

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE
SAN JOSE, CA 95192**

SS-F12-3, Sense of the Senate Resolution, Using a Shared Governance Model to Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit

Legislative History: At its meeting of October 15, 2012, the Academic Senate approved the following Sense of the Senate Resolution presented by Senator Peter for the Executive Committee.

**SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION
Using a Shared Governance Model to Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit**

Resolved, That the Academic Senate of San José State University endorses the attached white paper: "Using a Shared Governance Model to Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit;" be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution and the attachments be distributed to the members of the Board of Trustees, to the CSU Central Administration, to the incoming Chancellor Dr. Timothy White, to the Statewide Academic Senate, and the local campus senates.

Approved: (October 8, 2012)
Vote: (12-0-1)
Present: (Von Til, Heiden, Qayoumi, Junn, Bibb, Nance, McClory, Lessow-Hurley, Worsnup, Ng, Du, Kimbarrow, Peter)
Absent: (Bros-Seeman)
Financial Impact: (None associated with the resolution; possible savings associated with reduction of programs to 120 units.)
Workload Impact: (Substantial workload on a very short timeline)

**Academic Senate of San José State University
White Paper: October 15, 2012**

**Using a Shared Governance Model to
Preserve Integrative Learning within a 120 Unit Limit**

This paper was provoked by the publication on September 7, 2012 of an agenda item for the Board of Trustees of the California State University. This item proposed to eliminate a major segment of our curriculum—the program in upper division general education. The proposal was conceived with no faculty consultation whatsoever. Upon the intervention of numerous concerned individuals, including the Statewide Academic Senate and our own President Qayoumi, the proposal was withdrawn and replaced with an improved alternative. The events that began on September 7, 2012 demonstrate the need for a much wider understanding of shared governance and of our curriculum in integrative learning.

The Academic Senate of San José State University believes that it is important to respond to recent events in the following three ways:

- 1.

The Case for Faculty Preeminence in Determining the Curriculum of the CSU

“Collegial governance assigns primary responsibility to the faculty for the educational functions of the institution in accordance with basic policy as determined by the Board of Trustees. This includes admission and degree requirements...”¹

Faculty measure the passage of time at the CSU in decades, since we tend to spend our entire career here, while many Board members and administrators come and go more frequently. We worry, therefore, that some of our less experienced administrative colleagues may not in fact be familiar with the history and the traditions of shared governance. To some of us, after all, even though Chancellor Reed has had a long and valued career with the CSU, he is nonetheless a relative newcomer! To put this in perspective, consider that we have a faculty member here at SJSU who just celebrated his 60th year as an active teacher, and we have an academic senator who has served on our body almost continuously since the early 1960s. The faculty remember things that others might tend to forget.

The San José State Academic Senate has a long standing reputation of constructive engagement with administration. When administrators from outside join SJSU, they sometimes are surprised by this phenomenon, as if we alone had somehow been inoculated against a pathogen that has caused other campuses to develop an anti-administration paranoia. SJSU’s collegiality may stem from our history as the first Academic Senate in the CSU—a senate that for sixty years has incorporated the president and many key members of the administration into our ranks as full voting and deliberative senators. Presidents have different responsibilities than faculty, but Senator Caret, Senator Kassing, Senator Crowley, Senator Whitmore, and Senator Qayoumi have sought to use their wisdom to persuade us, rather than their authority to command us.

The SJSU history of collegiality gives us a sense of dismay when we witness the breakdown of collegial shared governance elsewhere in our system. We first addressed this problem in the last white paper we shared with the Board of Trustees, “Out of Crisis: Reinventing the CSU” which was distributed in 1999—a document that provoked a visit to our Senate by Executive Vice Chancellor David Spence. In that paper we hoped to draw “constructive lessons” from a growing clash between “faculty culture” and “board

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¹ “Report of the Board of Trustees’ Ad Hoc Committee on Governance, Collegiality, and Responsibility in the California State University,” adopted by the Board of Trustees of the California State University, September 1985.

In decades past, the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees have shared this view. Perhaps the most eloquent defense of the division of labor between faculty in shared governance and the Board was framed in the document written by the Academic Senate of the CSU and adopted by Chancellor Ann Reynolds in 1983, entitled “Responsibilities of Academic Senates Within a Collective Bargaining Agreement.” This document attempts to clarify the division of labor between the union, the Board, and academic senates so that the three organizations do not wind up working at cross purposes. It repeatedly affirms HEERA’s position that it is the role of shared governance to determine “policies on academic and professional matters.” As the 1983 statement puts it:

Through the campus academic senates/councils responsibility shall be vested in the faculty...for developing policies and making recommendations to the campus presidents on the following matters: 3. curricular policies...⁵

It is against this long and rich background of respect for shared governance—especially as it relates to curriculum-- that we view with shock the events that began to unfold on September 7. How could we possibly have reached the point where a

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proposal to radically change the curriculum of the CSU was created in secrecy and placed directly on the agenda of the Board of Trustees, without even a pretense of faculty consultation? Had the September 7 proposal been approved, it would have marked a complete repudiation of shared governance within our system. As Donald Gerth points out in his well-received history, “It is not conceivable that the California State University or any comparable higher education enterprise could function with integrity and in good health without a faculty representative body in a significant and

respected governance role.”⁶ But in a kind of surreal play--filled with miscommunication, misunderstanding, and mistrust--the September 7 proposal was

⁵ Responsibilities of Academic Senates Within a Collective Bargaining Context. Academic Senate California State University, 1981. Adopted by Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds, February 9, 1983.

⁶ Donald R. Gerth, *The People’s University: A History of the California State University*, Berkeley: 2010, p. 142.



Long before the term “integrative learning” became fashionable, San José State University used its upper division general education program—which we call SJSU Studies--to do just that: integrate learning. Our campus continues to embrace the goal of breaking down educational silos so that our students encounter multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving. San José State’s Strategic Plan, recently adopted under the fresh leadership of President Mohammad Qayoumi, defines one of SJSU’s key features as “Integrative Learning.” This “refers to the focus on students as intentional learners who combine knowledge from different sources as well as their own experiences and identities and continue learning throughout their lifetimes.”⁸

Integrative learning begins with the observation that problems in our increasingly complex world demand solutions drawn from multiple sources of knowledge—not usually from a single discipline. We have always known that our students need to acquire mastery of one of the disciplines, but it is more and more evident that discipline-based knowledge is a necessary but insufficient factor in the success of our graduates. The “real world” is far more interdisciplinary than our universities. It is easy to find committees in local corporations that have members drawn from engineering, business, science, the liberal arts, and the social sciences all sitting around the same table cooperating on a project. Each member must have mastery of his or her discipline, but the project’s success will likely depend on the ability of the members to integrate the knowledge drawn from each other’s fields, rather than simply sitting in intellectual silos. Since occupational [real world] success for our students depends upon integrating knowledge, universities must take care to see that the segregation of our curriculum by discipline does not retard the preparation of our students.

San José State has been a leader in integrative learning since 1993, when learning goals centered on “cultural pluralism” and “global understanding” were integrated into the previously more discipline-based categories of upper division general education. To understand the importance of this integration, consider whether any of the following problems can be adequately understood or solved by using only the knowledge of a single academic discipline:

- ! global climate change
- ! world hunger
- ! earthquake risks
- ! an aging society
- ! development of cultural diversity
- ! professional and business ethics
- ! religion and political controversy
- ! race and ethnic relations
- ! territorial disputes

⁸ <http://www.sjsu.edu/president/strategicplanning/definitions/>

- ! computers, ethics, and society
- ! war and peace

It is fairly obvious that each of these critical topics cries out for the integration of technical, scientific, philosophical, and social knowledge. [And as you probably have guessed] Each also represents one of our courses in SJSU studies.

Upper division general education at SJSU gives students in-depth practice with integrative learning. It creates an opportunity for them to step out of their majors, which deliver very important but mostly non-integrated knowledge, and acquire practice in a multidisciplinary environment. So, for example, when students from engineering, meteorology, nursing, political science, and philosophy find themselves taking the same class on world hunger, they share their own discipline-based perspectives and enrich each other's understanding. This "mixing" across the disciplines occurs both in the content of the course, and also in the membership in the learning community. We call this "horizontal integration" because knowledge from many parallel fields of equal importance is integrated in pursuit of a common goal. In this way SJSU Studies courses offer essential preparation for cooperative, multidisciplinary, project-based occupations and experiences.

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Some argue that integrated learning should happen strictly at the lower division level through our General Education Core. But the "Core" is a "Core" for a reason—it provides the basic foundation on which integrated knowledge can be constructed. To return to the example of our world hunger course, before students can reach the point where they can integrate knowledge from a range of disciplines they may need to have mastered college level math (to grapple with statistics,) and writing (to formulate and organize knowledge). They need to be scientifically literate (to understand studies of starvation, epidemiology, etc.), and they need an understanding of basic social science (relationship of class, poverty, war, and government.) "Integration" assumes you already have some knowledge which you *can* integrate. Students need practice at the integration of knowledge, and this can best occur at an advanced level. This feature of SJSU Studies could be termed "vertical integration" since it depends upon foundations laid down in the core.

There is an important misimpression that the CSU's program in upper division general education is "unique," and that its uniqueness proves that we are out of step with peer institutions. First, we should point out that being unique is not automatically a criticism—it is often celebrated and called "leadership." But an increasing number of institutions of higher education have imitated our model. The

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Association of American Colleges and Universities reports that 33% of its institutions have upper division general education specifically, and 63% have an integrative component in their degree programs. CUNY is in the process of strengthening advanced components in general education.⁹ Furthermore, the great majority of courses offered at U.C. Berkeley to satisfy breadth requirements are upper division courses.¹⁰

Others may argue that integrated learning should take place within majors. We certainly agree and can point to some fine examples where this has been done—such as with our Business Ethics course. Further incorporation of the learning outcomes from upper division GE into majors may be possible—and this may be a fruitful direction to explore as we grapple with the 120 unit limit. However, we are also aware that multi-disciplinary approaches sometimes meet with resistance from within discipline-based departments. We are hopeful that the reevaluation of both upper division GE and our high unit majors will result in creative solutions. We need to assure that each degree preserves its important disciplinary component while also offering the students vital practice with integrative learning.

The SJSU model has sought to overcome resistance to interdisciplinary curricula by placing its control and assessment in the hands of an interdisciplinary board—and not departments. The Board of General Studies (BoGS) has sparked more than its fair share of controversy over the years, and many faculty who have served on BoGS or brought proposals before it have some bruises. Passion over what we teach and what our students learn runs high. But for all of the controversies, BoGS has not forsaken the need for SJSU Studies courses to serve the interdisciplinary learning needs of students, rather than the convenience or financial needs of departments.

In summary, and in the words of our SJSU Studies program, “students become integrated thinkers who can see connections between and among a variety of concepts and ideas. An educated person will be able to apply concepts and foundations learned in one area to other areas as part of a lifelong learning process. These courses will help students to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in a multicultural society and to develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytic skills and creative techniques.”¹¹

⁹ Carol Geary Schneider, President, Association of American Colleges and Universities. Letter to colleagues in the CSU, September 12, 2012.

¹⁰ <http://ls-advise.berkeley.edu/requirement/summary.html>

¹¹ http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/docs/GE/GE_Guidelines_S09_revisions.pdf, p. 41.

A Realistic View of Implementation: the 120 unit cap

The September 7th proposal provoked a crisis over process and it also provoked a crisis over policy. The replacement proposal—which mandates that most degree programs be reduced to fit within 120 units—is itself controversial in some quarters. In our view this proposal does a better job of finding the appropriate division of labor between the Board of Trustees and the faculty, although any major policy change of this magnitude deserves to be thoroughly vetted with the shared governance system. It is a superior alternative because it preserves for faculty the role of determining the curriculum within limits prescribed by the Board—which we think is consistent with HEERA. Please note that this does not mean we necessarily agree with the choice to set the limit at 120—good arguments can be made for more education, not less. But shared governance does provide for the Board to set “basic policies” within which faculty senates operate, and there is no policy more basic than the length of a college education.



While setting basic policies and limits is within the Board’s purview as the manager of the system’s resources, it is most emphatically *not* an appropriate function of the Board to determine specifically how the curriculum will be configured to fit within the 120-unit limit. There is no clearer example of what HEERA calls “an academic and professional matter” than curriculum, and the construction of degree programs is at the heart of curricular matters. Apart from the tradition of HEERA and shared governance, there are also practical reasons for why curriculum has be thorou

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want to support the difficult work that produced this compromise, and so we will do our utmost to meet the one-month timeline. We hope that the efforts we make under this intense time pressure will prove that we are approaching the goals of the compromise in good faith, and that the system will show flexibility if needed.

We are concerned, however, about the tone of the rationale for the original September 7 proposal. It revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of the historical barriers that exist to reaching 120 units. It noted that since 2008 there has been very little progress in reducing programs to 120 units, and implied foot-dragging or negligence. While there may be some lack of enthusiasm for reducing programs, we are not convinced that the authors of the September 7 proposal really understood how the pressures of our existing bureaucracy and budget help to prevent necessary reform. Since these same pressures will continue to apply as we work towards the 120 unit



When reforming degree programs, it is worth noting that there are two separate components to program design and each requires a major investment of time. The first is the development or revision of courses. Faculty must continually upgrade the material so as to find better and more current ways to educate their students. Secondly, all of these courses must be integrated in order to produce a successful program of study. In past years these two efforts were challenging, but they have become even more laborious in the current environment of learning outcomes assessment. No longer can courses and programs be created without thought to “a culture of evidence.” Each change must be accompanied with thorough plans to produce evidence of student learning. Whether these additional requirements are useful is a debate for another day; what is certain is that they are time consuming.

Even the laudable goals of SB 1440 have had the unintended consequences of slowing some reform efforts. This particularly applies to those degree programs currently over 120/180 units. Once a program had been reduced to 120 units, it may suddenly encounter a new set of requirements specified by SB1440 from which it was previously exempt. These additional SB 1440 restrictions “kick in” at 120 and create additional planning issues that have to be addressed as programs seek to reduce themselves.

We are pleased that the revised proposal before the board acknowledges the importance of accreditation standards. In fact, for a typical accredited program, the audience for curricular change is not primarily the Board of Trustees or even our own campuses: often the most critical reviewers are accreditation agencies. These agencies demand evidence of integrated curriculum, breadth, assessment of learning objectives and program objectives, and an evaluation of that assessment. All external accreditations are labor intensive, but what is not as commonly understood is that they leave behind ongoing monitoring and planning requirements that may not be in perfect harmony with University and CSU procedures

In short, successful curricular reforms consume enormous amounts of faculty time. Given the workload demands of reform, it is not entirely surprising that progress has slowed over the last several years. Since 2008 the budget has declined. This leaves us with fewer full-time permanent faculty who can carry out reform work. This is especially true at SJSU, which has one of the lowest percentages of tenure/tenure track faculty in the system. Our remaining permanent faculty face classrooms packed with students who need faculty attention as much as ev

