

Institution: Delta College

Chief Executive Officer: Michael Gavin

Date Submitted: August 30, 2022

Action: “Given the current time of change at the College, with policies shifting to different sites and policy ownership within the College, it is important for the institution to provide the Higher Learning Commission a monitoring report mapping the location, ownership of institutional policies, and final language of institutional policies including its revised governance policy. This interim report will be due to the Higher Learning Commission September 1, 2022.”

Core Component 5.B

The institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution’s financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution’s governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

Areas of Focus: Policies and Governance

Introduction

Delta College, through an inclusive process, developed a new governance structure that addresses the manifold concerns that were raised during the prior Higher Learning Commission (HLC) site visit. The new structure:

1. Identifies what qualifies as policy-level decisions and defers those to the Board of Trustees;
2. Re-aligns employee and student success governance divisions to be, for the most part procedural, and vetted through a new governance body on campus;
3. Distinguishes between work-rule groups (faculty and facilities unions; Administrative Professional (A/P) and Support Staff (SS) groups), and institutional effectiveness and student success deliberating bodies.

Historical/Institutional Context for the Governance Issue

In 2017, Delta College administration, with the support of the Board of Trustees, made a decision to restructure the Instruction and Learning Services division in order to respond to the “fiduciary responsibilities” that were presented to them at the time. That restructuring consisted of hiring five Associate Deans in place of five chairs, thereby eliminating the division chair position and a majority of the release time associated with those positions. The decision caused concern on campus as a majority

of faculty felt that the decision, made without their input, violated governance norms and policies. Much of this concern originated from the lack of a common understanding among faculty, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees about the definition of 'shared governance' and what decisions required collaboration and which did not.

Prior to this decision, the policy-vetting body on campus was the Senate, with the President and Board of Trustees being the policy-setting bodies. The Senate, through October of 2020, was comprised of all full-time faculty, A/P, and SS. The purview of the Senate was to recommend to the President and, if relevant, the Board of Trustees, policies and procedures related to work rules as well as student and community-related policies.

Following the reorganization of the Academic area, Faculty spent two years establishing a union, the Delta College Faculty Association (DCFA). With the development of the DCFA, faculty work-rules would be developed through a contract following union rules, and so the work of the Senate as it pertained to faculty was left nebulous at best.

The Members of the other two work-groups within the Senate who were not faculty, the A/P and SS, voted to leave the Senate as a result of the faculty unionizing. The combined departure of two employee groups, along with the establishment of a union to govern work rules, left the remaining Faculty Senate without a clear purpose for policy work. In terms of governance, then, there was very little collaboration and much confusion about what policies and procedures belonged to what body when the HLC team visited. Their observations, correctly, were that:

1. As a result of the development of DCFA, the purpose of the Senate was changed;
2. With the exodus of A/P and SS, the work rules for those groups needed to be relocated to a handbook;
3. College-wide policies (including a shared governance policy) needed to be relocated to a Board Approved Policy Manual;
4. There was no formal shared governance structure in place;
5. The collaboration necessary for the College to fulfill its mission was lacking and there was no official mechanism for such collaboration to occur.

Report Specifics

Collaboration with Administrative/Professional (A/P) and Support Staff (SS) to Create a Handbook

When the faculty voted to unionize, the A/P and SS began to question the model of the Senate. They did not agree with keeping their work rules in the Senate Handbook for input by all three groups that were members of the Senate, as the Faculty work rules would now be established by the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

The A/P and SS formally voted to leave the Senate in February of 2020. The Board approved this action on [Tuesday, November 17, 2020](#).

The leadership of the A/P and SS groups began working with the Human Resources Office to create a [work rules handbook](#). The groups collaborated and, for the most part, moved existing policies and procedures to a central location.

A formal “[process for procedures manual review and comment](#)” procedure exists. If the Administration wishes to change a procedure that impacts the working conditions of either the A/P or SS groups, the procedure is followed to ensure the ability for input and two-way communication.

Approval of Board Approved Policies Manual

Historically, the Senate Handbook served as a form of a board policy manual. All Senate Policies were approved by the Board; the official place to house those policies was the Senate Handbook.

As the Senate membership changed, the Administration took action to consolidate policies that applied to the entire college community. On April 6, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved the “[Collegewide Board Approved Policies](#)” manual. The creation of this manual provides a centralized location for the policies in an easy to access location. The Collegewide Board Approved Policies Manual includes a [Shared Governance Policy](#).

On [August 9, 2022](#), the Board of Trustees approved the move of the remaining “Senate” policies” to this manual.

Development of a New Governance Model to Allow for Collaboration

In August 2021, Dr. Michael Gavin was appointed as the fifth President of Delta College. Upon taking the role, he hosted a variety of listening sessions and contextualized those within the College’s stated mission: “Delta College serves the Great Lakes Bay Region by educating, enriching and empowering our diverse community of learners to achieve their personal, professional and academic goals.” During those listening sessions, coupled with historical review of the College and its accreditation requirements, Dr. Gavin identified a vision for the College and desired that a new governance structure be created to:

1. Ensure the diverse community of learners from the three counties Delta serves were achieving at the same level;
2. Promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission;
3. Employ policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies— including [The Board of Trustees], administration, faculty, staff, and students.
4. Involve [many constituents] in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

The College’s employees, to include the Board of Trustees, however, did not trust that a new governance model would allow for the collaborative element that the HLC Criteria requires, and that the institution needed. As a result, Dr. Gavin presented a draft for a new governance structure that would focus on employee and student success, to include academic requirements and data review of success of all students and employees in a systematic fashion.

Originally, the governance structure was called “Council on Strategic Innovations toward Completion, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging” ([Town Hall Presentation](#)). The model consisted of ten subcommittees focused on equity, belonging, and innovation. Along with this model, Dr. Gavin solicited the leaders of each work group, the Diversity Council, and an Associate Dean to form an ad-hoc bylaws committee for

the Council. He also included adjunct faculty and Facilities Union representatives, to broaden the input, since the previous Senate did not offer a place for their inclusion.

The bylaws were developed and presented at an all-college Town Hall on December 3, 2021. Input from employees across the College was solicited ([recommendations](#)) and incorporated into the bylaws. Those recommendations resulted in a new name of the governance model: Council on Innovation, Belonging, and Equity ([final bylaws](#)). This shared governance model, then, was in alignment with the overall mission of the College and strategic direction of the College: to ensure that the College is creating policies and procedures to assist our diverse student body in succeeding, and that our diverse workforce develops a culture of excellence, innovation, and belonging.

Upon the completion of the CIBE bylaws, volunteers were asked to join subcommittees, and members of each subcommittee created draft charges for their future work. On May 26, those charges were vetted and finalized by the CIBE Advisory Board and Equity Review Committee, and the CIBE therefore came to fruition ([subcommittee charges](#)).

Senate Dissolution

Simultaneous to the development of CIBE, Dr. Gavin worked with the Senate, now comprised only of faculty, to explain the rationale for moving away from the Senate into a new body. Rather than demand that the Senate be dissolved, however, three options were offered to faculty regarding the future of the Senate: they could 1) dissolve the Senate and participate in the CIBE; 2) operate parallel to CIBE, but would have very little, if any purview in procedural or policy-making; or 3) become a subcommittee of CIBE.

The Senate's faculty leadership looked at all three options and held a Town Hall as well. During that Town Hall, they solicited a 'temperature check,' and it was clear most faculty were in support of dissolving the Senate. Faculty leadership therefore created a transition plan that outlined where policies that once lived in the Senate would be located should the Senate dissolve. Ultimately, 91% of the faculty who voted supported the dissolution of the Senate.

DCFA Contract, Board, and Clarity of Work Rules Affecting Faculty

With the ratification and the Board approval of the DCFA contract in June 2022, the work-rules for faculty, which were the origin of much concern regarding the Board of Trustees, administration, and faculty, were resolved. Article II of the DCFA contract establishes Board authority in no uncertain terms ([Collective Bargaining Agreement \(CBA\), Article II](#)). Moreover, the College established a variety of rules through the CBA that had heretofore not been firmed up, to include:

1. how faculty are evaluated ([Article X](#)) in line with the mission of the College to "educate, enrich, empower our diverse community of learners to achieve their personal, professional, and academic goals;"
2. how assessment would systematically and substantively be part of the departmental meetings (Article XIII); and
3. who has authority over the course schedule ([Article XIII](#)).

Conclusion

When the HLC Team visited our College (both virtually and in-person) in 2020, Delta College was in a state of flux regarding policies, procedures, ownership of those policies, and the governance model.

The 2021 – 2022 year included an active process that allowed the College time to work through the uncertainties, onboard a new college president, logically work through policy and procedure ownership, incorporate the new union structure, and to develop new ways to collaborate together.

Through this process, Delta College collaborated to dissolve one governance body, create a new one that aligned with the College’s mission, and ensured the governance system involves: “setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort [and]... engage [our] internal constituencies— including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution’s governance.”

Moreover, the new governance model focuses in on student success, employee culture, and eliminating opportunity gaps for students and employees through the subcommittees of CIBE and new practices for faculty noted in the CBA. As a result, this process, we believe, sets Delta apart for its innovative approach to governance which aligns its strategy with its long-term institutional goals.

Resources Referenced in Document:

November 17, 2020 Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

https://www.delta.edu/board-of-trustees/_documents/2020/11-november/11.17.2020-regular-meeting-minutes-approved.pdf

Support Staff and A/P Handbook

<https://www.delta.edu/employees/ss-ap-handbook/index.html>

Process for Procedures Manual Review and Comment

<https://www.delta.edu/employees/procedures/review-process.html>

Collegewide Board Approved Policies

<https://www.delta.edu/employees/board-approved-policies/index.html>

Shared Governance Board Policy 2.001

<https://www.delta.edu/employees/board-approved-policies/2.001.html>

August 9, 2022 Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

https://www.delta.edu/board-of-trustees/_documents/2022/08-august/08.09.2022-regular-meeting-minutes-draft-tbks.pdf

Town Hall Presentation

https://www.delta.edu/employees/president/_documents/SICIEB_Presentation_12.3.2021.pdf

Recommendations

https://www.delta.edu/employees/president/_documents/Recommendations-supporting-bylaws-002.pdf

CIBE Final Bylaws

<https://www.delta.edu/employees/cibe/index.html>

CIBE Subcommittee Charges

<https://www.delta.edu/employees/cibe/index.html>

Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement

https://www.delta.edu/employment/_documents/dcfa-cba.pdf