

EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (IEPI)

REPORT ON INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CAMPUS COMMITTEES

October 8, 2019

Ken Chaiprasert
2nd Vice President, ELAC Academic Senate

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MEMORANDUM

To: ELAC Academic Senate

From: Kenneth Chaiprasert, 2nd Vice President of ELAC Academic Senate

Re: 2019-2020 Short-Term Actions for Innovation and Effectiveness of Campus Committees

Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2019

I am forwarding for senate approval the actions below which derive from my work for the college through the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI). Senate approval will mean that the senate is formally recommending to the college president that he support my continued work on implementing these actions and provide direction to other parts of the campus community to support implementation of these actions.

The following list does not contain all of the concerns and ideas from my research on committees. The list below contains only actions that meet two criteria: 1) they were deemed as very pressing by subjects of the research and 2) they can be feasibly accomplished within a short timeframe (2019-2020).

Organizational Actions

- Guided Pathways as a standing agenda item on select committees*
- Explore having liaisons between committees, inter-committee meetings for liaisons, organized by clusters. Liaisons would coordinate, collaborate, and disseminate information among committees
- Periodic evaluation of the performance of all college committees and the overall functioning of shared governance using a rubric. Evaluations would be completed by committee members and kept anonymous.

Technological Actions

- Regularly publicizing committee news via ELAC website and social media*
- Increase training and use of virtual communications and records keeping (Zoom, ConferZoom, Canvas, BoardDocs, Doodle Polls, Outlook Calendar) in order to boost participation and forestall the “fading away” of members*
- Website for every committee with clear and simple information (especially minutes and other meeting materials)

Operational Actions

- Trainings and quick-guides for committee chairs to ensure decorum during meetings, encourage active participation by all members, reassure members that committees are safe places to speak out, facilitating conflict resolution, and instill a culture of collegiality.*
- Trainings and quick-guides for committee members on being active on committees, speaking up/out without fear during meetings, parliamentary procedure, decorum during meetings, “committee-speak” (especially acronyms), committee-specific ‘user guide,’ and overall shared governance at ELAC*
- Prioritizing the manageability of information and documents (especially for committees with large amounts of information at each meeting)
- Experienced committee members mentoring new members (including new chairs/co-chairs)
- Committee recruitment drives
- Committee training module with informational packet aimed at new faculty during each year’s New Faculty Institute (NFI)
- Making each meeting fun and interactive (food, breakout sessions, simpler agendas, recognizing accomplishments of the committee as well as of individual members)
- Establish the expectation, and practice of, constituency representatives reporting back to their respective constituencies
- Changing bylaws to have fewer designated members and more open voting rules

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the state of committees at East Los Angeles College (ELAC) and to make recommendations for improving the structure, organization, functioning, and communication of campus committees at ELAC. This report is based on findings from site visits, observations, focus groups, and interviews conducted at ELAC and other community colleges in the Los Angeles metropolitan region as well as one community college in New York over the spring 2019 semester (February 2019 to June 2019). Funding for this research was provided by the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) grant of the California Community Colleges. The proposals of this report include, but are not limited to, restructuring the campus committee structure to include an overall Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) committee, implementing professional development training on committee service, increasing committee publicity and online presence, integrating more advanced electronic/virtual communication in the daily functioning of committees, and ensuring that committees become more proactive over issues such as attendance, quorum, membership, and decorum.

SUMMARY LIST OF PROPOSALS

Theme 1: Committee Organization and Structure.....Page 10

- Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) Committee
- Inter-committee chair/co-chair or liaison meetings
- Clustering committees into meta-committees
- Regular reports between committees and the constituencies of each committee member
- Connect/integrate Guided Pathways into the committee organizational structure
- Avoid overlapping/conflicting committee meeting times

Theme 2: Committee Attendance, Quorum, and Membership.....Page 16

- Doodle polls and the Outlook Calendar to manage attendance and quorum
- Virtual meeting technology (Zoom, ConferZoom, etc.) to facilitate attendance
- Department chairs' awareness of and sensitivity toward faculty committee obligations when assigning class schedules
- Disregarding quorum requirements
- Open voting rules
- Ten minute rule to cancel a committee meeting
- Electronic spreadsheets to record/monitor attendance and membership
- Electronic committee sign-in integrated with the PD Office Flex records
- Staff support for routine tasks related to attendance and membership
- Agendas with names of the membership clearly visible
- Report attendance issues to department chairs and/or deans
- Standardizing the bylaws relating to terms (years) of service
- Multiple alternates for each committee member
- Chair/co-chair access to members' personal cell phone numbers
- Committee membership recruitment drives and open houses
- Rotation of probationary faculty through different committees
- True rotation within committee membership
- Recruitment of adjunct faculty

Theme 3: Committee Functioning and Overall Performance.....Page 28

- Electronic calendars to routinize recurring committee functions, dates, and deadlines
- Trainings/orientations/informational-packets on parliamentary procedure, meeting decorum and collegiality, conflict mediation/resolution, committee-speak, and how to be active on committees
- Addressing bullying during committee meetings
- Trainings on shared governance structure and process
- Introductory/summary guide (cheat sheet) about each committee
- Mentorship to newer members (including new chairs/co-chairs)
- Reassigned time or staff support for committee chairs/co-chairs
- Greater department interest about which committees faculty are passionate about
- Virtual meeting/communication technology (Zoom, ConferZoom, Canvas, BoardDocs) to help members, especially those from the South Gate Educational Center, stay connected

- Breakout sessions during committee meetings
- Simpler, more realistic agendas
- Better information management for committees dealing with high volumes of information
- Provide food during meetings
- Shared governance/committee rubric to periodically evaluate committee performance and viability
- Reduce the frequency of committee meetings
- Consolidation (or elimination) of redundant committees
- Meta-committee clusters for greater coordination and collaboration
- Subcommittees for specialized tasks
- Recognize committee (and individual committee member's) accomplishments
- Recap/follow-up regarding the outcome of committee recommendations

Theme 4: Committee Communication and Publicity.....Page 43

- Standardization of committee communication via email
- Spreading the word about committee updates/reminders
- Greater accountability for failure to communicate with the committee in a timely manner
- Avoid inundating members with too many emails
- Canvas, BoardDocs, and ConferZoom for communication
- Online presence for every committee with clear and simple information
- Integration between chairs/co-chairs and facilities when reserving rooms
- Regularly publicizing every committee via ELAC website and social media

REPORT

What follows is a detailed report on the findings from the research on committees that was conducted over the course of the spring 2019 semester (February to June 2019). The report includes findings from two focus group sessions held at ELAC. The first focus group session was held on Friday, May 10, 2019 and was limited to participants who identified themselves as current chairs/co-chairs of campus committees at ELAC. The second focus group was held on Friday, May 24, 2019 and was limited to participants who identified themselves as regular members of campus committees at ELAC. Although most of the subjects who attended the second focus group were mostly regular members of committees, a few of the individuals did identify themselves as also being a chair/co-chair of ELAC campus committees. Nevertheless, these individuals in the second focus group who identified as both regular members in some committees but also chair/co-chairs on other committees were asked to participate from the perspective of being a regular member of a committee.

The focus group participants were recruited via snowball sampling in which initial participants were acquired from a sign-up sheet that was distributed during different committee meetings at ELAC. Those who signed up were asked to refer other individuals who might also be interested in participating in the study. All focus group participants were given informed consent forms to sign which notified them that audio was recorded during the focus group session for the purpose of creating a transcript of the meeting, but that everything would be kept anonymous.

Additional input for this report comes from a breakout session/workshop given by Academic President Jeffrey Hernandez, Vice President of Continuing Education and Workforce

Development Dr. Armida Ornelas, and myself at ELAC's annual Opening Day event on Thursday, August 22, 2019. The breakout session/workshop was entitled, "Not another meeting? Let's rethink committees to ensure representation and empowerment", and was open to all members of the ELAC community who attended the Opening Day event. Findings of the report were presented at the breakout session/workshop and those who attended were solicited for further feedback and suggestions for improving committees at ELAC.

The rest of the findings for this report come from email, phone, and in-person interviews with chairs/co-chairs as well as regular members of committees at ELAC and other community college campuses in California and one in New York. Finally, the report is also based on observational findings from site visits to committee meetings at different community colleges in the Los Angeles region. The report is divided thematically into the following sections: Committee Organization and Structure; Committee Attendance, Quorum, and Membership; Committee Functioning and Overall Performance; and Committee Communication and Publicity.

Before proceeding to the first section of this report, I would like to acknowledge the following people for their contributions to this project. I am indebted to ELAC Senate President Jeffrey Hernandez and Vice President of Continuing Education and Workforce Development Dr. Armida Ornelas for their initiative, guidance, and support which made this project possible. Special thanks also goes to Dean of Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement Bryan Ventura as well as Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement Research Analysts Laura Cruz-Atrian, Adrian Shadaram, and Jeylee Espinoza Quiroz who helped to record the focus group sessions. Also, much gratitude goes to Citrus College Academic Senate President Nickawanna "Nicki" Shaw and Mount San Antonio College Academic Senate President Chisato "Chisa" Uyeki, and Mohawk Valley Community College Academic Senate

President Alexander Haines-Stephan for introducing me to their college committees. Thanks also go out to Professional Development Coordinator Nancy Ramirez, Public Information Officer Kevin Jimenez, and Guided Pathways Facilitator Dr. Arpi Festekjian for offering helpful ideas. Last, but not least, my endless gratitude and appreciation goes out to all of the awesome individuals who participated in the focus group sessions and interviews. Your insights and experiences are absolutely instrumental in this ongoing pursuit to improve committees at ELAC. Thank you!!

Theme 1: Committee Organization and Structure

A key task of the research for this project is to understand the ways that the many committees on campus are structured and how they are organized. To date, ELAC has more than forty committees as part of its shared governance structure to deliberate and make recommendations regarding various programs, functions, services, and issues under each committee's jurisdiction. Although there is the ELAC Shared Governance Council (ESGC) which is the overarching steering committee for many other shared governance committees, a proposal from the focus group for committee chairs/co-chairs is to create a new Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) committee underneath ESGC with the power to convene taskforces and workgroups to tackle specific jobs as needed. This would help to streamline the shared governance process so that there would be fewer permanent/standing committees under shared governance that would have to meet regularly.

A possible model for the PIE committee comes from Woodland Community College (WCC). At WCC, the PIE committee meets twice a month, and its membership consists of a Vice President, Academic Senate President, Academic Senate Vice President, Career Technical Education Dean, Instructional Dean, Student Services Dean, SLO Coordinator, Curriculum Chair, Institutional Effectiveness Dean, Campus Executive Dean, Classified Professional, and a Student representative. At WCC, the PIE committee does not have any quorum requirement. The workgroups or taskforces underneath the PIE committee meets as needed to tackle the tasks/jobs assigned by the PIE committee. According to the WCC model, the taskforces meet on an "as needed" basis. Nevertheless, unlike the PIE committee, the taskforces do have a quorum threshold to meet: a simple majority of the taskforce members in attendance. The PIE

committee then reports its findings and recommendations to the WCC Academic Senate and the WCC College Council when needed.

Applied to the ELAC context, the PIE committee would serve as an intermediate steering committee which will meet to assign tasks to workgroups that fall under PIE. Membership would include a Vice President, Academic Senate President, an Academic Senate Vice President, a Dean of Continuing Education and Workforce Development, a Dean of Academic Affairs, a Dean of Student Services, the Learning Assessment/SLO Coordinator, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, Dean of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement, a Classified Staff Representative, and an ASU student representative. The shared governance committees at ELAC such as the Budget Committee, Facilities Planning Subcommittee, Strategic Planning Committee, and others which had been reporting to ESGC would then be transformed into taskforces designed to complete specific tasks by a set deadline/timeline as assigned by the PIE committee. As soon as the task forces have completed their job or the time has expired, they are reabsorbed back into the main PIE committee. The PIE committee would also be able to create workgroups in order to carry out specialized projects unrelated to the shared governance structure of the college. Ultimately, the PIE committee's findings, recommendations, and initiatives (when they come up) would be submitted to both the Academic Senate and ESGC. The WCC model is just one possibility, and ELAC can choose whether or not to adopt a model for PIE that fits the specific needs and contexts of shared governance at ELAC.

Another proposal in order to achieve better organization and coordination among the different committees is to have liaisons from each committee to meet with one another on a regular basis. What was noticed by the chairs/co-chairs who participated in the focus group was that there was inadequate communication among the different committees across campus. This

led to what many felt was obliviousness, disorganization, redundancy, and overall sloppiness of committees across campus. Thus, they propose that each committee create a policy of sending a liaison to meet with other committees' liaisons in a kind of inter-committee meeting (akin to the Associated Student Union's Inter-Club Council). During such meetings, liaisons would be able to share with one another actions, projects, etc. that each committee is currently doing as well as anticipated projects down the pipeline. Liaisons could then help committees that are doing related work to better connect with and assist one another. The liaison meetings would help achieve better collaboration, coordination, and understanding among committees that otherwise may not be cognizant of what other committees are doing.

In addition to these meetings among liaisons, the focus group for chairs/co-chairs of committees proposed sending all liaisons to ESGC meetings. Alternatively, some attendees of the focus group advocated for the chairs/co-chairs of every committee to meet together on a regular basis to touch base with one another. The meetings of all committee chairs/co-chairs would provide an opportunity for chairs/co-chairs of different committees to get to know one another, socialize, share, commiserate, and collaborate on strategies for "getting things done". This proposal is similar to the previous one; the only difference is that instead of having liaisons from different committees meet, the chairs/co-chairs from different committees would meet instead.

As was mentioned at the chairs/co-chairs focus group, the proposals about having either liaisons or the chairs/co-chairs from each committee to routinely meet with one another align well with the overall spirit of Guided Pathways. The advocates of these proposals expressed optimism about how these liaison or chair/co-chair meetings can further collaboration, coordination, and overall streamlining of committee work across the campus. Another aspect of

Guided Pathways which could prove useful for committee restructuring is the idea of meta-majors. During the regular committee members' focus group, attendees complained of how the many committees have become so fragmented and so haphazardly situated within shared governance. They saw the value in adding structure along the lines of Guided Pathways because such a streamlined structure with more cohesive clustering of committees would help people better navigate the erstwhile confusing world of committees. Essentially, committees with similar or related purviews and functions would be grouped under a "meta-committee" cluster that is labeled to clearly—and simply—convey to the greater public (as well as to the committee members themselves) what the committees in that particular cluster are all doing. Furthermore, organizing committees into these large meta-committee clusters would dovetail with the previous recommendation regarding inter-committee liaison or chair/co-chair meetings. Committees grouped together in the same cluster would get to know one another better and thus be able to work and communicate with one another more closely and more efficiently. All of this should help to reduce the problem of committee redundancy in which multiple committees are engaged in similar work but fail to talk with one another.

Related to this idea of better communication and coordination among different committees that work on similar things, a proposal was mentioned at the Opening Day breakout workshop/session to have committee members who represent various constituencies give reports about the committee to their respective constituencies. This proposal is based on the reality that every member of a committee is from some kind of constituency group(s). As a representative of various and diverse constituency groups (be they formal or informal), each member on a committee should be reporting to the committee about concerns of their respective constituencies, as well as report back to their respective constituencies about developments from

the committee. Overall, this helps all constituencies and, by extension, the entire campus community stay connected to committees and vice versa, thereby furthering the organization and cohesiveness of shared governance.

Given the importance of Guided Pathways in rethinking how education is organized and structured at all of California's community colleges, any reorganizing of committee structure should make sure that all campus committees which directly impact (or will be impacted by) Guided Pathways are reorganized with Guided Pathways in mind. A special group of committees should be deemed as being relevant to Guided Pathways, and these committees should make Guided Pathways an essential component of their work. From my meeting with Guided Pathways Facilitator, Dr. Arpi Festekjian, the following committees should be designated as relevant to Guided Pathways: Academic Senate and Senate Executive Committee, the President's Cabinet, Chairs Council, Student Services, Information Technology Faculty Advisory Committee, Committee on Academic Freedom and Ethics, Career and Technical Education, Curriculum Committee, Learning Assessment Committee, Professional Development Committee, ELAC Shared Governance Council, South Gate College Council, Budget Committee, Program Review and Viability Committee (especially when reviewing AUP's to make sure that they align with Guided Pathways), Strategic Planning Committee, and the Educational Planning Subcommittee.

For these committees, a "Guided Pathways Update" should be a standing (permanent) agenda item. Essentially, a Guided Pathways Facilitator would attend each of these committees' meetings (or appoint an alternate/liaison from the Guided Pathways Steering Committee) in order to update these committees on the progress of Guided Pathways, inform them about how certain action items of the committee connect with Guided Pathways, and simply increase overall

coordination between these committees and the Guided Pathways team. The goal is to create a committee culture that respects and nurtures the campus-wide Guided Pathways implementation while also ensuring that all relevant committees are engaged in constant dialogue, coordination, and contribution regarding the direction of Guided Pathways at ELAC.

Something else that came up during the focus groups discussions on committee organization was the issue of scheduling meeting times. In order to better streamline committee meetings, the attendees of the regular committee members' focus group desired committee meetings to be scheduled earlier in the day—especially during the “College Hour”—so as to not conflict with teaching schedules. Conversely, some attendees wanted to ensure that committee meetings are as spread out as possible during the day in order to avoid overlap. Proponents of this second recommendation supported the idea of more widely-dispersed committee meeting times so that community members can attend as many committee meetings as possible. They do not like how many committee meetings take place on the same days or times as other committee meetings which precludes people from joining (or attending) more than one committee.

Theme 2: Committee Attendance, Quorum, and Membership

There seemed to be a consensus among all focus groups regarding one solution to the ubiquitous problems of low attendance, failure to meet quorum, and losing track of membership. The solution is to better utilize modern technology. One proposal called for greater use of Doodle polls to establish meeting schedules for each semester. Advocates for using Doodle polls believed that this should help create consensus on establishing a meeting day/time for the committee that would be doable for most—if not all—committee members. Arriving at a mutually agreed meeting schedule should mitigate the problem of committee members not being able to attend committee meetings. This practice also adds much needed flexibility to the days/times of committee meetings in light of how the commitments and schedules of committee members often change between the fall and spring semesters. There was also a suggestion to incorporate the calendar function in Microsoft Outlook or other similar calendar applications to establish a master calendar for all committee meetings. This master calendar would be online and easily accessible to all committee members (as well as the general public), and automatic reminders could be sent out via email through the calendar application about impending committee meetings. This should also help increase awareness of when committees are meeting and therefore curb potential non-attendance at meetings

Moreover, many regular committee members who attended the focus group suggested that using more advanced virtual communication programs like Zoom virtual meetings (a commercial program) or ConferZoom (the program of the California Community Colleges) could help increase attendance. Essentially, the members (or guests) of committees who are unable to attend in person for various reasons could attend virtually through programs like Zoom or ConferZoom. In addition, these individuals also proposed that all meetings should be

recorded so that anyone could access either video or audio recordings of the meetings. Those who were absent from any committee meetings as well as the general public can then easily catch-up on committee developments by accessing recorded video and/or audio. Having video/audio recordings would also reduce the need for taking very detailed minutes of every meeting.

Integration of these virtual meeting applications was deemed as incredibly crucial for ensuring that ELAC personnel (faculty, administration, staff, students, etc.) who are at the South Gate Educational Center could participate in the many committees that meet on the Monterey Park campus. As one focus group member stated, the lack of technological integration between the Monterey Park and South Gate campuses is an important “equity issue” that must be remedied. Attendees of the breakout session/workshop at Opening Day also expressed approval of utilizing technology to help keep committee members engaged in the committee when they are unable to attend the meetings. These Opening Day attendees of the breakout session/workshop recalled how members have a tendency of “fading away” over time as some designated members of committees accrue more and more absences due to teaching schedule changes among other reasons. Being connected with the committee through such virtual communication technologies means that members can stay virtually connected and/or can virtually catch-up on anything they had missed. Instead of gradually fading away from the committee with each and every absence, everyone could easily stay connected, be virtually present in the committee, and continue to be in the loop.

During the focus group for chairs/co-chairs, a recommendation was made that attendance at committee meetings be given more importance by the entire campus community. This would mean that any scheduling of classes for faculty should take into account what committees faculty

are interested in attending/joining. Attendees of this focus group suggested that department chairs should be cognizant of the committees on which each faculty member in their department serves (and especially the committees' meeting times) so that the department chair will not assign the faculty member to a class that conflicts with their committee meetings. Instead of having to miss committee meetings (or step down from serving on a particular committee altogether), faculty would have class schedules and committee schedules that would not conflict. Thus, this policy should help faculty maintain their attendance at committee meetings. Similarly, some attendees of the focus group for regular committee members proposed that department chairs include information about every faculty members' committee membership on their instructor matrices which should help department chairs keep track of every faculty members' committee obligations.

One proposal to increase committee attendance and participation that came from the chairs/co-chairs focus group was to reduce the frequency of committee meetings. Many felt that meetings were superfluous if they occur more than once a month. An example of how to reduce the frequency of meetings which was brought up during the focus group was ESGC's recent reduction of meetings from being two times a month to only once a month. Having fewer meetings makes serving on the committee less burdensome, and the fewer committee meetings that remain become more significant and less trivial. This would reduce the feelings of meeting-fatigue, especially the exasperation that comes with some meetings being held just to be in accordance with the bylaws—simply holding meetings for the sake of holding meetings—even though there was basically nothing important on the agenda. Reducing the burden of having to attend so many meetings should therefore help to decrease boredom and burnout and hence increase attendance and overall retention of committee members.

A suggestion was also made at the focus group for regular committee members that there should be more seamless integration of flex credit with attendance. The suggestion was for the Professional Development (PD) Office to create a system that simultaneously tracks attendance and therefore also tracks flex hours of each person without the committee chairs/co-chairs having to separately submit flex hour forms to the PD Office. It was also suggested that there should be an electronic check-in process during each committee meeting so that members could easily enter ID numbers or swipe their ID cards which would immediately register attendance and flex hours with the PD Office.¹

On the very important issue of quorum or lack thereof, nearly all people who were questioned shared their frustration with having to delay the start of meetings or even cancelling meetings altogether because the committee failed to reach quorum. In light of this, two divergent recommendations were made. People mentioned either being more lenient or being stricter when it comes to quorum requirements for committee meetings. In terms of leniency, many interviewees expressed support for lowering—or even discarding—quorum requirements in the bylaws. As was advocated by some people at the focus group for regular committee members, committee meetings should be open to whomever is in attendance during each particular committee meeting, and voting should proceed no matter how few actually attend the meeting. There should be no prescribed or required membership for each committee.

A similar proposal was made by the attendees of the Opening Day breakout session/workshop. These attendees highlighted the need for more open membership rules in each committee's bylaws. What this would entail would be to institute bylaws granting anyone who attends the committee meeting the right to vote during the committee meeting, even if they

¹ The process would be similar to the automated check-in process at Opening Day.

are not a designated member of the committee. As Senate President Jeffrey Hernandez and I pointed out at the session/workshop, this idea has already been pursued by the Transfer Committee as well as the Professional Development Committee.²

Furthermore, meetings should not be cancelled merely for lack of quorum. Instead, decisions should still be made during meetings even when quorum is lacking. Frequent cancellations of committee meetings due to lack of quorum was deemed as a key factor contributing to the overall inefficiency of campus committees. As one person in the focus group mentioned, cancellation of meetings creates a domino effect which delays action for all other committees that depend on the committee that cancelled its meeting. The overall outcome of meeting cancellations is that campus business comes to a grinding halt. Simply put, frequent cancellations due to lack of quorum reduces campus-wide productivity and hurts the morale of members, thereby dissuading them from continuing on the committee. Thus, advocates for making quorum requirements less stringent also desired a campus policy to ensure reliability of meetings so that all meetings take place as scheduled. These individuals recalled how exasperated they were at being scheduled to speak on an issue or to present on an agenda topic, but then learn on the day of the meeting that the meeting had been cancelled. They desire a policy of making sure that committees meet consistently as planned.

Conversely, another group of interviewees, some members of the chairs/co-chairs focus group, and some who attended the regular committee members' focus group objected to lowering or disregarding quorum requirements. To these individuals, quorum and a permanent membership are crucial for constituency groups to be properly represented in matters that the

²In the latest revisions to the Professional Development Committee's bylaws, voting rights would be granted to non-designated members only if they have frequently attended meetings of the Professional Development Committee.

committee is working on. One person even pointed out that having quorum is essential to Brown Act requirements, although this comment may not be entirely correct.³ These individuals proposed a stricter approach to handling attendance and quorum. One idea called for instituting a “Ten Minute Rule” akin to the one colloquially referred to by students in the classroom. The advocates of this idea discussed how unfair it is to those who arrive on time to then have to waste their time waiting until quorum is achieved (sometimes occurring as late as thirty minutes after the designated meeting time). What bothers them most is how they often eventually realize that quorum indeed will not be achieved and thus their wait was in vain. Hence, the proposal is that if quorum is not achieved within ten minutes of the scheduled start time of the committee meeting, then the meeting should be summarily cancelled.

Another proposal was made to have quorum determined prior to every committee meeting through electronic communication/polling. Essentially, chairs/co-chairs would utilize the yes/no vote function when sending out committee meeting reminders, and when the responses come in, chairs/co-chairs can determine ahead of time whether quorum can possibly be achieved well in advance of the day of the actual meeting. If not enough yes votes come in for achieving quorum on the anticipated day of the meeting, then the meeting would be cancelled and everyone would be informed of the cancellation accordingly. This helps with addressing the issue of not giving members (and possible guests) enough advance notice of the cancellation of committee meetings. In sum, everyone’s time would be better utilized and not wasted.

Those who advocated these stricter approaches also called on chairs/co-chairs to be more proactive in achieving quorum, advocated for stricter bylaws to require that attendance at all

³ In actuality, however, Brown Act requirements for committees relate to giving ample notice of committee meetings to the general public and do not pertain to quorum requirements.

meetings be mandatory, and demanded some consequence/penalty for failure to attend or abide by committee procedures, including—but not limited to—reporting of attendance and non-attendance or other disciplinary issues to department chairs or administrative superiors. On this issue, a few members of committees who attended the focus group supported the idea of department chairs getting notified about faculty's non-attendance at committee meetings. Essentially, committee chairs/co-chairs should report any member's attendance problems to all department chairs and/or deans. Nonetheless, the advocates of requiring routine attendance reports to chairs and deans also stressed how such reports should not be seen as being punitive. Instead, attendance reports should be used to spur dialogue between chair/dean and the faculty member regarding their committee obligation and whether or not it would be beneficial for the faculty member to pursue another committee that better fits their schedule. Overall, there was an even split between those who wanted a more lenient approach and those who wanted a stricter approach to quorum and attendance

On the issue of membership, participants of the chairs/co-chairs focus group mentioned having each chair/co-chair make sure that they have a membership list on hand at every committee meeting as well as an alternate membership list. Chairs/co-chairs should be proactive in checking this list at every meeting and making sure all are in attendance. There was mention during both focus groups of the need to have staff support to help with keeping track of attendance and membership. My site visit to another community college as well as interviews with committee chairs at other campuses revealed how important it was to have staff during committee meetings who could take care of very detailed membership lists—so detailed that they also include all personal cell phone numbers of every committee member. Essentially, within the first five minutes of the meeting, the chair/co-chairs of the committee will check the attendance

lists and will then directly call absent members' cell phone numbers to remind them of the meeting. Regarding detailed membership lists, the regular committee members' focus group suggested that chairs/co-chairs utilize Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to maintain attendance and membership records/data. Rather than chairs/co-chairs leaving attendance unmonitored and membership unorganized, attendance and non-attendance should be clearly recorded and the membership list kept up to date (made easy with the use Microsoft Excel). Additionally, every printed agenda should have the committee members' names listed in a sidebar similar to what is found on the ELAC Academic Senate agendas. As one person put it, this would behoove all members of the committee to get to know the names of fellow members of the committee, thereby enabling them to help the chair/co-chairs identify who is missing.

On the subject of membership lists, some members who attended the committee chairs focus group desired the standardization of all committees' bylaws pertaining to committee membership. Terms of each member serving on the committee needed to be standardized across all committees which would make it easier to keep track of when everyone's terms end and when recruitment needs to begin. The membership list should be detailed, kept current, and contain names of members as well as alternates and even 2nd alternates. As one person put it, there needs to be a system of "alternates for alternates"—the ultimate failsafe. Related to this point, a recommendation made at the focus group for committee chairs/co-chairs was to allow for administrators such as vice presidents to send alternates in case they are not available to attend a particular committee meeting of which they are a permanent member.

Membership recruitment was seen as a very important task by all people who participated in this study. Committee chairs/co-chairs in particular complained about how they were seeing only the same faces over and over again in every committee (usually, the people who have

reassigned time). There needed to be a way to reach out to new members in order to get, as one person put it, “new blood” in committees. Also, nearly every person in both focus groups described how lost they felt when they first arrived on campus and were told to join committees. These individuals called for new recruitment initiatives which could teach everyone who was new to the campus about what committees exist at ELAC and what each committee actually does. Many people called for a cyclical recruitment season that is similar to what the ELAC Associated Student Union does every beginning of the semester with “Club Rush”—a week when all student clubs and programs set up tables and recruit new students. Committees would table and hand out information about what they do (their objectives and purview), when they meet, etc. to new faculty during these committee recruitment periods.

Those who attended the focus group for regular committee members suggested that the perfect times for holding such committee recruitment would be on Opening Day⁴ as well as during the New Faculty Institute (NFI)⁵. Another suggestion was to have chairs and co-chairs make sure that they send recruitment emails to anyone they know, asking them to forward the email to anyone else who might be interested in joining the committee (similar to a snowball sampling methodology). Those who attended the regular members’ focus group also underscored the need for effective marketing through captivating emails that heighten the interest of the campus community in serving on committees. Another proposal related to recruitment involves having an “open house” period when committees essentially open their doors to all faculty to tour the committee early in the semester in order to find out if the committee is a good fit for them. This could be done by ensuring that all faculty have an introductory list of

⁴ I did distribute the 2019-2021 list of campus committees to all attendees of the 2019 ELAC Opening Day event.

⁵ Senate President Jeffrey Hernandez, Senate 1st Vice President David Hale, and I will be giving a presentation on serving on campus committees to the NFI class of 2019 as had been done in prior years as well.

committees on campus so that faculty can drop by to visit a committee that they might be interested in before officially joining. As one person stated during the focus group, people should have the opportunity to “take the committee out for a test drive”.

The necessity of having new, diverse membership was also reflected in the committee members’ focus group. During that focus group, many people advocated for a committee rotational cycle in which each member could serve on different committees to try them out for given periods of time, and then move on to other committees. Each member of the campus community interested in serving on committees would therefore have a chance to serve on every single committee on campus. Some even suggested that all probationary faculty be required to undergo committee rotations in their first year as part of their committee obligation. After having attended and learned more about all of the different committees during their probationary period, faculty can then settle on a committee that they enjoy attending the most and are most passionate about. Thus, more new faculty would be able to experience all of the different committees out there, and this would inject the much needed “new blood” and new faces into committees.

Related to this idea of rotation, the proposal was made during the committee members’ focus group that there be a rotational membership stipulation in each committee’s bylaws. According to advocates of this plan, instituting a “true rotation” requirement in committee bylaws would reduce the tendency of seeing the same faces over and over again on different committees. The problem identified by these people is that incumbents already in the committee who are seeking reappointment keep getting reappointed indefinitely. Not unlike the incumbent effect found in American politics, this issue of committee “incumbents” could be solved by having term limits combined with a rotational term system. Essentially, if you have served on a

committee for two years, then you cannot be reappointed until others have had a chance for appointment to your seat on that committee. Nevertheless, advocates of this proposal also mentioned how incumbent members who are truly passionate about a committee's work can remain on the committee, but as an unofficial or non-voting member until there are no new members seeking admission/appointment onto the committee. According to proponents of this plan, the overall effect would be to spur service on committees by new, diverse people who never had a chance to serve. As someone stated, this "allows for diversity, critiques, fresh ideas, new perspectives, and improvement, and avoids the 'monopolization' of ideas".

Furthermore on the topic of infusing fresh blood into committees, attendees of the focus group for regular committee members discussed how brand new members could be acquired if committees would simply institute a policy permitting committee chairs/co-chairs (or by vote of the majority of the committee) to remove members who are not performing their duties at a satisfactory level. Those individuals would be removed from the committee, thereby giving a chance to new people to replace them. Overall, the proposal was to have all committees amend their bylaws to include term limits for regular members as well as for chair/co-chairs, membership rotation, as well as removal from committee membership due to excessive absences. The advocates of this proposal nevertheless also wanted these changes to committee bylaws to not be mandated in a top-down way, but rather through dialogue within each committee to decide for themselves how best to adopt (or not adopt) these recommendations.

Something that was underscored during the focus group for regular committee members was the very low participation rates in committee service among adjunct faculty. There needs to be a much more effective recruitment of adjunct faculty for committee service. Adjunct faculty should be recruited through emails from department chairs and/or campus-wide email blasts that

go to all employees. Workshops and institutes for adjunct faculty conducted by either the PD Office or the AFT Faculty Guild should also inform adjunct faculty of various committees on campus that might interest them. Granted, adjunct faculty often find it incredibly difficult to fit committee service in their very busy schedules that often span multiple campuses, but at least informing them of what committees do and when they meet can give them an opportunity to serve on a campus committee should they be so inclined. There was even a proposal by members of the regular committee members' focus group that there be a policy to require adjunct faculty members to join committees or at the very least attend some committee meetings as their schedule permits.

Theme 3: Committee Functioning and Overall Performance

Overall, all subjects of this research expressed dissatisfaction with how committees are run and how they ultimately perform. A constant refrain from most interviews and focus group sessions is the need for proper training in parliamentary procedure. Chairs/co-chairs complained of certain committee members getting too vocal during meetings, dominating meetings, and not respecting fellow committee members. Similarly, regular committee members in the focus group also complained of committee meetings being derailed by unruly, disorderly, and overly dominant members. The focus group for regular committee members also broached the issue of probationary faculty often being reluctant to speak up at committee meetings out of fear of outright retaliation or some subtle form of reprisal from more senior faculty who are dominant in the committee. They also complained of committee chairs failing to stick to agenda items, and thus meetings often turn into group therapy sessions to just air “gripe after gripe”, and the agenda items are forever tabled for the “next meeting”. Chairs/co-chairs and regular committee members felt that giving them training in parliamentary procedure and rules of decorum would help ensure that committee members stay on task and that conflicts (or any other kind of disturbance) occurring during committee meetings get resolved expeditiously.

It was recommended that committee chairs/co-chairs be more aware of these instances of incivility during committee meetings and find ways to reassure that everyone’s voice will be heard. Advocates of this recommendation urge all committee chairs/co-chairs to encourage new members to speak up and to make sure that any reticent member is able to get a chance to speak before other outspoken members speak. As attendees of the Opening Day breakout session/workshop made clear, committee chairs/co-chairs need to ensure that every committee member understands that committee meetings are “safe places” to speak up. Thus, proper

training on how to run meetings and parliamentary procedure is clearly needed. Most committee chairs/co-chairs agreed that the Professional Development (PD) Office should play a role in helping to organize training on Robert's Rules of Order as well as facilitation techniques to promote discussion and purposeful action in a committee setting. Some also expressed interest in having the PD Office coordinate with the ELAC Academic Senate's Committee on Academic Freedom and Ethics (CAFÉ) to hold collegiality training to help everyone learn more techniques to promote collegial participation in committees. In particular, members who attended the members' focus group requested that the results of CAFÉ's collegiality survey that was implemented campus-wide in spring 2019 be integrated into collegiality trainings for anyone serving (or thinking of serving) on committees.

Some participants in the chairs/co-chairs focus group even desired that the PD Office provide a training module on conflict mediation techniques. Chairs/co-chairs mentioned how being new to the job makes it extremely hard for them to know how to properly handle conflict and difficult conversations that often occur during committee meetings. Regular committee members who attended the focus group also advocated for a policy that allows committee chairs/co-chairs to basically eject disrespectful, inconsiderate, or unruly committee members from meetings. Essentially, they wanted to see a campus-wide committee policy to address bullying in committees. They mentioned how the bullying needs to be rectified in order to create a safe environment for all committee members, and how this would help boost the morale of the entire committee. Establishing a safe environment in every committee is key to making committee service more appealing, more inviting, and this would sustain—and also grow—committee membership. Members would be motivated to continue attending committee

meetings and work hard for the committee if they are assured that committees are safe environments for them.

Chair/co-chairs of committees were especially vocal in advocating for the PD Office to include a component of promoting a “culture of respect” within committees. The trainings should not only train chair/co-chairs on overall “people skills” to facilitate and moderate committee meetings while maintaining decorum and collegiality, but also train regular committee members to respect the very concept of committee service. As one person put it, there needs to be a total “culture of respect” for everything related to committees. The chairs/co-chairs who attended the focus group mentioned how committee members often do not take committee service seriously and therefore shirk their responsibilities, and this is a contributing factor to committees being unproductive and inefficient.

A common refrain was the need to ensure that all committee members—and hopefully everyone at ELAC—understand what shared governance means to the campus. Committee members and even the chairs/co-chairs need a refresher on how each committee fits in the overall shared governance structure on campus. Many committee chairs/co-chairs admitted that they simply were unsure about whom to report their committee recommendations to, and they often felt lost whenever they were asked about how committees related to one other. In fact, many committee chairs/co-chairs who attended the focus group described how it would have been very helpful to know the structural and procedural details of the committee before they decided to run to be the new committee chair/co-chair. Committee members who attended the members’ focus group also voiced how they needed some kind of training about serving on committees at the beginning of each academic year. In light of this, better training on committee service and shared governance should be provided. Additionally, the list of all campus

committees should be distributed to the entire campus community in addition to having it posted and available on the ELAC Academic Senate's website.⁶

The regular committee members identified the New Faculty Institute (NFI) as the best place to have these trainings on committee service. According to them, new faculty should not only be encouraged to attend NFI, but actually be required to attend and see presentations on committee service.⁷ The focus group for regular committee members also voiced their desire to see trainings for faculty and staff regarding how to become more active, more involved, and more influential on committees. As was mentioned earlier, these focus group participants were concerned that brand new faculty and staff may feel too intimidated to speak up and get involved in committees, so in addition to having chairs/co-chairs encourage new members to speak up, there should be a training module on effective speaking and participation. This type of training will not only embolden new/quiet members of committees, but also train them to take leadership positions, including becoming new chairs/co-chairs in the future.

In order to address much of the foregoing, PD Coordinator Nancy Ramirez and I have collaborated on the "Basic Committee Meetings 101" training to be unveiled during the 2019-2020 academic year. The PD Office will help to print out materials that I will design on topics such as Robert's Rules of Order, tips on serving effectively on committees, shared governance at ELAC, oft-referenced vocabulary/acronyms during committee meetings,⁸ etc. Requests will go out to committee chairs/co-chairs (and even department chairs) to give a general orientation

⁶ The list of ELAC campus committees and contact information was included in the Opening Day folders/packets that were given to all members of the ELAC campus community who attended Opening Day 2019.

⁷ Senate President Jeffrey Hernandez, Senate 1st Vice President David Hale, and I will give the annual presentation on committee service and how to be active on committees to the 2019 NFI cohort.

⁸ Those who attended the Opening Day breakout session/workshop expressed frustration with the "committee-speak" phenomenon in which esoteric acronyms and other committee jargon gets thrown around during committee meetings without defining them for people unfamiliar with them. New members of committees are left feeling confused, left-out, and basically out of the loop of the conversation if they do not understand such committee-speak.

about what committees do, how they fit in the overall shared governance structure at ELAC, and then go over the materials as part of this “Basic Committee Meetings 101” training.

As part of these trainings, in collaboration with the PD Office, additional workshops will be instituted as part of the travelling roadshow on “all-things” committee. This would entail either me and/or others visiting committee meetings, department meetings, and other campus functions throughout the academic year to do small presentations on various topics related to committee service. Additional workshops will be provided at the faculty center on topics such as facilitation techniques, how to run meetings, how to speak up at committee meetings, committee collegiality, mediating conflict during meetings, among many other topics to explore. Alternatively, a self-paced Canvas course may also be created to be unveiled during the 2019-2020 year so that people who cannot attend the workshops could also find the same information by taking a short-course on Canvas.

Committee chairs/co-chairs also proposed requiring all committees to create a committee-specific instruction manual or user guide. This guide/manual would put the committee bylaws in simpler terms that are easy to understand. They should contain basic information about what the committee’s mission is, who/what it reports to, key recurring tasks that the committee performs and when they are usually performed, and also contain updated contact information about the chair/co-chairs as well as the meeting schedule. Most importantly, the guide would be useful for brand new chairs/co-chairs who were recently elected to their positions. Chairing duties can be very complex (crafting agendas, making copies of agenda packets, etc.), and many new chairs/co-chairs initially feel quite lost which hurts the functioning and efficiency of committees. In light of this, they would appreciate a campus-wide policy of having every committee come up with this first-time user-guide/instruction manual. Chairing duties and responsibilities need to be

made more explicit and prescriptive so that new chairs/co-chairs can be clear on exactly what they have to do.

Chairs/co-chairs describe how chairing requires learning on the job, and if one is lucky, the new chair/co-chair will get some guidance through informal mentorship from the previous chair/co-chairs. However, most people mention how they became chair/co-chair without any guidance because the many chair/co-chair duties are never explicitly spelled out anywhere (not even in the bylaws). Regular members of committees also desired mentorship. They recommend that senior faculty/administrator/staff on the committee take new committee members under their wing in order to “show them the ropes” of the committee. Lastly, all interviewees valued the institutional memory of more senior committee members. Having veteran members of the committee serve as mentors for the newer members helps to keep that memory alive as it gets passed on from one committee “generation” to another. This helps to ensure the continuation and overall sustainability of the committee over time.

The focus group for committee chairs/co-chairs also revealed the frustration that many chairs/co-chairs feel toward chairing committees without being given any reassigned time. The duties of chairing a committee can be quite onerous. Chairs/co-chairs mention facing challenges of having to find some time to have meetings in advance of the actual committee meeting in order to do preliminary planning (as some called it, the “meeting to plan meetings” syndrome), and they mention that they need some assistance in the form of either getting reassigned time or having classified staff assistance in performing some of the basic chores of running committees. Especially when it comes to maintaining a committee’s online presence (e.g. website and posting of agenda, minutes, etc.), chairs/co-chairs want to have classified staff support. At the very least, the chairs/co-chairs would like assistance with having a minute-taker during every committee

meeting. This is especially true for committees with an administrative chair/co-chair, and the proponents of providing assistance for chairs/co-chairs mention how it should be made very explicit in the bylaws exactly what staff support or resources the committee has access to.

To further improve the functioning and work of committees, it was suggested at the focus group for committee chairs/co-chairs that each faculty member be asked what they are interested in. The problem that some chairs/co-chairs faced was how some committee members were not interested in the committee that they joined, but joined simply because their department chair told them that committee service was required and how the particular committee that they joined fit in their schedule. These members would either be unenthusiastic participants at the committee meeting or worse yet, simply stop participating entirely, all of which makes it harder for the committee to function. To avoid this, the proposal was made for department chairs to not only make sure that class schedules don't conflict with a faculty member's committee commitments, but department chairs should also survey new faculty members (or even current faculty members) to find out what each faculty member is actually interested in before having them join a particular committee. Inquiring about the committee interests of individual faculty members should help the department chair direct the faculty member to the right (well-suited) committee. This should help improve engagement and activeness within the ranks of the committee membership when every member is serving on a committee which they are actually passionate about.

Another proposal to improve committee functioning is to integrate more advanced technology, especially virtual communication. All interviewees were supportive of a suggestion to make sure that Zoom becomes a tool that is easily accessible to all committees. This could help improve communications among committee members, especially when committee members

are unable to attend a particular committee meeting. This is very important to individuals who work at the South Gate Educational Center and therefore cannot go to the Monterey Park campus to participate in the countless committees there. Committee chairs/co-chairs who attended the focus group also wanted this technology to be used in conjunction with various apps that enable voting and recording of votes electronically. Overall, advocates of integrating this virtual technology stressed how this would not only be useful for South Gate personnel, but it would also be useful for adjunct faculty and any faculty who come to campus (whether Monterey Park or South Gate) only during the evening hours—a time when there are usually no committee meetings. As was stated earlier, attendees of the Opening Day breakout session/workshop also saw the value of such efficient virtual communication in helping to obviate the usual “fading away” of members—a recurring phenomenon in which designated members find it hard to physically attend every meeting and thus slowly fade away from the committee over time. Virtual communication would thus help committees improve their functioning and output because committee work and discussions can proceed “virtually” anywhere, at any time, and committee work can finally be liberated from physical constraints.

Moreover, use of such new technology could also help different committees virtually communicate with one another in real time when dealing with matters that transcend a single committee’s purview. This additional benefit from better utilization of electronic/virtual communication technologies complements the idea of having similar committees better coordinate and communicate with one another through meta-committee clustering.⁹

⁹ Please see discussion on clustering and creation of “meta-committees” under the section, “Theme 1: Committee Organization and Structure”, above.

On another note regarding the use of technology, greater utilization of an electronic master calendar (like the Outlook calendar) was also deemed to be very beneficial in helping to schedule committee activities/tasks that recur during the same time every academic year. New committee chairs/co-chairs expressed their abhorrence of having to learn from scratch all of the important committee tasks that have specific dates/deadlines even though they always recur every year at the same time. In order to avoid this, committee chairs/co-chairs mentioned how the use of an electronic master calendar that automatically places these recurring activities on the calendar would help all members keep abreast of cyclical/recurring committee dates/deadlines.

Something that was brought up at the focus group for regular committee members was how members often felt unprepared during meetings because committee chairs/co-chairs failed to give them agenda items, minutes, or documents for the meeting in advance of the actual meeting. Members felt that having ample time to review documents and then prepare prior to the meeting would help the committee meetings be more productive and efficient. Thus, a recommendation from this focus group is to have a standard requirement for all committee chairs/co-chairs to send out via email or through other technologies (Canvas, BoardDocs, etc.) meeting material at least one week in advance of the meeting. As was brought up during the committee members' focus group, this is especially important when the committee is slated to approve very long documents which cannot plausibly be reviewed during the meeting. Overall, having all documents available through these online platforms helps to promote transparency and efficiency.

People who attended the Opening Day breakout session/workshop also expressed how they wanted committees to focus on the manageability of information and documents. This was seen as especially important for committees that deal with large amounts of information on a

regular basis. They proposed that such high-information committees or any committee anticipating a meeting with high volumes of reading material to manage the dissemination of such information in an efficient, orderly, and well-paced manner so as not to overly inundate members at the very last minute. There should be ample time for members to digest such information, perhaps piecemeal, ahead of the meeting rather than all at once one day prior to the meeting or—worse yet—during the meeting itself.

Based on my observations of other campuses' committees during my site visits, I learned how committee meetings were often made more interactive by instituting breakout sessions. The committees met in rooms with movable tables which could be rearranged for small-group breakouts. The committee's agenda actually stipulated small-group work. Agenda items would be split up among small groups of about four to five people each. The breakout sessions would require members to be more active and participative in crafting plans of actions, proposals, suggestions, etc. which would then be reported out to the other small groups utilizing the "jigsaw"¹⁰ active learning technique. The integration of committee work with active learning strategies taken from classroom pedagogy seemed to work well with the committees at these other campuses, and high morale, excitement, and overall fun was palpable. Nonetheless, a drawback was the length of time it took for going through the day's agenda because each active-learning activity or breakout took a lot of time to organize and execute. Nevertheless, a takeaway point from this is to make sure that committees require every member to remain active during the meeting so that committee meetings do not devolve into an exercise in passivity.

¹⁰ During the committee's jigsaw session, each small group will tackle a specific agenda item assigned by the committee chair. Each member of the small-group makes suggestions in turn (going around in a circle until everyone has spoken), and then the recorder/reporter/expert will write down all suggestions. This person will then move to another small group to report their own group's topic and suggested solutions. At the end, people return to their seats, and all of the agenda items are discussed together as a whole during an overall debriefing session.

Something that was brought up during the focus group for regular committee members is how members are often frustrated by committees putting together agenda items that are too lofty, too broad/general, and thus too unrealistic to be achievable. They mention seeing meeting after meeting containing the same enormous task on the agenda which could never be tackled by the committee members. They urge all committee chairs/co-chairs to pare-down agenda items (especially action items) into more manageable pieces that are more specific than general in nature. Committees would do much better if the action items were disaggregated and tackled piecemeal at each committee meeting. Agendas would then not prove to be overly daunting and unobtainable, and committee meetings would not devolve into pointless get-togethers to discuss (or gripe about) the same agenda items over and over again that never get acted on.

Relatedly, the focus group for regular committee members also wanted agendas to be more structured and less free-wheeling. They want the committee to closely adhere to the items as listed, and in the order listed, on the agenda. Agenda items should be very specific, clear, and informative. They should not be so esoteric to the point that members do not know what to even expect at committee meetings. Moreover, proponents of this proposal desire committee productivity to be recorded. Committee chairs/co-chairs should keep track of whether agenda items were completed, and committee productivity should be gauged by how effective the committee has been in completing agenda items. On that note, one way to make sure that committees are indeed functioning as intended is to have periodic evaluations of committee performance and overall functioning of shared governance using a rubric. The rubric would grade the campus's shared governance along several criteria including how familiar the college community is with shared governance and the basics of committee service, how well committees communicate, how much committee recommendations are followed by the college president, the

clarity of bylaws, the degree to which committees follow bylaws, the overall efficiency and timeliness of committee action, the extent that committee interactions are collegial, just to name a few. A model for such a rubric comes from Mohawk Valley Community College in upstate New York. From my communications with the Academic Senate President there, the rubric was routinely used to assess overall committee efficiency, productivity, and compliance with shared governance.¹¹ Implementation of the rubric would involve a group of individuals who have extensive experience with shared governance conducting periodic evaluations of the campus's entire shared governance using the said rubric. Essentially, this team of individuals who are highly experienced with committees and shared governance would visit, interview, observe, and report on how well the entire campus meets the criteria set forth in the rubric.

Regarding the use of such a rubric, attendees of the Opening Day breakout session/workshop proposed that the rubric be disseminated to all members of the committee to complete on their own. Rather than having a designated team go around campus evaluating committees, the rubric should be issued to members of each committee for committee self-evaluation each semester or each academic year. This would be similar to the committee self-assessment as requested by the Accreditation Steering Committee at ELAC each year, but with a more critical eye towards assessing actual success rates, efficiency, and overall committee functioning. It would provide committee chairs/co-chairs, the committee itself, and the campus community in general with the feedback necessary to identify and rectify problems with committee functioning. People who supported this use of the rubric also stressed the need to keep such committee self-assessments using the rubric completely anonymous to ensure honest feedback and truly critical assessment. Having such a rubric aligns well with the

¹¹ In fact, Mohawk Valley Community College was the recipient of the "Campus Shared Governance Award" for 2017-2018, an honor bestowed by the State University of New York (SUNY) system.

recommendation made at the focus group for regular committee members that committees go through periodic viability review. Any committee failing to show viability after such a review would face possible elimination due to the committee's lack of viability.

Although budgets may limit the following proposal, what I observed at least at one college during a site visit was how food and drinks were provided during the committee meeting. The committees had at least some sort of snacks (fruit snacks, granola bars, trail mix, bags of chips) along with drinks ranging from iced water, iced tea, to fruit-flavored drinks. The committee members seemed to be reinvigorated by these snacks as they frequently walked to the "committee commissary" to find something to eat. The food, no matter how minor it was, seemed to lift spirits up which helped sustain the overall energy and therefore activeness of the committee. Having lunch or any snacks was also an issue that was brought up at the focus group for regular committee members. They advocated that, because ELAC often holds committee meetings during lunchtime (the ELAC College Hour), there should be a standard policy to require that committee meetings have some food for members. As these people made clear, hungry committee members cannot contribute much if they are running on empty stomachs. Most, if not all, faculty members have to teach right before the committee meeting and immediately after the committee meeting without ever having a chance to get food. This is detrimental not only to committee performance, but also to the overall performance of faculty in the classroom. Thus, both committee functionality and also student success are negatively impacted by a lack of food at committee meetings.

An additional proposal regarding functionality concerns the frequency of committee meetings. During the chairs/co-chairs focus group session, a recommendation was made to reduce the frequency of each committee's meetings, especially for committees that are meeting

more than once a month. This reduction in number of meetings would be similar to what was done for ESGC.¹² Scaling the number of meetings down can help reduce the feelings of burnout and fatigue among committee members. It can also help to keep the committee focused and be more purposeful rather than just holding a committee meeting for the sake of holding a meeting. In addition to reducing the number of committee meetings, another proposal was to collapse committees with similar functions. The fear is that there are so many committees that redundantly do the exact same thing. Collapsing committees should help make committees function much better by streamlining everything and reducing redundancy and inefficiency.

On the other hand, what was discussed at the committee members' focus group was to implement a more streamlined approach of clustering different committees together into meta-committees like what we find in clustering of majors/programs into meta-majors as part of Guided Pathways. The many committees that work on similar issues could become part of a larger thematic/functional cluster that would make it easier for people to find the right committee for them and also make it easier for the committees of the same cluster to coordinate/collaborate.¹³ Regular committee members also suggested that there be more subcommittees to assist the larger standing committees on more specialized/specific subtopics. This could help with overall committee functioning if there are more subcommittees or task forces to tackle certain issues that are so specialized to the point that they could potentially detract from the main order of business of the larger standing committee.

¹² Please see the same discussion as it affects "Theme 2: Committee Attendance, Quorum, and Membership" above on page 18.

¹³ For another perspective, please see the recommendation regarding clustering into meta-committees under "Theme 1: Committee Organization and Structure" above.

Finally, I observed during my site visits that committee functioning seemed to improve when each committee member gets recognized for their work. The committee started their meetings with recognition of outstanding work by a committee member. Kind of like an “employee of the month” recognition, the person is recognized with applause and is presented with a small certificate to honor them for their work on the committee. The award is quick and simple, but helps to affirm and underscore the value of hard work in the committee. It actually helps inspire committee members to want to work harder in the committee. On this note, members of the regular members’ focus group voiced their concern that some members’ contributions to the committee are not recognized, or that even the committee on which they serve never gets recognized by the campus community. The feeling that their committee’s input/contribution is not respected or even taken into consideration by the campus really undermines overall committee morale. They feel that their committee is powerless and thus their work is futile, all of which dissuades them from working hard in the committee.

Committee chairs/co-chairs who attended the focus group also expressed concern that morale suffers in light of instances when committee recommendations/feedback was not heeded. In light of this, a recommendation was made to recap at every committee meeting the key actions of the committee and the president’s response to those actions. This would help committee members know what exactly has been done regarding the committee’s action, and whether it has been effective or has yet to even take effect. This would be vital to help to ensure accountability on all sides, and it would give the committee members the much needed affirmation that what they are doing is not pointless and futile; what they are doing actually matters.

Theme 4: Committee Communication and Publicity

All participants/subjects of the research shared how much they cherished effective communication when it comes to committee work. They expressed the utmost importance of making sure that all committee members communicate with one another on a regular basis. In light of this, participants in the focus groups suggested that standardization of electronic communication be combined with stringent accountability measures to ensure that all members stay in regular communication with the committee. Regarding internal communication within the committee, committee chairs/co-chairs describe feeling exasperated with committee members who do not check their email. They proposed that communication be standardized so that there is a uniform communication protocol that is well defined and must be strictly adhered to by all members of committees. They also mentioned how, first and foremost, communication among the co-chairs themselves needs to be standardized and improved as well.

One proposal was for chairs/co-chairs to have access to a standardized email message template with designated sections that will make crafting regular email communications with members much easier, more consistent, more easily comprehended, and therefore more efficient. Similarly, participants in the focus group for regular committee members also echoed this sentiment as they recounted how fellow committee members failed to check emails and thus either forgot to review the committee documents or forgot to attend the meeting entirely. A suggestion that was given at the chairs/co-chairs focus group was to ask that members who receive any committee's email to also help to spread the word (perhaps via word-of-mouth) to others who are also serving in that committee. This would help in case some members do not check their emails but who can get updates via other members who do check emails. The chairs/co-chairs who wanted to see standardization when it comes to email communication

stressed the importance of establishing a more stringent policy regarding email responsibilities. They complained that members often asked chairs/co-chairs to use their personal Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo, etc. email accounts instead of the ELAC email account. They found this to be extremely challenging and trying, and asked that a standardized policy be promulgated requiring all members to only use their official ELAC email accounts, frequently check their emails, respond to emails in a timely manner, routinely check the Outlook calendar, and regularly visit the committee's website or any other online component/resource of the committee (Canvas, BoardDocs, etc.). Enforcement of an email communication protocol was seen as very important by committee chairs/co-chairs, and they wanted to make sure that the email policy is strictly enforced with repercussions for those who do not stay in touch with the committee. Members must respond to email or Outlook calendar requests or Doodle polling with a standardized yes or no, and those members who do not respond in any way will be noted by the chairs/co-chairs. The member's irresponsibility in email communication would then be noted to evaluate whether that person should remain on the committee, and one participant in the focus group even suggested that all of this get reported to department chairs or deans.

Regarding email enforcement, members who attended the focus group for regular members expressed their skepticism that there could ever be a solution for members who fail to check email. From another standpoint, email communication from committee chairs/co-chairs was seen as a tool that can be abused, so another suggestion was for committee chairs/co-chairs to only communicate very important matters via email as warranted, but not to overly inundate committee members with emails. This could lead to a sort of email burnout experienced by committee members who therefore get turned off and want to "tune out" the committee emails.

Chairs/co-chairs who were interviewed also mentioned the importance of ensuring that all members of the committee are on the same page, and they suggested additional technological integration to help committee members communicate. They mentioned integrating Canvas into committee communications. Essentially, a Canvas shell would be created for the committee and all members would then have access to the shell which would serve as a central repository/archive for all committee documents like minutes, agendas, action items, handouts, etc. The discussion forum function would also be accessible to members to communicate together online. The public could also participate in the committee by leaving comments or participating in the committee discussion forum.¹⁴ Regular committee members who were part of the focus group also stressed the need for recording video (or at the very least, audio) of committee meetings that can be uploaded to Canvas so that those who missed committee meetings—as well as the public in general—are able to see/hear what happened during each committee meeting. This is great for overall committee functioning and transparency, and the archiving of video/audio of previous meetings reduces the need for taking very detailed minutes.

External communications of the committee with the greater campus community (and the entire public at large) was also very important to subjects of my research. Committee chairs/co-chairs suggested that a campus-wide website be devoted to ELAC campus committees. The webpage would contain all updates, meeting schedules, and other information related to every committee on campus. The focus group for regular committee members also suggested that website should have an easily accessible “information summary” sheet that spells out the role of the committee, number of members on the committee, number of chairs/co-chairs on the

¹⁴ This would be similar to the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) canvas shell created during the spring 2019 semester which allowed so many members of the campus community to review the plan and share their suggestions via the discussion function on Canvas.

committee, how individuals can join the committee (appointed, elected, simply attending, etc.), terms of members on the committee, number of terms each committee member has served on the committee, and term limits (if applicable). Instead of posting wordy bylaws, the committee should work on providing this simplified summary of key information on the committee's website.

Some suggested that this webpage be integrated with BoardDocs, a web resource which serves as a repository for all committee documents like agendas, minutes, etc., and that this be standardized across campus so that everyone can access BoardDocs. As was mentioned during the focus group for committee chairs/co-chairs, BoardDocs has been utilized by the LACCD Board of Trustees as well as the District Academic Senate.¹⁵ A suggestion was also made that in addition to BoardDocs, Canvas has the potential to serve as a document repository and can be designed to be completely open to the entire public as well. (See discussion about Canvas immediately above.) Indeed, site visits to other colleges also showed how committees at other campuses are already using BoardDocs for much of their committee documents (although not all materials available are frequently updated). Campus and district IT offices should be contacted to investigate licensing agreements and other technology issues prior to the adoption of these online resources.

Another issue regarding external communication which was highlighted during the focus group for chairs/co-chairs of committees was the need to effectively communicate with ELAC facilities personnel about reserving places to hold committee meetings. Chairs/co-chairs felt frustrated with the fact that they do not have access to an overall online system to make

¹⁵ Nevertheless, there have also been issues with BoardDocs concerning ease of navigating and referencing to documents within agendas. This is due to BoardDocs's tendency to have a very general URL addresses for all documents used for an agenda packet which makes specific references (or links) to documents hard to do.

reservations for rooms across campus. Therefore, they proposed that there be a central online repository for making room reservations that would list all available rooms across campus during any given day/time. This is needed not only for making reservations for the regular committee meetings for an entire semester, but also for reserving rooms for special emergency meetings as needed that often take place outside of the committee's regular meeting schedule.

Aside from the foregoing, another dimension of external communication entails communicating with the community at large (general public), and this involves publicizing committees and their work. Oftentimes the campus is oblivious to what kinds of campus committees exist and the kind of great work that each committee is doing.¹⁶ To solve this problem, I have worked with ELAC's Public Information Officer Kevin Jimenez on a proposal to create monthly updates on the ELAC website and social media feeds on what committees are doing. What is envisaged is having the ELAC website and other social media platforms (primarily Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) feature monthly "committees in the spotlight" sections which will highlight what each committee is, what the committee is currently doing, or what the committee has recently accomplished. Committees will successively rotate under the spotlight each month so that one committee will be of focus with a featured article that lasts for one month, and then there would be a new article on a different committee for the next month, and so on. Alternatively, the monthly committee highlight/feature article could be split between two committees, with one committee being featured/highlighted for two weeks, and then during the next two weeks the feature/highlight will be on a different committee. Each committee's chair/co-chair will be contacted so that they can send brief descriptions about what they are currently doing or have done recently to the PIO office to publicize in these "committees in the

¹⁶ Please see discussion of a lack of recognition of achievements by members of committees or overall achievements of the committees themselves at page 42 above.

spotlight” pieces. Mr. Jimenez’s office would also have some editorial license to make minor modifications so that posts about the committee effectively grab the reader’s attention.

Although the ELAC website will likely only have a feature or spotlight on committees once per month at most, social media posts can be more frequent with perhaps two new posts on committees per week (a total of eight per month) depending on how active committees are and how much they have to share. Mr. Jimenez anticipates that only a few committees (primarily committees such as the ELAC Academic Senate or committees that report to ESGC) would have a lot of items to post to social media, while other committees would likely be highlighted/featured at most once a month with basic information about what they do and when they meet.

The attendees of the focus group for regular committee members also proposed that monthly campus-wide email blasts about committee developments could be utilized in addition to the website and social media feeds. They also suggested that each committee create a “committee newsletter” containing periodic (semesterly or yearly) summaries or highlights about the committee, accomplishments, action items, and even minutes that could be shared with the campus community. The focus group for regular committee members also proposed that ELAC’s own *Campus News* student newspaper be contacted whenever any committee’s work relates to students. Additionally, the members of the focus group for committee chairs/co-chairs also wanted the ELAC website or other mass communication system (email, social media, etc.) to help publicize reminders about scheduled committee meetings.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing findings reflect the shared experience of so many members of the ELAC community as well as members from college communities outside of ELAC. Their insights and proposals for reforming the campus committee structure, processes, and overall functioning will be the basis of recommendations for committee reform that will be presented to the ELAC campus community. Proposals based on this report eventually will be presented to the ELAC Academic Senate, the ELAC Shared Governance Council (ESGC), and ultimately the president of ELAC for approval. At this point in time, the timeframe for completion of these policy recommendations and acceptance by the campus community is still very much open. It is possible that the proposals/recommendations will be fully fleshed out over the fall 2019 semester with submission to the relevant committees for approval by spring 2020. Full roll-out of the recommendations may not be fully realized until fall 2020. Nonetheless, some short-term actions/recommendations can already be implemented during fall 2019. (Please see the memorandum entitled, “2019-2020 Short-Term Actions for Innovation and Effectiveness of Campus Committees” at the beginning of this report.)

As with any proposal regarding change, there will be some hurdles and unforeseen complications. However, as long as the campus community is actively engaged in dialogue about the concerns raised in this report and actively contributes ideas about committee reform, the future for campus committees looks very bright. There are a lot of changes in store for ELAC and community college education in general, and with a well-functioning committee system in place, ELAC will be able to tackle any unforeseen challenges as well as embrace new and exciting opportunities efficiently and with resolve. ELAC has some of the most active committee members of any campus community in the entire country, and these recommendations

are not designed to alter or dampen any of that. Instead, these recommendations are meant to complement the uniquely innate zest for committee service here at ELAC. When given ample input and feedback to sufficiently tailor them to the needs of the campus community, these recommendations will help to keep ELAC at the forefront of educational stewardship and leadership, and help to ensure continued success for the spectacular students at ELAC into the future. Go Huskies!!