

**Steering Committee Report
Academic Senate Steering Committee
Queensborough Community College
February 13, 2018**

This month there are reports from the Committee on Committees, Curriculum, and the Committee on Food Insecurity. Due to the retirement of HEO Senator George Muchita, we will have an election of a replacement senator, who will serve the remainder of George's term, which ends in April of this year. We will also consider the new General Education Outcomes, which were presented at the December 2017 meeting and a vote is scheduled under Old Business.

Some have asked why we need to have another election—identical to the one held in September—when there were several candidates who could serve as alternates. It has been mentioned that we often have alternates fill positions created when senators leave the senate, for example upon retirement of one of the at-large members of the senate. However, in such cases we have a larger pool of candidates. In the last regular HEO election there were only two candidates, Ann Tullio and George Muchita. Even though there were several candidates in September, that special election—conducted on the floor of the Academic Senate by Committee on Committees Chair Helmut Loeffler—was not a regular election of HEOs by HEOs. That is the reason we must repeat the exercise and hold the special election to replace George Muchita. Much like last time, the Steering Committee wrote to the HEO community and we also reached out to those who ran before. Regardless of the outcome today, there will be a regular election this semester for two HEO positions, with three-year terms beginning in May. The winner of this special election, and Senator Pantaleo, who was elected in September, will hopefully run again this semester, submitting petitions and appearing on the ballot.

The Steering Committee honors those who have expressed an interest in serving and hopefully our outreach has been helpful in identifying those who may be involved in the future. Having a larger pool of candidates will allow us to avoid the need for special elections altogether.

On that note: it's election season again, so please look for communications from the Senate Technology Officer Jeffrey Schwartz and Helmut Loeffler of the CoC regarding elections for positions in the Academic Senate as well as on standing committees of the Academic Senate.

Just to reiterate and for those who may be new to campus, membership on senate committees does not require being in the Senate. As we continue to place members on committees each year for three-year terms, we are starting to see the benefits of the continuity this affords. It is important for prospective members of senate committees to pay attention to a few details before returning their preferences to the CoC. First, anyone interested in a particular committee

should consult with their department chairperson. Not only that, but it might be wise to consult with Sandra Palmer, Dean of Faculty, and Tim Lynch, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. While their permission or support is not required for membership on any committee, they may be helpful. Prospective committee members should also become familiar with the meeting times of the committee they wish to join. Committee chairs are encouraged to established meeting times that will continue into the next year and perhaps beyond and department chairs are requested to observe these meeting times when scheduling classes. It's been noted that simply serving on a committee isn't enough: committee members should be engaged with the work of the committee and if you're not in attendance you are not participating.

On Wednesday, March 7, the Steering Committee will be meeting with the chairs of the senate committees, where various processes and protocols will be discussed, including the annual reports, which document the activities of each committee and its members in pursuing the charge set forth at the beginning of the academic year. We will emphasize the need to document what members are doing so they may be properly recognized, as well as the need to establish and maintain regular meeting dates, as noted above, so future members can be available for meetings.

In other business, the Steering Committee joined the Faculty Executive Committee at a regularly scheduled meeting in November 2017 to discuss the issue of restrictions placed on the posting of signs and the distribution of flyers. This issue, which has been discussed now for more than a year, involves what the Academic Freedom Committee, the FEC and the Steering Committee believe are unreasonable restrictions placed on communicating with the community through printed matter, restrictions that are possibly violations of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The policy in question, "Guidelines for creating and posting all Queensborough Community College flyers," can be found at <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/studentAffairs/guidelines.html>. The College administration has been queried by FEC Chair Phil Pecorino, and the Chair of the Academic Freedom Committee, Julian Stark, both members of the Academic Senate. Copies of their correspondence, first with Vice President Stephen Di Dio, and later Vice President Sheri Newcomb, have been circulated and certainly many people have expressed interest and concern. The lack of consultation on this matter and the ongoing concern about the elimination of the original opt-out Community Dialogue email system, for some seem to represent a pattern. The Steering Committee, aside from the merits of the complaint about the policy, believes the issue of restricting, through a kind of prior restraint, does warrant wider community consideration, whatever the outcome of the policy happens to be. We believe that this issue, in the abstract, also reflects a growing confusion as to what the role of the Senate—as the *policy-making body of the College*—ought to be, and what the responsibilities of college administrators ought to be when it comes to replying to email, answering questions, asking for clarification and explanation. At the meeting in December, VP Newcomb, who was gracious

and affirming of the rights of individuals under the Constitution, suggested that there would be an opportunity to consult and collaborate and it was agreed at that meeting that representatives of the Steering Committee and the Academic Freedom Committee would have an opportunity to participate in considering a revision of the posted policy, especially to alleviate faculty concerns. At that meeting and in exchanges since, VP Newcomb has sought to allay faculty concerns and stated that the intent ascribed to the administration by some was a misunderstanding. Recently, the Steering Committee learned from VP Newcomb that she is presently working on changes to the posted policy, which members of the community are invited to read for themselves. We refrain from bringing this matter formally to the senate for a vote, believing that collaboration is still possible and we look forward to working out the details with VP Newcomb.

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