Summary Report of Findings
College Council Focus Group

<u>Held</u>: Wednesday, April 11, 2012, College Heights Conference Room

<u>In Attendance</u>: Jennifer Hughes, Daniella Medeiro, Medelline Lowe, Susan Estes, David Locke, James Carranza, Mike Claire, Juanita Celaya, Eileen O'Brien, Krystal Romero.[1]

<u>Others Present</u>: Milla McConnell-Tuite, (Moderator, Planning, Research & Institutional Effectiveness (PRIE)); Bev Madden, (Co-Moderator, Community Relations & Marketing), Milla Khano, (Student Assistant, PRIE), and Monique Nakagawa (Notetaker, PRIE).

<u>Purpose</u>: *To provide a qualitative evaluation of College Council; to identify areas of overlap or redundancy with the Integrated Planning Committee; and to suggest areas for improvement.* As the moderator noted in her introduction to the session, the focus group was broadly intended to capture members' perceptions, brainstorm, diagnose problems, and stimulate new ideas.

<u>Methods:</u> The focus group was structured as a "hybrid" model in which two individuals briefly presented historical contextual information about the initial implementation of shared governance (Susan Estes) and the Integrated Planning Model (Milla McConnell-Tuite/Moderator). The moderator used exercises, questions, and follow-up probes to elicit a current snapshot of College Council <u>as it is perceived by its participants</u>. For some exercises, she asked participants to read various documents or write their responses on post-it notes. The co-moderator recorded on a flip chart major themes, exercises responses, including "parking lot" for tangential but notable comments. Ms. Nakagawa took detailed notes.

<u>Summary of Major Findings</u>:
Overall, four broad themes or topics emerged

- Shared governance
- Information clearinghouse

- Operations
- "Voice of the community"

<u>Roles and Tasks Findings:</u>

- CC has its well-regarded roots as foundation for the implementation to shared governance at CSM in 1993; the original vision included the hope that shared governance would eventually permeate the institutional beyond CC. Today CC is most the prominent shared governance body with equal participation from the four constituencies.

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[1] Note: Remarks are not identified by individual except those cases in which the participant provided factual background or historical information.

- In response to accreditation issues, the Integrated Planning Committee (IPC) has emerged over the last several years with planning oversight for the "Integrated Planning Model" and as the body that ensures integration of planning.

- College Council has maintained respected formal, official, and ceremonial functions as well as be utilitarian and "official."

- At the same time, however, it is considered by several participants as out of date, too "easy" and comfortable, not focused on "challenges for the college."

- Over the past year CC agendas have had only <u>one</u> decision item; however, CC also validated that shared governance occurred in the allocation of faculty positions.

- The lack of decision items is revealed when people are asked to describe their activities as "participants" and as "representatives." Clearly CC is in flux— there is a disconnect, for some, between what members actually do on CC and what they think they "should be doing."

- Budget priority and allocation decisions have shifted (from the original purview of CC) to IPC where, as one participant said, "things [decisions] are happening." In fact "budget" guidance is articulated in the original purpose statements for both IPC and CC. Budget allocation decisions, it was observed, are critical in any program planning.

- Participants agreed that CC serves as an "information clearinghouse," part of an "honest effort to disseminate" information. Information becomes redundant and repetitive, however, when it is also presented (frequently by the same people) at IPC or is an outcome of IPC actions.

- The substance of many CC discussions/agendas frequently do not include issues "guiding the institution," but are operational issues, e.g. parking lots and trash cans. These issues are important enough to "take somewhere." Should they be the work of CC?

<u>Shared Governance Findings</u>

- There was consensus that shared governance representation must be retained in some oversight group, whether it be CC or IPC. The "spirit" of shared governance must be preserved.

- Monitoring and ensuring shared governance could potentially become a new focus of CC (and more like the evaluative discussion that comprised the focus group.)

- Classified staff were originally represented by a classified senate. Historically there may have been concerns that classified staff would not be "protected" or "scapegoated" if they participated in shared governance.

- There was some ambiguity about how members perceive their roles on CC. One member, for example, saw the CC participant role as one to gather information, not make decisions.

Thoughts about the Future…

- There is a vacuum for discussion and information-sharing about selected operational issues. Where do those issues belong? Can the current committee structure accommodate them, perhaps as a new Operations Group?

- Information sharing and communicating the "voice of the community" could be considered a discrete, explicit charge for an existing committee (e.g. CC or IPC) or another new entity.

- IPC's membership is currently dominated by deans (who serve as other committee chairs) as well as others in leadership positions; if IPC were to take over CC functions, then it would need more equal representation among other groups—students, classified staff, and student services people.

- IPC, however, must preserve a structure that ensures integrated planning. Is it practical for one committee to adhere to constituency representation while organized to support the integrated planning model?

- Since 1993, shared governance has evolved in a variety of ways at CSM. Focus groups or discussions with constituency groups could help evaluate what constitutes participatory, shared governance today as well as identify possible areas of improvement and new strategies for implementation.

Focus Group Organization and Analysis

I. Introduction for Participants
The moderator discussed the need for an evaluation of College Council (CC) and provided an explanation of the hybrid Focus Group approach. She noted that evaluation of CSM's planning processes systematically is mandated by accreditation (and an issue raised by the last accreditation visit) and identified as a need in *Implementing Shared Governance, 1993*, which called for an annual assessment.

II. Background
Context for Integrated Planning
The moderator provided an overview of the Integrated Planning Model, noting that "integration" occurs when plans are synchronized according to the same calendar, when all plans address the same set of priorities, when committee chairs all sit on the

same oversight committee, and when there's a linkage via people ("right people at the table").

The group was shown a graphic of the Integrated Planning Committees as it existed at the start of the semester and then a graphic of the current planning structure, with three committees suspended. The revision in structure, the moderator noted, was as a result of "evaluation…and the testing of ideas."

Context for Integrated Planning/Discussion: One participant posed the question: "What was the impetus to revise committees" [e.g. Enrollment Management, Human Resources, Distance Education.]?

The moderator noted that "originally the idea was to evaluate each committee annually. The evaluation was a tool to gauge how the committee was shepherding along the plan to which it was attached."

One of the IPC co-chairs explained: "IPC hears from a committee chair needing to redefine the committee's mission and not knowing the purpose. We recognized that we needed to have a means to judge the effectiveness of the IPC…We started by looking at the committee structure…whether there was duplication."

Context for Implementing Shared Governance[2]
Susan Estes directed the group to several sections of *Implementing Shared Governance*, 1993. Among the areas she highlighted:
- P1: Definition of shared governance.
- P2 ¶1: Guiding principle: CSM's commitment to four constituency groups with the goal of serving students.
- P3: Structure of shared governance. Implies that the structure will not remain static" and will manifest itself at CSM in many ways.
- P4 §2: Purposes. Particularly bullets 3 & 4:
  o Serve as the principal forum in which the college addresses issues related to planning and program review; and
  o Participate in the development of the institutional budget and in giving advice to the administration on college-wide budget decisions.
- P11 Appendix A: History of shared governance.

III. Exercise: Chair
Q: If CC were a chair, what kind of chair would it be? (What would it feel like?)

The responses were vivid:
- Easy chair.
- Office mesh chair.

- Regular, maybe a bit big, with arm rests.

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[2] Note: Susan's presentation occurred after the "Chair" exercise but is addressed here in the narrative since it was a part of the initial background information provided.

- 1970s recliner – leather, so the quality was there; worn; comfortable, but…
- Wooden, to sit in occasionally
- Colorful plaid, cushions, spider wheels… large back, arm rests, black legs.
- Formal, upright with little use except for official occasions.
- Tough, durable, comfortable that would match the responsibilities it holds.

- Big, oversized, highbacked, like a throne. When you sit in it, you look lost. Red velveteen with claw feet.
- Uncle's old orange barcalounger. Was in style, sturdy, big enough to hold…but worn out and needs to move on.

Discussion and Themes: Several themes emerged that would thread through other discussion. CC has had a respected formal, official, and ceremonial function and it can be utilitarian and "official." At the same time, however, it is out of date and has become too "easy" and comfortable, not focused on "challenges for the college," as one participant put it.

IV. Exercise/on post-it: I understand my role on College Council
(Rate degree of agreement: Agree Strongly, Agree, Disagree, Disagree Strongly)

Discussion and Themes: The vast majority indicated that they understood their role: however, one respondent indicated he straddled between two choices because of the difference between "theory and reality." Another indicated a conflict in choice because of the difference between what her role "should be" vs. "what is." These individuals voiced another theme threading the discussion—the gap or disconnect, for some, between what members actually do on CC and what they think they should be doing.

V. Exercise/on post-it: Types of activities you've done as a member of CC as a "participant" and as a "representative"

The "participant" activities included attending meetings, bringing information to group on a variety of topics (including accred. reports), being informed, listening and asking for clarification, and participating in discussion about smoking task force and trash can survey. "Representative" activities included "nothing and "very little," "agreeing that procedures were followed for faculty hires," reporting to the Academic Senate, sending emails for council feedback, commenting on certain issues, listening to issues, and taking info back to various groups.

Discussion and Themes: Several respondents noted there was more "participation" than "representation" because of what one member described as "not a lot of interest." One faculty member, on the other hand, sees his role as "serving as voice of faculty and bringing information back." Another faculty member indicated he's aware of wearing a "particular hat" as a member. "Bringing information" to CC or to other constituencies was a theme; however, the topics were "parking lots and trash cans"

and "operational, mundane…[not] moving the college." The theme emerged of the need for CSM to address issues that are operational, "not big," but important to take "somewhere."

As another consequence of membership on CC, one participant sees CC as allowing people to be a part of shared governance and that the practice of rotating chairs is an opportunity to gain leadership experience [where there are few such other opportunities].

VI. College Council Agenda items
Participants were given a listing of CC agenda items for the past year.
Q: What themes emerge? What commonality? What not in common?

Discussion and Themes: One member observed that there was only one "decision" item while another member noted "a lot of information items…repetitive information." Another stated there's been an "honest effort to disseminate information. Think we've done a good job. But I see redundancy, repetitiveness."

Agenda items do fall into categories, as one member stated: "campus operations, some budget, procedures and policies, some grievance [policy issues]. Another member pointed out CC's shared governance oversight charge—that while not listed as one of the year's agenda items, faculty position requests came to CC for final approval. "That is one function that CC is supposed to do." Finally, one member posed the apt question: "Does it mean we're not coming up with solutions to these information items?"

VII. IPC Agenda items
Participants were given a listing of IPC agenda items for the past year and, once the discussion was launched, mission/purpose statements for both CC and IPC.
Q: Are they different from College Council's? Are they the same?

Discussion and Themes: While many information updates appear on both committees' agenda, a shift in tasks has occurred, with IPC now engaging in budget issues. Since position requests are addressed in IPC [October agenda], IPC is perceived as "guiding where the college is headed." As one member noted, " the pathway for faculty funding was via IPC. IPC is where things are happening….CC is more of an information clearinghouse. IPC has more action." (CC did, however, "approve" the number of faculty positions.) One member pointed to the budget oversight function in IPC's Mission and Purpose Statement which is now taken on by CC, just as at another time CC considered program review.

One participant observed that IPC "has structure for true integrated planning. People connected with the plans are at the same place at the same time. The structure allows for integrated work." Another pointed out that IPC is a result of shared governance and CC has oversight of it…yet there is no "overseeing shared governance on its agenda."

A contrasting view came from another who stated, "I think I am here to get information and I am not expected to have decision-making on my part. "

VIII.   Break

IX. CC and IPC Mission Statements/IPC Organizational Chart
Discussion and Themes: After the break, the discussion shifted to whether the IPC should become CC. Should the shared governance mission of CC be carried over to IPC; if so, what are the challenges and how is shared governance assured?

As one member said: "[Are we] really trying to find a way to say CC is old and tired....? Is IPC then going to be the new shared governance structure? What is the make-up of IPC? Will each representative body have a say?" As a respondent pointed out, the constituency representation is imperfect in the current structure of IPC. IPC is comprised of mostly "decision-makers" and deans who chair the planning committees. (The deans become committee chairs because people "defer" to them.) IPC needs more student services representation though another noted that there has been an attempt to bring "more classified staff and student voices" on IPC.

The discussion then focused on shared governance. As one member noted: "[We need a] common understanding of what shared governance is. In my mind, it's a path for consultation, a pathway for participatory governance. Ultimately, though, decision-making often rests with the president...and Academic Senate."

Another observed that "shared governance should permeate the entire institution. There is lots of need for input...such opportunities exist." Yet one expressed concern that if there was a shift in committee structure where would the "spirit of shared governance [reside]? I see the college moving to a corporate structure, with more power at the top. Staff and students are given less weight." The moderator noted that originally the classified senate was a shared governance entity that no longer exists. Another remarked that may have occurred because the classified reps were not "protected" and were stigmatized."

One member observed that the focus group discussion was a sign of shared governance in action: "We're doing what we're supposed to do. We're checking IPC. We need to make (clear) we enact shared governance at all levels...and make IPC responsible for overseeing shared governance." Another thought CC should exist but then questioned whether CC should report to IPC given the current structure.

Finally, if IPC were to become CC in some form, there was a sense in the group that the structure would need to change. One member explained: "We can't have an integrated planning body without the committee chairs. But the beauty of CC is incumbent on official representatives getting back to their constituencies. The beauty is that it is constituency-based. We need a marriage of the two structures or we lose other voices. But we need committee chairs, or there is no integrated planning going on. [That requires] a separate conversation with classified staff."

X. Compendium of Committees
For the final exercise, members were given the complete *Compendium of Committees* but there was not enough time for discussion; the moderator suggested that the group might review the *Compendium* as they might entertain a prospective Operations Group.

Jennifer Hughes stated that at the next meeting, "we can discuss why operation items have been coming on CC's agenda. I agree that there's a void now."

XI. Wrap-up and Next Steps
The moderator proposed follow-up focus groups with Academic Senate, Classified staff or other to possibly evaluate the effectiveness of shared governance. (This was questioned by a participant—"is this turning into an assessment of shared governance?"

Moderator Summation:
- Three major themes...
  - Shared governance
  - Information clearinghouse
  - Operations
  - "Voice of the college community" [this fourth was added by a participant]

Closing Remarks by Participants
- "We may need to define what shared governance means today."

- "If CC were not to go away, maybe it can play a different role that what we currently have. Maybe it meets twice a year to oversee shared governance? Could be a revision of itself?"

- "If the purpose of CC has moved to IPC, then the spirit of shared governance needs to move to IPC."

- "Agree: the spirit of shared governance is really in CC; the spirit needs to be preserved."

"Parking Lot" for Ideas

- "How are individuals chosen to be a part of shared governance?"

- "Does the [lack of decision items in CC agendas] mean that we are not coming up with solutions?"