

Board of Trustees President Petrides and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the District Academic Senate, we would like to invite you and another board member to attend part of the upcoming District Academic Senate meeting on Monday Sept 11th. We would like this to be an opportunity for the Senate and the Board to engage in meaningful dialogue, especially as related to participatory governance structures and the recent changes to the chancellor's search procedures.

As was highlighted in the last board meeting during the board self-evaluation agenda item, members of the board have not received onboarding and may not have an understanding of the role and purview of the District Academic Senate, how it is different from AFT, and what our own board policies dictate about that relationship. To this end, we would like to propose to also use a Board study session or retreat to engage with the board around the role of District Academic Senate and participatory governance. I want to be clear that while all district faculty Academic Senate leadership was involved in crafting this letter and accurately represents the sentiments of faculty leadership, it is not an official statement on behalf of the senates or faculty bodies.

As related to participatory governance, District Academic Senate has purview over areas that are commonly known as 10+1, as outlined below:

1. Curriculum including establishing prerequisites and placing courses within disciplines
2. Degree and certificate requirements
3. Grading policies
4. Educational program development
5. Standards or policies regarding student preparation and success
6. District and college governance structures, as related to faculty roles
7. Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes, including self-study and annual reports
8. Policies for faculty professional development activities
9. Processes for program review
10. Processes for institutional planning and budget development
11. Other academic and professional matters as are mutually agreed upon between the governing board and the academic senate.

There are a few Board Policies that I would like to cite for your reference that are directly related to the role of the Academic Senate and the Board:

Per BP [2.08.11](#)

The Board recognizes the Academic Senate as the official body representing faculty in participatory governance (Title 5, 53200) and the "the right of Academic Senates to assume primary responsibility for making recommendations in the areas of curriculum and academic standards". In academic and professional matters, the Board will rely primarily on faculty expertise through the established Academic Senate processes.

Per [BP2.05.6](#)

The Board or its designees will consult collegially with the Academic Senate when adopting policies and procedures. The Board will rely primarily on faculty expertise on academic and professional matters

as listed above through the established Academic Senate processes. The Academic Senate will consult collegially with the administration of the college and/or district.

Per [BP2.05.9](#)

The recommendations of the Academic Senate will normally be accepted, and only in exceptional circumstances and for compelling reasons will the recommendation not be accepted. If a recommendation is not accepted, the Board or its designee, upon request of the Senate, shall promptly communicate its reasons in writing to the Senate. The reasons will be based upon a clear and substantive rationale which puts the decision in an accurate, appropriate, and relevant context.

In order to clear up some apparent confusion, I also want to provide for your reference a link to the newly updated [ACCJC Accreditation Standards](#). Section 4 of the Accreditation Standards speak directly to the role of the governing board and the board is evaluated against and held to those standards.

As related to the chancellor search procedures changes allowing for the Board of Trustees to consider candidates whose names were not forwarded by the search committee that were adopted at the last meeting over the effusive objections of the faculty senate leadership in the district, which represents all of the colleges, I would like to outline and reiterate our concerns.

We object to the change of allowing the board the authority to interview semifinalists whose names were not forwarded by the committee. This change serves only to diminish and undermine the role of the search committee in this critically important process of selecting a permanent chancellor, and contributes to a perception of the Board as completely lacking transparency. The adoption of this change at this juncture has led to the perception of the upcoming chancellor search process as tainted, unfair, and undermining participatory governance. We have already had faculty at one campus state that they feel that engaging in the chancellor search process will be pointless, and other faculty have shared that they feel that the board has enacted this policy change to allow it to engage in “backroom dealings” and have “rigged the process.”

We also fear that the changes and public perception of those changes will have a negative impact on the chancellor pool, as potential candidates may see the district as too contentious and the potential to be hired through a tainted process may be too high. In addition, if we want to actually engage in anti-racist practices and promote leadership at all levels that is representative of the students that we are serving, these are exactly the types of practices that have historically privileged white folks (especially men), so this new policy is actually antithetical to equity and justice

A chancellor that is chosen through a process that does not honor the search committee selection will be seen as illegitimate. We also conducted our own review of other California Community Colleges in multi-college districts and Bay Area colleges that have engaged in a Chancellor Search in the last two years, and found no evidence of other districts maintaining the same policy. I would also like to point out that, though the suggestion for the chancellor search change may have come from the [CCLC CEO document](#) (and was not stated as a rousing endorsement, but as a possible option), per the same document, in the same section, they provide strong cautionary words that speak to this:

The board should exercise caution in considering for final interviews those candidates originally rejected by the search committee. While committees can miss good candidates, such a step risks

alienating members of the committee with whom the board and new CEO must work (pg 14, paragraph 3 of The Final Evaluation).

While the board has the important responsibility of selecting a permanent chancellor, this approach drastically undermines the participatory governance in which we have prided ourselves in developing in this district, in which the voices of all constituents are considered in important processes like this one, and is already alienating potential committee members. It also, I venture to add, undermines the trust and confidence of the public and the SMCCCD employees in the board itself.

Our goals in this conversation with members of the Board are the following:

- Discuss with members of the Board why the Senate construes this change as a failure of participatory governance
- Ensure that members of the Board understand the potential impact of not having faculty participate on the search committee and their grounds for declining to participate
- Negotiate changes to the language adopted at the August 23 Board of Trustees meeting

Ideally, the Board would consider a change to the newly adopted changes to remove the option for “The Board of Trustees [to] retain the right to consider one or more candidates whose names may not have been forwarded to the Board and will notify the Committee of their rationale.”

Failing this, we would like to see a commitment for the Board to consult with the search committee prior to considering any additional candidates whose names were not forwarded.

If the Board insists on continuing with the previously approved language, we would appreciate if the Board could:

- Provide examples of procedures where this is part of a chancellor’s search at the California Community College level.
- Give substantial reasons why this practice is superior to alternative practices that more effectively honor and engage in participatory governance

Although the board may only have one employee, that one employee oversees almost 1700 other district employees, most of whom are also county residents and local voters. Every one of those employees has a stake in the selection of the next chancellor, and procedures that honor and trust the work of the selection committee to do its job are essential to maintain.

Our ultimate goal is to develop and facilitate increased understanding and communication between our respective governance bodies. We look forward to hearing from you and hope that you are able to attend the upcoming DAS meeting.

Thank you,

Arielle Smith
District Academic Senate President