



Academic Senate

President's Report to YCCD Board of Trustees (A.K.A "Howerton Highlights")

Date: June 11, 2020

Good Evening Trustees,

"One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city, and if it can change a city, it can change a state, and if it can change a state, it can change a nation, and if it can change a nation, it can change the world."
-Barack Obama

You may notice a different tone in my report tonight. Over the last few weeks, I have been struggling with a range of emotions as I witness the various voices lifting to demand a change to our status quo in hope to make a better future for ALL. There are many who are struggling. Those who are struggling to be seen/heard. Those who are struggling by having their privilege identified for the first time. Those who are struggling while looking into a mirror and forced to challenge life-long held assumptions. Those who historically have been marginalized. Those who are grieving for loved ones and a future they will never experience are also struggling. I know all these things are personal and no one can know exactly what another person is thinking, feeling, or should do as we navigate these waters.

As a communication studies professor and a critical theorist, I am fascinated by the emerging international social movement we are witnessing and the ways in which communication is being used to give a voice to those who have been interrupted, silenced, and/or dismissed. I am glad that the voice is finally loud enough to be heard by some who need to hear it. Hopefully will lead to lasting policy changes.

I also want to note that June is Pride Month. Last year was the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots (June 28-July 3, 1969) where a series of spontaneous demonstrations by the gay (LGBT) community sparked a movement to validate the co-existence of the queer community. The annual pride parades that we know today has roots in visibility demonstrations. "We are here!" (as a side note: In grad school I did an ideological criticism of the SF Pride parade posters and the symbolic alignment with the movement). I moved to California in 2000 from Memphis, Tennessee. As a southern boy who had to live most of his life closeted for fear of safety, attending my first pride parade was life changing. A little quick history - when I was in my early 20s I came home to find a flier for the local chapter of the KKK on my front door. Looking over your shoulder in fear of safety can impede the luxury of self-actualization.

Because of the riots and demonstrations over 50 years ago, I can be here tonight and proudly announce my orientation and share my life publicly with my husband. Something I would not be able to do 50 years ago...and to be honest it is still a challenge when I go back to the south and other parts of the country. I know what it can feel like to be living in fear of harm because of who

you are. The assumptions and stereotypes people have of you based on a personal characteristic. This is the antithesis of what higher education environments should. As educators we seek to support student growth into their potential, celebrate the various voices, and learn from those differences.

I feel like I am rambling now, so to wrap up my report I will be working with the WCC senate to support college/district efforts to maintain our commitment to diversity and access.

I would also like to reshare with you the following two documents. In the fall, I will work with the WCC Senate during our retreat to reaffirm our commitment to our community norms that advocates for all voices being heard in our decision making:

- [WCC Academic Senate Community Norms](#) (Click Link)
- ASCCC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

With the goal of ensuring the equal educational opportunity of all students, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges embraces diversity among students, faculty, staff, and the communities we serve as an integral part of our history, a recognition of the complexity of our present state, and a call to action for a better future. Embracing diversity means that we must intentionally practice acceptance and respect towards one another and understand that discrimination and prejudices create and sustain privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others. In order to embrace diversity, we also acknowledge that institutional discrimination and implicit bias exist and that our goal is to eradicate those elements from our system. Our commitment to diversity requires that we strive to eliminate those barriers to equity and that we act deliberately to create a safe and inclusive environment where individual and group differences are valued and leveraged for our growth and understanding as an educational community.

To advance our goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice for the success of students and employees, we must honor that each individual is unique and that our individual differences contribute to the ability of the colleges to prepare students on their educational journeys. This requires that we develop and implement policies and procedures, encourage individual and systemic change, continually reflect on our efforts, and hold ourselves accountable for the results of our efforts in accomplishing our goals. In service of these goals, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges is committed to fostering an environment that offers equal employment opportunity for all.

As a collective community of individual colleges, we are invested in cultivating and maintaining a climate where equity and mutual respect are both intrinsic and explicit by valuing individuals and groups from all backgrounds, demographics, and experiences. Individual and group differences can include but are not limited to the following dimensions: race, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry, citizenship, immigration status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, registered domestic partner status, age, political beliefs, religion, creed, military or veteran status, socioeconomic status, and any other basis protected by federal, state or local law or ordinance or regulation. We acknowledge that the concept of diversity and inclusion is ever evolving, and thus we create space to allow for our understanding to grow through the periodic review of this statement.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher J. Howerton, M.A., Ed.S.

WCC Academic Senate President