

It certainly has *not* been an ordinary, “business as usual” kind of year for the MJC Academic Senate. The Fall semester began with a personal challenge, as I recovered from emergency spine surgery, and the Spring semester ended with a collective health emergency and our college transitioning to teaching and learning from a social distance. To tell the truth, the year has been more of a white-knuckled, rollercoaster ride. And completely unanticipated. But, the Academic Senate has tried to keep focus on our two guiding principles this year—action and creative collaboration—and with the extraordinary collegiality of our trustees, district, college and student leaders, and faculty and classified professionals, the wild ride has been more than bearable, it’s actually been energizing and inspiring in many ways. So, I’d like to begin by thanking all of you for an unforgettable year.

Some of the projects undertaken by the Academic Senate this year have had unexpected challenges. The Senate passed a resolution early in the academic year supporting educational opportunities for [incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students](#) in Stanislaus county, and we’ve actually been able to begin a pilot program at the Sherriff’s REACT facility off of Crows Landing. It appears further advances in this pilot project will be untenable in the near future given the prohibition of entering the facilities, but know that the senate will continue to give attention and energy to the development of this important program.

One of the principle Academic Senate projects of the year, a multiple day professional development conference at Asilomar with participation from MIT, Cabrillo, Columbia and Merced Colleges, never happened. But we are now launching a variety of summer and fall 2020 virtual professional development activities that include communities of practice, book discussion groups, remote conferences, partnerships with the state Academic Senate and professional development opportunities from Oxford and Wesleyan Universities. In other words, we’ve tried to find ways to take action, working with others while cultivating a sense of belonging, even when physical space separates us.

And instead of our normal twice-a-month Senate meetings in the Library Annex basement, the Academic Senate has tried to adapt to the needs of the college in our new reality. One good example of this is the Senate co-hosting a *Grading During Covid-19 Townhall* with the college vice-presidents to aid over 120 faculty participants as they confronted the challenges of grades this semester.

Moreover, the Academic Senate, Curriculum Committee and the Guided Pathways implementation team have all committed to working this summer and being a part of participatory governance during extraordinary times. We hope to aid quick, collaborative decision-making in times of crisis in relation to budget processes and other vital academic and professional matters, such as re-envisioning our college shared governance model, rolling out Guided Pathways Schools, establishing a policy in regards to Credit for Prior Learning and creating recommendations on the [Academic Calendar](#).

One final hallmark goal of the Academic Senate this year has been to develop and implement a teaching and learning center, the [Institute for Applied Creativity and Community Transformation, or ACCT](#). During the Fall 2019 semester, over 75 faculty, students, classified professionals and college and community leaders gathered for [four Academic Senate sponsored workshops](#) dedicated to the exploration and expansion of active learning models at MJC. We now are working on digital workshops, virtual communities of practice and other online, action-oriented activities which will give opportunities to work together creatively to seek innovation.

But, these Academic Senate projects are just a small part of all that is being done to assure a bright future for our college and district. Kudos to the MJC Music Department for its recent virtual [Music Showcase](#) which helped raise over \$35,000 for music students, congratulations to Dr. Theresa Rojas for a live-streamed [Latin X Comic Arts Festival](#) and applause for the [Celebration of the Humanities](#), which transitioned all of its events and performances online to highlight the creative accomplishments of our students.

So, despite the frenetic year, much has been accomplished by so many. And while no one could have known last August that this would end up being one of the college's most challenging years, the journey has been made meaningful by the dedication of so many to the mission of our college. Thanks to all of you for making this a great year, despite the many ups and downs. Henry Ford once said that "coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." Thank you for the honor of working with each of you, I know that the rough ride is not over and many challenges are ahead, but in my mind this year has been a success precisely because we've been on the rollercoaster together.