

Participatory Governance System

Annual Evaluation

Spring 2006 and 2007 Surveys Compared

Executive Summary

Introduction

In January 2005 the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) recommended that

“The College should finalize immediately an effective governance structure that reinforces respectful dialog, defines shared commitment, and outlines the roles and responsibilities of all constituent groups for participation in informed decision-making process. The processes must be designed to result in action with on-going assessment and evaluation of institutional effectiveness to improve student learning.”¹

In response to this recommendation, the College adopted a new Participatory Governance System (PGS) in the fall 2005. In spring 2006 the first PGS survey was administered to governance members to assess the effectiveness of the PGS. In spring 2007, to continually improve the effectiveness of the PGS a second annual PGS survey was administered. This report presents the results of the 2007 survey in comparison to 2006 results.

Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to query members participating in the governance system on their perception and satisfaction with the governance process. All members of the college community serving on governance committees, students, faculty, staff, and administrators were invited to participate. The results of the survey are used by the Governance Review Council (GRC) (See appendix for members), the body charged with the review and evaluation of the PGS, to recommend improvements: (1) to the orientation and training of members; (2) in policy, practice, and process of the governance system; (3) and for enrichment of members experience.

Instrumentation

The survey developed and first administered by the Governance Review Council in spring 2006 was administered in spring 2007 as well. The use of the same instrument permits direct comparison of items. The survey asks first for a respondent profile on service to the college and then asks 25 questions, of each respondent, in five areas:

- (1) Task;
- (2) Information Adequacy;
- (3) Participation;
- (4) Professional Conduct and Respectful Dialogue; and
- (5) Overall.

¹ January 31, 2005 letter from ACCJC

Findings

The college constituencies include staff, students, faculty and administrators. A total of 49 members were surveyed in spring 06 and 43 members in spring 07. In The total number of committee meetings increased from 78 in 2006 to 103 in 2007. Meeting attendance was excellent for both years. One noted difference was in multiple committee memberships. In 2006, 12% of members served on four or five committees, while in 2007 no one served on more than three committees.

Responses to Meeting Process

Responses to the 25 statements on Meeting Process show dramatic improvement from 2006 to 2007. Figure 1 shows each statement in each of the five areas investigated: Task, Participation, etc. along with the summaries of agreement with the statements. In addition to the percent of agreement for 2006 and 2007, the percentage point differences are reported.

The percentages of respondents indicating strong agreement with the survey items rose significantly in 2007. In spring 2006, only one item specified an “agree” or “strongly agree” level of 90%-100%. In the spring 2007 survey, there were nine items where 90%-100% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

Of the 25 items only one, “All members attended regularly” showed a decrease of 7 percentage points. The remaining 24 items showed increases in agreement from 2 to 37 percentage points. For example, under Participation, in 2006, 76% of members agree or strongly agreed that “Decisions were made by consensus.” In 2007 100% of respondents agreed, an increase of 24% points.

Of special interest is the category of “Professional Conduct & Respectful Dialogue”. The results show that 95% of respondents in 2007, compared to 76% in 2006 agreed that “Different opinions and values were respected.” 88% in 2007 agreed with the statement that “Committee members were always respectful of all members.” This is 25% point increase over the 63% agreement in 2006.

Figure 1
Strongly Agree and Agree Responses to Meeting Process

	Task	Percent Spring 06	Percent Spring 07	Percentage Point Difference
1	Agendas, minutes & materials were provided electronically prior to the committee meetings.	90%	95%	+5
2	In general, the objectives of each committee meeting were clear and understood.	76%	91%	+15
3	The discussions usually followed the agenda.	84%	93%	+9
4	Committees completed the agenda in an efficient and timely manner.	59%	81%	+22
5	Action items and parties responsible were clearly articulated.	69%	93%	+24
6	Action items were assigned and completed in a timely fashion.	59%	86%	+27
7	Standardized procedures were identified and followed.	59%	88%	+29
8	Committee chair or co-chairs were effective in managing meetings.	74%	79%	+5
	Information Adequacy			
9	The committee members had appropriate information to make informed decisions.	49%	79%	+30
10	Discussion and decisions were data driven and supported by sound evidence.	45%	81%	+36
	Participation	Percent Spring 06	Percent Spring 07	Percentage Point Difference
11	All constituent groups had an opportunity to participate on PGS committees.	76%	91%	+15
12	All members attended regularly.	65%	58%	-7
13	All members were encouraged to be actively involved.	86%	88%	+2
14	All members participated in the discussion and decision making process.	74%	91%	+17
15	Decisions were made by consensus.	76%	100%	+24
	Professional Conduct & Respectful Dialogue			
16	Different opinions and values were respected.	76%	95%	+19
17	Committee members were always respectful of all members.	63%	88%	+25
	Overall			
18	Participation in the PGS committee was important and valuable to the college.	82%	91%	+9
19	The committee charge was understood and the members worked toward fulfilling the charge.	65%	79%	+14
20	Proposals, requests, and decisions moved through the PGS as designed.	47%	84%	+37
21	Committees have a means to evaluate the effectiveness of its decisions and actions.	39%	63%	+24
22	Meetings were positive and constructive.	67%	84%	+17
23	Committees acted in accordance with Title 5 Participatory Governance guidelines.	67%	79%	+12
24	Overall, I am satisfied with the Participatory Governance System's performance.	57%	79%	+22
25	I was an effective participant.	82%	86%	+4

Highlight of Findings

1. A higher percentage of committee respondents served on only one committee for the 2006-07 year compared to 2005-2006.
2. Members serving on 4 or 5 committees decreased to zero in 2007 indicating a broader level of participation by all members of the college community.
3. The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with a statement was higher on all items for the spring 2007 survey compared to the spring 2006 survey with the exception of the statement that “All members attended regularly.”
4. Meetings were generally on task and well run.
5. While the adequacy of information to make informed decisions dramatically improved, 30 and 36% points from 2006 to 2007 improvements could still be made.
6. Respondents felt all constituencies were represented and participated in discussion and decision making. Remarkably, the number of respondents who agreed that decisions were made by consensus increased from 76% to 100%.
7. Most respondents indicated that the products of their meetings i.e. proposals and requests moved through the system as designed.
8. Most thought committees did not have the means to evaluate the effectiveness of its decisions and actions. Even though this item showed improvement between the spring 2006 and spring 2007 surveys, more improvement is needed.
9. Respondents in 2007 indicated a continued interest in training in Consensus Decision Making and Meeting Management. In 2006 respondents requested Consensus Decision Making and Conflict Resolution.

Conclusion

The College has established effective governance structure with on-going assessment and evaluation. The comparison of the 1st and 2nd years indicates constituent participation in informed decision-making process.

In November 2004 the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) observed during the site visit “...instances of self-destructive and disrespectful behavior displayed by faculty and staff...” The comparative assessment demonstrated the college’s success in establishing a system that reinforces professional conduct and respectful dialog.

Through the hard work and commitment of faculty, staff, students and administrators, the College institutionalized a new participatory governance system in 2005-2006 which continued to grow in 2006-2007. Comparison of the results of the two annual surveys reveals tremendous positive growth and development. While improvements are indicated, the College of Marin has made significant progress in establishing and maintaining an effective participatory governance system

Appendix A

Governance Review Council Fall 2006 – Spring 2007

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