PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

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 College of the Redwoods (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 203. 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.

Vision/Mission/Values

Vision
College of the Redwoods is a learning community where lives are transformed.

Mission
College of the Redwoods puts student success first by providing outstanding developmental, career technical, and transfer education. The College partners with the community to contribute to the economic vitality and lifelong learning needs of its service area. We continually assess student learning, institutional performance and practices to improve upon the programs and services we offer.
Values

Student Success and Access: We put students first, ensuring that student learning, advancement, and access are pivotal to all we do.

Educational Excellence and Innovation: We value ongoing and systematic planning and evaluating methods that move us towards excellence.

Honoring Diversity: We value all members of our community and strive to create a nurturing, honest, open environment that allows diversity to thrive.

Participatory Governance: We value ethical behavior and strive to create a culture where all students, staff, faculty and administrators engage in an inclusive, ongoing and self-reflective decision making.

Environmental Awareness: We value the environment and recognize the need to minimize our impacts upon it.

Community Development: We value the economic and intellectual development of the communities we serve.

Supportive Culture: We strive to create a supportive, problem-solving culture, and we recognize the proven usefulness of an interest-based approach (IBA) for achieving trust, cooperation and effective problem solving.

Accreditation Standards

Redwoods Community College District is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), the two-year higher education division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Governance, as defined in these accreditation standards, supports institutional effectiveness by requiring processes in which ethical and broad-based leadership:

- guide the accomplishment of the mission, and
- promote ongoing dialogue focused on continuous improvement.

Governance is addressed in two components of the accreditation standards. Standard IV includes these statements most relevant to this document:

- governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and chief administrator.
- the institution establishes and implements a written policy providing for faculty, staff, administrator, and student participation in decision-making processes. The policy specifies the manner in which individuals bring forward ideas from their constituencies and work together on appropriate policy, planning, and special-purpose bodies.

These accreditation standards provide a mandate for collaborative decision making and ongoing cooperation in decision making among the components of the District.
Value of Participatory Governance

Participatory governance is a process and structure designed to enable those who work and study in an academic institution to share the responsibility for planning and guiding the direction of the institution and for the implementation of recommendations and decisions. While decisions are not always based on majority rule, participatory governance shares the democratic belief in the inherent equality and dignity of persons, and the goal of promoting mutual benefit and individual liberty through an open deliberative process. It is this process when embraced by participants that can lead to effective governance and can result in an environment of innovation, respect, collaboration, and collegiality.

Active service in participatory governance requires a significant expenditure of time and effort, both during, and in addition to, regularly assigned working hours. Substantial faculty and staff involvement is critical to the success of this endeavor. Each member of the college community belongs to one or more of the college constituent groups and has the responsibility to actively participate in the participatory governance process. This responsibility may be a leadership role or a representative role, in which one may be required to attend meetings, report information and collect input, or as a general college member it may be to communicate questions, concerns and opinions to one’s representatives.

Regardless of a member’s role, they may be asked to serve on committees or task forces and they have the responsibility to keep informed about the issues facing their constituent group.

Whatever the member’s role, it is through active involvement by all members in the participatory government process that effective governance will occur.

Implementation of Participatory Governance at CR

The College and its governance groups strive to put into practice the spirit and principles of participatory governance. Effective participatory governance is a partnership between and among those who are charged with making recommendations and those who are held accountable for outcomes. An inclusive governance structure enables members of the college community to participate in developing recommendations for consideration by the Board of Trustees.

Through mechanisms of participatory governance, the knowledge and experience of committed individuals and organizations will be molded into better decisions than any individual could make alone. In addition, there is a greater likelihood that participants will understand, embrace, and faithfully execute these jointly-developed decisions. Toward this end, it is appropriate that each individual and each constituent group within the Redwoods Community College District make a commitment to the success of our students, our mission, and the governance process by subscribing to a common set of standards within the participatory governance process.

The participatory governance process at College of the Redwoods shall be guided by our commitments to the following standards:

1. We hold as our first priority in each decision the best interests of students and the provision of the highest quality programs and services.
2. We recognize that we are mutually dependent upon one another to perform our respective roles. The Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, support staff, and students all play critical roles; none of us can be successful without the support of others.

3. We affirm that each of us who fulfills a role also has value because of the knowledge and experience we contribute to making enlightened decisions. Our primary objective will be to make the best decision.

4. We strive to be honest, open, candid, and tolerant; to expect and cultivate the same behavior from all others in the process; and to refrain from words or behavior that either personally demean another participant, or discount his or her contribution or legitimate role.

5. We refrain from making decisions in a unilateral and authoritarian manner.

6. We respect the ultimate legal authority of another person or body to make the decision, with the expectation that there will be an attempt to understand and incorporate the reasoning and perspectives of the various parties of interest, and with the expectation that there will be a good-faith attempt to gain consensus about the decision.

7. We guard against tendencies of institutional, group, and personal self-interest that can divert the focus from making the best decision.

8. We make our positions known to others as clearly and explicitly as possible, and to make every effort to resolve conflict within the shared governance framework.

9. We consider commitments of time and resources as a cost of governance that should not detract from our fundamental role of providing direct instruction and services to students.

10. We accept personal and group responsibility for the development of trust and communication.

The intent of AB 1725 and the accreditation standards is actualized in such a spirit of collaboration. Functionally, the process includes a system of committee meetings and activities designed to solve challenges at levels closest to the staff and work units affected and to provide the President with assistance in preparing plans, processes, and policies.

These processes work because members of the College governance, advisory, and operational groups and administrative staff agree that shared responsibilities are important and are to be protected through adherence to the following mutual agreements:

- All members agree to:
  - Work for the greater good of our students.
  - Use analytical skills, creativity, and expertise to further District long-range goals, effective day-to-day functioning, and students’ well-being.

- Fulfill group member responsibilities through:
o Attendance at meetings
o Clear articulation of constituent needs
o Function as a team member with other members of the group
o Follow-through on tasks
o Report meeting outcomes back to constituent groups
• Work toward common understanding and consensus in an atmosphere of respect.
• Support the implementation of recommendations once group consensus is reached.
• Welcome change and innovation.

In turn, the President agrees to support the work of District groups by making the commitment that members will have:
• Flexibility and resources needed to accomplish assigned tasks
• Shared responsibility for outcomes
• Praise and recognition for their work
• Support for change and innovation
• Access to leadership opportunities

Relationship of College Constituency Groups: Roles of Board, President, Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Students

The College has developed individualized processes to generate, review, and implement recommendations on the academic and professional matters defined in law and regulation. However, when the implementations of recommendations impact the College as a whole, these recommendations are presented at the College Council. After being reviewed and considered by this group, recommendations flow to the President and Board of Trustees or return to the originating group for clarification. All groups retain the right to communicate directly with the Board of Trustees.

Critical to the integrity of the College governance structure is that each member of the community understands the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of each constituent group in the governance process.

Members of the College have the authority and responsibility to make recommendations in matters appropriate in scope. The scope for each constituent group outlined below is derived from several sources: the Government Code of California, California Code of Regulations Board Policy, and College practices and procedures.

Role of the Board of Trustees

Trustees are guardians of the public’s trust and are accountable to all citizens of the District. As described in the previous section of this document, the Board’s primary responsibility is to establish District policies that align with the minimum standards set by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

The Board of Trustees, as elected representatives of the community, is the final voice in the District subject to the laws and appropriate regulations of the State Legislature and State
Chancellor’s Office. The Board ensures that this mission and vision will be accomplished by assigning responsibilities to the President. In this way, the Board remains outside the operations of the District.

As a legislative body, the Board of Trustees conducts deliberations and actions openly within the realm of public scrutiny consistent with Government Code Section 54953, also known as the Ralph M. Brown Act. Minutes are prepared for all actions taken by the Board of Trustees to serve as the District’s public record.

Every regular Board meeting provides an opportunity for the public to address the Trustees on any item of interest to citizens within the jurisdiction of the Board. No action, however, can be taken on an issue unless it has first been noticed on the Board agenda. In response to unagendized public comments, therefore, Board members may:

- Request clarification from those making public comments;
- Request staff to provide factual information on the comments being presented;
- Request staff to report back to the Board on the subject of comment at a later meeting; or
- Direct staff to place the matter on a future agenda.

Exceptions to the requirement for open meetings occur when the Board confers in private for consideration of or to confer with:

- the appointment, employment, evaluation, discipline or dismissal of an employee;
- charges brought against an employee by another;
- national or public security;
- legal counsel regarding litigation;
- student disciplinary actions;
- real property transactions;
- District representatives within the scope of collective bargaining;
- honorary degrees or gifts from anonymous donors; or
- any time as current law allows.

Items to be discussed in such a closed session are disclosed in open session through the printed and public Board agenda. Following a closed session, the Board reconvenes in open session and announces any action taken in closed session and the vote or abstentions of its members. Trustees do not disclose personnel, collective bargaining, or other discussions prohibited by law.

**Role of District President/Superintendent**

The President is the administrative agent of the Board of Trustees and, as such, is the only employee responsible directly to the Board. The President is accountable for the operation of the District and for providing policy recommendations to the Board.

The President has the right to accept, reject, or modify recommendations from the College Council. When the President rejects or modifies a recommendation from the College Council, he/she informs that group of the objections to their recommendation. The Academic Senate, CRFO, CSEA, Managers Council and ASCR retain the right to present their comments on the President’s recommendation directly to the Board of Trustees.
**Role of Faculty**

Faculty members perform duties as instructors, librarians, or counselors in areas for which they possess appropriate qualifications; implement activities based on applicable recommendations and District/College goals; perform contractually identified professional responsibilities; and provide advice and recommendations regarding relevant policies and procedures through active participation on committees, councils, and task forces.

Full-time and part-time faculty members at the College are represented in governance by an Academic Senate. As per Board Policy 203 “Responsibilities of the Academic Senate,” in the following areas the Board delegates authority and responsibility to the Academic Senate for making recommendations to the Board. In making decisions in these areas, the Board will rely primarily upon the advice and judgment of the Academic Senate:

1. Curriculum, including establishing prerequisites and placing courses within disciplines
2. Degree and certificate requirements
3. Grading policies
4. Standards or policies regarding student preparation or success
5. Faculty qualifications, including equivalencies, internships, and the placement of courses in disciplines for the purpose of establishing minimum qualifications
6. Decisions to offer tenure
7. Policies for faculty professional development activities

In these areas the recommendations of the Senate will normally be accepted, and only in exceptional circumstances and for compelling reasons will the recommendations not be accepted. If a recommendation is not accepted, the Board or its representative, upon written request of the Academic Senate, will communicate its reasons in writing within ten working days.

In the following areas the Board or its representatives will reach mutual agreement with the Academic Senate, and such agreement will be expressed either by written resolution, administrative regulation, board policy, or other board action:

1. Educational program development, including both the initiation and elimination of programs
2. College governance structures as related to faculty roles
3. Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes including self-study and annual reports
4. Processes for program review
5. Processes for institutional planning and budget development
6. Other academic and professional matters as mutually agreed upon between the Board and the Academic Senate

In these areas, when agreement cannot be reached between the Board and the Academic Senate, existing policy shall remain in effect unless continuing with such policy exposes the district to legal liability or causes substantial fiscal hardship. In cases where there is no existing policy, or
in cases where the exposure to legal liability or substantial fiscal hardship requires existing policy to be changed, the Board will act, after a good faith effort to reach agreement, only for compelling legal, fiscal, or organizational reasons. In those cases, upon written request of the Academic Senate, the Board will provide a written rationale to the Academic Senate within ten working days.

In addition to the specific responsibilities noted above, the Academic Senate is responsible, after consultation with the President or his or her designee, for making faculty appointments to all committees, task forces, or other groups dealing with academic and professional matters.

Full-time and part-time faculty members within the District are represented in collective bargaining by CRFO, which operates under a contract negotiated and approved by its members. The two bodies that represent faculty are compatible; the Academic Senate is responsible for professional and academic matters, while the CRFO responds to negotiable matters such as salary, benefits, and working conditions.

Role of Classified Staff

Classified staff members include College employees in a wide range of positions including administrative assistants, clerks, custodians, and grounds workers. Classified staff members are provided with opportunities to participate in the formulation and development of recommendations as well as in the processes for developing recommendations that have or will have a significant effect on their work.

Classified staff members are represented by the CSEA. This collective bargaining unit conducts elections to appoint classified staff to College governing councils in the areas that have or will have a significant effect on staff and that are outside the scope of collective bargaining. Prior to the Board of Trustees taking action on such matters, classified staff are provided with the opportunity to participate in the formulation of recommendations through committee participation in areas that affect them. The Board gives every reasonable consideration to recommendations and opinions of staff.

Role of Students

Students are the reason the College exists: Students learn through participation in and completion of approved courses and involvement in college life activities. Students are represented by an Associated Student College of the Redwoods (ASCR) organization composed of an elected Student Senate. The student government organization operates in accordance with its own constitution and bylaws and is responsible for appointing student representatives to serve on College councils and committees. In their role representing all students, they offer opinions and make recommendations to the administration of the College and to the Board of Trustees with regard to policies and procedures that have or will have a significant effect on students. Those areas are specifically defined as:

- Grading policies
- Codes of student conduct
- Academic disciplinary policies
Curriculum development
Courses or programs which should be initiated or discontinued
Processes for institutional planning and budget development
Standards and policies regarding student preparation and success
Student services planning and development
Students fees within the authority of the District to adopt
Any other District and College policy, procedure, or related matter that the District Board of Trustees determines will have a significant effect on students

Generally, the Board of Trustees shall not take action on a matter having a significant effect on students unless they have been provided with an opportunity to participate in the recommendation process. The Board of Trustees ensures that recommendations and positions developed by students are given every reasonable consideration. Similarly, the Academic Senate will consult with their counterpart ASCR prior to making recommendations that impact students’ interests.

Role of Administrators and Management Staff

The constituency body of administrators and management staff are held accountable to provide effective leadership for and support of faculty and staff in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of College activities while maintaining compliance with state regulations, laws, and College policies.

Structure of Participatory Governance

Participatory governance at College of the Redwoods relies on advisory committees, each concerned with functions critical to the well-being of the college community. The President chairs College Council. College Council is assisted by information gathered by many segments of the college. Other governance and representative groups at the college include:

- Academic Senate (Full-time and Part-time Faculty)
- Administrative Cabinet (Management Team)
- Managers Council
- California State Employees Association (CSEA) (Permanent Full-time & Part-time Classified)
- College of the Redwoods Faculty Organization (CRFO) (Full-time & Part-time Faculty)
- Student Senate/Associated Students of CR (ASCR) (Students)

Operating Agreements for Groups

Operating agreements outline the rules of conduct, desired behaviors, delegation of authority, and the roles and responsibilities of committee members. Some groups may develop specific operating agreements. Following are overall operating agreements for all CR groups.

1. All members of District groups understand that they attend meetings to represent constituent groups at a College. In this role, members are responsible to serve as a conduit for information and the catalyst for discussion on topics raised and within the constituent group.
These topics include, but are not limited to, the specific areas outlined in state law and regulation.

2. Team members are committed to their group’s charge and to agreed-upon norms for operating in District groups. In the first fall meeting, each governance group will:
   - Distribute and discuss the group’s charge and reporting structure to ensure the group members understand their relationship in the Colleges’ governance structure
   - Develop norms for working as a team
   - Develop operating agreements for determining recommendations
   - Review or establish task-specific operating agreements, if needed

3. Team members are committed to regular attendance in accordance with their contractual obligations and understand that matters will be acted upon irrespective of absent members.

4. A record of each meeting is distributed and posted on the District website.

5. Recommendations from all groups are forwarded to the President. The chairs are responsible for tracking the progress of those recommendations and providing feedback to the group on the approval, rejection, or modification of the recommendations. All College consultative bodies are expected to conduct their work efficiently and provide recommendations to the President on a timely basis. Failure to provide recommendations in a reasonable period of time will result in the President exercising his delegated authority to act independently for the good of the District.

6. It is everyone’s responsibility to work toward achieving the Mission, Vision, and Strategic Goals of the College. Additionally, the members and chairs of committees are responsible for ensuring a continuous flow of communication regarding decision making from the College President, the College Council, committees, constituency groups, and the campus at large.

7. A self-assessment of group effectiveness will be conducted annually.

Reference: Education Code Section 70902(b)(7); Title 5, Sections 53200 et seq; 51023.5; 51023.7; Accreditation Standard IV.A.2, IV.A.5

Approved: 11/01/2011