
Happy New Year! I hope 2020 brings each of you meaningful journeys and joy. Being the first association report of the semester, I thought I might indulge a bit once again and philosophically frame the work of the MJC Academic Senate this year. You may recall last semester the Academic Senate focused on action education, learning by doing, and related experiential models of education. While we will continue to expand and develop these efforts, this spring the MJC Academic Senate will also be fostering cross-programmatic collaborations and peer-to-peer mentorship opportunities to work with colleagues who serve the same students, live in the same communities, face similar challenges and have similar opportunities.

This commitment to in-house mentorship is bolstered by a recent Office of Institutional Effectiveness [Professional Development Survey \(Fall 2019\)](#) in which several hundred faculty, administrators and classified professionals highlighted areas of demand for professional development, including listing “Mentoring” as the top leadership topic of interest. The [Qualitative Response Overview](#) of this survey further emphasized the point by asking for more “team building” and peer-to-peer learning opportunities in a host of skill areas. This makes sense. While there is a plethora of professional development opportunities to learn from outside experts and gurus there is often a dearth of time to constructively share best practices with our colleagues, mentor one another and work collaboratively to solve problems, create new programs and improve services. The survey, then, suggests that many on our campus, across constituency groups, feel isolated from colleagues and do not have sufficient time and encouragement to work with colleagues to better serve our students and community.

But this trend towards isolation and organizational structures which build specialized silos that work in a closed, static system is nothing new. Since the nascent days of the American Republic, our education system has continually moved away from the one room school house approach Thomas Jefferson was so fond of, in which students of various ages and abilities pursued a common education, and towards a segmental approach which operates by the acquisition of discrete information that differentiates teachers and learners into hundreds of

academic disciplines which rarely dare cross disciplinary boundaries. In fact, the most often neglected, under-utilized resource at many institutions is its own human resources. Often people are kept from working with others by organizational structures, scheduling conflicts and a host of other discrete functions which require little cross-departmental collaboration.

For these reasons, Spring 2020 at the MJC Academic Senate is a semester of breaking old boundaries, emphasizing the professional capacity each of us has and supporting efforts which promote working across traditional silos in new and creative ways. We will continue to work towards the Fall 2020 roll out of Pathways curricular maps and full implementation of the Pathways initiative. This effort alone will group academic programs, support services and college activities in unique, interdisciplinary ways, making new peer to peer collaborations possible among divisions that previously had little contact with one another in day to day teaching and learning efforts.

Our May faculty retreat will focus not on the outside expert but, instead, promote peer-to-peer sharing of best practices. We will promote interdisciplinary innovations by developing and supporting the Applied Creativity and Community Transformation (ACCT) Institute so that all faculty, classified professionals and administrative leaders have opportunities for professional development not just from outside experts but from the vast pool of knowledge and experience we already possess at the college.

Billy Frye, former Chancellor of Emory University, reminded us (1999) that what should ideally be driving our conversations about academic organization on college and university campuses is: “the need to communicate, recognizing that we all have something important to say to and to learn from our colleagues; the need to focus on the big issues and to avoid entrapment in intellectual fashions, disciplinary turf wars, and cults of personality; and the need to meet the needs of our students and of society at large more effectively.” This, in a nut shell, is the aim of our Academic Senate efforts this upcoming semester and we look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, college administrators and classified professionals to make this a community of life-long learners who constantly seek support, knowledge and innovation from fellow colleagues.

Handout

- [Professional Development Survey \(Fall 2019\)](#)
- [Qualitative Response Overview](#)