



Borough of Manhattan Community College  
The City University of New York  
Academic Senate

---

**PRELIMINARY**

Summary Report for the 2009-2010 Third Session of the Academic Senate

submitted by

Professor Philip A. Belcastro, Ph.D., Chair

May 26, 2010

May 26, 2010 marks the conclusion of the third session of the Academic Senate and its standing and ad hoc working committees. The Academic Senate is responsible for the principle academic policy decisions of the college including admissions criteria, academic programs, degree requirements and graduation requirements. The Academic Senate serves as the agent of the faculty in carrying out the functions of faculty subject to the provisions of the Bylaws of the CUNY Board of Trustees.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The third session of the Academic Senate yielded significant actions including: (1) Resolution imploring President Perez to support the process of faculty governance via Academic Senate by allotting 8 hours of reassigned time per academic year, to be allocated at the chair's discretion among the officers, in order to fulfill the charge of Academic Senate; (2) November 12, 2009 Faculty Development Day ~ Standard 14 & Testing; (3) The Academic Standing Committee reviewed 1,234 academic appeals; (4) Three hours of reassigned time was restored to the Academic Senate Secretary for the Fall semester of the academic year; (5) Resolution requesting President Perez reconsider his decision to deny the Academic Senate reassigned time to support the process of faculty governance at BMCC; (6) Resolution for reassigned time for faculty serving on the IRB; (7) Resolution for the president to halt any increase in current course enrollment caps set by the administration; (8) Resolution that over-tallies only be granted at the sole discretion of the respective department chairs; (9) Resolution that faculty should not be penalized for poor student participation in the Title V-style advising program; (10) April 28, 2010 Joe Doctor Colloquium on Academic Freedom; (11) The Faculty Development Committee awarded 13 faculty development grants; (12) Revision of the Student Academic Referral Form; (13) Status Report on Student retention at BMCC; (14) Course revisions; new courses: HED-110: "*Comprehensive Health Education*," POL-110 "*Introduction to Politics*," LAT-200 "*Peoples & Cultures of Latin America*," MMA-100 "*Foundations of Digital Graphic Design*," MMA-215 "*Typography & Layout*," MMA-225 "*Digital Imaging for Graphic Design*," MMA-235 "*Visual Communication and Design*," VAT-153 "*Script to Screen*,"; and new curricular: CIS

curriculum "Geographic Information Science" (A.S.), proposal for an Associate in Science degree in Biotechnology Science offering two new courses--*Cell Biology* (BIO-260) & *Introduction to Biotechnology* (BTE-201), and Letter of Intent for Dual Joint Degree in Forensic Accounting with John Jay College; (14) The establishment of the *Academic Freedom Committee* as a standing committee of Academic Senate; and (15) The establishment of the *Regulation Compliance Committee* as an administrative committee of Academic Senate.

It is noteworthy and representative of the volume of committee work and preparations that these accomplishments were realized in less than 7 hours of deliberations on the academic Senate floor for the entire academic year.

## 2009-2010 ACADEMIC SENATE EXPERIENCE & RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. The 2009 UFS Faculty Experience Survey

The UFS Faculty Experience Survey reported that BMCC ranked between 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of 19 CUNY colleges, in key assessment items regarding: (1) department participation in decision-making; (2) workload; and (3) faculty participation in decision-making. BMCC faculty rated these key items lower in 2009 in comparison to the 2005 UFS Faculty Experience Survey. The current administration was seated throughout the 2000 to 2010 academic years.

The faculty's lament and frustration with the administration over the past decade centers about its disenfranchisement in decision-making as well as in the administration's ill respect for the expertise and fiduciary role of CUNY faculty. Recently this was illustrated in a symbolic way when no representative of BMCC faculty governance was invited to address the dignitaries, or sit at the dais, for the dedication of Fitterman Hall. Regarding the fiduciary role of BMCC faculty, this was illustrated in the unilateral proprietary action exercised by the administration in reinterpreting nearly three decades of faculty past practice regarding the college's enrollment, appeal and dismissal policy. Related to this point the administration acted without notice to the Academic Senate, to establish the *Enrollment Management Committee* exclusively comprised of college administrators /directors and void of a single seated faculty member. Further, on the floor of the Academic Senate the president, referring to VP Diaz as his legal advisor, reaffirmed that regardless of the decisions rendered by faculty in the Academic Senate it will be the BMCC president that determines which recommendation will be forwarded to the CUNY Board of Trustees.

It is my observation, given such history, that the senior administration at BMCC interacts with faculty as a cog in their system rather than the academic engine charged with the enterprise of higher education at CUNY. In turn senior administrators' commitment to faculty and its governing bodies is pro forma. As such academic administrative actions are absent of the engagement and heeded respect necessary to foster faculty's charge, or in turn nurture a collaborative engagement with faculty as stakeholders in the academic enterprise of BMCC.

This concern is a primary concern of the faculty and as such should be relegated to a primary charge of the 2010-2011 Academic Senate. The 2009 UFS Faculty Experience Survey serves as a roadmap to addressing BMCC's three primary faculty concerns: (1) department participation in decision-making; (2) workload; and (3) faculty participation in decision-making. An assessment of these three areas should be two-tiered with the first focused on the organizational apparatus that promotes or offends faculty participation in the decision-making

process. The second tier should focus on chronicling the extent that the expertise and fiduciary role of BMCC faculty is respected and reflected in the president's decisions and actions.

The initiative's objective is to identify for the president the factors, variables and policies that offend faculty's charge in the academic enterprise of BMCC. This initiative is formidable and will require considerable human resources over a multi-year period. The initiative's goal is to significantly improve faculty's ranking of BMCC on a subsequent UFS Faculty Experience Survey in the key areas of: (1) department participation in decision-making; (2) workload; and (3) faculty participation in decision-making. The exercise would be advanced as a healthy and candid institutional evaluation, resourced with the partnership of the president, with the intent not to assign fault—but rather to find viable solutions to the salient concerns of the BMCC faculty as stakeholders in the college's academic enterprise.

#### Recommendation

The 2009 UFS Faculty Experience Survey serves as the standard to address three primary faculty concerns: (1) department participation in decision-making; (2) workload; and (3) faculty participation in decision-making. A two-tiered assessment of these three areas would focus on; (1) the organizational apparatus that promotes or offends faculty participation in the decision-making process; and (2) chronicling of the extent the expertise and fiduciary role of BMCC faculty is respected and reflected in the president's decisions and actions. The initiative's objective is to identify for the president the factors, variables and policies that offend faculty's charge in the academic enterprise of BMCC. This initiative's goal is to significantly improve faculty's ranking of BMCC on a subsequent UFS Faculty Experience Survey.

## II. Academic Senate Resources

The Academic Senate remains considerably under-resourced by the administration's caveat, in turn impeding the Academic Senate's logistical and legislative ability to exercise its charge.

*Regarding the reassigned time for Academic Senate Officers.* After considerable negotiations, a survey of CUNY campuses, meetings, memoranda, and two nearly unanimous motions by Academic Senate to provide officers with reassigned time--the president simply restored the (3-hour) reassigned time for the secretary that was confiscated from the Academic Senate in its 2007 inception. This is the third academic year the Academic Senate has operated with the least amount of reassigned time of any CUNY governance body. The president's refusal to resource the Academic Senate continues to hamper its initiatives and charge. One example of great concern is the Academic Senate Website. The Academic Senate Website was conceived by the body as a primary communication and document resource venue. Indeed the Academic Senate has expressed a desire to utilize the Academic Senate Website as a forum for college wide discourse. **The president's refusal to sufficiently resource the Academic Senate continues to hamper its initiatives and charge as well as fails to satisfy the college's obligation to facilitate faculty governance.**

*Regarding the logistical support for convening and the exercising of the Academic Senate's charge.* The scheduled time allotted by the college remains insufficient for the Academic Senate's deliberations. In addition, the voting apparatus (*clickers*) and dependent software is

unreliable and consumes too much time in its transition from College Council to Academic Senate as well as in recording votes. In November, 2009 the president agreed to replace the 'clickers' with a more efficient and accurate system. However the clickers have yet to be replaced and the need remains outstanding.

#### Recommendations

1. The Chair of Academic Senate be allocated three reassigned hours per semester to allocate to officers and representatives of Academic Senate to carry out Academic Senate tasks.
2. A reliable and expedient roster and vote recording apparatus be provided and maintained for the Academic Senate by September 1, 2010.
3. Part B, section 4.b of the BMCC Governance Plan be amended to: "***The Council meetings precede the Senate meetings and shall last no more than 40 minutes.***"
4. In practice the College Council should present all reports and presentations in writing and reserve deliberation for action items.
5. The College Council should be scheduled for only two meetings per semester. (The College Council Executive Committee has the power to call additional meetings if warranted.)

Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 potentially increase by 50% the deliberation time of Academic Senate.

#### III. Orientation of Freshman Members of the Academic Senate.

During the 2009-2010 academic year a freshman orientation to Academic Senate was piloted. The objective of the orientation was to assimilate freshman members as well as returning members of the body to the functions, duties and operations of the Academic Senate for the coming academic year. While informative, the attendance was sparse and the time limited due to the fact it was scheduled following an Academic Senate meeting. The need and value of a freshman orientation remains.

#### Recommendation

To address the logistical problem it is recommended that a freshman orientation be conducted immediately following the first meeting of the standing committees. The convener of the standings committee would be charged with preparing the freshman orientation following guidelines provided by the Chair of Academic Senate. Committee members will serve as a resource to the organization, history and practice of Academic Senate, College Council and their respective standing committees for the orientation. The freshman orientation would also function as an introductory and convivial setting between new members and their colleagues.

#### IV. Study Abroad Committee

The governing predecessor of Academic Senate was Faculty Council. Faculty Council had as a *special committee* the *Study Abroad Committee* which was charged with reviewing and recommending undergraduate applicants for study abroad courses. In the transition from Faculty

Council to Academic Senate the *Study Abroad Committee* was not formally recognized or accounted for as a committee of Academic Senate.

#### Recommendation

Amend the BMCC Governance Plan to establish the Study Abroad Committee as an administrative committee of the Academic Senate.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was challenging and most gratifying to be a part of the 2009-2010 session of Academic Senate. The willingness, camaraderie and '*roll-up-the-sleeves*' work ethic of its members this year again fostered a productive session. Our labors and tribulations are also mindful of yet another loss, Professor Richard Chorley. As I said on the floor of the Academic Senate I wish you all the good fortune of finding a colleague who is a friend and more so, a colleague who is a good friend. Indeed we are burdened less by our labors and trails when good friends are also competent, dedicated colleagues.

I am reluctant to begin mentioning individual efforts because my list is extensive, albeit exclusive of those individual efforts not known to me. Kindly know I am most appreciative of the services and counsel rendered from the body and the officers of the Academic Senate: Beryl Duncan Wilson; Cynthia Wiseman; Glenn Miller as well as the standing committee officers. The ad hoc committee on Academic Freedom and the ad hoc Regulation Compliance Committee have earned special recognition for their labors and commitment in advancing the breadth of Academic Senate for faculty.

This report's summary, accomplishments, concerns and recommendations were born from the spirit and vitality of this faculty's voice. Truly that is the mission of the Academic Senate; that is to translate the faculty's voice into the academic mission and enterprise of the college. The third session of the Academic Senate's deliberations, in several cases, entertained divergent positions on policy and recommendations. However following deliberations the Academic Senate acted in overwhelming unanimity--in one voice. The opportunity to contribute to and amplify our voice continues to serve as my motivation and reward.