Participatory Governance

Introduction

Governance at College of the Redwoods is a deliberate process which seeks out creative and constructive ideas and perspectives of this community of learners. It enables active, responsible participation of affected parties (which could be functional units and/or employee groups) in the decision-making process by providing meaningful opportunities to introduce, analyze, discuss and provide input or recommend courses of action before a final decision is made. Governance at CR is a process of participatory governance where decisions are made at the broadest possible level of the organizational structure.

Principles Embodied in Governance

1. Participatory Governance recognizes that the mission should drive governance and accepts the authority vested in the Board and the Administration. It also recognizes that such authority will be exercised after due consideration of the wisdom emanating from the participatory governance process.

2. Participatory Governance is most effective when individuals and groups can express their opinions and engage in discourse freely and without fear of retaliation. Thus, it is the responsibility of all parties to conduct themselves and act in a manner that is consistent with this principle.

3. Participatory Governance is a process that allows for many divergent views, opinions and perspectives to be brought forward and discussed. However, Participatory Governance will be effective only if all parties agree to respect the final decision and do their part in implementing it, though they may disagree with the decision itself.

4. Participatory Governance recognizes that the participation of affected constituent groups should be real and meaningful and that this participation should be based on the principle that each group has the largest influence in matters that concern it most. As an example, according to this principle, faculty will have the largest influence when it is a matter of curriculum (or the areas mandated by AB 1725) while student services staff will have the largest influence when it is a matter of matriculation.

5. Participatory Governance recognizes that in addition to the involvement of members of affected groups or functional units, the need for establishing regular communication between and among the representative bodies and seeking their participation as appropriate.

6. Participatory Governance recognizes that governance involves implementation of a combination of policies, procedures, guidelines and practices. It is recognized that the deliberate and formal process of participatory governance is appropriate for the first two while informal, and collegial, consultation is appropriate for the later two.

7. Participatory Governance recognizes the necessity and importance of participation of involved parties in the initial selection of supervisors and administrators and subsequently in providing feedback in the evaluation process of supervisors and administrators.
8. Participatory governance is most effective when decision-making is distributed throughout the organization so that decisions can be made at the broadest level of the organizational structure and when roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority of functional units and committees are clearly delineated.

9. Participatory Governance recognizes that while there is the presumption that the administration will abide by the advice and recommendation of the constituents there will be instances where it may choose to disregard such advice or recommendation. In such cases it is incumbent upon the administration to provide a rationale for the decision. It also recognizes that, in exceptional circumstances, it may become necessary to take action affecting institutional constituencies without the full benefit from the shared governance process. In such cases, the representative bodies will be informed as soon as possible and will be provided an opportunity to provide feedback.

10. Participatory Governance requires periodic assessment of the process itself. It is expected that the process will be evaluated at least once a year with the express objective of making it better.

11. Participatory Governance recognizes that there are many administrative decisions made in CR that do not fall under the purview of this process—for example, developing the facilities master plan is a matter of participatory governance while implementing the plan is not.

12. Effective participatory governance requires that constituents and functional units adopt processes and practices that allow for decision-making in a timely manner.

College of the Redwoods hereby establishes a model for Participatory Governance to facilitate broad participation and involvement in college decision-making by all members of the college community, including students, faculty, classified staff and administrators. A major role of governance for the college must rest with the President, directly accountable and responsible to the Board of Trustees for the educational leadership and effective management of the college's human, physical and fiscal resources. In keeping with the spirit of the Education Code of the State of California, the success of participatory governance at College of the Redwoods depends upon the levels of cooperation and trust attained, the values shared, and the consensus achieved among all college constituencies. The goal of the participatory governance process is to bring together all constituent groups in order to facilitate the development of college-wide recommendations.

Participatory governance at CR must also function harmoniously with, but separate from, collective bargaining laws and the negotiated agreements between the respective employee bargaining units and the Redwoods Community College District. The California School Employees Association (CSEA) and the College of the Redwoods Faculty Organization (CRFO) represent the college classified staff and the faculty, respectively, in all matters pertaining to hours, wages, and working conditions. The Academic Senate also has rights and responsibilities that are defined by AB1725 (commonly referred to as the 10 + 1) and reflected in District Board Policy. The participatory governance model should be one that functions within:

- the mandates of AB 1725, the Education Code, and Title V of the Code of Regulations
- the Collective Bargaining Agreement(s), and
- the policies of the Board of Trustees of the Redwoods Community College District.