

Participatory Governance at Porterville College: An Introduction

Porterville College Mission:

Students are our focus at Porterville College. We are committed to providing an excellent educational experience to our diverse community in an environment that fosters student learning and success. In promoting a student-centered learning environment, we commit ourselves to innovation, respect, collaboration, collegiality, and participatory governance.

Background

If you attend or work at Porterville College, you have a role in its governance through its participatory decision-making process. The purpose of this document is to help you to understand that role as well as to provide a comprehensive picture of the variety of roles played by others who participate in the governance of Porterville College.

Participatory governance is a structure and a process of decision-making designed to enable those who study and work in an academic institution to share responsibility for decisions and for the implementation of those decisions. While participatory governance does not always make decisions based on majority rule--since the various units and organizations that make up the college have different roles and responsibilities based on law, contract, and/or prior agreement-- it shares with democracy a belief in the inherent equality and dignity of all human beings, and the goal of promoting mutual benefit and individual liberty, to the degree possible, through an open deliberative process.

The particular form that participatory governance takes at Porterville College has evolved over the last five years. Given the fluidity of the process we have developed, this evolution may continue. However, whatever modifications we make to the particular forms or processes of campus decision-making, the Porterville College mission statement clearly affirms our commitment to participatory governance. It also affirms our commitment to the values we believe are most likely to result in effective governance: innovation, respect, collaboration, and collegiality.

An Overview

Participatory governance at Porterville College takes place in multiple groups and on multiple levels, often simultaneously. However, most major decisions that do not involve contractual issues (Contractual issues must be negotiated between one of the unions and the college or district administration) are ultimately deliberated in one of three bodies: the Academic Senate, the College Learning Council, or the President's Cabinet.

The specific roles and responsibilities of each of these bodies are discussed in more detail below. In the most general terms, The Academic Senate is responsible for representing the academic and professional interests of the faculty, as well as for setting the academic calendar and making decisions regarding the curriculum. It is made up of an Executive Committee and a representative from each division. The College Learning Council--a body that includes all college administrators and program directors, all division chairs, and representatives of CSEA, CCA, and the Associated Students at Porterville College--is responsible for coordinating and communicating college-wide planning, budgeting, and reporting. Finally, most college-wide decisions are reached through consensus of the President's Cabinet. This Cabinet is chaired by the President and includes all members of the Academic Senate and all members of the College Learning Council.

All three of these participatory bodies are supported in their work by campus-wide committees that are co-chaired by an administrator and either a faculty member or a classified employee. Their work may also be supported by sub-committees and occasional ad-hoc task forces.

Meetings of the Academic Senate, the College Learning Council, and the President's Cabinet--as well as meetings of all campus committees and task forces--are open meetings. All are welcome to attend, and all are welcome to ask questions and to speak their concerns and opinions. In addition, the college president holds monthly campus-wide forums to discuss issues, problems, and questions that concern members of the campus community.

Participation Tip: The easiest way to find out what is going on at Porterville College and to participate in decision-making is to attend open forums and/or meetings of the Academic Senate, College Learning Council, and President's Cabinet.

Where You Fit In

Each classified and certificated employee, and each student at Porterville College, belongs to one or more bodies that have the responsibility of representing their members in the participatory governance process.

If you are a full-time faculty member, you are represented by your division chair, the Academic Senate, and CCA. You have the responsibility to participate in the election of your division chair, your division's academic senate representative, and the president-elect of the Academic Senate. If you are a CCA member, you also have the responsibility to elect Porterville College's Campus Chair and Campus Representative. In addition, you have the responsibility to keep informed about division, senate, and CCA issues and to communicate your questions, concerns, and opinions to your representatives.

If you are an adjunct faculty member, you are represented by your division chair and by the Academic Senate. You have the responsibility to participate in the election of the Adjunct Representative to the Academic Senate and to communicate your questions, concerns, and opinions to the adjunct faculty representatives.

If you are a classified employee, you are represented by CSEA. Some classified employees are also represented by the director of a unit. You have the responsibility to attend CSEA and unit meetings and to participate in the election of CSEA officers.

If you are a student at Porterville College, you are represented by the Associated Students of Porterville College and have the responsibility to participate in ASPC elections. You also may be asked to serve on ASPC committees or to represent the ASPC on a campus-wide committee.

If you are a Manager or Administrator at Porterville College, you are not represented by any particular campus group, but instead belong to the administrative team of the college. You supervise other employees and have a permanent seat on both the President's Cabinet and the College Learning Council. In many cases you also chair committees and/or Task Forces. Your responsibility is to fully understand the participatory process of the campus, and to use that process to work collaboratively with faculty, classified employees, and students for the benefit of the campus. It is also your responsibility to accurately communicate and promptly implement the decisions made through participatory governance.

No matter which of the above groups you belong to, you may be asked to serve on committees or task forces. You also have the responsibility to keep informed about issues, and to communicate your questions, concerns, and opinions to your representatives or directly to decision-making bodies. In short, participatory governance works best when everybody participates.

The Role of Representatives

If you are a representative to the Academic Senate, the College Learning Council, the President's Cabinet, or to a campus-wide committee, you assume responsibilities to both the group you represent and to the participatory governance body on which you serve. Among your responsibilities are attending meetings, informing yourself to the best of your ability on the issues brought before the body or committee, and reporting back to those you represent as well as soliciting their input on a regular basis. You may also be asked to help with the work of the body or committee, including serving as chair, taking minutes, and/or helping to implement the proposals and projects approved by that body or committee.

In addition, as a campus leader, it is your responsibility to embody the college's commitment to "innovation, respect, collaboration, and collegiality."

Participation Tip: Don't wait to be asked. Tell your campus representatives what you think, volunteer to serve on committees, and when you feel prepared, let others know you are willing to represent the group you belong to.