

Participatory Governance Evaluation (2024-2025)

8 May 2025

According to our charge, College of Marin's Governance Review Council is responsible for “conduct[ing] an evaluation of the governance system annually” in order to ensure that:

- “the College actively maintains its participatory governance system,”
- “committees fulfil their charges effectively,”
- “the system’s processes are open, transparent, and equitable.”

This semester, the GRC conducted an anonymous survey of those serving on PGS committees. The survey achieved a nearly 65% response rate, with at least 50% response rate within each of the 10 PGS committees. All constituencies--students, classified professionals, faculty, and administrators—were invited to share their thoughts on their experiences with their committee(s). We appreciate all the responses we received in the survey, as they help us better fulfill our responsibilities in maintaining our system of shared governance.

Based on the feedback, we have identified key strengths and concerns regarding our PGS below (pp. 1-2) as well as both system-wide and committee-specific recommendations included toward end of the document (pp. 2-4).

Key Strengths

1. **Commitment to improvement.** Overall, many respondents seem genuinely interested in improving their committees.
2. **Meetings.** Most committees meet according to schedule and frequently enough, with 82.5% of respondents indicating their committee “almost always” meets as scheduled.
3. **Leadership.** Several committees highlighted effective leadership (e.g. PLC, TPC, GRC) with positive comments noting clear facilitation, inclusiveness, and good communication.
4. **Collaboration.** Several committees received praise for collegial, collaborative, and efficient environments (e.g. PLC, GRC).
5. **Dedication:** Several committees commended their members for their dedication to the work despite challenges (e.g. GRIT, PRAC).
6. **Representation.** Several committees were praised for having good representation from the various constituent groups (e.g. PLC, GRC, College Council).
7. **Specific project completion.** Several committees demonstrate the ability to complete specific projects successfully (e.g. FSPC, IEC).
8. **In-person meetings.** A number of respondents stated that in-person meetings are run effectively, more so than Zoom meetings.

Key Concerns

1. **Alignment with charges.** Most committees have concerns that their work does not fully align with their charge (e.g. CTEC, FSPC, TPC, College Council). This misalignment creates confusion about committee purposes and responsibilities.
2. **Impact.** Many respondents express concerns that their recommendations aren't meaningful, valued, or acted upon (e.g. PRAC, TPC, CTEC, and GRIT). There is often no clear "closing of the loop" to show how committee work influences decisions.
3. **Transparency.** Multiple committees note a lack of transparency, particularly in funding processes or decision-making (e.g. PRAC, IEC). Members often do not understand how decisions are made or implemented or what role their recommendations play.
4. **Leadership selection and continuity.** Many committees report confusion about how chairs are selected, inconsistent election practices, or long-standing leadership without rotation. Moreover, several committees have experienced a significant disruption in leadership this year (e.g. GRIT, GRC) or a lack of change over a long amount of time (e.g. FSPC). Very few committees appear to have regular elections.
5. **Communication.** Communication is problematic at multiple levels: within committees (e.g. CTEC), among committees (e.g. GRC), and between committees and the broader college community (e.g. EPC).
6. **Workload.** Some committees report uneven distribution of workload (e.g. EPC), challenging timing expectations (e.g. PRAC, IEC), or unrealistic expectations in the time allotted (e.g. GRC).
7. **Participation.** Some committees experience a lack of participation and engagement (e.g. TPC, CTEC) or domination by particular voices (e.g. EPC), limiting the diversity of perspectives. Also, many respondents said they were new on committees and still did not feel familiar with the committee's work or that they were capable of fully participating.

System-Wide Recommendations

1. **Clarify governance roles and processes.** Develop and distribute clear documentation and definitions of each committee's purpose, decision-making authority, and how recommendations move through PGS. Revise the PGS Organization chart. Incorporate clear and effective feedback loops for recommendations.
2. **Facilitate reviews and revisions of committee charges.** Implement a structured process for committees to review their charges and propose revisions that align with their actual work and the college's mission. Ensure reviews consider workload and time allocation

for the committee. Remove committee charges from the PGS plan to allow for more frequent updating of charges.

3. **Provide governance training and onboarding.** Establish regular professional learning opportunities for both new and continuing members focused on effective committee practices, including chair facilitation and inclusive participation.
4. **Incentivize participation.** Develop an incentive system for committee participation and leadership. Explore options such as release time, professional development credit, stipends, and/or public recognition to encourage broader engagement.
5. **Strengthen student participation.**
Actively recruit, onboard, and support student representatives to ensure meaningful participation across PGS committees. Provide orientation, mentorship, and scheduling flexibility where possible.
6. **Broaden communication.** Clarify channels of communication about committee work, decisions, and outcomes. Create structured opportunities for committee leadership to communicate with each other about overlapping work. Ensure committee websites are regularly updated. Explore ways governance committees can share their work with the broader college community. Establish clear expectations for two-way communication between committee representatives and their constituent groups.
7. **Prioritize meeting in person.** Whenever feasible, committees should meet in person to strengthen engagement, participation, and collaboration. Exceptions should be considered when needed to support accessibility, equity, and broad participation.

Committee-Specific Recommendations

- **College Council:** Transition from an information-sharing body to a true recommending/advisory body as described in the charge.
- **CTEC:** First, consider whether this committee should continue in its current form. If so, revitalize this committee by reviewing its charge, clarifying leadership and membership expectations, and establishing a regular meeting schedule.
- **EPC:** Develop strategies to broaden campus engagement with planning processes. Ensure diverse voices are contributing to discussions.
- **FSPC:** Resolve and clarify the relationship to the Environmental Action Committee.
- **GRC:** Refine the GRC charge to prioritize core responsibilities such as reviewing committee charges, supporting participatory governance processes, and tracking systemic recommendations. Strengthen onboarding of new members to improve continuity from year to year. Increase meeting frequency and/or duration to allow sufficient time for committee business.

- **GRIT:** Provide leadership stability and support to the new chair. Establish clear processes to ensure the committee's program review recommendations are meaningfully considered.
- **IEC:** Provide clear budget parameters at the beginning of the equipment request process.
- **PLC:** Increase funding allocation to support professional learning activities.
- **PRAC:** Increase transparency in funding processes with clear documentation of decisions. Implement best practices for organizing committee work throughout the year. Improve meeting facilitation.
- **TPC:** Review the committee's charge, clearly define its role in technology planning decisions, and establish processes to ensure its recommendations have a meaningful impact.

Governance Review Council:

Emy Bagtas-Carmona, administrative representative
 Barbara Bonander, faculty representative
 Ryan Byrne, administrative representative
 Katherine Hsiaw, student representative (co-chair)
 Dave King, faculty representative (co-chair)
 Emelia Nacos, student representative
 Melanie Palomino, classified professional representative
 Joanna Pinckney, classified professional representative