

Report to the Board of Trustees
May, 2017
Christine M. Miller, ASCSU Chair

Thank you, Chair Day, it's my pleasure to share what occurred at the Academic Senate's meetings last week.

I'll humbly report that I was re-elected for a second and final year as ASCSU Chair, as were Vice Chair Catherine Nelson from Sonoma State, and Member-at-Large Tom Krabacher from Sacramento State. Robert Keith Collins from San Francisco State is the second Member-at-Large, and Simone Aloisio from Channel Islands is Secretary.

As I reflected on last year, I thought about the theme we adopted last summer to guide the Senate. The theme was "Finding the Balance." It recognized the need to examine competing demands, and the tradeoffs that occur when one set of interests dominates others. It also featured the assumption of agency by the ASCSU, which aimed to put us in a proactive rather than a reactive posture.

Since I'm being reflective about Finding the Balance, and since you know you can expect me to develop a motif in these reports, I decided to use this idea of balance to frame my remarks.

I've learned a lot this year.

Although there were definitely times when I felt just like this gymnast, I hung on, and hung in. So did the Senate, and faculty systemwide. In a minute I'm going to mention a couple of things that left us scrambling to stay centered and balanced, but before that I'm going to focus on some other aspects of the theme.

I'm going to start with this notion: "Balance is not something you find, it's something you create." That's a very proactive notion, which claims agency, as I mentioned before. The Senate seeks to create balance when it passes resolutions and asks for its recommendations to be adopted. I'm going to summarize four of those resolutions and link them to this notion of creating balance.

The first is AS-3295, “Campus Accommodation of Military Students’ Service Obligations.” This resolution acknowledges that our students who are members of the various military services are spinning a lot of plates in the air, between school, family, work, and duty. They engage in vital “state and federal security and civil assistance missions that include humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and firefighting”, not to mention their more predictable duties. Current policies cover accommodating them when they’re gone over 30 days, but this resolution recommends that campuses and faculty develop ways to accommodate them for obligations of less than 30 days. Our military students are engaged in a delicate balancing act, and we want to make sure to support their academic progress.

Shifting from a balancing act to the idea of a pivot point allows me to transition from our military students to a nautical theme.

Pivot points keep things balanced too, but they shift. As you can see, the pivot point is an imaginary place on a ship’s centerline where it pivots based on controllable forces, like thrust, side force and rudder force.

That imaginary point moves, though, based on whether the ship is stopped, going forward, or going backward. How does this relate to the Good Ship CSU? Well, the controllable force in our case is funding. Depending on how well funded we are, our engines are stopped, we go forward, or we go backward. The legislature and the governor are the ones with true control over this funding force, but to offset backward momentum caused by disinvestment in the CSU, the ranks of contingent, or adjunct, faculty have ballooned, and the demands on librarians, coaches and counselors have grown. AS-3283 is a resolution that acknowledges the CSU is out of balance. The pivot point has shifted backward, and we are no longer making headway. So, the Senate is asking for a “task force to explore models of employment security” for these folks. That task force can consider ways to change the thrust and allow the CSU to pivot toward recognition that contingent faculty, librarians, coaches and counselors actively contribute to student success. We hope such a task force can develop recommendations to turn the ship around.

Besides shifting the pivot point, another means of creating balance is to consider how heavy the load is which needs to be balanced.

Here's where the concept of a fulcrum comes in. Think of a teeter-totter with an adult on one end and a child on the other. They'll never be able to be horizontal unless the fulcrum moves to a place off center, as you can see in this image.

So, the fulcrum takes into account how heavy the load is, and how much effort it takes to balance the load. I'd like for you to think about Graduation Initiative 2025 in this context. The Graduation Initiative is really a heavy lift, requiring a great deal of effort to balance. So, we need to consider carefully the inputs needed to produce the output of accelerating student graduation. That's where AS-3293 comes in, which is our resolution asking that the Grad Initiative specifically commit to promoting active learning and high impact practices, along with the faculty development needed to engage in those efforts. As our resolution notes, "this kind of engaged learning is precisely what leads to retention and student success, to graduation and eventually to hiring. . . . [H]igh impact practices are both cost-effective and cost-efficient in facilitating time to degree, enhancing graduation rates and leveraging student success." We hope the Chancellor's Office will acknowledge the need to devote a portion of Graduation Initiative funding to these efforts in order to balance the load.

So as you can see, there's more than one way to create balance. Sometimes though, despite the desire to create balance, we fail.

On the topic of intellectual property rights, despite many brains, CSU faculty could not reach equilibrium with the Chancellor's Office on a draft intellectual property policy. That's because the scales weren't calibrated to begin with: the scales were precariously tipped when "CSU faculty were not consulted at any point during the drafting" of the policy, even though we asked repeatedly to collaborate. When we were asked to weigh in, it was after the fact, after the policy was formulated, which isn't true consultation and shared decision-making as provided for in law. In addition, the timeline prevented many campuses from providing feedback, which stymied our response, so our resolution, AS-3296, does not offer formal comment on the policy. Instead, we will forward to both the Chancellor's Office and CFA the responses from the brains on our campuses. Hopefully balance can be created at the bargaining table on the intellectual property issue.

I'm going to step out of my theme briefly to discuss the Senate's last two resolutions. They're too sensitive to discuss in this breezy format. They don't lend themselves to allegories, or metaphors, or puns, or any other comparative frame. They're too personal for that. Both resolutions hit at the core of what it means to be a faculty member who goes beyond the teaching mission and devotes herself or himself to serving the CSU.

I'm talking about faculty like me who love our students, and who see one way to express that love as service on a senate.

One of our resolutions, AS-3297, expresses respect for our colleagues in the San Bernardino Senate as they undertook a thoughtful and gut-wrenching process to consider whether they could maintain confidence in their president's leadership. This is not the first senate in the CSU to ask that question, and it's not a question any faculty member ever wants to consider. Believe me when I tell you, we'd much rather devote our energy to teaching our students than to asking that question. So when we do ask it, the situation is quite serious. That's why the statewide senate didn't take a position on the particular circumstances at San Bernardino, but instead we conveyed our respect for that faculty's decision making. We further urge this Board to investigate the issues raised by faculty at San Bernardino, and to develop a policy for dealing with future votes of no confidence on other campuses. In this case, we've expressed our respect for the faculty, now it's your opportunity to do the same.

The second resolution I'm dismayed to present to you also hits at the core of faculty who devote themselves to service on senates. In this case, AS-3298 considers the low blows delivered to faculty in a published editorial shrouded in the guise of support for a piece of legislation. Despite the disguise, no one was fooled: authors Paul Granillo and Trustee Emeritus Lou Monville simply seized the legislation as an excuse to excoriate the San Bernardino Senate specifically, and academic senates generally, by leveling ad hominem attacks without supporting evidence. But hey, these writers aren't the first ones to critique a senate, and they won't be the last. If they had just stopped there, I would have been disappointed in their unfounded indictments, but I and probably the rest of the faculty could shake them off and move on with our commitment to serving the CSU.

The problem is, they didn't stop there. They violated the policy of this Board which governs confidentiality in executive searches. As members of the search committee for the current president, they breached CSU policy by revealing both the candidacy of applicants and the deliberations of the committee. This is serious. If there are no repercussions for going to the media and "outing" job candidates or confidential personnel discussions, why would outstanding candidates apply, and why would outstanding people serve on the committees to select them? There should be significant consequences for violating CSU policy. For its part, the Academic Senate endorsed a letter I wrote to the San Bernardino Senate, it censured the two writers, it revoked Monville's Senate commendation issued a year ago, and it asks you all to do two things: rescind Monville's honorary doctorate, and not appoint either of them to future CSU

search committees. Rescinding the doctorate would send a clear message that violating the confidentiality of a personnel committee has consequences. It would also send a clear message that such degrees have meaning, and their recipients embody and uphold the values of the CSU.

In sum, what the ASCSU is saying in these two resolutions is that we can respect the San Bernardino faculty's process in considering a vote of no confidence, but we can't respect what the former chair of this board did when he and his co-author violated CSU policy in order to attack the senate.

So you can see why I had to step out of my balance motif. It just didn't do justice to the interwoven issues here.

I think it can do justice to two more quick thoughts, however.

The first is a plea, grounded in a resolution the Senate passed in March. My plea is not to ignore or sacrifice graduate education as we pursue the Graduation Initiative, which has an overwhelmingly undergraduate focus. Don't let the scales get so out of balance that graduate education suffers.

The second is also a plea, and it's not entirely connected to the Graduation Initiative. My plea is for time. Time to think, time to talk, time to respond appropriately. I'd say the single biggest complaint I've heard from faculty all across the system this year is that deadlines for response are way too short for the kind of thoughtful input they'd like to give. I mean, every now and then we can make a quick turnaround work, but when it becomes the "new normal," we can't even catch our breath. To cite just a few examples, between general education requests, Executive Order drafts, intellectual property policy review, and the breakneck speed at which changes to academic preparation are happening, some faculty are starting to ask a very important question:

Do you want it fast, or do you want it right?

Of course, the answer is, both. And if both can happen, there is balance. But if not, the scale tips to one side or the other. We all need to work together to create that balance.

Trustee Day, that concludes my report.