

Integrated Student Success Committee



Meeting Minutes

Friday, September 4, 2020

Zoom Meeting: 8:30am-10:30am



Present: Jake Aharonian, Andrea Alexander, Paulette Bell, Li Collier, Anne Donegan, Robert Ethington, K Frindell Teuscher, Luz Garcia, Regina Guerra, Michael Hale, Robert Holcomb, Blair Lamb, Matthew Long, Daniela Kingwill, Regina Mahiri, Sean Martin, Amy Merkel, Lisset Miranda, Amanda Morrison, Geoff Navarro, Purnur Ozbirinci, Inge Stockburger, Victor Tam, Eric Thompson, Michelle Vidaurri, Vanessa Luna Shannon, Kyle Wallstrum and Hilleary Zarate, Delashay Carmona Benson

Guests: Smita Avasthi, Laura Aspinall, Pedro Avila, Riva Bruenn, Chris Cullen, Malena Hernandez Legorreta, Karen Morris, Candy Owens, Jennifer Perez, Maria Randazzo, Megan Rhodes, Roam Romagnoli and Zee Salman

Absent: Hector Delgado and Brandon Repp

Welcome

Icebreaker: Dr. Amanda Morrison facilitated getting to know each other icebreaker with multiple breakout rooms.

Introduction to Equity Topic

Pedro thanked everyone on the committee for being dedicated to equity work. We need to be direct and intentional about the work that needs to happen at the JC. This committee will be instrumental in leading the work going forward. Pedro provided some background on SEA which included the four areas SEA is required to address by the state:

- a. Maintain a student equity plan
- b. Provide matriculation services
- c. Adopt and implement AB705
- d. Provide all non-exempt students with an ed plan.

Pedro stated that there are changes happening in student services that help support our Petaluma campus better and as a result, some staff will be re-assigned. One of the outcomes of the changes leaves a vacancy for the Director of Student Equity. There is no intent to eliminate the position as there is critical work that needs to be done across the district and it's an opportunity to re-think how we manage and do equity across the district. Previously, faculty have expressed interest in being more engaged with the equity work and this is an opportunity to elevate the work! Currently the position is

housed in Student Services, but equity is everyone's work and with these changes, we can be impactful across campuses.

Michael asked if there was a timeline for a decision to be made concerning the Director of Student Equity position. Pedro acknowledged that time is of the essence and the plan is to start conversations with the senate and the campus community. The process for the position will go through shared governance and it is highly important that faculty be included in the process.

Pedro requested that the Academic Senate be included in the conversations concerning the vacant position as there may be some overlap with the work and Guided Pathways work groups.

Centering Ourselves in the Student Experience

Students Karen, Maria, Miranda and Zee provided their current experiences and answered the following prompts:

- a. Is there something you wish SRJC knew about either the complexities or benefits to our current remote learning and pandemic experience?
- b. Are there strategies or support the SRJC has provided recently that has been particularly helpful to you?
- c. What are the areas where we may be falling short?

Student responses included: the online environment allows for someone working full time to continue their education and was their preference over night classes. Teachers are assigning just reading or text work but aren't offering any lectures that explain what is being read. Verbal instruction is preferred for some. During the registration process, classes appeared to be online via zoom, but once class started, they began asynchronous. Recommended there be a cohesiveness around the scheduling during registration so students don't have adjust their schedules too much. Professors are responding late to emails and messages from students. There should be more flexibility as not all students are tech savvy.

Committee Revisions

Several committee structure changes were suggested. They were:

- a. Change ISSC meeting times from 8:30-11:30 am to 9:00-10:30 am.
- b. Make the 3rd Friday of each month a regular standing meeting (instead of as needed) for teamwork.
- c. The Senior Dean, Counseling and Student Success is appointed as the Co-Chair by position and would change to the Vice President, Student Services as the Co-Chair or designee.
- d. The position Director, Student Equity is appointed by position and would change to the Dean of Students or designee.
- e. The position Dean, Student Services, Petaluma Campus would be appointed by position and the title changed to Executive Dean, SRJC Petaluma or designee.

Using the poll feature in Zoom, the changes were approved by consensus.

Discussion on Committee Appointments

Michael read a statement from 10 current and former ISSC members regarding the Academic Senate Executive Committee's appointment to this committee. The statement was sent to the Executive Committee and he stated no response was received. Therefore, he was bringing up the subject during this meeting in order to make public the objections and ideas contained in the statement.

Michael's statement was as follows:

"We have enjoyed reading the statements of solidarity with Black Lives Matters throughout the summer and with our colleagues who were recently subjected to a racist attack this week. At the beginning of the summer we were particularly impressed with the Senate Executive Committee statement challenging us with 'identifying and dismantling racist institutional practices and structures at the college and aligning the colleges budget with anti-racist values. Commitment to building an anti-racist equitable institution and in doing work that reflects equity, diversity and inclusion in all matters related to the sentence 10 + 1.'

Personally speaking, I have enjoyed my working relationship with Julie Thompson over the last several months regarding the BSU demands. I have watched her grow and take bold leadership on several important issues. It has been wonderful to watch and a wonderful to work with other Senate members.

But that is why the appointment of Eric Thompson to the ISSC was so baffling to us. But this is not just focused on Eric exclusively. I call on everyone in a leadership position, as I did in my DL.staff.all, to conduct a serious self-reflection about what this moment in American history is demanding. If you do not have a demonstrable history of anti-racist and anti-sexist action along with a commitment to deep equity work, then you should consider stepping down so that somebody with that experience can step up. In my DL.staff.all email I called on the administration and faculty leadership to create pathways for people to step down gracefully without judgment into lateral or adjacent positions. I stand with by this call as one of the only mechanisms to truly make Black Lives Matter more than just a slogan, or more than performative allyship at SRJC. We must be prepared to sacrifice more.

What do we believe qualifies someone to be a faculty leader for ISSC? 1: A demonstrated commitment to equity initiatives that remove systemic barriers to underserved populations. 2: A history of working with the most marginalized and under resourced students at SRJC, specifically, Black, Indigenous, and people of color. I think Luz Garcia's leadership last year is a great example of that. 3: A record of inclusive leadership across all campus groups: staff, faculty, administrators and students. 4: A person informed by the data analysis of equity metrics, academic metrics, equity reports and research instruments. We want someone who is not data adverse. (That is what I said in my breakout meeting. I feel like I work at one of the most data adverse institutions that I've ever worked, and I've worked over 10 colleges.)"

Michael stated the committee needs a faculty leader to reflect the ideas contained in the statement.

Chris said he had been a member of this committee for last few years. He was worried about someone who has not been doing the work the last two years would be joining or leading the committee. He was frustrated with the pattern of obstructionism at SRJC, of authoritarian approach that obstructs initiatives which are not perfect but are meant to end in lower equity gaps. He stated the person that was appointed has been very much against many of these state initiatives, from Guided Pathways on, and many of the other initiatives that are meant to lower equity gaps, to raise completion rates.

Chris continued by saying that this committee needs somebody who has a record of inclusive leadership; someone who has served on the committee in the recent years; somebody with the right temperament, who can take criticism, who can lead by example; someone who is committed to the equity work, and someone who is BIPOC. Christ stated with Eric Thompson, he was frustrated by the disrespectful manner that he addressed the Senate meeting this week and that Eric had not been to this committee meeting in the last two years except to cast a vote, and he was not involved in the committee work. He stated that people who are passionate about equity work tried to sign up for this committee and were not selected.

Anne stated a need to clarify the statement that Michael presented was received by the Senate Executive Committee at 3:21am that very morning and that it responded to at 9:36 this morning, which needed to be on the record.

Amanda stated that there have been a number of letters sent to the Academic Senate Executive Committee by other individuals that were sent earlier than 3 am, but it is true that the co-signed letter came very late and there was a sense of urgency in doing it this way.

Amanda stated there is a culture at SRJC, and at all colleges, of a divide between student affairs and academic affairs. She believed this divide is hurtful when it comes to ISSC because some faculty leaders consider any programs that do not take place within classroom to have very little value. She said a lot of people who run these programs are classified staff and the classified staff at SRJC are much more racially diverse. She believed faculty leaders need to understand that the classified professionals feel marginalized and underrecognized despite the data showing the programs they are involved in do make some dramatic improvements in the equity situation.

Laura pointed out she also was not reappointed to ISSC and found that very disappointing. She said she served on the committee since the early days of student success and equity work. She hoped that her not being appointed meant that a person of BIPOC faculty would take her seat, but this was not the case. Instead, three out of four members of the Executive Committee now serve on ISSC. These objections were raised at the Senate Retreat on the Friday previous and Eric Thompson said he did not want to be on ISSC, and yet he still occupies the seat.

Eric stated he found Michael's statement respectful and agreed with it and was anxious to relinquish any position of leadership, especially to a BIPOC person. He stated his deep commitment to diversification and has been made it a priority in his life. He pointed out the people who spoke about him here did not know his background, and that there were specific reasons why the Academic Senate President asked him to serve on this committee. A past-president of the Senate, he did not feel he had an option of refusing. He considered it his duty to serve on this committee as long as the Senate President and the senate Executive Committee desired his to. But he would be happy to relinquish this position to somebody else if the President and the Executive Committee agree to this.

Michael stated that the world is in global uprising for black lives, and that it is a global reckoning. He pointed out that during this time the ISSC was being led by someone who is saying he doesn't want the position. Michael called on Eric Thompson to step down, and call on the committee to make a motion so that the committee can vote no confidence in the appointments. He said this would send a message to the Senate President that a new composition of this body is needed, that we need a new faculty chair, and new consideration who should be on this committee.

Michael made the following motion: “that ISSC take a vote of no confidence in the Senate Executive Committee's faculty appointments, specifically but not exclusively the faculty chair appointment. We would like appointments to prioritize BIPOC faculty and people with backgrounds in equity work.”

Daniela stated there is imbalance of power on this committee as a whole where there are 10 administrators, 13 faculty members but only four classified professionals and four students. She was also concerned that many people on the committee are not speaking because of fear. She stated that several people who wanted to be on this committee were not selected and asked how these decisions made.

Sean stated that this is a historic moment to act responsibly with the goal of addressing systemic racism and our community needs. He thought it is also important for everyone to understand how this committee fits within the structure that has been developed in order to meet the educational needs of our community. He stated that there is a reason for the particular purview that exists both in the law and in regulation, and that it has been developed and fought for over many decades. The reason for the 10+1 purview of the Academic Senate was that the state legislature in California felt that the mission of the Community College system would be better served if the educators had a significant role in shaping the institution so that it would meet students' needs, and so the faculty does play outsize role in this for good and wise reasons.

Sean continued that historically there always were profound differences and disagreements, and different approaches to the work this committee is doing. This requires people with various backgrounds and a more nuanced, thoughtful and compassionate approach to move ahead with the work of this committee. He believed the committee should take a pause, and think about its function, why it is structured the way it is, and how we can change it in order to provide equitable opportunities that benefit individuals in our community and the community as a whole, and the best way to do this is to ensure that the faculty are integrated. Sean stated that nobody is claiming that all the work happens in the classroom, that he recognized the work being done with students, especially BIPOC students, who are facing enormous economic and sociological struggles that need to be attended outside of the classroom. There are ways that this work may be made more effective if faculty are directly involved.

Matthew pointed out that a motion was put in the “chat.”

Chris endorsed the motion and wanted to respond to Eric and Sean. He said he has watched over the last several years as these initiatives, and in fact all this work was obstructed. He did not believe they honestly wanted to move ahead with this work. He clarified that nobody is talking about removing all the faculty from this committee, but that students and the classified staff is where most diversity on at the college was currently found, and that we find most of our white men, like him, in the faculty positions. He stated that there were many people at SRJC who do not feel safe and were are afraid to speak up due to the leadership style being used, which included the committee appointments. Chris supported a vote of no confidence and believed we should rethink the committee and who is making the appointments as the Senate Executive is also an obstruction against the policies the committee is working on.

Andrea Alexander seconded the motion, and Matthew pointed out that we were in discussion on the motion.

Li reminded everyone that only committee members can vote. Guests cannot, and that the options for the vote are: Yes, No, and Abstain.

Sean stated that the language of the motion was ambiguous, and he was not sure what voting yes or no would mean.

Michael clarified that voting yes would be a vote for no confidence.

Sean pointed out that there were two points in the motion: one is a vote of no confidence and the other is a question of whether we would like to prioritize BIPOC faculty; these were two distinctive questions.

Li questioned if it would be clearer to have two separate motions: one on the chair appointment and the second one on the faculty appointments.

Michael stated that both of the issues are tied together because BIPOC faculty were not prioritized in the appointments, and therefore the two questions were connected; a vote of no confidence would be sent to the Senate President and back to the Academic Senate to reconsider appointments.

Anne stated that when members of this committee were selected, there was no faculty person of color who was not placed on the committee. She pointed out that Laura was not appointed to the committee because she had not put her candidacy in.

Laura clarified that she submitted her name after the second call and wrote Eric personally to apologize for missing the first call. She was told twice that she was appointed to the committee, but just received email saying she was not, with no explanation as to the reason.

A vote by Zoom poll was conducted and Regina stated the vote results as 67% yes, 7% no, 26% abstain. Li stated that there was a 2/3 majority and the vote passed, and the committee would need to communicate to the Academic Senate President.

Michael offered to draft an email regarding the vote and expressed his appreciation for everyone voting.

Laura clarified that the vote percentages which may be a bit skewed because most of those who abstained were guests and therefore should not count for the vote total.

Anne said that since this committee is so dependent upon using data, it needs to be collected properly. Election results are data. Allowing non-voters access to voting can muddy the results and therefore we should have a roll call vote.

Li reminded everyone that she asked non-members not to vote at all, and we could check with the guests to see which of them might have voted.

Matthew stated that we could just do a roll call vote, which then commenced with the following votes:

1. Robert E: Yes
2. Li C: Yes
3. Hector: Absent
4. Matthew L: Yes
5. Robert H: Abstain
6. Hilleary Z: Yes
7. Michelle V: Yes

8. Sean Martin: No (with the explanation that the motion misconstrued and distorts the process and intent of the senate exec)
9. Regina M: Yes
10. Amanda M: Yes
11. Inge S.: Yes
12. Kyle W: Abstain
13. Jake A: Abstain
14. Andrea A: Yes
15. Paulette B: No
16. Anne D: No
17. Luz N-G: Yes
18. Michael H: Yes
19. Daniela K: Yes
20. Amy M: Yes
21. Geoff N: Yes
22. Purnur: Yes
23. K. F-T: Abstain
24. Eric T: No (with same caveat as Sean. He would vote yes on a part if the motion was divided)
25. Regina G: Yes
26. Lisset M: Yes
27. Brandon R: Absent
28. Delashay C B: Absent

The results of the roll call vote were: 17 yes, 4 no, 4 abstain, 3 absent. Li stated that the motion passed.

Next Meeting Agenda/Wrap-up

The next committee meeting will be held on Friday, October 2, 2020 via Zoom. We will be reviewing the committee's functions and setting up the teams. Orientation materials will be made available to committee members to review at any time.

Meeting Chat

If you would like to see the Zoom chat for this meeting, please see document Appendix A, 9-4-20 ISSC Chat.

Meeting adjourned at 10:31am.