, to use or not use particular technology, or require faculty to include some other agreed upon element of the course. Senates may ask all faculty to include certain statements in faculty syllabi in order to communicate important messages to students across campus, such as a senate policy on academic integrity. Just as the COR is a contract with the public and transfer partners, the syllabus is a contract between the teacher and each student in the class.

## PEER REVIEW

We have other obligations to our colleagues as well, including performing peer evaluations to improve the teaching and learning environment and participating



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in program review. Both of these peer review processes are designed to allow faculty to contribute to the quality of the profession as well as to the excellence of academic programs at the college. Through implementation of these processes, we strengthen the educational experience at the college for students and colleagues by using our expertise in our disciplines and our experiences with helping students learn. Our profession must maintain high standards, and the best way to energize members of the profession is with meaningful peer review. In addition, California Education Code is clear that faculty evaluations must include peer review (see §87663.c) while other elements of faculty evaluation are optional. The ASCCC has several papers on program review and a new one, approved at the plenary session in Spring 2013, on faculty evaluations.

## GRADES

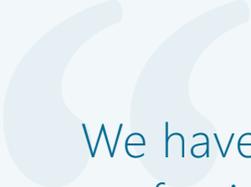
California Education Code §76224 gives faculty complete authority over grades awarded to students. Unless the faculty member is incompetent, or mistake, fraud, or bad faith can be proved, the grade assigned by the instructor of record is the official grade for the student for the class. We take this responsibility carefully and thoughtfully by ensuring that our assessment of student work aligns to the expectations stated in the class syllabus and the COR. With as much fairness as possible, we must ensure that students are treated equitably and evidence is available to demonstrate to a student why a particular grade was awarded.

## TENURE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Understanding and defending tenure and academic freedom are critical parts of what faculty must do. In order to be able to explain successfully why tenure exists or what academic freedom means when we are faced with questions from those outside of academia, we first must have faculty-wide conversations about what these critical elements of our profession grant to us. The Academic Senate has resources on both tenure and academic freedom that can be useful for faculty to read before engaging in those conversations with

family and friends who want to know why faculty should have tenure. A brief explanation of what tenure and academic freedom provide for faculty should include the fact that institutions of higher learning are also protected by tenure and academic freedom just as much as individual faculty. These necessary aspects of our profession are not simply tools created by faculty unions to allow faculty the right to say anything we want. Quite the contrary, both tenure and academic freedom exist to keep our institutions of higher education engaged in speaking the truth about controversial topics and not beholden to an agenda from a funder, a faction of the community, or other entity attempting to sway academic learning away from the facts and truths of a given discipline. Though it happens rarely, faculty with tenure can be fired, and tenure does not guarantee that faculty with documented poor performance remain employed indefinitely. Our profession needs tenure and academic freedom, and we also need to honor the responsibilities that go with speaking the truth of our disciplines.

We have the greatest profession on the planet—we see lives enriched and transformed in a positive way every day. The faculty I know regard teaching as a joyful and rewarding assignment, and our students are lucky to work with the dedicated faculty of the California community colleges. ■



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# Showing Gratitude—Recognizing Good Work

JULIE ADAMS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASCCC

**R**ecently, I travelled to Atlanta and needed to navigate my way around a new city. While I knew where I wanted to go, I was not quite sure how to get there. The young man at the hotel desk was very helpful as he assisted me every day in navigating the city with ease and confidence. As I departed the hotel on the last day, I wanted to thank him again for his assistance. However, it was his day off. Since this staff member was not available, I asked for the general manager's information so I could send a note of gratitude for how a member of his staff welcomed me to his city, shared his excitement for local businesses, and overall helped make my experience enjoyable.

As I prepared to write this article about recognizing our own faculty for doing an exceptional job, this experience helped me to reflect on the challenges individuals have in thanking people who have an influence on their lives—whether something as simple as navigating a new city or as complicated as navigating one's life. In the moment of appreciation, most people share their gratitude freely. While individual recognition of doing one's job well is very much appreciated, sharing the good work we observe with others may be more difficult. With the busy lives we lead, we are all sometimes guilty of failing to show our gratitude as openly and as widely as we should.

As senate leaders, all of you struggle to meet the needs of your students, your departments, and your campuses, while still balancing your responsibilities to your partners, families, friends, and even pets. However, you also interact each day with individuals who are doing amazing work with their students, and you recognize their contributions regularly. As I talked with the young staff member, I realized

that while people often recognize individuals for work they do daily, rarely does the recognition rise to a level where their community realizes their contributions.

Each August, the Academic Senate sends out award announcements for local senates to recognize programs or faculty on their campus. In community colleges, faculty are the foot soldiers, daily doing the job that is expected, serving our students and our community without complaint and more times than not, without recognition. Metaphorically, they direct visitors around our city, ensuring their experience is pleasant, following up with how our service can improve, and generally educating them about the benefits we offer. Where we fail, however, is in telling our story about how wonderful our faculty are. We all struggle with being too busy—too busy to stop and share gratitude, too busy to acknowledge those that make a difference, too

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busy to nominate a faculty colleague who deserves to be acknowledged for the great work he or she consistently provides to us as faculty, our students, our college, our community, and California.

Look around your department and your campus for those that quietly perform at an exceptional level. Every day you interact with individuals doing amazing work, and you as a senate leader are likewise an outstanding member of your community. The Academic Senate offers an opportunity for you to recognize your colleagues. Perhaps your department or your college acknowledges faculty accomplishments regularly, and therefore you may question the need to go through the effort to complete a nomination application, write letters, and seek approval from the local senate president in order to nominate a colleague for a statewide award. One reason to do so is that Senate recognition goes beyond your department or your campus. Academic Senate awards serve a greater purpose. The Exemplary and Hayward awards are presented before the Board of Governors, the Stanback-Stroud award is presented at the Spring Plenary Session, and all awards are shared with all 112 campuses via press releases. The Senate uses this opportunity to share with the Board of Governors the amazing work that faculty do on a regular basis. Because the Board often only receives reports about problems or complaints, every opportunity faculty has to share how their work daily contributes to student success is a win for all our campuses.

The ASCCC challenges you this year to work with others to nominate a program or faculty member—part-time or full-time—for one of our awards. You do not need to do it alone; get several colleagues to help. The requirements, including application and rubrics, are posted on the Senate website at [www.asccc.org/awards](http://www.asccc.org/awards). Do not hesitate nor waste time thinking about all the other priorities you have; your work and priorities will still be there waiting for you. The first award is due in November, so you still have time. Start the nomination now and ensure that your college's outstanding faculty and programs receive the recognition they deserve. ■

# Senate Awards

Opportunities to recognize your colleagues this academic year:

## EXEMPLARY PROGRAM AWARD

**Application Deadline: November 12, 2013**

The Exemplary Program Award, established in 1991, recognizes outstanding community college programs.

## HAYWARD AWARD

**Application Deadline: December 23, 2013**

The Hayward Award is conferred upon four faculty members annually who have been nominated by peers from their college. Named for former California Community College Chancellor Gerald C. Hayward, the award honors outstanding community college faculty who have a track record of excellence both in teaching and in professional activities and have demonstrated commitment to their students, profession, and college.

## STANBACK-STROUD DIVERSITY AWARD

**Application Deadline: February 10, 2014**

The Stanback-Stroud Diversity Award, named for former Senate President Regina Stanback-Stroud, honors faculty who have made special contributions addressing issues involving diversity.

# Democracy Commitment: ASCCC and FACCC Promote Student Engagement

DAVID MORSE, LONG BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, VICE PRESIDENT, ASCCC

RICHARD MAHON, GOVERNOR AT-LARGE, FACCC

**I**n spring 2011, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges adopted Resolution 13.03, “Democracy Commitment.” The resolution calls for three activities: that “the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges endorse “The Democracy Commitment,” that the Senate “commit to further the aims of the “The Democracy Commitment” in general,” and that “the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges produce an action-oriented guide furthering the aims of “The Democracy Commitment” for use by the California community colleges.”

Started in 2011, The Democracy Commitment (TDC) is modeled after the American Democracy Project, a movement involving four-year, public universities that is sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The co-founders of TDC as credited on the organization’s web site are Bernie Ronan of the Maricopa Community Colleges, and Brian Murphy, President of De Anza College. TDC describes itself as “a national initiative providing a platform for development and expansion of community college programs, projects and curricula aiming at engaging students in civic learning and democratic practice across the country.”<sup>1</sup> The initiative’s goal is to ensure that every graduate of an American community college has a strong education in and understanding of democracy.

The Democracy Commitment has sponsored or initiated various programs since its inception. The first signature initiative was “Engage the Election 2012,” which encouraged member institutions to hold political forums voter registration drives, and other activities to promote participation in the 2012 elections.

A follow-up initiative, “Engage the Election 2014,” encourages member institutions to present events through which faculty and students can participate in dialogue about the midterm elections. A third major initiative, “Bridging Cultures to Form a Nation: Difference, Community, and Critical Thinking,” is a three-year curriculum and faculty development project intended to promote “difference, community, and democratic thinking into transfer courses in the humanities,” “promote greater adoption of proven high-impact practices that advance important civic learning outcomes,” and “create a series of humanities-enriched professional development opportunities for community college faculty, especially adjunct faculty” ([thedemocracycommitment.org/bridging-cultures-to-form-a-nation](http://thedemocracycommitment.org/bridging-cultures-to-form-a-nation)).

At the time that the Academic Senate passed Resolution 13.03 S 11, the Democracy Commitment was a new movement. However, in the intervening two years, several California community colleges have

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the goals and origins of the Democracy Commitment, see <http://thedemocracycommitment.org>

established local chapters, including Cabrillo, De Anza, Foothill, Laney, Mt. San Antonio, Long Beach, Saddleback, Santa Monica, and Skyline colleges.

Each of these colleges has a strong local academic senate, and most of them also have a strong on-campus presence from the Faculty Association for California Community Colleges (FACCC). The connection of strong senate leadership and FACCC representation at colleges that have embraced the Democracy Commitment should come as no surprise: Both the Academic Senate and FACCC have a long history of encouraging student activism. Indeed, for several years FACCC has been a very strong supporter of the Student Senate of California Community Colleges' "March in March," a yearly demonstration and advocacy event for student leaders in Sacramento. Likewise, the Academic Senate played an instrumental role in the creation of the Student Senate, guiding and advising the SSCCC throughout its early years.

The primary mission of both the Academic Senate and FACCC is to represent faculty. However, the primary mission of faculty is to educate students, and because faculty are committed to the democratic mission of the California community colleges, finding ways to promote student democratic activism should be a natural extension of both organizations.

Although several California community colleges have established local Democracy Commitment chapters, much more could be done. Of the 112 community colleges in the state, only eleven individual colleges and four multi-college districts are listed as member institutions on the Democracy Commitment website. Academic senate leaders and FACCC members on the remaining campuses around the state might consider collaborating to establish their own local chapters that further the aims of TDC and the education of their students.

At the state level, ASCCC and FACCC frequently work in conjunction on various issues, and the two organizations will certainly continue to collaborate whenever possible to enhance the educational experiences of our students. The Academic Senate

will also continue to pursue the final resolved clause of Resolution 13.03 S11, which calls for an "action-oriented guide" that would further promote TDC.

The Democracy Commitment is an initiative with admirable goals that seek to benefit our students and our communities. The Academic Senate has formally endorsed the aims of TDC and urges local colleges to explore the possibility of joining this constructive educational movement. ■



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# Accreditation and the Academic Senate: An Ongoing Relationship

DOLORES DAVISON, Foothill College, Accreditation Committee Chair, 2012-13

PHIL SMITH, American River College, Accreditation Committee Chair, 2013-14

**T**he relationship between the Academic Senate (both locally and statewide) and accreditation is a unique one. At the local level, academic senates have a legal role in the accreditation process as outlined in Title 5 Regulation's list of academic and professional matters designated to senates ("the 10+1"), an official responsibility in the accreditation process that no other faculty constituent group is afforded. At the state level, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) has supported faculty's accreditation work since its founding, with even more pronounced involvement in accreditation training and assistance over the past 10 years. Since the senate-accreditation relationship continues to evolve, the current roles of both local senates and the ASCCC with respect to the accreditation process may not be immediately familiar to new faculty leaders or regular faculty experiencing accreditation for the first time. This article is intended as a quick refresher.

For local senates, the role of faculty in accreditation processes is defined by Title 5 Regulation as one of the 10+1 academic and professional matters. As Title 5 makes clear, local senates make recommendations regarding "faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes, including self-study and annual reports." Just as with other academic and professional matters in the 10+1, district governing boards must either rely primarily upon or mutually agree with the academic senate on faculty accreditation roles and involvement. (Note the determination of whether a board will rely primarily upon or mutually agree with the academic senate with respect to faculty roles on accreditation belongs to the interpretation

of the local college or district and is typically defined in board policy.) In a day-to-day sense, academic senates are responsible for ensuring effective and meaningful faculty participation in accreditation by participating in accreditation planning, confirming faculty to serve on accreditation committees, and interacting with evaluation teams during the team's visit. It is not unusual to have the academic senate president of a college serving as chair or co-chair of an accreditation committee, particularly the college-wide accreditation coordinating committee or one of the two standards committees which most relate to academic and professional matters, namely Standard II (instruction) or Standard IV (governance). At the 2013 ASCCC Accreditation Institute, keynote speaker Nathan Tharp, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on accreditation in the California community colleges, noted that the faculty member

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with the most accreditation information on virtually every campus he studied was the academic senate president. Because the academic senate president is required to sign all of the reports sent to the Accrediting Commission, including annual reports, it is essential that local academic senates be involved and familiar with accreditation and all that it entails.

The ASCCC has become increasingly active in its efforts to help local senates with accreditation over the past 10 years although the statewide senate has been an advocate for effective faculty participation and inclusion in accreditation processes for the past five decades. For example, a resolution from 1970 urged local senates to "... support increased participation by ethnic minorities ... on accreditation teams," while others through the 1990s and early 2000s addressed issues ranging from granting accreditation to Western Governors University (the body urged that accreditation not be offered to the school; see Resolution 02.05 (S98) and *Rostrum* October 1998) to concerns regarding the restructuring of the accreditation standards (Resolution 02.05 S02). If you enter the search term "Accreditation" in the ASCCC website's search engine, you will see 43 pages of results with papers, *Rostrum* articles, and resolutions, many of them predating ASCCC's first Accreditation Institute in 2007.

While the ASCCC had been an active proponent of faculty inclusion and participation in the accreditation process dating basically from its formation, by the mid-2000s it became apparent that the range of concerns being expressed by the colleges could not be addressed solely at the ASCCC's plenary sessions. That realization led to the formation of a standing Accreditation Committee of the ASCCC and the creation of an annual Accreditation Institute. As a result of these two changes, the ASCCC is devoting more resources than ever to accreditation support for member senates, and its accreditation efforts have become much more visible.

The Accreditation Committee, comprised of 5-7 faculty members from across the state and chaired by a member of the Executive Committee, is responsible

for implementing resolutions passed by the body at the plenary sessions that are deemed by the Executive Committee as relating to accreditation. In addition, the Accreditation Committee is responsible for the creation of the program for the Accreditation Institute, for participating in breakouts during that Institute, and for presenting materials through breakout sessions at the plenary sessions and other institutes or events as warranted. The Accreditation Institute, held each year since 2007 (and for the past two years in collaboration with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges [ACCJC]), provides faculty and others around the state with resources to assist colleges in the accreditation process. The Institute is designed to assist anyone involved in accreditation, from brand new volunteers to seasoned veterans, with information about accreditation processes and procedures. This assistance has come in a variety of forms, both during the Institute and throughout the academic year. For example, for several years one of the most pressing concerns regarding accreditation was the issue of student learning outcomes and assessment (SLOA). In response to that concern, the Academic Senate voted to create a standing committee dedicated entirely to that subject. The SLOA committee led breakouts at both the Accreditation Institute and plenary, and was involved in planning a separate session at the Curriculum Institute for Student Learning Outcomes coordinators. In 2012, when it appeared that most colleges were at least comfortable with the process and had moved on to other areas of concern, the SLOA committee was folded back into regular work of the ASCCC.

In recent years, as the focus of many colleges' accreditation processes has turned from student learning outcomes and assessment to fiscal policy, integrated planning, governance boards, and other matters of concern, the ASCCC has addressed these emerging issues through the Accreditation Institute, breakouts at the plenary sessions in the fall and spring, senate papers, and *Rostrum* articles. The involvement of the ACCJC in the Accreditation Institute over the past two years has given faculty leaders an opportunity to speak directly with the

commissioners regarding concerns and questions about the accreditation process, and reciprocally, for the ACCJC to hear from senate leaders and others about the challenges their colleges are experiencing with various accreditation reports and processes.

In addition to these resources, the ASCCC also provides assistance through its Accreditation Resource Teams. The teams, which consist of faculty experienced in a variety of areas of accreditation, “consider the problem statement developed by the local senate regarding an issue, and then create training and potential solution options adapted to the requesting college culture and student populations based upon Academic Senate positions and papers.” These visits are designed to assist colleges facing sanction or which are otherwise concerned with the processes and roles of the faculty within their own college governance structures.

From its inception, the ASCCC has taken its role as an accreditation support resource for faculty seriously. In recent years, ASCCC support for accreditation work has increased and become operationalized through the ASCCC’s standing Accreditation Committee and its yearly Accreditation Institute. This year, the ASCCC plans to refine and enhance the Accreditation Resource Teams to provide tailored service and support to colleges who need specific accreditation advice and assistance. In conclusion, we believe that the effective involvement of the Academic Senate (both local and statewide) is crucial to meaningful accreditation processes and outcomes. More information about the ASCCC’s work and positions related to accreditation can be found at [ASCCC.org](http://ASCCC.org).

*Note: A version of this article appeared earlier in the August FACCC Newsletter. ■*

## Academic Senate Events

Save the date for the 2013-14 Senate events!

### **Fall Plenary Session**

November 7-9, 2013  
Irvine Marriott

### **Spring Plenary Session**

April 10-12, 2014  
Westin San Francisco Airport

### **Accreditation Institute**

February 7-8, 2014  
Marriott La Jolla

### **Faculty Leadership Institute**

June 12-14, 2014  
Paradise Point Hotel and Spa

### **Academic Academy**

February 21-22, 2014  
Silverado Resort and Spa

# Julie's Inbox

*The Academic Senate receives many requests from the field, and most of them come through the Senate Office into the inbox of our own Executive Director Julie Adams (hence the name of this column). As you might imagine these requests vary by topic, and the responses represent yet another resource to local senates. This column will share the questions and solutions offered by the President and the Executive Committee. Please send your thoughts or questions to [julie@asccc.org](mailto:julie@asccc.org).*

*Q: Last year I heard that colleges experienced disruptions in the degree approval process when new C-ID descriptors were finalized and then added to TMCs when colleges were in the middle of the degree approval process. Is anything being done to prevent these sorts of disruptions in the future?*

*Sincerely, Darn I did not submit that to C-ID yet*

Dear Darn—

Absolutely. Discussions are planned with the Chancellor's Office to ensure that the "rules" are not changed for a college mid-process (or at least not changed without appropriate notice). All future TMCs or model curricula will not be finalized until all descriptors are finalized, ensuring we will not have these issues in the future. It's important that newly finalized descriptors be added to TMCs in a timely fashion so that the published TMC provides the field with the most accurate and current information. The Chancellor's Office template, however, should not suddenly change without notice and, effectively, impose new requirements on colleges. Colleges should have some grace period for getting their degree through the process before they are held to the requirements of an updated template. We look forward to sharing this information with the field when the details are worked out. But it should be noted that every effort is being made to ensure that these issues are minimized in the future.

Good luck! Executive Committee ■