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## College Senate Assessment Overview

- Fulton-Montgomery Community College (FM) is guided by a “culture of assessment,” and in accordance with such a culture there exists an evolving Senate Assessment Plan that the Senate Chair, in direct conjunction with the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) and more indirect conjunction with Senators, is to follow
  - The Senate Assessment Plan lays out a timeline for assessing its various charges as informed by the [charges highlighted](#) from College’s [Strategic Plan](#)
    - Each year, a different charge is assessed

## 2020-2021 Senate Assessment Overview

- As detailed in the [2020-2025 College Senate Assessment Plan](#), which was revised due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cessation of assessment during the 2019-2020 academic year to allow for execution of the approved assessment cycle, the following Senate charge was scheduled for assessment: “To assess and make subsequent recommendations regarding Senate and Senate Committee structure and operations”
  - While this charge is connected most specifically to the Goal # 2 of the Campus Strategic Plan (Strengthen Communications), the overriding purpose of the charge is to forge a macro assessment of the College Governance system, so there is connection to all of FM’s Strategic Goals
  - Assessment measures related to this charge are grounded in a Senate-approved [Marco Assessment Rubric](#), which include assessment of the following aspects of the Campus Shared Governance model:
    - Climate, Communication, and Collaboration
    - Faculty and Staff Roles
    - Students Roles
    - Processes
    - Structure
  - Assessment goals of the charge are gleaned via identifying and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data speaking to the strengths and weaknesses of FM’s Shared Governance, including:
    - Creation, administering, and review a survey pertaining to the charge
    - Review and analysis of Committee assessment activities and reports from the 2020-2021 academic year
    - Review and analysis of Senate assessment conclusions and suggestions spanning the previous assessment cycle (2014-2019)
- Outcomes of the assessment include:
  - Analysis of the efficacy of the Senate and its committees within the larger shared governance system
  - Analysis of what, if any, modifications to the Senate and the larger Shared Governance Systems might be required
  - Discussion of analysis of assessment activities and measures with the Senate and the campus via Senate meetings, as also informed input from varying constituency groups offered by Senators
  - Providing access to all assessment reports and related activities and measures on Google Drive for further and wider-reaching assessment
  - Analysis of the assessment towards future action, if applicable

## Actions

- The assessment plan was adjusted during the 2019-2020 academic year to include macro assessment within the assessment cycle and to eliminate a redundant assessment charge. The process for conducting macro assessment, however, was halted due to the pandemic, so the process started anew for the 2020-2021 academic year, which also

required revising the assessment plan again. The following chronologically outlines the actions taken towards assessing the College's Shared Governance system:

- During the [September 2020](#) meeting a motion to review the [revised assessment plan](#) to was presented to the Senate and subsequently brought to Senator's constituency groups for review and comment. The plan was approved without further revision at the [October 2020](#) Senate meeting.
- At the [November 2020](#) Senate meeting a motion to approve a list of assessment questions for Senate Committees devised by the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) was presented to the Senate and was subsequently brought to Senator's constituency groups for review and comment. The questions were approved during the [December 2020](#) meeting and committees were encouraged to start addressing them as soon as possible.
- During the [February 2021](#) Senate meeting the [Shared Governance Assessment Rubric](#) constructed by the SEC was brought to for Senators to discuss and bring to their constituents, and a motion was made to approve it. The rubric was approved with no changes during the [March 2021](#) Senate meeting.
- In April 2021 a survey was constructed and sent out to all employees by the SEC (students are not on the same email system, and with most College activities occurring remotely, it was not possible for the SEC to glean feedback from students) based on the approved Shared Governance Assessment Rubric, which remained open until the end of the semester. The results of the survey were shared with the SEC, to eventually be shared with entire College within this report.
- During the summer of 2021 the Senate Chair wrote the assessment report via data speaking to the Shared Governance Assessment Rubric.
- Senate Committee assessment reports were submitted to the Senate Chair by September 2021, which were required for the Senate Chair to complete the Shared Governance Assessment report.
- A motion to approve of the Shared Governance Macro Assessment report was made at the September 2021 Senate meeting, after which discussion and input from their constituents were afforded.
- The report was approved at the October 2021 Senate meeting and subsequently turned over to the Assessment Committee.

## Observations

- Campus Survey
  - The survey was comprised of five open ended questions that reflected the five assessment measures on the Shared Governance Assessment Rubric. Employees had an 18-day window to fill out the survey. All responses were anonymous.
  - Of over 260 employees, 10 responded to the survey: [Link to Results](#)
    - The paucity of responses suggests a sentiment of apathy towards shared governance exists at the College due to factors such as a shrinking employee base (leading to more responsibilities for more employees), a small but vocal and influential group of employees who are not in favor of the current governance system (who usually desire a return to "Professional Staff," which was not a form of shared governance), and the impact of the remote environment
      - It is difficult to gage, therefore, the representative and heuristic nature of the results to the questions
  - Conclusions from Responses
    - Climate, Communication, and Collaboration
      - A majority of respondents feel the climate, communication, and collaboration at the College is sufficient, though there were a couple of responses suggesting disapproval, with one response suggesting shared governance at the College is more like an oligarchy, another claiming that the system is not in fact one of shared governance, and another

claiming the storage of documentation is confusing. None of these responses, however, offered clear explanations of their rationale. The criticisms are in line with the small but vocal and influential group of staff that have opposed the system since its inception a decade ago.

- Faculty and Staff Roles
  - Most respondents felt faculty and staff have ample opportunities to engage in shared governance, though there were some comments about the strain the pandemic and a shrinking employee base has had on such engagement.
  - As with the first question, the same minority of respondents had issues with the role of faculty in staff. For instance, one respondent stated, “Faculty and staff have no role,” citing the lack of faculty involvement in the process of funding dorms (which have now been eliminated) and if the current College President “know what a search committee is?” It is unclear how this question pertains to the initial statement. Another just said refer to the question 1, meaning shared governance is an oligarchy, so one must infer the respondent means faculty and staff have no meaningful roles.
- Student Roles
  - There is consensus that there is not enough student involvement in shared governance. Some of the reasons given speak to a general lack of student interest, problems with communication due to separate email systems, issues with how the Student Senate Association (SSA) does not require its leadership to represent on the Senate and/or committees, and the restructuring of the SSA from its previous model, which has enabled the College President to veto SSA decisions.
- Process
  - The results are mixed regarding the process of shared governance. Half of the respondents stated the process works. But some of those, and other respondents stated there are some confusing aspects related to shared governance, particularly for newer employees, that there is too much bureaucracy integrated into the process, and that some sort of orientation and/or general presentation about the role and process of shared governance is required. And another comment derogatorily stated, “Having a ‘Senate’ in no way constitutes ‘shared governance,’ suggesting that respondent is not clear that the Senate is just a part of the system.
- Structure
  - As with Process, the results are mixed. Half of the respondents approve of the structure of shared governance at the College, but some of them, in accord with comments from those who do not approve of the structure, feel streamlining is required to make the structure of shared governance clearer and to render it more effective, particularly due to the shrinking employee base. Others feel there are not enough newer voices in the system and that, since the Senate is just a recommending body, there really is no true shared governance (speaking to, via inference, Leadership and the Board of Trustees needing not to heed any approved motions from the Senate).

- 2020-2021 Senate Committee Reports

- [Assessment](#)

- Overall, the assessment report indicates the composition and operation of the Committee are effective. There were some comments, observations, and recommendations to note:
      - Non-teaching faculty constituency groups have not attended meetings or elected representatives during the last few years, to a large extent attributed to a shrinking

workforce at the College and subsequent changes of job responsibilities and elimination of positions that would populate committee seats.

- The lack of full attendance and/or representation means that truly global input might not be gleaned via Committee work.
  - The Committee recommends communication with the Committee's leadership representative for clarification of what specific constituent representatives should be on the Committee and to stress the importance of participation on it.
- There had been some uncertainty regarding the Committee's role in communicating feedback about assessment. The hope is the change in its charge during the past academic year addresses this uncertainty.
- [Curriculum](#)
  - Overall, the assessment report indicates the composition and operation of the Committee are effective. There were some comments, observations, and recommendations to note:
    - There has been discussion about adding a Library representative and the Accreditation Liaison Officer to the Committee to better represent the most directly concerned constituents associated with curriculum issues and to better meet the Committee charge
    - To address difficulties attaining student involvement in the Committee, ideas such as a semester (vs. year) term, promoting the Committee participation at orientation and SSA meetings, and recommendation and solicitation of student representatives were suggested
    - To address difficulties attaining adjunct participation, a semester vs. year long term was floated
- [Institutional Advancement](#)
  - Overall, the assessment report indicates the composition and operation of the Committee are effective. There were some comments, observations, and recommendations to note:
    - There was concern about meeting quorum due to the lack of Building and Grounds and Student representation and/or attendance at meetings.
      - (Note: this issue was addressed by the revision to quorum procedures noted in the next section.)
    - Three of the five charges assigned to the Committee seem to be already addressed by other areas of the College, so the Committee plans to further investigate and discuss potential elimination, condensation, or revising of those charges.
    - Without a budget, the Committee finds it difficult to meet initiatives and responsibilities issuing from its charge, so the Committee will investigate the potential for a budget.
- [Policy](#)
  - Overall, the assessment report indicates the composition and operation of the Committee are working well. There were two points briefly noted regarding its composition:
    - There were no Building and Grounds or Student representatives during the 2020-2021 academic year, though if this has been a persisting issue was not mentioned.
    - The continuing sharp decrease in students has had an "impact on the decrease in staff population," though there is no analysis or suggestions in relation to this impact on the Committee's composition or process.
- [Safety](#)
  - Overall, the assessment report indicates the composition and operation of the Committee are working well. There were some comments, observations, and recommendations to note:

- There have been some difficulties finding volunteers for the Committee, likely due SUNY mandates related to composition and a shrinking workforce at the College. To address this issue, the Committee recommends expanding the number of group members and eligible chairpersons, increase the term for chairs beyond one year, and potentially require one of the *ex officio* members of the Committee to be Senate representative.
- There is some uncertainty about the roles of students on the Committee.
- The SUNY requirement that 50% of the Committee be male and the other female ignores other forms of gender identification, which is potentially discriminatory. It also leaves unrepresented groups potentially most given to safety issues.
- Some further clarification and specification of what constitutes “safety” could be helpful.
- [Student Life](#)
  - Overall, the assessment report indicates the composition and operation of the Committee are effective. There were some comments, observations, and recommendations to note:
    - To assure sustained student involvement on the Committee, requiring a “student representative from the Student Senate and the two remaining positions be solicited from the students at large” is recommended.
    - Add the Athletic Director to the Committee as athletics constitute a large portion of student activities on campus, and add the Director of the Library since that position is extensively involved with student’s academic lives.
    - Staff the Hearing Board subcommittee with one-term members solicited via a survey of interested and concerned employees and students.

#### [Notable Previous Assessment-Cycle Data and Actions \(Including from 2020-2021\)](#)

- Climate, Communication, and Collaboration
  - Attendance to open forums related to FM’s shared governance practices, requested via survey in 2013-2014, was scant.
  - A Senate Activity Tracking Sheet has been used by the Chair since 2013, but it has yet to be made a formally approved tool.
  - The College Board of Trustees and the President must approve all changes to the College Senate *Articles of Governance*, which addresses the need for collaborative development mechanisms to continually review and approve the *Articles*.
  - Representation and participation of the Adjunct, Buildings & Grounds, and Student constituent groups has decreased and, in some situations, entirely dissipated within the Senate and its Committees.
  - The Shared Governance Cabinet was established in 2017 to make sure the leadership of all main branches of governance at FM (College Senate, SSA, and Leadership) are aware of what is transpiring within each other’s branches and to help set agendas not relegated to items only directly related to a given branch. The intention of the Cabinet is to garner more consistent and relevant communication and collaboration. Other than the first year of the Cabinet, however, student participation has been almost non-existent.
  - Monthly College Assemblies, sponsored by the College Senate, provide a forum for the three branches of campus governance to bring information and important activities and initiatives. These assemblies replaced what were called “Meetings with the President” to encourage better communication across campus and collaboration. While these meetings are generally well attended, student participation in them has diminished to the point there has been very few student reports from the SSA chair over the past three years.
  - The channel of communication between Faculty/Staff and Students in relation to governance has long hindered by separate email systems, resulting in governance information not flowing as freely in either

direction as would be optimal. It remains to be seen if that has been addressed with all of the College community moving to Outlook 365.

- More specific guidelines and timeframes related to the Vice-Chair's role to mentor of new College Senate are needed.
- The addition of macro-assessment to the Senate Assessment cycle provides a tool for assessing the effectiveness of the SEC, which was not previously afforded. However, such assessment would occur every five years vs. the three suggested in the 2016-2017 Senate Assessment Report.
- A list of Official Senate Documents was added to the "Bylaws and Procedures" and the Senate Executive Committee now has oversight of such documentation in relation to the Senate Assessment cycle.
- Senators were asked to include (or ask a related chair or leader) a Senate report and discussion on the agendas of their constituent meetings to provide another manner for communication of process and collaboration.
- The 2018-2019 Senate Assessment report indicated that there is ample opportunity for all members of the College to be heard and to participate. The reason for a lack of participation seems to stem from four factors: 1) apathy, as suggested by the lack of participation in the surveys regarding quite substantial changes to the composition of the Senate and macro-assessment of the current shared governance system; 2) a shrinking employee base (including adjuncts) that makes participation more difficult for more employees; 3) the steep decrease in student body and staff has acutely impacted avenues for student involvement on campus, including governance; 4) a lingering desire on the part of a very small but very vocal majority to return to the previous governance structure, which was not a form of shared governance.
- After concerns raised by Student and Academic Services Faculty about communication due to widely varying duties and scheduled, a monthly meeting time on the calendar was set for them as of the 2020-2021 academic year.
- Faculty and Staff Roles
  - The data suggests faculty and staff have ample access to participate in campus governance processes, but there is some data indicating confusion related to *how* participate.
  - Most faculty and staff generally understand and value the purpose of shared governance, but there is a small group of that does not entirely grasp how shared governance works at FM and/or do not endorse the College's current iteration of it. This lack of understanding or valuation of the system stems from many factors already noted via the 2020-2021 survey and elsewhere, including apathy, being stretched too thin, declining morale due to a dwindling employee base, and a feeling that the Faculty and Staff role in the College's shared governance system, being that of yielding recommendations for Leadership and the Board of Trustees, affords no real or direct governance influence.
- Student Roles
  - As noted in the survey conducted for this assessment report, Committee Reports over the last few years, and attendance reports for meetings, there is little student involvement in the shared governance process, and it continues to decline. There are many avenues for such participation, but comprehension of those paths is likely not clear to many students, and it seems the importance of shared governance for students is also unclear.
  - The change to SSA from SGA seems to have disengaged students from faculty and staff in many aspects of campus life, including governance. The previous system provided monetary incentives to participate on Committees and the ability of the SGA to roll over funds from the previous year also more effectively stirred student engagement in their own and the overall College governance system.
- Process
  - The mechanism by which the entire campus now votes on College Senate approved changes to the *Articles of Governance* served to provide an opportunity for participation and a balance of power.



- Much Senate activity beyond discussions and reports issue from motions made by the Curriculum, Policy, and SEC, as evinced by Senate agendas and minutes.
- Formal documentation detailing the flow of Curriculum motions was created to make that flow clear and to alleviate deliberation of Curriculum matters when unnecessary. This helps mitigate the burden derived from a shrinking employee body tasked, consequently, with more responsibilities and speeds up the Curriculum process from beginning to end.
- While on occasion there have been items asked for inclusion into a Senate agenda after the agenda came out, generally there is ample time to access and review documentation. There is currently no deadline given for the inclusion of agenda items, as such as decision is left at the Chair's discretion.
- All Senate and Committee meetings require agendas and minutes that can be accessed by the campus community. There is both direct and indirect data, though, indicating the current storage location (Google Drive) is hard for some to access, cumbersome to use, and that some campus members are not sure where governance documentation is housed at all. That, along with the College's move away from Google for its documentation storage, is likely to continue creating confusion.
- As noted in Climate, Communication, and Collaboration, a Senate Activity Tracking Sheet has been used by the Chair since 2013 to document motions proposed, voted on, tabled, etc., but it has yet to be made a formally approved tool.
- Other than the 2020-2021 academic year, during which a couple of Senate Committees did not meet on a couple of assigned dates at the very beginning of the year due issues related to working remotely and employees leaving the College who chaired and/or represented them on the Senate, the Senate and its Committees meet regularly. If there are no agenda issues, Committees are free to decide if they should or should not meet.
- All votes on motions made at a Senate meeting, excluding Curriculum due to the time sensitive nature of the items brought to the Senate, are deferred until the following month for review, analysis, and discussion within the Senate, Committees, and all constituent groups.
- Constituent groups are free to elect whom they wish to serve in shared governance, save for the Safety Committee, the membership for which is dictated by SUNY and is ultimately determined by the President after nominations forwarded from the Senate.
- While most surveys and anecdotal evidence indicates Senators feel free to speak and participate, there is also evidence from the same sources suggesting some Senators are reticent to act upon such freedom.
- Clear nomenclature was created for quorum and the voting privileges for *ex officio* committee members during the 2020-2021 academic year ([Articles of Governance Revision Campus Vote](#)) to assure consistency of meeting processes across the Senate and its committees.
- Structure
  - The role, functions, and powers of what was the Senate Structure Committee were defined during the last assessment cycle see ([Articles of Governance](#)), and it was renamed the Senate Executive Committee during that time ([April 2017 Senate Minutes](#)).
  - The Shared Governance Cabinet was created and its composition established, and the "Meeting with the President" was changed to the "College Assembly" to reflect the nature of shared governance at the these meetings ([February 2018 Senate Minutes](#))
  - As Senate and Committee minutes indicate, there has been a consistently intensifying lack of participation from some constituent groups in Senate and Committee activities (notably Adjuncts, Building and Grounds, and Students), and a shrinking employee body. These same minutes also reveal this has been an ongoing topic of discussion, with the question of if certain groups' representation should be reduced or eliminated in certain areas of the shared governance system.
    - There have also been concerns raised, primarily by one vocal faculty member, in Senate and Curriculum Committee meetings, that there are members of the Senate and committees that do not



belong on them. For example, one line of argument suggests Building and Grounds should not have a voice in and vote related to curriculum matters as it is beyond their interest and job descriptions and responsibilities.

- The shrinking number of employees and students have led to discussions (see Senate and committee minutes) about the need to streamline the structure of the current governance system to make it better function and reduce constraints on a smaller group of potential participants from which to staff the Senate and its committees, which is a major impetus for this macro-assessment.
  - The College-wide approved removal of the Civility and Sustainability Committees from the Senate helped achieve such streamlining by removing committees that the campus agreed were not governance-related.
- The [Articles of Governance](#) clearly delineate the metrics for Senate and committee composition and function. The Articles and Procedures and Bylaws also explicitly spell out the processes for nominating and voting for those interested in shared governance positions and procedures for bringing items to the Senate. Further, the Curriculum Flow Chart not only streamlined and made clear the processes for the path of curriculum matters, but it also highlights the bottom-up movement of such matters and the highest level of the College hierarchy to which varying curriculum documents must go.
- The “Composition of the FMCC Senate” chart in the [Articles of Governance](#) (p. 12) assures that as constituent groups grow or reduce in numbers, their representation correspondingly grows or reduces. For instance, due to the shrinking numbers of employees at the College, Student and Academic Services Faculty and Clerical groups had the number of Senators reduced from four to three via the stipulations of the chart. (See the [Articles of Governance](#) from 2018-2019 and 2020-2021).
- The Accreditation Liaison Officer was added as an *ex officio* member of the Assessment Committee ([Articles of Governance Revision Campus Vote](#)) to assure whoever holds that position, which is vital for College assessment activities, can offer direct input and judgment.
- The Senate Chair was voted to serve as the *de facto* SEC Chair ([Articles of Governance Revision Campus Vote](#)), as the Chair sets the agenda for Senate meetings, which led to the Senate Chair running Executive meetings regardless of who chaired them.

#### [Actions Taken via the most recent\) Assessment \(2018-2019](#)

- The College community has been encouraged to attend meetings.
- Monthly SASF meetings were established.
- The process of addressing decreasing the composition of Standing Senate Committees and further consolidation of the Senate itself due to a shrinking employee force and a lack of participation of some groups has begun with this report.
- The process of consideration of changes or even replacement of the current governance system has been initiated via this report.

#### [Future Activities or Recommendations via 2020-2021 College Senate Report](#)

- Establish an inclusive *ad hoc* Senate committee to consider changes to or even replacement of the current shared governance system.
- Continue to encourage College employees to attend Senate meetings and devise proactive and enticing measures to assure they understand the function and importance of the Senate as a recommending body within the context of shared governance, and how to access Senate-related information and documentation.
  - Establish more explicit language related to the Senate Vice-Chair’s role as mentor towards this end.
- Construct explicit language in the Articles regarding mentoring responsibilities of the Vice-Chair.
- Task the SSA Liaison with garnering information about the lack of student involvement in shared governance and what steps can be taken to get students more involved.

- Investigate how to send/forward information regarding shared governance activities and opportunities to students via email.
- Encourage Committee Chairs to place on their meeting agendas revisions noted in past assessments and bring any related motions to the Senate for deliberation and potential voting the following year.
- Motion to have the Activity Tracking Sheet as a formally recognized living document indicating Senate actions and make to clearly appoint the Senate Chair as she or he who is to maintain and make accessible the document.
- Consider electing the Senate chair during the final Senate meeting of the academic year preceding such appointment to forge a smoother transition and overall continuity moving into the following academic year.

#### [Unaddressed Action Items from Previous Assessment](#)

- The Senate should consider a formal motion recommending the College Senate Activity sheet, or other instrument to be determined, as the formal record of College Senate activity on motions and recommendations.
- The model established in proscribed duties of the College Senate Vice-Chair to serve as a mentor to new members of the College Senate should be considered as the College Senate considers ways to inform new committee members of committee's past actions, charges and methods of practice.
- The College Senate should assess review effectiveness of the SEC.
- The College Senate should assess the effectiveness of the establishment of ad hoc committee procedures during the next assessment of this Senate charge as per the Senate assessment plan.

#### [College Senate Committee Assessments 2020-2021](#)

[Assessment Committee](#)

[Curriculum Committee](#)

[Institutional Advancement Committee](#)

[Policy Committee](#)

[Safety Committee](#)

[Student Life Committee](#)