



# HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500  
Chicago, IL 60604-1411  
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440  
Fax: 312.263.7462 | [hlcommission.org](http://hlcommission.org)

July 25, 2019

President Joe Sopcich  
Johnson County Community College  
12345 College Blvd.  
Overland Park, KS 66210-1299

Dear President Sopcich:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on the academic governance structure.

The institution is required to submit an additional report on faculty voice within the shared governance system at JCCC. The report, to be submitted no later than May 1, 2020, should include, at minimum, the following: 1) A narrative describing the College's efforts to resolve confusion pertaining to faculty voice, and in particular the resolution of the existing "two body" faculty governance issue; 2) Specific policies pertaining to faculty voice within the shared governance system that have emerged from these efforts; and 3) Documentation from FA and/or Faculty Senate policies providing clear delineation of responsibility and authority.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2021 – 2022. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at [lnakutis@hlcommission.org](mailto:lnakutis@hlcommission.org). Your HLC staff liaison is Linnea Stenson ([lstenson@hlcommission.org](mailto:lstenson@hlcommission.org)); (800) 621-7440 x 107.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



## STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: July 25, 2019

STAFF LIAISON: Linnea Stenson

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

**INSTITUTION:** Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Dr. Joe Sopcich, President

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES:** An interim report is required by 9/1/2019 outlining the academic governance structure including academic leadership, academic and faculty committees and faculty including adjunct faculty to include communication processes and protocols between the committees, leadership, and faculty; the outline of shared governance protocols and communication between faculty, academic leadership and JCCC leadership; and an outline of decision-making protocols as well as communication protocols when decisions are final.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2018 Comprehensive Evaluation.

**REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY:** The Johnson County Community College interim report is presented in a clearly written narrative supported with two supplementary documents—the first of which, distributed to the JCCC community, is a policy statement drafted by the institution's president, setting forth the nature of shared governance at the College. The second of these is an organizational chart, dated June 13, 2019.

**REPORT SUMMARY:** The College's submission begins with a letter from the institution that provides an overview of the issues addressed in the report and JCCC's efforts to respond. The remainder of the report describes the institution's actions in each of three areas.

First, the document summarizes the activity surrounding the release of *the Shared Governance at JCCC* document, drafted by the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and distributed to the entire faculty during a meeting in August 2018. "*The document positions the institution within a context for what shared governance is within the framework of the college and how the hierarchy of decision making is theoretically designed and should function.*" Subsequent to the faculty meeting, the document was released more broadly, to the Board of Trustees, the Collegial Steering Committee and

the Cabinet. The College also plans to make the policy document available to all constituents “*as part of the website and communications revamp...*”

The institution then undertook a “*surface scan*” of the College, the main purpose of which was to examine the functions, the titles, and the composition of the various committees, and to “*lay out a hierarchy chart that details the path of faculty input...*” Following receipt of survey information, the CAO developed two schematics, one of which “*shows how information flows up to Educational Affairs, the faculty-led body overseeing curriculum, and the Instructional Deans Council...*” The second schematic shows the committees whose recommendations are sent directly to the Office of Academic Affairs.

The two schematics were shared broadly at the 2019 faculty meeting and will be made available on the redesigned website when completed. Here the report notes that as of April 2019 a new campus intranet tool was implemented, affording easy access to the minutes of all decision-making committees, and assuring greater transparency with respect to institutional decision-making.

The third area addressed in the report is that of “*faculty voice*,” which derives from two separate bodies—the Faculty Association (FA) and the Faculty Senate (Senate). The FA is the faculty’s collective bargaining unit—“*the local arm of the NEA*”—while the Senate “*seeks to act as a sounding board for faculty issues in what they consider to be all non-contractual spaces.*” To resolve the uncertainty among the faculty with regard to the roles of these two bodies, the CAO began meeting with the presidents of the FA and the Faculty Senate in October 2018, which continued until January 2019, when the executive committees of the two FA and the Faculty Senate were included in the discussions.

According to the interim report, these discussions will continue until some conclusion is reached—and in particular, the College seeks to establish “*a schematic realignment that will create on body that functions as a stable faculty conduit [that] feeds information from the entire body of the faculty to the CAO and upper administration.*” Here the report notes that the two specific challenges facing the institution as it searches for resolution in this matter.

**REPORT ANALYSIS:** The Johnson County Community College interim report provides evidence showing that the College has made discernable progress in addressing concerns pertaining to institutional governance. In particular, the development of two “*schematics*” are in essence graphic representations of committee structures and flow charts of reporting and information; these should be useful to any member of the faculty or staff seeking clarification about how committees are organized and how decision making is structured within Academic Affairs. The Committee Structure graphic is shown below.

## Appendix B: Committee Structure



The *Shared Governance at JCC* document crafted by the CAO and shared with the faculty—and subsequently with other key constituencies as well—sets forth the primary features of the College’s shared governance system. In this regard, the document makes reference at several points to the AAUP 1966 “*Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*,” and other related statements.

Perhaps the most specific of the points in the document, with regard to the roles and responsibilities of various constituent groups are points two and three in the numbered section of the document, which identifies general authority vested in the Board of Trustees, the faculty, the administration, and the professional staff. At this point, the document employs this quotation: “...*Differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand...*” (American Association of University

Professors 1990) The document emphasizes in several places the importance of placing the interests of the College at the forefront of all decision-making.

The institution has made—and is making—efforts to resolve acknowledged confusion between two existing faculty bodies: the Faculty Association (FA) and the Faculty Senate. To date there has been no resolution in this matter despite what appear to be good faith efforts on the part of both groups and the CAO. The College's desire to create a single faculty body with sole responsibility for shared/faculty governance is a worthwhile one, though the institution might consider the respective nature of the two groups as it seeks to reach closure and ask itself whether it isn't possible for the two to co-exist as long as their respective areas of responsibility and authority are clear.

As it stands now, it isn't clear from the report exactly what the decision-making authority of the Faculty Senate is—or if the FA, which is the faculty's bargaining unit, holds authority for matters of curriculum, instruction and related areas.

**Analysis Concluding Statement:** The College's progress in two areas described in the report has been adequate or better. The creation and distribution of the shared governance document and the development of the schematics should provide needed clarification pertaining to the character of shared governance at JCCC and supply campus constituents with a useful visual guide pertaining to committee structures and decision-making. The Higher Learning Commission will not seek additional reporting in these areas.

To date, however, the institution has not been able to resolve the matter of faculty voice, with the FA and the Faculty Senate both still active. This is a critical matter as pertains to shared governance and the faculty's role in that system. Consequently, the Higher Learning Commission will continue to monitor this matter by requiring an additional interim report on faculty voice and shared governance. (Please see the Staff Finding section below.) The specifics of the report are provided in the Staff Action section.

**STAFF FINDING:**

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 5.B pertaining to faculty voice in shared governance

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

**STAFF ACTION:** Receive the report on the academic governance structure.

The institution is required to submit an additional report on faculty voice within the shared governance system at JCCC. The report, to be submitted no later than May 1, 2020, should include, at minimum, the following: 1) A narrative describing the College's efforts to resolve confusion pertaining to faculty voice, and in particular the resolution of the existing "two body" faculty governance issue; 2) Specific policies pertaining to faculty voice within the shared governance system that have emerged from these efforts; and 3) Documentation from FA and/or Faculty Senate policies providing clear delineation of responsibility and authority.

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