

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR THE MJC PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC SENATE

1. Mission

The Academic Senate of Modesto Junior College will:

- Act as a responsive body to reflect faculty opinion on academic and professional matters;
- Promote the general welfare of Modesto Junior College and the Yosemite Community College District;
- Consult collegially with the YCCD Board on academic and professional matters. The Senate will, after sober and thoughtful deliberation, participate in the formation of District policies by recommending those actions deemed most likely to advance the education of the students of the District. The Senate will be mindful of the importance of its recommendations, recognizing that, in those instances where the Board has elected in Policy 4103 to rely primarily upon the advice and judgment of the Senate, those recommendations may be rejected only in exceptional circumstances and for compelling reasons, and that, in those instances where the Board has elected to provide for mutual agreement with the Senate, those recommendations will be the basis for any new District policy and the current policy must prevail unless continuing with such policy exposes the District to legal liability or causes substantial financial hardship.
- Participate in the governance of the College and District, assisting in the implementation of policy through the Senate committees, and by directing its officers to carry Senate resolutions to the College and District Councils.

2. Core Values

- **Leadership:** The Academic Senate champions the leadership role of faculty at Modesto Junior College in academic and professional matters and fosters effective faculty participation in governance to effect change. The Academic Senate facilitates and supports the development of faculty leaders and expects accountability from its leaders. The Senate models effective leadership and promotes the inclusion of leaders from various backgrounds and experiences in order to represent all faculty.
- **Empowerment:** The Academic Senate empowers faculty through its publications, resources, activities, policies, and presentations. The Academic Senate works to empower faculty from diverse backgrounds and experiences in order to promote inclusiveness and equity in all of their forms.
- **Voice:** The Academic Senate promotes faculty primacy in academic and professional matters as established in statute and regulation. The Academic Senate serves as the voice of the faculty on academic and professional issues in college and district consultation and decision-making. The Senate values thoughtful discourse and deliberation that incorporates diverse perspectives as a means of reaching reasoned and beneficial results.
- **Collegiality:** The Senate collaborates with statewide organizations, and with administrators, trustees, students, and others, to develop and maintain effective relationships. The Senate believes that collaboration among faculty and with other college constituencies improves professional decisions. The Senate is respectful in its working relationships and promotes civility as important to foster collegiality.
- **Professionalism:** The Senate actively promotes the development and communication of professional standards, and the use of best practices as a professional expectation. In all its activities, the Academic Senate adheres to the highest professional ethics and standards.

3. Charge

Section 53200, Sub-Chapter 2, Academic Senate, of the Title 5 Regulations, stipulates that the Academic Senate's primary function, as the representative of the faculty, is to make recommendations to the administration of the college and to the governing board of a district with respect to academic and professional matters.

“Academic and professional matters” means the following policy development and implementation matters:

1. Curriculum, including establishing prerequisites and placing courses within disciplines;
2. Degree and certificate requirements;
3. Grading policies;
4. Educational program development;
5. Standards or policies regarding student preparation and success;
6. District and college governance structures, as related to faculty roles;
7. Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes, including self-study and annual reports;
8. Policies for faculty professional development activities;
9. Processes for program review;
10. Processes for institutional planning and budget development; and
11. Other academic and professional matters as mutually agreed upon between the governing board and the Academic Senate.

4. Senate Structure

—Executive Board Officers

- President
- President-Elect
- Secretary
- Parliamentarian
- Legislative Analyst
- Immediate Past President

—Standing Committees of the Academic Senate

- Curriculum Committee
- Accreditation/Institutional Effectiveness Committee
- Professional Development Committee

5. Senate's Participation in College Standing Committees and Councils

- College Council
- Distance Education Advisory Committee
- District Council
- Diversity and Community Committee
- Resource Allocation Committee
- Technology Committee

6. Role of the Academic Senate of Modesto Junior College

AB 1725 created law and regulation to assure “effective participation” of the Academic Senate in participatory decision-making in governance of California Community Colleges and to ensure that the local governing board engages in “collegial consultation” with the academic senate on matters that are academic and professional in nature. “Effective Participation” means that affected parties must be afforded opportunity to review and comment upon recommendations, proposals, etc., having given due and reasonable consideration to those comments.

In addition, the academic senate retains its primacy in what is known as the “10+1” issues on academic and professional matters. This concept is defined by legal requirements. The Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) Board of Trustees and the Modesto Junior College (MJC) Academic Senate are obligated to “consult collegially” on Academic and Professional (10 + 1) issues that come before the YCCD Board of Trustees for action (YCCD Board Policy 4103, Education Code Sections C.A.C. Title 5, Section 53200 et. Seq.).

There are Academic and Professional issues on which the YCCD Board of Trustees has agreed to “rely primarily” on the recommendations of the MJC Academic Senate. The “rely primarily” areas are:

- Curriculum, including establishing prerequisites and placing courses within disciplines
- Degree and certificate requirements
- Grading policies
- Faculty role and involvement in accreditation process, including the self-study and annual reports
- Faculty professional development

“Rely Primarily” means that the Board must ordinarily accept the Senate’s recommendations except when “exceptional circumstances and compelling reasons” exist for the Board not to accept the Senate’s recommendations. In instances where a recommendation is not accepted, the reasons for the YCCD Board’s decision must be communicated to the MJC Academic Senate in writing and based on a clear and substantive rationale which puts the explanation for the decision in an accurate, appropriate, and relevant context.

There are Academic and Professional issues on which the YCCD Board of Trustees and MJC Academic Senate reach “mutually agreement”. The “mutually agree” areas are:

- Education program development
- Student preparation and success
- Program review
- Institutional planning and budget development
- District and college governance structures
- Others as may be mutually agreed upon by the Academic Senates and the Board of Trustees

“Mutual Agreement” means that recommendations shall be prepared by either the MJC Academic Senate or the YCCD Board’s designee, and are subsequently ratified by both. The Academic Senate and the YCCD Board’s designee will strive for consensus on those matters. If, after good faith effort, “mutual agreement” cannot be reached, existing policy shall remain in effect unless continuing with such policy exposes the District to legal liability or causes substantial fiscal hardship, which the YCCD Board shall promptly communicate in writing to the MJC Academic Senate.

On issues relating to Institutional Planning and Budget Development, any recommendation with implications for Academic and Professional matters prepared by the MJC Academic Senate or the YCCD Board’s designee will be submitted in a timely matter to both the Academic Senate and the designee for review. Such issues include, but are not limited to, faculty hiring prioritization and program elimination occasioned by financial necessity. If, after good faith effort, the designee and the Senate are unable to reach consensus on planning and budget recommendations, they will make separate proposals to the Board.

Concerning Academic and Professional matters, “While in the process of consulting collegially, the academic senate shall retain the right to meet with or to appear before the governing board with respect to the views, recommendations, or proposals of the senate. In addition, after consultation with the administration of the college and/or district, the academic senate may present its views and recommendations to the governing board” [Title 5 Section 53203(c)]. The Academic Senate will be given reasonable accommodation in doing so.

7. Products

- Senate Rules and Bylaws
- Senate Agendas and Meeting Minutes
- Senate Resolutions
- Yosemite Community College District Policy and Procedures (District-wide collaborative efforts)
- Senate Website
- Email Updates and Communications