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College Senate Assessment Overview

- SUNY Fulton-Montgomery Community College (FMCC) 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 from College’s [Strategic Plan](#)
 - Each year, a different charge is assessed

2023-2024 Assembly Assessment Overview

- As detailed in the [2023-2029 College Assembly Assessment Plan](#), which was updated in the wake of revised charges as the transition from the College Senate to College Assembly continued, the charge for the 2023-2024 academic year is: “To serve as and promote a forum of collegial discussion for and dissemination of information about the institution”
 - This charge is connected specifically to all four goals of the College’s current [Strategic Plan](#), as the existence of an open forum for institutionally relevant discussion and sharing of information logically influences FMCC’s ability to adapt and connect to and leverage: partnerships; equitable student experience; enrollment, management, and retention; transformation of the College and, in turn, the communities it serves.
 - Assessment outcomes of the charge are gleaned predominantly via identifying and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information via College Assembly (and Senate for the five academic years prior to 2023-2024) operations (i.e., Assembly and Assembly Executive Committee (AEC) meetings and their related agendas and minutes). Assessments and minutes from Assembly committees also provide relevant data towards assessing the Assembly charge. These and other assessment loci are specifically reviewed and analyzed to assess the charge and its role in meeting the Strategic Plan.

Process and Actions

- As noted above, the change in governance structure that went into effect for the 2023-2024 academic rendered some of the charges redundant and discussions within the AEC determined that two of the charges were specific to two Assembly committees (Curriculum and Policy).
 - Consequently, the AEC presented the possibility of revising the charges and Assembly Assessment plan at the [November 2023 Assembly](#), with this item on the Assembly agenda for discussion at the [December 2023](#) and [February 2024 Assemblies](#).
 - The motion to pass the revised charges and, in turn, assessment plan were accepted at the [April 2024 Assembly](#).
- With this, the process for conducting assessment of the given charge could proceed, which included the following:
 - Review of Assembly and Senate agendas and minutes to assess the charge and in what ways that analysis informs support of the Strategic Plan.
 - Commencement of the research for the construction of this assessment report during the summer of 2024 via available

- Review of Assembly Committee assessment reports, which were due on September 1, 2024.
- Construction and dissemination of a [survey](#) regarding the effectiveness of the Assembly in meeting the charge given for assessment, in general terms and in contrast to the previous governance model.
- Submission of the assessment report to the College Assembly for approval (the name) during its October meeting.
 - A motion to approve the assessment was made at the October Assembly meeting. The motion was approved.
 - The assessment was submitted to the Assessment Committee by November 1, 2024, per the [College Assembly By-Laws & Procedures Manual](#)
- The [last assessment of the given charge](#) addressed the 2018-2019 academic year.
 - The charge was initially slated for assessment during the 2021-2022 academic year, but the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions to the assessment cycle, including suspension of all assessment during the 2019-2020 academic year.
 - Additionally, a macro assessment of the entire shared governance system was instituted due to acute contractions and changes at the College during the 2020-2021 academic year, some due to the pandemic, some due to trends in decreases in enrollment and funding since the 2014-2015 academic year that led to the restructuring of the shared governance structure.
 - Of note, macro assessment is now one of the three Assembly Assessment charges moving forward.
 - The charge informing this assessment report was expanded since the previous assessment to include “and dissemination of information about the institution” to forge a more holistic and heuristic assessment report.

Observations

- College Senate (Fall, 2019-Spring, 2023)
 - While the previous governance model was in place, all Senate meetings were open to all College employees, with the Senate Chair sending out to the entire campus agendas and reminders that all are welcome and encouraged to attend and participate; all agendas and minutes were also permanently placed in the College Senate Google Drive area.
 - The storage area for agendas and minutes were moved to [SharePoint](#) during the 2023-2024 academic year, in which all agendas and minutes can be accessed.
 - There were public comment periods slotted at the beginning and end of all Senate meetings (and these are indicated on the agendas, again accessible via the link to the Shared Governance [SharePoint](#) area) during which anyone can speak.
 - In practice, the Senate generally allowed those who are not Senators to talk between public comments too, if requested.
 - During the Senate years assessed in this report (2018-2023), public comments were offered at almost all of them (see Senate minutes, again, accessible via [SharePoint](#))
 - These opportunities for public input almost always used, as the minutes for Senate meetings indicate.

- Discussion also generated via reports from the Chair of the Senate, Senate Executive Committee (SEC), and Senate Committees, standing and *ad hoc* alike, again accessible via Senate Minutes on [SharePoint](#).
 - Academic Division Chairs, Support Staff, and Senate Committee Chairs were to include on agendas for their respective meetings (viewable on SharePoint) what they thought was of relevance to their constituents from and for Senate meetings, which generated reports and discussions at the Senate and during constituent meetings.
 - Senate reports as part of agendas can be viewed within [Academic Division](#) and [Senate Committee](#) areas on SharePoint.
 - ✓ There is a lack of documentation for Support Staff in relation to agendas and minutes due to the very disparate roles this group possess.
 - Senators could raise specific interests and concerns of their or own constituents as agenda items or during public comments.
- Shared Governance Cabinet
 - From the 2017-2018 through the 2022-2023 academic years, a Shared Governance Cabinet (SGC) met every month to share information and concerns was created.
 - The SGC afforded campus leaders of the College's three areas of governance (aside from the Board of Trustees, which holds final say regarding any College governance issues) the opportunity to share their constituents' concerns, bring such information back to their constituents, and better foster a wider-reaching sort of discourse, generally and in specific relation to governance.
 - The SGC also aimed to help campus leaders form more inclusive and informative agendas, and SCG meetings directly set the agendas for College Assemblies
 - [The minutes of the SGC](#) are available on SharePoint
- College Senate Assembly
 - Starting simultaneously with the SGC, College Assemblies, as stipulated in Article IV: Meetings of the [Articles of Governance](#), replaced what were previously called "Meetings with the President." These meetings monthly meetings during an academic year functioned to yield "information sharing and exchange"
 - The College President, the Senate Chair, and the Student Senate Association President would share information with the College community with an eye towards fostering more inclusive campus-wide discussions.
 - Agendas and minutes were not constructed for these meetings, as they were to remain open and informal in contrast to Senate meetings.
 - This informality allowed everyone in attendance had the opportunity to ask questions, propose ideas, raise concerns, etc. as there was no agenda or rules of order to limit such discourse.
- College Assembly (Fall, 2023- Spring, 2024)
 - During the 2023-2024 academic year, the College Governance system changed from the "Senate" to the "Assembly" in light of the [macro Governance assessment](#) conducted

during the 2020-2021 academic year and the work and subsequent [proposal for a revised governance system](#) from the *ad hoc* Shared Governance Committee.

- In short, the new system combined the Senate and Assembly meetings to create a system more democratic than representative system, as all Faculty and Administration, most Support Staff are required to attend.
 - Maintenance Personnel and Clerical elect two representatives to attend Assemblies, as these groups are needed to keep the College running the meetings.
- Consequently, at College Assemblies, besides reports given by Governance and Committee chairs, the Student Senate Association and College President (which constitutes the combination of Senate and informational Assembly meetings), the VP for Administration and Finance, Deans of Academic and Student Affairs, and Chief Diversity Officer also provide reports.
 - The goal is to assure more information is shared and more opportunities for discussions are afforded to the campus community.
- This new system also combines what was the Senate Executive Committee and Shared Governance Cabinet into one committee, called the Assembly Executive Committee (AEC).
 - This systemic modification also allows for discussions with more breadth, better agenda setting
 - Combined with the synthesis of the previous iteration of the Assembly with what was the Senate, the number of meetings were reduced, which is currently necessary as the College is understaffed due to financial constraints, retrenchments, retirement, and other ways by which personnel has reduced in number.
- The [survey](#) sent out to the College community suggests the move to the Assembly format is amendable.
 - Only one out of seventy-two respondents indicated she or he did not think the College Assembly met the charge, and most comments, in addition to the statistics, expressed that sentiment
 - One issue seems to be the inability or unwillingness of certain constituents to make the Assembly, either in person or virtually.
 - ✓ All Full-Time teaching and Student Services Faculty and Administrators are required to attend, but others are not to keep College operations functional during Assemblies
 - ✓ Most employees who were not required to attend the meetings generally did not.
 - ✓ Fourteen respondents could not answer because they were new to the College, so they did not possess experience by which to answer the question.
 - Only two out of eighty-one respondents did not feel the new governance system worked better than the previous one (College Senate)
 - Many respondents prefer this model because the Senate was representative (though everyone on campus was always invited to attend Senate meetings), there is one less meeting to attend, and, above all and as a result of the mandatory attendance for much of the campus, there were far more people in attendance to share information

- Again, there was a large number of respondents who answered “I don’t know” either because they started working at the College after the 2023-2024 academic year or stated a need for more time to assess.
- The open-ended question about suggestions for better meeting the charge led to a diversity of responses. The most common one was that the system worked well.
 - One or two respondents asked for the meeting to be accessible virtually, which it was for those who were not required to attend.
 - Two or three respondents requested guidance provided the Student Senate Association President, likely because he tended to just read minutes from the Association’s prior meeting.
 - Two or three others only want actionable items presented at Assemblies, with informational presentations once or twice a semester
 - ✓ This, however, would not meet the standards for Assembly meetings as laid out in the [Articles of Governance](#), and would mean Assembly meetings could not effectively address time-sensitive issues.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Immediate Actions

- The main impetus for the revised governance system currently in place served to foster more and broader discussion, thus it clearly connects to the assessment charge guiding this report.
 - This goal has clearly been accomplished, as many of the College’s fulltime employees are required to attend College Assemblies and there is much broader representation in terms of reportage. Additionally, constituent groups (Maintenance Personnel and Clerical) that require representation are afforded the opportunity to attend the meetings virtually via MS Teams.
 - It is noteworthy, though, that required attendance is a large part of attainment of the charge via the change in governance system. All employees were welcome to Senate and the previous iteration of Assembly meetings, but apathy, taking on numerous roles due to a decline in personnel, and a general misunderstanding of the representative system played a role in the lack of discussion, especially at Senate meetings.
 - Further, the previous version of the Assembly was associated with its past identification as “Meeting with the President,” so the Assembly was considered a meeting that predominantly served to receive information disseminated from College President.
 - The above observations suggest a need to keep a close watch on if the new structure solves the noted observations in the long-term or if the underlying issues noted above are more a cause than symptom of thwarted discourse.
 - While the new governance system has only been in place for year, one way in which it might indeed address the identified concerns is the expediency for action via discussions. For example, the representative form of governance mandated that changes to the [Articles of Governance](#) and [Bylaws and Procedures](#) go into effect after a campus-wide vote at the end of the year, but the new system does not require such delay as most of the full-time campus community attends Assemblies and can vote on motions immediately.
 - This was the case with the elimination of two larger shared governance charges and slight modifications of the three that remain.

- The immediacy of action from discourse might suggest more direct and effective input on decision making for College employees who in the past might not have felt they had such impact.
- Another concern is that twice each semester Assemblies are scheduled for one-hour slots. There have already been occasions where committees, administrators, and others could not share information or make inquiries due to time constraints.
 - These meetings should occur during 85-minute slots to mitigate this issue.
- The survey regarding the charge suggests the system and meetings are working well to meet the charge, but consideration could be given to the following:
 - Clearer instructions for accessing the meeting virtually.
 - Showcasing a different department or division (though time might impede that idea)
 - Clear guidance for the Student Senate Association President.
 - Conveyance of information regarding the approved [Articles of Governance](#) and how they determine the nature and frequency of meetings.
- One last concern involves attendance at AEC meetings. Due to other obligations, there are usually at least a couple of its members not present. Additionally, the AEC is 40% larger than it was during the Senate model (ten versus seven members).
 - The concern, in conjunction with the continuing reduction of College personnel, leads this report to suggest considering reducing the number of members in the AEC, likely the number of *ex officio* administrators, as they often have conflicts with AEC meetings.

[Actions Taken via Previous Assessment of the Charge](#)

- The following actions items from the 2018-2019 governance report have been addressed due to the mandate for most full-time employees to attend Assembly meetings
 - “Continue to encourage College employees to attend Senate meetings and assure they understand the function and importance of the Senate as a recommending body within the context of shared governance.”
 - “Remind Senators and Committee Chairs of their responsibility to inform their constituents about Senate matters, its relevancy to them, and how to directly or indirectly bring an issue to the Senate.”
- The following actions items from the 2018-2019 governance report have been addressed due to the structure and operations of the new governance system
 - “Initiate discussion of changes to or even replacement of the current shared governance system”
 - Look into 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 and consider”
 - The 2024-2025 academic year, per the [proposal for a revised governance system](#), consolidates two standing Assembly committees (Institutional Advancement and Policy) into one.
- The current [Articles of Governance](#), which were revised for the Assembly model, mitigated the following items.

- Assessment of “the effectiveness of the establishment of *ad hoc* committee procedures ...”
 - See “Purpose” (p. 1), Article II (p. 2), and Article VIII (p. 8).
- “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.”
 - There are no longer Senators.
- [T]he Policy Committee or the College Senate should consider a motion revising the composition of the Policy Committee ...” due to poor attendance
 - The impending synthesis of the Policy and Institutional Advancement committees accomplishes this goal (see [proposal for a revised governance system](#)).
- The action to have Assembly committees determine their own 6-year plan based on their charges was suggested by the AEC and was implemented for the 2023-2024 academic year, by which each charge is to be assessed twice during that span.
 - In the future, committees will be assigned a question or two regarding the larger governance charge for further assessment data.
 - This (these) question(s) were not sent to committees this year because it was the governance system is still in transition (committee restructuring and consolidation) and the call for them to determine assessment plans in addition to conducting simultaneous assessment.

Unaddressed Action Items from Previous Assessment

- There was discussion regarding “the feasibility of scheduled monthly SASF meetings to be placed on the Senate Calendar,” but action from such discourse has yet to occur.
- The recommendation to “review effectiveness of the executive committee in 3 years (2019-2020) ...” did not occur due the pandemic, macro assessment of the shared governance system the following year, and the subsequent changes to the governance system.
 - The 2022-2023 assessment report suggests that this assessment should take place during the 2026-2027 academic year, “which would provide sufficient data within the context of the new governance system”; however, this report has already begun consideration of such assessment, and it seems this will need to be a more immediate and ongoing process.

Committee Assessments

- [Assessment Committee](#)
- [Curriculum Committee](#)
- [Institutional Advancement Committee](#)
- Policy Committee (No Report Submitted)
- [Safety Committee](#)
- [Student Life Committee](#)