



Digest

Digest means an item that has been through internal review of the Chancellor's Office and the review entities. The item now has form and substance, and is officially "entered into Consultation." The Council reviews the item and provides advice to the Chancellor.

CONSULTATION

Title: Preparation of Faculty for Administrative Positions
Date: May 15, 2008
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Issue

There is a growing concern that, as a result of retirements, the California Community College System is beginning to face a shortage of able administrators to serve as dynamic and inspiring campus leaders. Colleges, rural and urban, are already discovering the difficulty of attracting well-prepared applicants for administrative positions, particularly individuals with experience specific to California and its community college system.

Background

California's governance system is unique, and successful leaders need knowledge to understand it and a temperament that will enjoy working within it. Administrators hired from out of state and/or from the private sector frequently require a significant period of adjustment in order to become familiar with California's laws and regulations, and given the frequent turnover in such positions, many administrators who are new to the System never become fully acclimated.

Understanding the complexities of the California Community College System and how it differs from other systems is an important component for System administrators to grasp. Unlike the private sector's reliance on hierarchical approaches to decision making or the marginalized role of constituent groups in states where governance is locally bargained, California operates through a complex statewide system of consultation. Though the System's interaction of constituencies and law is intricate, where consultation is reflective of collegial respect and informed by knowledge, California's unique system of checks and balances and its unified approach to serving students is the envy of the nation. On the other hand, where there is an insufficient understanding of how the System operates, students suffer the consequences. Therefore, rather than drawing on the shrinking pool of potential candidates within the System or applicants whose entire work experience lies outside the System, an alternative may exist to increase the supply from within the ranks of California's community college faculty.

Among the System's employee groups, the largest constituency, faculty, has primary responsibility to make recommendations to local boards concerning academic and professional matters. At the state level, such recommending authority to the Chancellor and the Board of Governors is the responsibility of the Academic Senate for California

Community Colleges. The System's faculty oversee curriculum, accreditation for courses and programs, transfer and articulation, counseling and advising, and all academic and professional areas related to student success. Every college in the System has experienced, dedicated faculty who in addition to their regularly assigned duties serve on local senates and college-wide committees and are familiar with California's laws, codes and regulations. Within this enormous body of nearly 60,000 teaching and instructional support professionals, there surely exists a potential pool of capable administrators, individuals who have written curriculum, counseled students and understand full well the relationship of the classroom to the exigencies of budgetary and regulatory realities.

While the occasional local and regional effort is designed to prepare faculty for administrative roles, a system-wide approach has yet to be established. In addition, a range of potential barriers would need to be addressed.

While many faculty would no doubt appreciate the opportunity to serve as administrators within our local colleges and throughout the System, they are understandably hesitant to relocate and/or exchange the security afforded by tenure for marginal financial incentives. Many faculty earn almost as much by working overloads and teaching summer courses than they would as administrators. Couple that with the loss of retreat rights and the perception that administration is frequently more about management than creative leadership, and we have effectively created a system that denies the potential of some of its most talented, knowledgeable, and uniquely prepared individuals to step forward and provide the guidance born of their years of service. What would encourage successful faculty leaders to move into administration and what barriers could be reduced or eliminated?

Recommendation

A working group from Consultation Council should be formed, comprised of representatives from all interested groups, to discuss and assess potentially viable options for encouraging faculty leaders to move into administration – in particular determining whether they require legislation to implement or can be accomplished by mutual cooperation of local trustees. As this issue is centrally concerned with faculty, the Academic Senate should serve as a co-chair of the working group. Any proposal that comes from the working group should be reviewed by all affected constituencies, including local senates, unions, and administration.