

To: David Wain Coon, Ed.D., President, College Council Chairperson

From: Governance Review Council

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Re: GRC Recommendations

As part of College of Marin's Participatory Governance System (PGS), the Governance Review Council (GRC) is charged with monitoring and evaluating the governance process to ensure that:

- the system's processes are open and transparent;
- governance committees adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Participatory Governance System Plan;
- committees fulfill their charges effectively;
- committee members regularly communicate with their constituent group;
- recommendations are consistent with the mission of the College; and
- the College actively maintains its participatory governance system.

In carrying out our charge this year, we remained cognizant of relevant California Education Code and reviewed the College's accreditation history and the origin of the PGS. This governance system was adopted in May 2005. It has been revised multiple times over the years, most recently in December 2012. We conducted our deliberations in view of this historical and regulatory context and in alignment with PGS central tenets:

Any system of governance is dependent upon the cooperation and collaboration of all of its components to function effectively. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts and it is the interdependence of those parts that is important to the success of any effort by the whole. Members of the College community need to respect each other's professionalism and encourage trust and a sense of team work. To that end, the College of Marin has established a participatory, advisory system of governance which includes a commitment to participation from all segments of the college community in making recommendations for the policies and procedures that govern the college. PGS Plan pg. 4 <http://www.marin.edu/WORD-PPT/PGSPlanRevDec2012.pdf>

In fall 2014, the Governance Review Council was presented with two proposals for new governance committees, i.e., a standing accreditation steering committee and a finance subcommittee of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee. At the same time, the GRC reviewed spring 2014 PGS member survey results and noticed that, although survey results were generally positive, the lowest rated item was attendance at meetings. In addition, our own committee had occasionally failed to meet quorum and student and employee seats were vacant. In fact, the accreditation committee proposal was originally submitted to the GRC in spring 2014, but due to a lack of quorum the committee was unable to make a decision. Therefore the proposal carried to the fall 2015 agenda.

When fall semester began, only two GRC members were continuing members, there was no chairperson and there were two vacant seats. Over the course of the semester, the only filled student seat was vacated, resulting in no student members. An administrative seat also was vacated but filled. On two occasions, quorum was not met. There has been turnover in the staff resource as well. Despite this instability, during spring semester we increased our meeting frequency to twice a month to allow for the additional time needed to fulfill our charge. We also temporarily instituted a rotating chair position, to share the responsibility.

In addition to the PGS survey results, we reviewed the Governance Digest which is an annual compilation of governance committee activities for the previous year. Minutes of all committees' meetings for the previous year were analyzed in order to compile attendance and quorum data, and the number of seats available and filled in the PGS was compiled and compared to the number of faculty, staff and managers employed to help us get a sense of PGS requirements and capacity. These data, in addition to our own committee experience and informal feedback from faculty, staff and managers who we queried identified three problems on which we focused our discussions: inadequate attendance, lack of quorum, and unfilled positions on multiple committees. These problems need to be remedied for the long-term viability of the system and to carry out the college's business efficiently and effectively.

It was in light of these problems, that we considered the proposals for a new accreditation committee, a finance subcommittee and a change in the Facilities Planning Committee's charge--another proposal submitted in mid-spring. While GRC members understand and agree with the need to address accreditation and budget issues, given our concern that the PGS may already be overextended, resulting in problems with participation, we were reluctant to add new committees and potentially exacerbate the problem. However, we are also uncertain about the basis of the participation problem, whether it is due to too many seats across the multiple committees, too few people available or willing to serve on PGS committees, the unfilled central coordinating role, management and flow of committee meetings, or employees' and students' lack of awareness of the PGS or lack of interest in serving or some other unidentified cause.

Knowing that we are seeing insufficient participation in the forms identified above, yet lack clarity on the source or sources of the problem, we offer the following recommendations. In

addition, as we were formulating potential solutions, we kept the previously noted context, PGS purpose and these values in mind: broad participation and input into decisions; transparency; committees should make timely decisions and be able to carry out their charge; and respect for people's time.

Recommendations to Address Attendance, Quorum and Vacancies

Our informal feedback suggested a lack of awareness of the participatory governance system and inability to distinguish it from other committee work such as hiring committees, etc. Therefore, some of our recommendations are intended to raise PGS visibility and cultivate broad desire to participate as well as facilitating attendance.

- Add a Flex Week event. The goal of the event would be to teach faculty and staff about participating and leading in PGS.
- Add Flex Week training about how to make meetings effective with a component specific to PGS chairpersons
- Add PGS information into the new employee orientation process where it currently does not exist (classified staff and managers) and make the information more extensive and concrete where it does exist (new faculty orientation).
- Publish PGS articles or a newsletter to the entire COM community on a regular basis and keep web pages and online meeting calendar up to date.
- Have a PGS point person speak to the committees at each initial meeting each fall; provide an introduction which will include information about the committee's charge, an update on the committee's progress and issues that have been discussed, and expectations of the members of the committee. Designate a substantial part of the first meeting to discussing members' roles and each person's expectations, what the year will be like, and what kinds of issues will be discussed and decisions and recommendations made.
- In order to conduct business more efficiently, make teleconferencing and video conferencing an option when in-person attendance is not possible. Use e-mail to conduct relatively simple business (e.g., approving agendas and minutes) between meetings.
- Change the nature of quorum to a simple majority of 50% plus 1. Eliminate the constituency requirement. Simultaneously, encourage members to send a representative from their representation group, teleconference, Skype or email their viewpoints prior to the meeting in order to be considered.

Recommendations on Committee Proposals

- Accreditation Committee
 - This should be a small steering committee appointed by the President, rather than a formal PGS committee, so that it can be flexible with the needs of the accreditation cycle.
 - An accreditation project manager needs to lead the process and implementation and that might be the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO).

- Postpone the Finance Committee creation. While the GRC appreciates the rationale for the proposed committee, creating a new committee at this time would undermine the concern that the system is already overextended and would be imprudent while we are recommending the evaluation of the existing committees.
- Postpone proposed change to the Facilities Planning Committee charge until the PGS is evaluated.

Recommended Additional Evaluation

Since we cannot yet discern the primary reason for insufficient participation in PGS and informal feedback from faculty, staff and managers raised additional concerns about the governance system, we recommend additional evaluation.

- Redesign and conduct a Spring PGS survey of the campus community to take into account the issues the GRC has been discussing this year and include open-ended items before this semester ends. As this is part of our usual practice, we have proceeded with this action.
- Conduct an overall evaluation of the governance system committees (excluding Senates) taking into consideration accreditation, education code and institution effectiveness and capacity.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. We look forward to your response.