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## ABSTRACT

A formal governance system was adopted by the Board of Trustees in April 1991 at Burlington County College in New Jersey after the Commission on Higher Education and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools observed that it was lacking. The policy defines the path for maintaining a governance structure which fosters clear and timely communication within and among the college community. Senates of administrators, college staff, faculty, and students were formed to provide representation for all college constituencies. Governance Forums and regular President's breakfasts with leadership from each of the senates were implemented to improve campus communications. Officers from each senate work with elected representatives from their constituencies to study specific issues, while recommendations are presented for discussion and subsequently voted on by the membership before being formally presented to the President. Many recommendations generated by the staff senate have been approved, including the following: (1) the addition of a benefits specialist position; (2) a secretarial pool feasibility study; (3) a process for dealing with on-the-job injuries; and (4) an employee award to recognize special efforts. In addition, an Academic Secretaries Roundtable was created to improve commonly shared work processes, which led to the formation of a Quality Council of secretaries and administrators charged with meeting the needs of constituents; improving work processes; fostering communication and understanding; and supporting other quality service initiatives. (The Board of Trustees policy on governance is appended.) (KP)

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# *Opening Up the Decision-Making Process Through Shared Governance*

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## *Burlington County College*

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Success in the Community College  
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June 19-22, 1994

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### *About the Presenters*

#### *Dr. Robert C. Messina, Jr.*

Dr. Messina has served as President of Burlington County College since January 1987. Under his leadership BCC enrollment has grown substantially and a renewed emphasis has been placed on the quality of service we provide to students. He is the driving force behind the college's governance system, which has provided the opportunity for administrators, faculty, staff and students to become part of the decision-making process.

The President has also led the college in adopting the use of interactive videodisc technology, introduction of new technology-oriented curricula, computerization of the college library's card catalog, and construction of technology-based adaptive learning, math, biology, and nursing labs. In recent years he has obtained from county and state sources the funds to construct three major new buildings at the college's main campus and to build the first building at a second campus.

Dr. Messina is a member of the board of the American Association of Community Colleges and immediate past chair of AACC's President's Academy. He has been a frequent speaker on teaching-learning and leadership issues at national conferences of AACC, the Association of Community College Trustees, the Community College Consortium, the League for Innovation in the Community College, and COMBASE. On the local level Dr. Messina is president of the Burlington County Chamber of Commerce and serves on numerous boards and statewide committees.

Before coming to Burlington County College, Dr. Messina was Academic Vice President at Broome Community College in Binghamton, New York and a faculty member and Dean at Nassau Community College in Long Island, New York. Dr. Messina earned his doctorate in Analytical Chemistry from Hunter College, and his bachelor's in Chemistry and Mathematics from the City College of New York.

## *About the Presenters*

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### *Curtis Cearfoss*

Curt Cearfoss has worked in education for over twenty years in a variety of administrative functions. Presently he is an Associate Dean at Burlington County College and Chairperson for the Division of Business Studies. He has additional responsibilities in the areas of high school articulation, services to evening and extension campus students and delivering credit-bearing instruction to employees in businesses and military installations and to inmates at correctional institutions. An advocate of total quality, he has promoted several quality initiatives to colleagues and staff in the academic area of the college. Mr. Cearfoss holds a B.S. from Slippery Rock State College and an M.A. from Central Michigan University.

### *Norma Trueblood*

Norma Trueblood has worked at Burlington County College for eight years. Her first assignment was in BCC's EOF office, but her primary experience has been gained as the division secretary in the Science, Mathematics, Technology Division. Norma is the current chair of the All-College Staff Senate and also a member of the Academic Secretaries Roundtable. She attends BCC evening classes and looks forward to achieving an Associates Degree in Business Management.

### *Sandra Young*

Sandra Young has spent the last six years at Burlington County College as the Executive Secretary to the Vice President of Academic Programs. Sandra has been provided the opportunity to develop leadership skills through her role as a founding officer of the All-College Staff Senate and as the founder of the Academic Secretaries Roundtable. She also serves as the Leader of the Academic Area Quality Council and as a member of the Program Committee for the New Jersey Higher Education Quality Roundtable. The President of Burlington County College has encouraged her interest in the total quality leadership philosophy by supporting her attendance at various workshops and conferences, including the VICA Total Quality Curriculum Train-the-Trainer Program.

### *The Call for a Formal Governance Process*

After reviewing an institutional self-study and visiting the campus in April of 1989, the Commission on Higher Education and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools made the observation that there seemed to be no formal operating structure for governance at the college. The report by the commission suggested that an organized governance system be adopted that would provide the following:

- An umbrella organization to oversee and pull together individual committee work;
- A forum for thoughtful, collegial consideration by faculty, support staff, administrators and students, and administration of issues crucial to the teaching/learning process and environment; and
- A unified direction and philosophy for the college.

In response to the report, the President of the college called for the creation of a cross-functional committee whose objective it was to study and evaluate governance systems used at other colleges. Following this benchmarking process, the committee was charged with making a recommendation to the President and the Board of Trustees for a governance system that would, from an all-encompassing perspective, insure communication among and input into the decision-making process by all constituency groups of the college community.

## *Governance System Adopted by Board of Trustees in 1991*

A formal governance system was adopted by the Board of Trustees in April of 1991 (see attachment). The Board policy clearly defines the path for maintaining a governance structure that fosters clear and timely communication within and among the college community. It accomplishes this through President's Forums within which the various constituencies (faculty, students, support staff and administrators) of the college can discuss and express views upon those matters deemed to be of interest and importance to the membership of the constituency groups.

The four senates formed to provide representation for all constituencies within the college include the following employee classifications:

- Administrative Senate

Administrators and special project personnel, except administrators who report to the President (his executive staff)

- All-College Staff Senate

All support staff, physical plant and security personnel, and members of the confidential staff

- Faculty Senate

Full-time faculty and instructional assistants

## Student Senate

A branch of the Student Government Association

The senate structure provides an opportunity for the discussion of issues of concern to each constituency that do not fall within the scope of collective bargaining. The officers of the four senates constitute the President's Governance Forum. As its name suggests, this governance organization provides a forum for the discussion of college-wide issues with the President, and a mechanism to coordinate the activities of individual senates. The forum has led to a number of joint committees and teams to work on issues in depth.

### ***Communication: The Foundation For Successful Governance***

Increased efforts have been made to improve communication within the college community. In addition to the regularly scheduled Governance Forums, three or four times a semester the President and his top administrators host a breakfast meeting with the leadership of the student senate and the chair of each student club or organization.

The President holds regular meetings with officers of the faculty association, and separate meetings with the leadership of the Faculty Senate. Officers of each senate are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with the President whenever the need to discuss issues of importance to their senates arises.

Faculty are invited regularly to attend breakfast or luncheon meetings with the President and the Vice President of Academic Programs. These forums provide individual faculty members the

opportunity to present suggestions for innovations in teaching and possible new academic directions for the college.

The President has an open-door policy and meets with individual faculty members upon request. This outreach includes initiating opportunities to speak to faculty one-on-one by walking the halls and inviting conversation, stopping by a faculty office or seeking out conversation with faculty between classes.

In response to an invitation from the Academic Secretaries Roundtable, the President participated in a fireside chat with all college secretaries. Over lunch, he shared information about his ethnic background, family history, education, employment experience, his family life, his involvement in the community, and his vision for the future of the college. He invited questions and stayed after the luncheon to speak one-on-one to those employees with individual questions or items of concern.

### ***Forum Format Encourages College-Wide Communication***

Each governance forum is opened by the President, who begins by providing an oral report that communicates a broad scope of information about college and administrative activities. The reports typically include information about the budget, funding sources, new and proposed federal and state legislation, construction updates, and a variety of other items of interest to the college community. Further discussion follows individual reports presented by each of the four senates. Governance committee and sub-committee reports are then heard.

The objective, as stated in the Board policy, is to continuously facilitate communication from the President and his administration to the senates, from the senates to the President, and from senate to

senate. It is the responsibility of each governance officer to share with his/her senate membership information shared at the forums. Additionally, as soon as possible after each forum, a summary is published in the employee newsletter, The College Connection, to insure that everyone at the college is provided information on forum activities.

### ***Senate Officers Included in Key College Functions***

In an effort to include representatives from each governance senate in key functions of the college, the President has invited senate chairs to make remarks at such events as the ground breaking ceremonies for the new Academic Center and the Mt. Laurel High Technology Campus. The members of the President's Forum were the first to receive a tour of the new Academic Center building while it was still under construction. Senate chairs were also included in the group of speakers invited to address their peers and the community in the dedication ceremonies and ribbon cutting for the new Academic Center.

Members of each senate were included on the search committee for a new Vice President of Academic Programs. The four governance senates were also represented in the process of creating a comprehensive analysis initiated by the Department of Higher Education that addressed academic programs, community services, institutional support and student services.

### ***Each Senate Charged with Writing Its Own Constitution and By-Laws***

The Board Governance Policy charges each senate with the responsibility for adopting its own set of by-laws and constitution. These direct how each unit defines the process to arrive at formal

recommendations. Typically, the officers of each senate work with elected representatives from each area within their constituencies. Committees and sub-committees may be formed to study specific issues. Recommendations are then presented for discussion and subsequently voted on by the membership as a whole before being formally presented to the President.

### *Senate Recommendations Well Received and Acted Upon*

The President has received numerous recommendations from the senates collectively since the adoption of the formal governance system in 1989, and the college has gained system-wide benefit from those recommendations adopted by the administration. Two examples of recommendations from the Faculty Senate that were approved and acted upon include the dedication of space for an adjunct faculty office that includes a computer and printer, and a new class schedule matrix developed was adopted for use beginning in the Fall 1994 semester.

### *A Closer Look at One Senate's Accomplishments*

The All-College Support Staff Senate has been particularly successful in achieving approval of its recommendations. The senate adopted a constitution that provides for a governing body consisting of the four officers and representatives from the following employee classifications: confidential, physical plant, support staff, security and off-campus sites.

Although always diligent in adhering to the tenets outlined in its constitution and by-laws, the staff senate has elected to operate in an informal manner as opposed to a rigid structure. This informality allows the governing body to cut through the sometimes crippling bureaucracy that can be created through

extensive and involved committee and sub-committee structures. The officers make the decision on which of the recommendations submitted by its membership to accept and then attempt to utilize the simplest method for gaining approval of those recommendations.

The senate always deals with the common sense notion of issue resolution at the lowest appropriate level and, therefore, because many recommendations are dealt with directly through contact with the responsible area or department, a great number of those problems are dispensed with quickly and cooperatively. In order to maximize the impact of its efforts, the senate also chooses to invest its energy in those recommendations where the probability for approval is believed to be the greatest.

One difference between the constitution of the All-College Staff Senate and the Faculty Senate is that the Faculty Senate constitution allows its membership to deal with only those issues deemed of academic significance. Although it may agree and ultimately benefit from a recommendation proposed by one of the other senates, it will not offer its support to any recommendation that doesn't directly impact the academic development of the college. The support staff senate, on the other hand, attempts not only to select for further study those recommendations that would benefit its own members, but also those that would have a broad positive impact on the college community as a whole.

### ***A Specific Example of College-Wide Benefit Gained Through A Recommendation Made by the All-College Staff Senate***

Burlington County College was established in 1968. Many employees have long service records and are planning for retirement. Questions abound surrounding the retirement process

and the proliferation of paperwork involved. Clarification is typically sought on such concerns as continuing health benefits, enrollment dates, dependent medical coverage, completion of federal and state tax forms, pension enrollments, contributions and loans, workmen's compensation procedures, etc.

The support staff senate studied and then submitted a written proposal to the President recommending that a staff position be added to the Personnel Department specifically to assist employees with the administration of benefits. The recommendation was reviewed by the President and his administration, and it was decided to create the position. An employment search was conducted and a Benefits Specialist was hired shortly thereafter. This is a clear example of how the All-College Staff Senate was instrumental in impacting the decision-making process that benefited the college as a whole.

### ***Opportunities for the Development of Leadership Skills Within the Support Staff***

For the last six years Norma Trueblood has worked as Division Secretary in the Science/Mathematics/Technology Division. In this role, she has daily contact with faculty within her division and students taking science, mathematics and technology courses. She reports to the chair of that division.

In 1992 Norma was elected by a group of her peers to the office of Chair-Elect of the All-College Staff Senate and served one year in that position. She has just completed a year as chair and is looking forward to serving one more year as an ex-officio member of the senate board.

Being part of the governance system has created an opportunity for Norma to broaden her work relationships throughout the college. As part of the President's Forums, she meets on an equal footing with officers of the other governance senates. This provides her with the opportunity to discuss issues of importance with members of the administration, faculty, students and the President. Additionally, the President meets separately with Norma as Chair of the All-College Staff Senate.

Although Norma and the Science/Mathematics/Technology Division faculty secretary perform functions for faculty in the division, she did not feel comfortable offering suggestions for process improvement directly to faculty members prior to her active role in governance. This personal growth was achieved through involvement in the decision-making process brought about through participation in the governance system, and direct encouragement from the President of the college.

Although Norma's role in the senate will be limited to advisor this coming year, she has gained respect from members of each of the employee groups, and leadership opportunities continue to open up for her. For example, she has been asked to serve on the Community Advisory Board for the Equal Opportunity Fund program.

Norma now finds that she is able to address groups of people comfortably. She has learned conflict management skills and is able to offer a differing point of view to others whether they be her peers, administrators or members of the faculty. She has learned to work as part of a team, and developed the patience necessary to see issues through to completion so that her ideas have a better chance of receiving organization-wide acceptance.

## *Many All-College Staff Senate Recommendations Acted Upon*

Many recommendations brought to the President through the support staff senate have been acted upon. A partial listing is provided below:

- . A Benefits Specialist position was added to the Personnel Department employee complement;
- . A task force was created to study the feasibility of implementing a secretarial pool at the college;
- . Step-by-step instructions that clearly spell out the need to immediately report and how to complete the needed paperwork dealing with on-the-job injuries was written and distributed to all employees;
- . Polarized screens and arm rests were made available to all employees assigned personal computers or terminals;
- . An award to recognize special efforts by an employee nominated by his/her peers has been designated and will be implemented this fall;
- . A designated space was created in the employee newsletter named the "Suggestion Corner."

An additional outgrowth of support staff involvement in the governance process is the inclusion of senate members as active participants in the Middle States Steering Committee, and in a special group of college representatives who work with the Director of Admissions to do liaison work with high school counselors.

By far the most far reaching recommendation acted upon was the proposal to develop a college-wide step-by-step resolution process for addressing student concerns. This effort is explained in more detail later in this document.

### *The Academic Secretaries Quality Roundtable*

The President and Vice President of Academic Programs serve as joint sponsors to a team of secretaries who requested permission to form a quality group called the Academic Secretaries Roundtable. Permission was granted for the team to meet monthly for one hour on their own time and one hour on college time. Lunch is provided by the Vice President.

The charter meeting of the Roundtable was held in February of 1993. The team was given the opportunity and responsibility for self-governance, and selected for its first item of business the development of a mission statement that addresses the desire to improve commonly shared work processes.

The five academic divisions at Burlington County College are Business Studies; Humanities and Social Sciences; Language and Literature; Nursing and Allied Health; and Science/Mathematics/Technology. Each division is assigned a division secretary and a faculty secretary. The Vice President of Academic Programs is the chief academic officer, and her management team includes the administrators who overlook the academic divisions, plus the Registrar. Including the Executive Secretary to the Vice President, there are 12 secretaries who attend Roundtable meetings.

Although there are other employees who fall into the secretarial classification (approximately 35 secretaries in all), the secretaries in the academic division share similar responsibilities and regularly perform identical tasks. The goal of the roundtable is to share common concerns, to foster communication, and to offer each other support in the process of prioritizing commonly shared work processes in need of improvement.

The Executive Secretary to the Vice President of Academic Programs chaired the first team meeting and was subsequently selected by the group as leader. A decision was reached that the meeting format would be devoted equally to sharing information on quality improvement concepts and actual process improvement initiatives. The leader made clear from the outset that this group was to function as a team rather than a committee, and that decisions would be reached through consensus.

### *Understanding Quality and Continuous Improvement*

Some of the first quality concepts shared with the group included these:

- . Albrecht's Upside-Down Pyramid adapted to education
- . The key tenets of quality
- . The benefits of defining and improving process
- . A definition of internal and external customers
- . The roles and responsibilities of team members
- . The team problem-solving process

- Definitions of terms used in total quality leadership philosophies.

### *Prioritizing Improvement Initiatives*

Brainstorming was used to decide on a list of work processes that needed improvement, and that the secretaries felt belonged within their purview:

- Attendance record keeping;
- Institutional travel approval;
- Faculty loads;
- Completion and flow of regularly used forms such as student grade change, student attendance verification, time sheets, leave requests;
- Internal mail distribution;
- Shared use of printers between secretaries and faculty;
- Communicating with and gathering forms from prospective or new adjunct faculty.

## *The Recommendation Process*

One of the first items to be tackled by the team was reaching consensus on what process to use to share recommendations with the academic administrators. It was decided to copy minutes to the Vice President of Academic Programs, but not to the other academic administrators. The concept of forming a self-directed team of support staff employees was new, and a wonderful feeling of excitement was tempered with a strong desire for diplomacy.

The responsibility of self direction weighed heavily on the team, and its members were committed to doing their best to do things right. As they struggled to grow and learn just what the right things might be, they didn't want those administrators to whom they directly report looking over their shoulders. But they did want someone to be aware of their direction, and selected the Vice President of Academic Programs for a number of reasons: 1) not only is she the chief academic officer, she is the team sponsor; and 2) she is a very special person whose appreciation for the contributions of employees from all job levels is clearly transmitted. Simply put, the team members felt comfortable sharing with her and valued her opinion.

During the weekly staff meetings of the Vice President, attended by the academic administrators and her secretary, the team leader would present a report on the progress of the Roundtable. The Vice President would present for discussion the recommendations received from the Academic Secretaries Roundtable, and clarifying questions would be directed to the team leader. If a decision was reached, at the next meeting of the Roundtable, the leader would report the resolution to the team.

After discussion, a recommendation might be altered and acted upon without further input from the Roundtable, or possibly considered unimportant and tabled completely. Another difficulty was that at times the academic administrators appeared to be offended by the recommendations, as if they implied criticism. This method of communication proved to be unsatisfactory and unsatisfying to all those involved. For one thing, it put the team leader in the position of interpreter, and she felt this indirect form of communication inadequate.

Empowering a team of secretaries to brainstorm about and make recommendations for improvement in the work process sounds great. The reality, however, is that the Roundtable was not empowered to implement its recommendations. The leader felt strongly that the only way to openly communicate the team's ideas for innovation and change was for the members of the Roundtable to meet and discuss their goals face-to-face with the administrators.

The academic secretaries began using total quality management philosophy buzz words such as benchmarking, management by fact, data driven decision-making, process improvement, continuous incremental improvement, structured analysis, etc. in their daily conversations. It seemed that the secretaries were becoming more knowledgeable than their administrators in total quality management philosophies and, in turn, the administrators were feeling a bit left out.

The team leader and a fellow quality advocate, the Associate Dean of Business Studies, discussed the situation with the Vice President of Academic Programs, and suggested to her the creation of an Academic Quality Council that would include the Vice President, all academic administrators, and their secretaries. The Vice President supported the recommendation with the directive that the

Academic Secretaries Roundtable not be subsumed by the Quality Council. This was because the Roundtable members had begun to form a common bond that increased morale among the secretaries, and the meetings provided a forum for open communication among team members, and between the team and the Vice President.

### *Presenting The Concept of a Quality Council*

The leader of the Roundtable shared with the team the suggestion for joining with the administrators in creating a quality council. The secretaries expressed some initial discomfort about meeting with the administrators in a team situation where they would be expected to openly express their opinions. This type of group discussion where everyone was on an equal footing was intriguing, but was also a little intimidating.

The leader of the Roundtable, the Business Studies Chair, and the Vice President also addressed the creation of a quality council with the academic administrators, and discussed the fact that functioning in a team environment would require that the administrators adopt a new role. Each understood the need to leave his/her supervisory hat back in the office, and accepted how important it was to make the secretaries comfortable by encouraging open dialogue.

Two possible hurdles in creating the Academic Quality Council included concern over the size of the team. First, a team of eighteen members is large and can sometimes become unwieldy. Second, asking all of the secretaries and administrators to meet together would create logistical problems in arranging office coverage. But it was agreed that it was important, particularly at this forming juncture, that all team members be included in the meetings.

## *The Academic Area Quality Council*

Once it was determined who would serve on the Academic Area Quality Council, the first order of business was to decide on team roles. In order to ease the transition to a team environment, the leader of the Academic Secretaries Roundtable was asked to extend her role to include being the TEAM LEADER for the Council.

The bulk of the logistical work of the Roundtable fell to the TEAM LEADER. This included scheduling meetings, completing room reservations and catering requests, preparing agendas, putting together the materials on quality concepts, taking minutes and distributing them, etc. A team isn't a team if one person does all the work. Since we were attempting to break new ground in the perception of the traditional secretaries' role in committee involvement, the Vice President of Academic Programs volunteered to be TEAM RECORDER rather than ask a secretary to perform this function. The Vice President also continued in the role of TEAM SPONSOR.

The TEAM LEADER, who had from the beginning relied on the Associate Dean of Business Studies for guidance in doing the "right things right" in her leadership role, asked him to volunteer his services as TEAM ADVISOR/FACILITATOR. This support was considered crucial to the success of the team, and a necessity in order to manage team functioning in so large a group.

It takes time for people to learn to work in teams. Employees must recognize the difference between team involvement and committee membership. We can all empathize with those who shudder at the thought of joining just one more committee. Those same feelings abound when the new buzz word "team" is invoked. However,

teams are much different from the traditional committee structure. Teams are process oriented rather than results oriented, and decisions are reached through consensus.

Another frequently held perception that creates difficulty in team success is the misconception that team participation interferes with work. In order to achieve through team participation, members must accept the fact that the team is work, and that through process improvement we insure that the work is more efficient and satisfying.

The next order of business was to lay the ground rules for operation. Except for the special responsibilities for the TEAM LEADER, SPONSOR, and FACILITATOR, all other team members were considered "equal". This meant that during Council sessions, traditional roles of supervisor and subordinate were suspended. Prior to the first Council meeting, the Associate Dean for Business Studies counseled his administrative colleagues regarding their team membership and explained that they must park their usual managerial roles at the door. It was a function of the TEAM FACILITATOR role to ensure that no member, especially an administrative staff member, dominated a meeting and to encourage contributions by quieter members. Another ground rule dealt with the scope of the Council's influence to create change. The Council is not, to be sure, a cross-functional team. It is, rather, a homogenous group of people from one slice of the College. Therefore, it must limit its focus to those items which are strictly within the authority of the Vice President of Academic Programs. While this will strengthen the infrastructure and processes within the academic area, the Council recognizes the supplier-customer relationship that exists between and among other areas of the College, and looks forward to developing

appropriate cross-functional teams as the College quality efforts mature.

The first meeting of the Academic Area Quality Council occurred on August 23, 1993. Since both the membership of the Secretaries Roundtable and the Vice President's administrative staff had had exposure to the Total Quality principles and philosophies and had been versed in the Council's basic ground rules, little time was spent reviewing these items. Since the Council understood its function was to focus on process issues within the Academic Area, a few days prior to the first meeting, each member was asked to identify process related items in the Academic Area that he/she thought could be improved.

It was anticipated that the team would have some awkwardness and discomfort at first with members acting in uncustomary roles. Therefore, when the team came together for the first time, the TEAM FACILITATOR elected to use a variation of a quality tool called a Nominal Group Process. It is a consensus building tool designed to select and prioritize items. Of particular benefit to a new group is that the process gives everyone an equal voice and is not very threatening to participants. For interested readers, most "how-to" quality books will provide the details of the Nominal Group Process. Through this process, the Council was able to identify and prioritize eighteen improvement issues. This was accomplished in just two hours.

The TEAM FACILITATOR and TEAM LEADER use each meeting as an opportunity to expose the team to new quality concepts, tools and practices. For example, part of one meeting was devoted to having the team learn flow-charting techniques. Flow-charting was then used to help the team work through an issue dealing with the step-by-step process of how we handle a

student who wants to enter a "closed" course. We have also incorporated a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle into our improvement efforts. This means we develop our (P) plan for improvement, (D) do the plan, (C) check to see whether or not we accomplished what we planned and (A) act to memorialize the successful plan as the new way of doing business. As each process issue is completed, we create a flow chart and accompanying set of instructions for each member.

The Council has had some growing pains and criticisms. Team meetings take time and the Council meetings are viewed by some administrators and secretaries as an intrusion on needed "in-office" time. Since the Secretaries Roundtable continues in addition to the Quality Council, the secretaries are away from the office for both. There was skepticism on the part of one or two secretaries that they would be treated as equals by administrators. This has not proven to be the case. Another problem surrounds the requirement for consensus. Most are unaccustomed to this process, and the more results-oriented of the lot feel that it sometimes takes too long to reach a conclusion. We also have a couple of people who are reluctant to speak up, particularly when their views run counter to an already known attitude of their supervisors. Since most of these things are not uncommon to new teams, the TEAM LEADER thought it would be helpful to spend some meeting time talking about the dynamics of team development. This seemed to take the edge off some of the concerns, but there are still some wait-and-see attitudes.

Although the Council had a good notion of its purpose, it was suggested that we formally list it in a mission statement. A sampling of quality oriented mission statements was reviewed. The Academic Area Quality Council's Mission Statement follows. It reveals our present attitudes, our desire to learn and grow, our

willingness to share our experiences and efforts and to help others in their quality journeys.

## ACADEMIC AREA QUALITY COUNCIL

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Academic Area Quality Council is an assembly of staff members from the academic area of Burlington County College whose purpose it is to learn the concepts of Total Quality Service (TQS), implement them within the academic area and to promote Total Quality Service as the guiding philosophy at Burlington County College.

In support of this mission, the following goals have been established.

1. provide service that meets or exceeds the needs of our respective constituencies;
2. continuously strive to improve the work process associated with academic functions at the college;
3. foster communication and understanding; and
4. provide information, assistance and support to other areas of the college attempting Total Quality Service initiatives.

11/9/93

## *The Trouble with Quality*

In the 1980's the buzz word was "Management by Objectives"; in the 90's it's "Quality." The word quality finds its way into conversation in every home, school and workplace. Americans buy quality cars, demand quality service, and expect quality education. The average taxpayer is demanding quality in exchange for his hard earned investment in the economy. Words like accountability and outcomes are frequently invoked in describing the effort to extract the most value from the dollar. If an organization hasn't elected to jump on the quality bandwagon, then it might easily be perceived as lacking.

The American culture is unique. We hold great pride in our strong history of extraordinary individual accomplishments achieved through hard work and competition. Typically, long and hard fought battles have been waged in search of the American Dream. This is a country of opportunity, where anyone with enough drive and single-mindedness can by sheer determination achieve great personal wealth and success. Those of weaker fiber are left behind in our climb to the top.

And this is where you want to do quality? You want those who have studied and worked hard to achieve success to now function in teams, where the team is recognized and rewarded instead of the individual? It is suggested that the employee performance evaluation process be eliminated because it is harmful and demoralizes the worker. You ask those locked in fierce competition to share their strategies and innermost secrets with others. These are examples of just some of the philosophies we are expected to joyously embrace as we struggle to integrate quality initiatives and continuous process improvement into the work place.

There are those who can be considered the pioneers of the quality movement applied to education. Now that some of us in education have reached the lofty position of expert in this management philosophy, do you know what we do? We, in that grand American fashion, make a killing by marketing and selling it rather than sharing it. American entrepreneurship at its finest!

We are told that without total commitment from the very top, our efforts are doomed to failure. At the same time, we are told that everyone must be involved; empowerment is the new buzz word. But isn't this just business as usual? Isn't this a prime example of management from the top down? Is there a dichotomy in the quality message?

The President of Burlington County College is well versed in the tenets of each of the prominent total quality management philosophies. In his search for knowledge, he met with many learned people who not only encouraged him to wage an all-out college-wide quality initiative, but who even felt disappointment in him for not leaping into the water feet first.

This President wholeheartedly believes in the need for quality and continuous process improvement. There has never been a stronger advocate for the customer. One of his goals since assuming the Presidency has been to encourage and build a team environment. He has recognized what many others fail to understand: the desire for cultural change must come from within, and it takes an investment in time to achieve that change.

The President began, in daily interaction with his executive staff team, administrators, faculty, support staff, and students, to inculcate the college community with the need for a change in

direction. Therefore, he was encouraged when the All-College Staff Senate recommended, through governance, a college-wide process to provide exceptional service to students and other customers.

The President not only approved the recommendation, but offered his total support to the project. He selected a member of the support staff as leader, and stressed the importance of insuring representation from all employees groups, as well as the need to regularly communicate progress to the college community. He assured the team leader that she had his complete support, and that he would make available to her any necessary resources.

And then he did an extraordinary thing -- he stepped back and let the team do its work. It was a risk to grant the team, particularly one led by a member of the support staff, autonomy in developing a far reaching and system-wide process that would literally change the direction of the college from an employee-based culture to one of student orientation.

The President recognized that if this was to be a true quality initiative, then the team must have the freedom to struggle through its own search for quality deployment. And he knew the only way to allow this growth was to build trust in the team through empowerment. So he took the risk, put his faith in the team, and trusted that they would do the right things right -- and they did.

In summary, it is important to remember there is more than one way of doing quality, and sometimes a more measured approach is the best. Consider allowing your organization the time needed to become knowledgeable and comfortable with the philosophy. Understand that, although it can be force fed, the goal is to win universal acceptance, not just lip service.

## *A Paradigm for Change*

We at Burlington County College believe that business as usual is no longer good enough; standing still can only be viewed as falling behind. All members of the college family must understand the need for change and accept the responsibility for improved outcomes. Continued success depends upon the capability of the college to consistently deliver on its promise to its customers, both external and internal. This can be achieved through incremental and systematic improvement, by competing against our own best past performance, and through benchmarking.

This new philosophy of the 90's calls for a paradigm shift in thinking about the role people play within the organization. Adopting an environment where everyone has the opportunity for input into the decision-making process through governance and team participation is creating better outcomes for all. This proactive involvement helps everyone to gain a better understanding of how all our parts fit together as a whole.

It is imperative that cross-functional teams be encouraged whenever possible. Instead of individual departments relying on only internal resources to improve the delivery of their services, employees must work together cooperatively across departments to meet the needs of the customer.

In order for Burlington County College to become a continuously improving organization, it must also become a learning organization. As a community college, we value student learning and know that extraordinary achievements can result. The same is also true for organizations. We must learn how to advance the work of the college more effectively and efficiently by continually

striving to achieve excellence in the services we deliver to our students and the community.

**For more information on Governance and Quality Initiatives, please contact Dr. Robert C. Messina, Jr., President, Sandy Young, or Curt Cearfoss at Burlington County College, County Route 530, Pemberton, NJ 08068. Telephone: (609) 894-9311.**

## *Burlington County College*

***Board Policy***

**No: 903**

**Title: *Governance***

**Date: 04/23/91**

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Burlington County College is committed to providing its students, faculty and staff with an environment that is conducive to the academic mission of the college. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the college to provide and maintain a governance structure that fosters clear and timely communication within and among the college community and provides forums within which the various constituencies (faculty, students, support staff and administrators) of the college can discuss and express views upon those matters deemed to be of interest and importance to the membership of its constituency groups.

Each major constituency (students, faculty, support staff and administrators not members of the President's executive staff) shall have a senate. Each senate shall create its own constitution and by-laws to the extent that the constitutions and by-laws conform to pertinent college policies, Federal and State statutes and regulations, as well as existing collective bargaining agreements. Membership and participation in the senates shall be open to all members of the respective constituency group. Membership and participation shall not be restricted, except as specifically identified by this policy.

Each senate may, in accordance with its constitution and by-laws, hear and consider issues, views, concerns, ideas, proposals or recommendations presented by individuals or groups of its membership. Each senate may, after considering such items, develop and submit proposals and recommendations to the President of the College, or his/her designee, as appropriate. (All parties shall adhere to the common sense notion of issue resolution at the lowest appropriate level.) Each senate may also advise the President with respect to general college policy and issues of importance to the college. The President may, as deemed appropriate, consult with the leadership of each of the senates regarding issues or policies that impact upon members of that senate.

### **I. Purpose of Governance Structure**

Governance is intended to foster and improve communications and collegiality and shall not be used to interfere with the efficient and effective operation of the college.

### **II. Governance and Collective Bargaining Units**

Governance is not intended to interfere in any way with the collective bargaining process, nor should the collective bargaining process interfere in any way with governance. Recommendations regarding collective bargaining matters may not be made by the senates. Efforts shall be made to clarify the distinction between collective bargaining and governance issues affecting faculty and support staff. Further, officers, board members, other representatives or negotiators of collective bargaining units may not serve simultaneously as officers, board members, representatives or in any other elected or appointed capacity of their respective senates.

### III. **Senate Meetings**

Each senate shall hold regular meetings of its executive board. Each senate shall be charged with effective representation of membership issues, as well as communicating with its membership, and shall hold as many informational meetings as deemed necessary for such purposes. Each senate shall hold at least one meeting per year that is open to all its membership at which election of officers will be held.

### IV. **Senate Conduct**

Each senate shall conduct all meetings and activities in accordance with its constitution and by-laws.

### V. **College Forum**

There shall be a College Forum that will meet at least three times per academic semester. There shall be no meetings between the end of the Spring semester and the beginning of the Fall semester, except for emergent circumstances. The President of the college shall preside over the meeting. Each senate may present items for consideration for the forum agenda. Participation in the forum shall be limited to the President of the college, his/her executive staff and the elected officers of each senate (i.e. chair, chair-elect, secretary, secretary-elect).

All meetings shall follow the established agenda. All items for consideration on the agenda must be submitted to the President of the college, or her/his designee, at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled forum meeting. The President may present, for comment, matters of importance to the college community. The agenda shall be established and published in the "College Connection" at least one week prior to the scheduled forum meeting.

If a senate has submitted an item included on the agenda, at least one elected officer of that senate must be present for the matter to be heard.

### VI. **Quorum**

There are no quorum requirements. Scheduled meetings will be held even in the absence of representation from an individual senate.

### VII. **Communications**

Summary of the college forum proceedings shall be published in the "College Connection" as soon as reasonably possible following the forum meeting.

### VIII. **Additional Meetings**

The President of the college may call such additional meetings, either with the senates as a group, or individually as he/she deems appropriate. The President may also consult with senates individually on issues of unique importance to that senate. Senate leadership may, as deemed necessary, request a meeting with the President or the appropriate members of the executive staff.

Approved by the Board Policy Committee 04/02/91  
Approved by the Full Board on 04/23/91