

SCC Academic Senate White Paper
District Leadership Review & Recommendations to the Board of Trustees
SCC AS Approved 05.03.2022

This document has been compiled for our Board's attention to highlight the concerns faculty have regarding our district's leadership, planning, and decision-making. We believe that collegial consultation and effective participation, as codified in California Education Code, Title 5, and our own Board Policies and Regulations, have been the subject of persistent failures over the last several years. We urge the Board's attention to these matters as we believe they represent serious organizational concerns.

1. Collegial Consultation and Participatory Governance

District has failed to engage in meaningful collegial consultation on academic and professional matters with the Academic Senate, resulting in a previous a [white paper](#) from the SCC Academic Senate (October 16, 2018); a [resolution from the District Academic Senate](#) (April 2, 2019); a follow-up [resolution from Sacramento City College](#) (May 4, 2021); an IBA session with the Chancellor, the Deputy Chancellor, and the Academic Senate presidents (January 14, 2019); a Collegiality in Action session facilitated by ASCCC and CCLC (January 2021); and a District Core Inquiry from the ACCJC review team in 2022 regarding governance and decision-making ([SCC & District Core Inquiries](#)).

LRCCD Board Administrative Regulation [R-3411](#) states that "the Chancellor's Cabinet will function as the Los Rios Community College District participatory governance group and may take up issues of District-level significance which are not reserved by law, contract or agreement for negotiation, or which may be the responsibility of other groups" However, Chancellor's Cabinet meetings fail to meet basic standards consistent with effective participatory governance groups. Agendas frequently lack relevant data, staff reports, or other information vital to making informed recommendations to the Chancellor, meeting schedules do not facilitate the timely exchange of information and feedback to and from local constituent groups; and meeting minutes consistently lack sufficient detail to reflect the complex and nuanced feedback offered by members. As a result, Chancellor's Cabinet does not support effective participation. Additionally, District Core Inquiries received from the ACCJC review team ([SCC & District Core Inquiries](#)) identify Chancellor's Cabinet as a specific area for further review, citing agendas, minutes, governance, and structure among other elements for exploration.

District failed to consult effectively with the SCC Academic Senate, our Curriculum committee, and affected department faculty over AB 705 implementation for Math and English. In 2020, District failed to honor the processes of the AB 705 Implementation work group, and instead issued a decision related to English writing placement which directly impacted the faculty and students of SCC. In 2021-2022, District has failed to consult effectively on recent implementation requirements for Math and again issued a directive to our Math departments impacting curriculum, and student preparation and success. Other college districts are using the next year to support Math faculty in professional development, providing time and resources for the creation of new curriculum, and offering the opportunity for both faculty and students to prepare for the coming changes; however, our District accelerated the most recent guidelines around implementation, mandating implementation this year. Math faculty have expressed similar frustrations with District over recent negotiations on class caps. SCC ESL faculty note that since 2019, District has similarly abandoned consultative roles with ESL departments who worked in good faith to create effective AB 705 processes. As our faculty attempt to comply with the rapidly changing environment, it is imperative they have the support and flexibility needed to succeed.

Additionally, where decisions are not clearly 10+1 areas, they are still frequently issues of shared governance, per our [SCC Governance Guide](#) or in coordination with district-wide committees, and require effective participation or consultation with these affected groups.

Recommendation: We respectfully urge the Board to review these documents; conduct interviews with constituent groups directly to clarify the concerns highlighted; and develop a meaningful plan of action for organizational change within our district that honors our local college governance processes and Academic Senate consultative processes.

2. Centralization without Consultation

As referenced in SCC Academic Senate Resolution 2021-02 ([SCC AS Agenda 05/04/21](#)), District has undermined the autonomy of the college presidents by centralizing key areas that previously reported directly to them including the Public Information Offices (PIO) and Philanthropy Offices. It appears these decisions were made by early 2020; however, public announcement was not made until the [October 10, 2020 Board Retreat](#), and only as a direct response to a question posed by one of the trustees. A college PIO provides critical support to a college president, serving as their spokesperson, speech writer, and media specialist. As this position now reports to District, the loss of this role at the college level is significant. Further, the SCC Philanthropy Office and personnel have also been centralized, now report to District, and the SCC office is closed. A college Philanthropy Office and personnel have the ability to cultivate relationships with community donors and meet the needs of our students and college directly. These relationships are more than symbolic in their connection with our local community and the goodwill they generate.

As “processes for institutional planning” are a 10+1 issue ([P-3412](#)), we maintain District had a duty to consult with us on these proposals, but failed to do so. Numerous services across our colleges have been centralized or proposed for centralization including: PIO offices, Philanthropy/Foundation offices, A&R, FA, Research, Outreach, Information Technology (IT), College Websites and Webmasters, College Nurses, Call Centers, Online Catalog, Degree Planner, Los Rios Colleges Online, Online Course Development Coordinators (OCDCs), and Tutoring Services. Many of these areas touch purview for the Academic Senate, the District Equity and Student Success Committee (DESSC), ([P-3412](#), [R-3412](#)) [local governance committees](#), and/or [Chancellor’s Cabinet](#). While there may be organizational efficiencies or other benefits to be gained with specific efforts, District has failed to ensure that transparent, meaningful consultation has taken place in advance and has failed to provide robust data to support proposed organizational changes. Our faculty emphasize the importance of having local offices, local connections, and local staff at our college to serve our students effectively. For example, our ESL faculty note that in the case of ESL student questions about enrollment and financial aid, local staff who are able to provide information and facilitate processes are essential, not a telephone chain to an unknown DO employee. Local staff, who can ensure our students receive immediate help pertinent to our college, is essential.

Financial Aid, Admissions & Records, and Outreach are all core matriculation areas and fall under the purview of the [District Equity and Student Success Committee](#) (DESSC; formerly District Matriculation), which serves as a recommending body to both District Academic Senate and the Board of Trustees. While DESSC has recently been engaged by District over the planned centralization of Admissions & Records and Financial Aid, this communication has only taken place *after* SCC’s Resolution against Centralization without Consultation (2021-02) and *after* vigorous attempts by our faculty and senate representatives in meetings with the Chancellor, Chancellor’s Cabinet, via Board reports, and other communication over a period of time. We further note that many of the efforts toward centralization

have accelerated over the course of the pandemic, made easier by the lack of day-to-day interactions and accountability these interactions promote.

Per Board regulations, Chancellor's Cabinet is identified as "the steering committee for District strategic planning processes" ([R-3411](#)) and "recommendations shall be reached by consensus." However, on issues of centralization--which constitute district strategic planning--no consensus has been achieved. Instead, District has continued its efforts toward centralizing services across the colleges, without effectively engaging Chancellor's Cabinet as a governance group in these decisions.

District has cited *equity* as the rationale during meetings and college [coffee chats](#) for centralizing of additional functions and services, including Admissions & Records, Financial Aid, Outreach, Call Centers, and Information Technology, while failing to provide evidence-based rationale for how centralization of these functions would close equity gaps and promote anti-racism. Instead, District has moved forward with decisions and retention of consultants. Centralization of services has been the predetermined outcome without data to support change and without constituent group consensus.

Further, between 2013 and 2021, administrative positions at the District Office have increased by 71%, while increasing by 30% at ARC, 22% at FLC, and 5% at SCC, and decreasing by 15% at CRC, suggesting an increasingly heavier concentration of administrative power at the District level while faculty and local college hires have noticeably declined. <https://datamart.cccco.edu/datamart.aspx>

Centralization efforts have recently gained the attention of the ACCJC's District Peer Review Team. The [District Core Inquiries](#) indicate, among others, *governance*, *reorganization* plans, and the *autonomy* of the four colleges in the district as areas to explore further.

Recommendation: We urge the Board to review and evaluate the evidence—or lack of—for all areas that have been centralized or proposed for centralization, and to consult collegially with the Academic Senate on processes for institutional planning as well as through our local college governance structures. We urge the Board to restore autonomy to our local colleges and to our college presidents in accordance with our Board Policies and Regulations.

3. Lack of Transparency with the Board and Others

Instead of the previously broad-based, collaborative, and robust district strategic planning process, District opted for a process involving just two individuals from a single college. This left college senates to provide feedback to the existing goals, without meaningful information, including data, reports, legislation, and state chancellor objectives that may inform recommendations. Meaningful engagement with constituent groups has been largely absent.

<https://employees.losrios.edu/lrccd/employee/doc/committee/das/2021/20211005-2021-2022-strategic-plan-reaffirmation-process.pdf>

District failed to provide appropriate information to Chancellor's Cabinet including the [District Core Inquiries](#), received from the ACCJC. Chancellor's Cabinet met on March 28th, 2022 and April 25th, 2022, and while the core inquiries from ACCJC had been received previously, they were not agendaized for discussion on either day ([Cabinet Agenda 03/28/22](#), [Cabinet Agenda 04/25/22](#)). As a participatory governance group, Chancellor's Cabinet is responsible for "Reviewing and providing recommendations to the Chancellor on district-related accreditation processes and documents"; however, timely information about our colleges' and district's accreditation findings has not been shared with this governance group ([Chancellor's Cabinet Responsibilities](#)).

District has retained numerous consultants to provide services for the centralization of various areas without following procedures outlined in LRCCD Administrative Regulation [R-8335](#) and codified in California Public Contract Code [§20651](#) requiring public disclosure of bidding and contract awards. These actions result in a lack of transparency regarding the need for such services and how much money the District is paying these consultants. We have concerns regarding consultants being retained to enact District objectives instead of providing relevant data and information to constituent groups for review and recommendation.

Recommendation: Our senate respectfully recommends that the Board review its policies and regulations pertinent to Chancellor's Cabinet to address the issues cited above. Further, we urge the Board to conduct an audit on the consultants who have been hired by our district in recent years, including: the services provided; amounts committed; the funding streams associated with these expenditures; the return on investment to our colleges; and the transparency in sharing reports and data with the Board and constituent groups in a timely manner.

4. Equity and Anti-Racism

District has failed to operationalize in a meaningful and tangible way the commitments made by the LRCCD Board of Trustees in their [Resolution dated July 14, 2020](#). Further, while making a formal and public commitment to equity and anti-racism in the wake of George Floyd's murder, and after hiring two consultants, Lasana Hotep and Dr. Cynthia Olivo, to assist with this work, District failed to provide the LRCCD Board of Trustees or faculty with meaningful updates on the progress of this work or a final Board-approved report documenting the consultants' findings and recommendations.

Despite the fact that the Los Rios Community College District's Black/African American student enrollment dropped by 25% since Fall 2017 (compared to an 11% decline across all demographic groups), the District has not identified Black/African American student enrollment and retention as a district-wide strategic priority (source: CCCC Data Mart and <https://losrios.edu/about-los-rios/our-values/strategic-plan>).

The recent racist threats directed at ARC's College President and, by extension, to our students of color have prompted concerns over District's failure to share information broadly and promptly with our college community, jeopardizing the safety of SCC faculty, staff, and students, particularly those of color. This person, who posed an imminent safety threat, was able to enter the SCC campus and buildings while classes were in session, classes that included black faculty and black students who had not been informed of the danger and could have reported her presence earlier.

This incident has further highlighted concerns previously expressed by our Black Faculty and Staff Association (BFSA) colleagues about safety, transparency, and leadership as reflected in both the 2020 and 2022 list of demands.

Recommendation: We respectfully urge the Board to review its stated commitments and the concerns of the BFSA, black student enrollment, anti-racism, and safety to develop a prioritized plan of action to address these issues.

5. Wasted Taxpayer Dollars

On March 3, 2020, the District was unsuccessful in persuading voters to approve [Measure E](#), a \$650 million bond measure that would have been used to upgrade facilities throughout the District, despite a [record voter turnout](#), despite the fact that voters had previously approved [Measure A in 2002 and Measure M in 2008](#), and despite the fact that on March 3, 2020, voters approved [Measure H](#), a bond measure benefitting the Sacramento City Unified School District.

The District has purchased software packages and technology solutions, frequently without consultation with users, and many of these software solutions, such as Ad Astra, Degree Planner, and Starfish, have either been only partially implemented, abandoned, or have failed to adequately serve their intended purposes. Additionally, the sheer number of consultants retained by the District in recent years and the associated tax-payer dollars committed to them, with undetermined outcomes, warrants further attention.

Recommendation: In addition to conducting an audit on consultant contracts and expenditures, we urge the Board to perform an audit on the software packages, programs, and technology solutions and services that have been purchased in the last nine years to assess the state of implementation, utility, costs, and return on investment to our colleges.

6. Safety

The lack of protection for our college campus during the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed unlawful entry, residence, and vandalism on college property and has been accompanied by security threats to our faculty, staff, and students. Our college campuses have remained available to the general public--but essentially closed to our students, staff, and faculty--during the pandemic without adequate physical and District law enforcement protection. Presently, our SCC police captain is having to perform duties for two colleges, we are losing personnel, and our college police departments are critically understaffed making it challenging to keep up with every day duties and respond effectively to hotlines established to help staff and faculty. Our operations personnel have also been negatively impacted by the extra-normal duties of cleaning up trash, needles, and human excrement on our college campus throughout the pandemic. Recent complaints from our West Sacramento Center also underscore a lack of responsiveness from our district in addressing safety concerns as reported by our personnel.

Recommendation: We respectfully urge the Board to review recruitment and retention practices for the LRCCD Police Department, implement temporary remediation measures, and to explore additional safety systems.

7. Organizational Culture

Districtwide employee satisfaction surveys from [2019](#) and [2017](#) indicate that since 2014, employees increasingly feel as if the district is not headed in the right direction, the quality of education the students are receiving is declining, and that the district is becoming less well-regarded in the community. <https://employees.losrios.edu/our-organization/institutional-research/reports/employee-survey-reports>

On May 12, 2021, statements were made during the public comment portion of the Board of Trustees meeting describing a culture of intimidation within the district, and the fear of retaliation when employees voice opinions. These comments included both SCC faculty and anonymous comments from managers in our district. Manager comments highlighted concerns regarding organizational decision-

making, centralization, and a culture of intimidation that restricts their ability to express diverse viewpoints. <https://losrios.edu/lrccd/main/doc/board/2021/20210512-bot-minutes.pdf>

Since 2013, six highly qualified presidents have left or are leaving. Of those resignations, three included relative lateral moves and three resigned before reaching full retirement age. No conclusion is drawn from this data alone; however our senate believes this situation warrants further analysis to assess variables related to retention of our college presidents. The recent announcement of SCC's college president's resignation has increased faculty complaints about our district leadership, decision-making, and the inability of the college presidents to function as CEO's of the colleges "without interference" as per Board Policy P-4111. <https://losrios.edu/shared/doc/board/policies/P-4111.pdf>

Recommendation: Our senate recommends that a district-wide survey be conducted to provide employees the opportunity to elaborate on responses and provide greater contextual information to help inform organizational change. We also respectfully recommend that our Board conduct exit and post-exit interviews with all college presidents and high-level administrators who have left District employment in the last several years, or whose resignations have been announced, to gather and assess factors that might reduce turnover and promote stable, high quality leadership.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Given the many concerns highlighted above, the persistence of behaviors over an extended period of time without substantive change, and despite numerous appeals to our district leadership, we believe that significant and immediate inquiries are warranted at the highest levels of our organization. We urge the Board to consider and respond to the totality of persistent concerns that have been identified. We respectfully urge the Board to give its full attention to these concerns and to act in an expedient manner.