

## Curriculum Committees and Local Senates

### A Report of the Local Senates Committee of The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Prepared by Everett J. (Bud) Hannan November, 1987

Proposed changes in Title V, Part VI of the California Administrative Code have generated a statewide examination of an interest in the composition and structure of curriculum committees and their relationship to the local academic senate and administration. The purpose of this paper is to report the results of a curriculum committee questionnaire distributed by the Local Senates Committee in early 1987. Seventy-five colleges responded to the questionnaire.

Questions to be examined are as follows: What is the relationship of the curriculum committee to its local senate? What is the composition of members of curriculum committees? Who chairs them? If faculty chair their curriculum committee, what is the level of institutional support? What changes are being contemplated by the local senates as a response to the statewide effort to strengthen the role of faculty in their curriculum committees? How satisfied are the senates with the composition and structure of their curriculum committees?

#### Local Senates and Curriculum Committees

Section 55002, subsection (a.1.) In proposed Title V changes, states:

The college and/or district curriculum committee shall be established by mutual agreement of the administration and the academic senate. The committee shall either be a committee of the academic senate or a committee which shall include faculty and may otherwise be comprised in any way that is mutually agreeable to the college and/or district and the academic senate.

Faculty members participate in all curriculum committees reported by the 75 senates. The faculty are the reported majority on all but 5 such committees. But the structure of such committees implies a different role for faculty centered around two curriculum committee "models": (1) curriculum committees as subcommittees of the senate and (2) curriculum committees as college advisory committees.

#### Subcommittees of the Senate

Twenty-seven senates reported that their curriculum committee is a subcommittee of their senate. Such "subcommittees" were defined as "established by the constitution or by-laws of the senate". Senates in these cases define the role that their faculty have in the curriculum committee. All but one of the constitutionally based curriculum committees have one or more administrators on their committees.

Two distinct patterns emerge within curriculum committees established by the senate. First, 11 out of 27 such senates reported that their committees have only one administrator. **In all such cases the administrator had no vote.** The pattern clearly evidenced an almost exclusive role for faculty in respect to the business of the curriculum.

Second, 15 out of the 27 senates reported more than one administrator (range 3-11) on their committee. **In such cases, all but one committee included the administrators as voting members.** Such committees were much more likely to have an administrator as the chair. The

pattern was that of greater collegial interaction with administrators in curriculum matters.

All but one of these senates reporting the curriculum committee as a subcommittee of the senate also reported satisfaction with their current structure. All but two such senates were clearly contemplating no changes in the structure of their curriculum committee as it currently exists. Whether as exclusive faculty domain, or an interactive one, it is clear from the study that curriculum committees established by the constitution or by-laws of their senates are perceived to meet the intent of section 55002, subsection (a.1).

### **College Advisory Committees**

There is a range and variety in the composition and the function of college advisory committees. For example, in 43 of the 48 cases these committees are chaired by an administrator—generally the chief instructional officer. Nine of the 48, however, are chaired by faculty; and the remaining 6 colleges are chaired by the faculty or administrator, via election by the committee or a co-chair arrangement. Administrators on such committees generally have a vote (in all but three cases). Four of the 5 committees in which administrators have an equal or greater membership than faculty evidence the college advisory model. Membership ranges from an 11:17 faculty-to-administrator ratio to ratios like 8:0 (the average ratio for all 75 committees is about 2.6 faculty for each administrator).

The greatest percentage of reported senate dissatisfaction is generated by college advisory curriculum committee structures chaired by administrators (10 of the 33 senates report dissatisfaction) and by co-chaired or advisory committees that elect their chairs (3 of 6 reported dissatisfaction).

All 9 of the senates that report a faculty chair of their college curriculum advisory committee reports satisfaction with their curriculum committee. Nevertheless, they are anticipating changes in those committees (3 of the 8); as are the committees that are co-chaired or elected (4 of the 6) and the committees chaired by administrators (16 of the 33).

*Information on district curriculum committees indicated that such committees are more generally advisory models, usually chaired by administrators.*

**Subcommittees of the senate seem to generate a much greater sense of faculty control over the curriculum process.** This appears to be true whether or not the senate defines curriculum as the faculty's exclusive domain or an activity to be collegially shared with administrators.

The college advisory model is subject to a far greater range of responses and seems to reflect a greater range of structures and processes. Where faculty control is most evident, as is the case for advisory committees that are chaired by faculty, there is a greater degree of satisfaction on a par with the satisfaction reported of the college using a subcommittee of the senate model.

### **Who chairs the Curriculum Committee?**

Twenty-seven of the senates report that their curriculum committee requires a faculty chair; 7 senates report a committee that is co-chaired; thirty-six colleges report that an administrator chairs the curriculum committee. The CIO is the usual chair under these circumstances. In all but 2 instances the administrator is appointed by the college president or by virtue of organizational tradition. Curriculum subcommittees of the senate are chaired, in all but three instances, by faculty. Faculty chairs are usually appointed by their senates or, more often, elected either by the general faculty or by their curriculum committee.

Eight senates report a move toward establishing a faculty member as the chair of their curriculum committee. Seven colleges report a move toward a faculty co-chair position. This serves to indicate a moderate institutional response to Academic Senate efforts to strengthen the role of faculty in the curriculum process. This trend should continue to be monitored in the 1987-88 academic year.

Institutional support for faculty chairs is a significant issue. Of the 34 colleges reporting a faculty chair, or co-chair, as an institutional expectation, only 11 indicate that reassigned time (or a stipend) is provided. Twenty percent is the model average for reassigned time in such instances. Clerical assistance is generally provided by the chief instructional office. It remains to be seen the extent to which institutional support (or the lack thereof) might affect efforts to strengthen the faculty role. **Most of the colleges reporting institutional support (reassigned time) also report that they have curriculum subcommittees of the senate.** There is a relationship, yet to be studied, between institutional support, in the form of reassigned time, and the collegiality that is structurally implied by senate-based curriculum structures.

### **Conclusion**

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, in "The Role of Faculty in the Curriculum Process", states:

**Ideally, the curriculum committee will be a subcommittee of the academic senate. This subcommittee, which might be appointed by the senate or elected from the faculty at large, could include administrators and/or students in either voting or nonvoting capacities. Having the curriculum committee under the aegis of the senate will ensure the central role of faculty in the development and approval of the curriculum.**

The Local Senates Committee study of curriculum committees seems to indicate an empirical level of support for our Academic Senate position. Senates that adopt this position are much more confident that their faculty is engaged in the curriculum as it should be. Faculty-chaired college advisory curriculum committees enjoy a certain degree of confidence. However, curriculum committees that are subcommittees of the senate enjoy the greater confidence of their senates and report the greater level of institutional support.

### **Recommendation**

Local Senates should examine their constitutions and by-laws toward the goal of establishing their curriculum committee as a subcommittee of the senate. The Academic Senate should continue to work with local senates toward the promotion and facilitation of the Subcommittee of the Senate Curriculum Model.