

**STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE  
QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CUNY  
MONTHLY REPORT**

**1. Senate Matters: Composition and Membership**

After the modifications of a few weeks ago, the membership of the Academic Senate is stable at this time.

**2. Committee Matters: Composition and Membership**

- Several resignations and appointments have added new members to the Committee on Continuing Education; and the Committee on Assessment. As of this writing, we have not yet been advised of the names of chairs for the Committee on Publications and Ceremonial Occasions, although this is eagerly anticipated. On these points, we refer our colleagues to the report of the Committee on Committees prepared by Dr. Edward Volchok.

**2. Committee Matters: Activities**

- The Steering Committee met with the chairs of committees on September 12. As per our last report, all Committees of the Academic Senate have been charged to contribute to the collection of evidence and documentation related to preparation for the Middle States Accreditation review our institution will be scheduled to undergo during the Academic year 2014-2015. The Steering Committee will, of course, draft, or contribute, as needed, to the “Leadership and Governance” portion of the report. We are grateful to the Committee Chairs who were kind enough to meet with us; in a few cases, representatives were sent where the election of a Committee chair is pending.
- The Steering Committee would like to extend its special and profound thanks to Mr. David Moretti, who, by most recent report, continues to work, patiently, with committee chairs to help them master the intricacies of the new website.
- The Steering Committee would like to draw the attention of Senators and prospective Faculty guests to Item VII on the Academic Senate Agenda, a statement by the Committee of Chairs regarding Pathways. We have placed a resolution next to this statement in the event that the Academic Senate wishes to formally endorse this statement, which the Steering Committee supports. We wish to thank the Committee of Chairs for this important communication.
- The tremendous burden upon the Committee on Curriculum to proffer the courses for the Common Required and Flexible Core created at the mandate of the Board of Trustees Resolution of June, 2011 has been, up to now, assumed in the spirit of a shared governance system that, we had hoped, could protect our programs and our faculty. The

Steering Committee would like to thank the members of the Committee on Curriculum for their incredibly diligent work, consistently beyond the call of duty, to address the demands of the Board of Trustees Resolution.

The events that have transpired since the transmission of Vice-President Steele's email of September 13 to the members of the Department of English have raised nevertheless several serious questions that the Steering Committee is compelled to address. While the Steering Committee acknowledges Vice-President Steele's subsequent apology to the faculty, we regret to note that, as of this writing, no formal retraction of the "hypothetical scenario" described in her email has been offered.

The absence of a written retraction sustains a grim climate of apprehension that has now been cast over faculty decision-making and academic freedom across our campus.

Acting in concert with the Faculty Executive Committee, the Steering Committee has directed the Chair of Queensborough's Committee on Academic Freedom, Dr. Julian Stark, to investigate possible violations of Academic Freedom in the events surrounding the transmission of the September 13 communication from Queensborough's administration. The Steering Committee of the Academic Senate is hoping that we can anticipate a progress report from this committee at our meeting on October 9, 2012. We wish to thank Dr. Stark and his colleagues for their diligence and trouble.

However, the Steering Committee wishes to observe that the current crisis over the question of whether three-credit English Composition courses would adequately support our student's learning without a fourth contact hour raises fundamental questions about the entire Pathways initiative. How can faculty truly be said to enjoy academic freedom if they are being told how to teach? How can faculty truly exercise academic freedom when the sanction of campus closure can be invoked, as a shadow, over all us, threatening our livelihoods and eliminating educational opportunities for our students?

The members of the Steering Committee have agonized over these questions from the earliest point, in June, 2011, when it became clear that the Board of Trustees resolution would compel compliance from faculty governance bodies on our campus. In recent meetings with the Faculty Executive Committee, and representatives of the Committee of Chairs, we have heard continued uncertainty and ambivalence expressed concerning the implications of withholding cooperation in the Pathways initiative. Some members of faculty, including this writer, had hoped that utilizing shared governance would allow departments to make appropriate internal judgments about their own curricula in a manner that would be most protective of our students and our campus. Other colleagues, however, have—legitimately--seen this process of cooperation as one that has diminished, not only the integrity of shared governance, but the professional status of the faculty, and urged non-compliance.

The Steering Committee has accordingly prepared the two resolutions below, in support of our campus, our English faculty, and the professional judgment of our faculty to reject Pathways. We are disposed to regard the endorsement or rejection of these resolutions as

a species of referendum on the future direction for our campus in the matter of the Pathways Initiative. Until we have a vote, we are very kindly requesting the Committee on Curriculum to suspend its consideration of courses for the “Pathways buckets.”

Although we are offering these resolutions for a vote on the floor of the Academic Senate, we wish to remind faculty that meetings of the Academic Senate are public, open meetings, as per the resolution of Perez v. CUNY of 2006. We join the Chair of the Faculty Executive Committee, Professor Alexandra Tarasko, in inviting all members of Queensborough’s faculty to attend.

Members of Faculty who are not senators will be required to request permission to speak, as per Article I, Section 3 of Bylaws of the Academic Senate:

*Meetings of the Academic Senate shall be subject to the Open Meetings Law and the Freedom of Information Law. Under the Open Meetings Law, the public has the right to attend any meeting of a public body. Any time a quorum of a public body gathers to discuss business, the meeting must be held in public, subject to the right to convene an executive session under certain limited circumstances. Non-members must conform to the usual requirements of parliamentary procedure; the Parliamentarian will interpret and enforce the rules which include that no non-member of the body may speak without the permission of the body.*

However, the Steering Committee of the Academic Senate is committed to recognizing any member of faculty who chooses to attend this meeting and wishes to speak to the floor.

### **3. University and College Wide Matters with Direct Bearing on the Senate**

The Steering Committee submits the following resolutions for the consideration of the Academic Senate and Faculty:

#### **I. RESOLUTION IN AFFIRMATION OF QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE REMAINING A VIABLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

Whereas, Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York is obliged to honor its legal obligations and the agreements it has undertaken,

and

Whereas, the College needs to satisfy criteria for accreditation of its degree programs, as per Title 8, Chapter 2, section 52.2 of the Rules and Regulations of the Commissioner of Education of the State of New York, (available at

[http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/title\\_8\\_chapter\\_ii\\_regulations\\_o.htm](http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/title_8_chapter_ii_regulations_o.htm)), which indicates that "institutions shall possess the financial resources necessary to accomplish its mission and the purpose of each registered curriculum..."

And

Whereas, the College needs to satisfy liberal arts requirements, as per institutional accreditation requirements set by the New York State Board of Regents in Chapter 1, title 8, Section 3.47 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules, and Regulations of the State of New York, (available at [http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/chapter\\_i\\_of\\_title\\_8\\_of\\_the\\_offi.htm](http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/chapter_i_of_title_8_of_the_offi.htm))

And

Whereas, the College is obliged to honor its articulation agreements, and to meet its obligations to dual-join degree programs with other colleges in the City University of New York;

Therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that it shall be the official College policy of Queensborough Community College of the City university of New York that:

- the College must offer in sufficient number courses required in its degree programs;
- the College must not violate state law or regulation by failing to offer courses in sufficient number required for its degree programs;
- the College must not jeopardize its accreditations by failing to offer courses in sufficient number required for its degree programs;
- the College must not violate its agreements with Dual Joint Partners by failing to offer courses in sufficient number required for its degree programs;
- the College must not violate its Articulation Agreements by failing to offer courses in sufficient number required for its degree programs;

And BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these obligations must be honored, irrespective of whether Queensborough's course listings adhere to the specifications of the CUNY Common Required and Flexible Cores.

**II. RESOLUTION TO REJECT PATHWAYS, AFFIRM ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND THE RIGHTS OF ENGLISH FACULTY AT QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Whereas, the Board of Trustees "Resolution on Transfer" was passed in June 2011 over the objections of Faculty across CUNY, expressed in numerous resolutions from Academic Departments, College Governance Bodies, and the University Faculty Senate, totaling over 100 in all (archived at

<http://cunyufs.org/A/<https://mail.qcc.cuny.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=cface175e3f74c86b86921e51ccaf55c&URL=http%3a%2f%2fcunyufs.org%2fA%2f>>)

And

Whereas, notwithstanding the faculty's continued misgivings about the insufficient curricular rigor of the Required and Flexible Core Curriculum created by a "Steering Committee" of fourteen invited CUNY faculty, this general education curriculum was approved by the CUNY Central Office by December, 2011;

And

Whereas, the passage of the June, 2011 resolution of the Board of Trustees represented a revocation of the agreement and promise recorded in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees for November 24, 1997, in the wake of the settlement of Polishook v. CUNY, which affirmed that "...the faculty, in accordance with CUNY Bylaws § 8.6. shall be responsible... for the formulation of policy relating to...curriculum..."

[\(http://www.cunyufs.org/reports/Polishook-vs.-CUNY.html<https://mail.qcc.cuny.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=cface175e3f74c86b86921e51ccaf55c&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.cunyufs.org%2freports%2fPolishook-vs.-CUNY.html>\)](http://www.cunyufs.org/reports/Polishook-vs.-CUNY.html<https://mail.qcc.cuny.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=cface175e3f74c86b86921e51ccaf55c&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.cunyufs.org%2freports%2fPolishook-vs.-CUNY.html>)

And

Whereas, as this situation has developed at Queensborough Community College, faculty have been torn between anxiety for the future of their institution; the need to preserve degree attainment opportunities for students; and persistent reservations about the curricular value of the Required and Flexible Core Curriculum;

And,

Whereas, this ambivalence has, to date, been expressed in a dual "compromise" approach, of sustained criticism for the initiative, coupled with an attempt to process courses appropriate for the Required and Flexible core through Queensborough's system of shared governance;

And

Whereas, in May, 2012, the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs freighted an already deeply flawed 30-credit General Education schema with an additional condition that all courses in the "Pathways" Required and Flexible Core be three credits and three hours, notwithstanding the need many students have for additional instructional support;

and

Whereas, this condition has particularly problematic implications for courses in the humanities, and especially English composition, where a fourth contact hour has played a critical role in enabling Queensborough's faculty in English rhetoric, composition, language, and literature to fulfill Queensborough Community College's mission to provide students with "a rich general education core aimed at enhancing students' critical thinking and decision making skills," by "utilizing effective learning strategies" and through "the use of innovative pedagogy;"

And

Whereas, on September 12, 2012, members of the Department of English, fearing for their ability to realize Queensborough's institutional mission, rendered the academic judgment, consistent with their charge as members of the faculty of English, that a three-credit, three hour English course would not serve the educational interests of Queensborough's students;

And

Whereas, in response to this vote, our Vice-Provost of Academic Affairs broke with Queensborough's tradition of shared governance and constructive dialogue, and indicated, in an email, that English Composition courses that failed to conform to the Pathways requirements of being three hours and three credits would not be scheduled for offering in the coming academic year, and that students would be advised to satisfy English composition requirements at other institutions, with severe consequences for staffing,

including the likely non-reappointment of adjunct, untenured, and tenured faculty;

and

Whereas, this email, although mitigated by an apology from Vice-President Steele submitted to the faculty on Monday, September 17, and sent, as the Steering Committee, the Faculty Executive Committee, and many members of the Faculty believe, only under financial and administrative pressure, is widely understood by faculty across CUNY to express a strong possibility that faculty and campuses failing to conform their curricula to the Pathways parameters may face severe consequences, resulting in job losses for full- and part-time faculty;

And

Whereas, this apprehension was not allayed by the message of the Chancellor, issued on September 19, 2012, affirming the authority of the CUNY Board of Trustees and the Chancellor in the implementation of the "Pathways Resolution;"

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Academic Senate and Faculty of Queensborough Community College strongly supports the academic freedom of our colleagues in the Department of English---and all Academic departments-- to render their best academic judgments in the review of course configuration proposals to accommodate the Pathways curriculum;

And

BE IT RESOLVED THAT no further review of courses configured to meet the specifications of the Pathways initiative can proceed at the level of the Committee on Curriculum until and unless the academic judgment and academic freedom of the faculty are fully respected, and guaranteed, in a written document;

And

BE IT RESOLVED THAT no further review of courses configured to meet the specifications of the Pathways initiative can proceed at the level of the Committee on Curriculum until and unless Vice-President Steele's email, outlining the consequences of the English Department vote, is formally retracted, in a written document;

And

BE IT RESOLVED THAT no curriculum, adopted by the faculty under pressure and constraint, should ever be interpreted by Administrative personnel, either on this campus or at the CUNY Central Office, or any media organization, as denoting any degree of faculty support for the Pathways Initiative, which is overwhelmingly rejected by members of our faculty as harmful to our students and poor educational practice.