

## Interim Report to Higher Learning Commission

In response to the issues raised during the site visit conducted in the spring of 2018, Johnson County Community College (JCCC) filed an interim report regarding actions taken by the institution to address the concern raised by the site team at conclusion of the April 30-May 2, 2018 site visit. Specifically the team recommended an interim report “outlining the academic governance structure including academic leadership, academic and faculty committees and faculty including adjunct faculty to include communication processes and protocols between the committees, leadership, and faculty; the outline of shared governance protocols and communication between faculty, academic leadership and JCCC leadership; and an outline of decision-making protocols as well as communication protocols when decisions are final.”

The follow-up staff analysis of the interim report submitted in the summer of 2019 indicated:

“The institution is required to submit an additional report on faculty voice within the shared governance system at JCCC. The report, to be submitted no later than May 1, 2020, should include, at minimum, the following: 1) A narrative describing the College’s efforts to resolve confusion pertaining to faculty voice, and in particular the resolution of the existing “two body” faculty governance issue; 2) Specific policies pertaining to faculty voice within the shared governance system that have emerged from these efforts; and 3) Documentation from FA and/or Faculty Senate policies providing clear delineation of responsibility and authority.”

To address the requested follow-up by the Higher Learning Commission, two task forces were formed. The **Academic Shared Governance Task Force** was composed of Division representatives (one full-time faculty from each division), two adjunct faculty representatives elected at-large, and one member of Counseling Faculty. The charge of the Task Force was “To research and provide a recommendation to the CAO on an appropriate policy structure for faculty shared governance complete with an operational practices framework for the policy structure.”

The second task force formed was in response to the reference in the HLC feedback report to address faculty voice “within the shared governance system.” The President’s Cabinet noted that while there were indirect policies and processes related to shared governance there was not a strong policy or structure. The President formed the **Institutional Shared Governance Task Force**, with representation that included senior administration, professional and hourly staff, two full-time faculty members, and one adjunct faculty member. The faculty were elected to serve by the Academic Branch and other positions were appointed by the Cabinet. The Task Force also opted to add an additional member, the Vice President of Student Government to represent the student voice.

The charge of the Task Force was to “Research and provide a recommendation to the Cabinet regarding an appropriate policy structure for institution-wide shared governance.”

Additionally, the Task Force was requested to “Research and provide a recommendation to the Cabinet regarding an operational framework for the policy structure.”

### **Academic Shared Governance Task Force**

The Academic Shared Governance Taskforce focused on philosophies, policies, structures, and procedures within the academic branch only. The Institutional Shared Governance Taskforce focused on the overarching aspects of shared governance for the entire College. Philosophy statements developed by the Shared Governance Taskforce and the Institutional Shared Governance Taskforce complement each other.

All members of the Academic Shared Governance Taskforce attended weekly meetings, treated each other with dignity, respect and support, and worked toward transparency in processes and in communications to constituents. Academic Shared Governance Taskforce members were genuine and honest with each other about ideas, challenges, and instincts, listened first to understand and not be dismissive of input received, and practiced being open-minded while thinking of the future and leaving behind the past. Academic Shared Governance Taskforce discussed issues rather than people and focused on the overall good of the students and JCCC.

Johnson County Community College formed the Academic Shared Governance Taskforce composed of one representative, full-time faculty, from each academic division, two representatives from the adjunct faculty, two representatives from the instructional dean’s council, one representative each from the Educational Affairs committee, the Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Association. The Academic Shared Governance Taskforce determined, after conducting a survey of existing conditions, that it should focus on a new faculty governance structure and best practices. The Academic Shared Governance Taskforce reviewed four dimensions of a governance structure: (1) equitable distribution of labor, (2) shared authority and responsibility, (3) communication, and (4) effective decision making.

Academic Shared Governance Taskforce members communicated frequently with constituents. The chair for the Academic Shared Governance Taskforce sent a weekly email to all adjunct and full-time faculty reporting the discussions and decisions of the Academic Shared Governance Taskforce. All minutes and documents generated through the work completed were maintained on an internal server, and all meetings were open to visitors.

The Academic Shared Governance Taskforce approached the charge with both process and political questions in mind. Several questions had to be addressed in the evaluation: Does the current governance structure foster an equal distribution of faculty involvement and move decision making along in a reasonable fashion? Is it structured in a way that is understandable to

all faculty members? Does it facilitate proper communication between committees? Is it too bureaucratic? Does it meet the administration's needs?

The role of the Faculty Association was well defined, and the Bylaws for the Association are Appendix A. The JCCC Faculty Association (FA) is the legally recognized bargaining agent representing all full-time faculty members at JCCC. The FA is affiliated with the Kansas National Education Association and the National Education Association. For more than 40 years the FA has negotiated the Master Agreement with the Board of Trustees of Johnson County Community College. The Master Agreement is the legally binding contract that defines the terms and conditions of employment at JCCC as a full-time faculty member. The FA's role at JCCC, however, has always and continues to go beyond those tied to its legal status as a negotiating agent. It continually acts to represent the full-time faculty in discussions with the administration regarding matters outside the Master Agreement, sends faculty representatives to sit on key committees when asked, and works with the administration in a number of ways to strengthen instruction at the College. The FA also serves as the elected conduit of communication between full-time faculty and the Board of Trustees.

The Academic Shared Governance Taskforce used a survey to identify issues across the Academic Branch in need of solutions. The survey was electronic, which allowed anonymity in the pursuit of honest responses. At the same time, it provided data on governance issues as perceived by the faculty.

Throughout the process of evolving shared governance philosophy, policies, and procedures, the Academic Shared Governance Taskforce held listening sessions the academic branch was invited to attend and participated in two Town Hall meetings in conjunction with the Institutional Shared Governance Task Force for the entire campus community.

The Academic Shared Governance Taskforce conducted an academic branch vote on shared governance philosophy, policies, and procedures and a model for branch governance during spring 2020. Those eligible to vote on shared governance included all full-time academic branch staff, adjunct faculty, and full-time faculty.

The faculty, adjunct faculty, and academic full-time staff approved the new model of an Academic Branch Council and philosophy statement by a majority vote. As a result of the vote, the Faculty Senate is no longer part of the academic governance model, and the Academic Branch Council (ABC) has been adopted as the preferred model for communication.

### **Expectations of the ABC**

- Topics that might impact specific stakeholders (to include but not be limited to existing branch committees) will be brought to those stakeholders for consideration.

- When stakeholders reach decisions the ABC will bring without prejudice the decisions of those stakeholders to the CAO.
- The ABC will commit to sharing all relevant information in order to facilitate the most educated decisions possible by the branch committees or by branch vote where deemed appropriate.

### **Membership of Academic Branch Council**

A chair and vice chair will be elected from and by the academic branch. The following groups will determine representation on the ABC. Each group will determine how the representative is to be selected.

- The Chief Academic Officer of JCCC
- One member of the future Adjunct Faculty Council
- One member of the Instructional Chairs Council
- One member of the Academic Staff Member
- One member of the Faculty Association
- One member of the Instructional Deans Council
- One member of College Scholars Committee
- One member of Online Learning Advisory Council
- One member of Educational Affairs Committee
- One member of Portfolio Review Committee
- One member of Program Review Committee
- One member of Faculty Development Advisory Committee
- One member of Sabbatical Committee
- One member of Calendar Committee
- One member of Ed Tech Advisory Committee

### **Responsibilities of Academic Branch Council**

The Academic Branch Council recommends directly to the Chief Academic Officer on such matters as the following:

- Appropriate Faculty Decision-Making Issues
  - Decisions about what should be voted on and by whom, should a vote be determined to be appropriate.
  - ABC may create a taskforce or ad hoc committee to investigate and offer policy suggestions on issues that do not fall within the purview of a standing academic branch-wide committee
- Responsibility for All-Faculty Meeting
  - Facilitation of branch voting (faculty, staff, adjunct faculty)

- Organize and conduct All-Faculty Meeting in both the Fall and Spring semester
- ABC will supply the faculty regularly with information relevant to its participation in the formulation of the priorities of JCCC and will supply the faculty yearly with information relevant to these priorities.
- Communication across the branch
  - Sharing reports of special and standing committees.
  - Communicates work by the ABC to the General Faculty.
  - ABC will be responsible to plan the agenda for meetings of the faculty in order to provide for timely and appropriate discussion of faculty business and to provide accurate information about matters of concern to the faculty.
  - In its role as coordinating committee of the academic branch, the ABC will communicate regularly with members of standing academic branch-wide committees.
    - Faculty representatives of standing committees who have concerns about branch-wide issues of shared governance relevant to their committees should report those concerns to the ABC.
    - The ABC will consider these concerns and, where it deems appropriate, formally address them in regular ABC meetings.
    - On matters deemed to be of general concern, ABC may report directly to the academic branch, or request that standing academic branch-wide committees do so.

### **Institutional Shared Governance Task Force**

As noted previously, the President appointed the Institutional Shared Governance Task Force (ISGTF) to make recommendations to the cabinet regarding policies and structures to strengthen institution wide shared governance.

Membership of the Institutional Shared Governance Task Force included the following:

- 3 Cabinet members (CAO, VP Continuing Education, AVP Strategic Communication and Marketing)
- Director of Financial Aid
- AVP, Chief Financial Officer
- Administrative Assistant (hourly)
- Director, Human Resources
- Professor, Economics

- Professor, Librarian
- Adjunct Professor, Humanities
- Student, Vice President Student Senate
- Director, Assessment, Evaluation and Institutional Outcomes (Facilitator)

To accomplish the goals of the Institutional Shared Governance Task Force the team members looked to other examples of shared governance in higher education, identifying several models in both two-year community colleges and four-year institutions. These models were used as reference points when writing the institutional Philosophy Statement and designing the Operational Framework.

The ISGTF met weekly and published minutes for the campus community each Monday. The ISTGF hosted campus-wide Town Halls in November, Professional Development Meetings in January, and listening sessions in March. The feedback received during these sessions on the Philosophy Statement and Operational Framework documents and models related to a College Council helped inform changes and refinement before submission of recommendations to the President's Cabinet. Final documents and models were submitted by the ISGTF to the Cabinet on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 for approval. The Philosophy Statement, Operational Framework, as approved by the Cabinet, are located in the Appendix B.

The ISGTF also recommended to the President's Cabinet that a follow-up task force be formed to address staff voice on the campus. When reviewing shared governance models the ISGTF members noted a lack of a formal structure to represent staff voice. This recommendation was approved by the Cabinet and will be acted on in the late spring or early summer.

The Board of Trustees received an updated on the activities of the two task forces during their March, 2020 Board retreat. Additionally, the Shared Governance Philosophy statement was presented to the Board of Trustees by Dr. Sopcich at the April, 2020 board meeting. The board acknowledge the statement and the hard work of the College campus in addressing this topic.

### **Summary**

The College has benefitted greatly from the work of the two Task Forces charged with examining both the Academic Branch Governance and Institutional Governance of the institution. It has allowed the College to engage in meaningful discussions, and find areas of both disagreement and shared vision.

Having completed this initial work, the next charge for institution is putting the best practices and policies identified into practice, and interweaving the governance models into the culture of

the institution. In the short term the College will take the following steps to encourage this process:

- Appoint a Staff Shared Governance Task Force to identify a mechanism for including staff in shared governance.
- Review and evaluate current bylaws and procedures for existing Committees and Task Forces to incorporate best practices identified in the Institutional Shared Governance Framework.
- Ensure current technology and resources, such as the College's intranet, are available and ready to facilitate stronger communication of minutes and updates required of best practices identified.