



Butte College Classified Senate

Participatory Governance Representative Guide

1. Purpose

This guide provides classified representatives who have been appointed to participatory governance bodies a practical understanding of their role and responsibilities within the college's governance structure. It is designed to support effective participation, communication, and engagement in the governance processes.

2. Governance Overview

Participatory governance bodies include committees, councils, task forces, and workgroups formally recognized within the college's governance structure. They are critical to the college's decision-making process. These bodies function as the eyes and ears of the college within specific areas of focus. These bodies are often composed of campus leaders and professionals embedded within the departments or programs with direct relation to these areas of focus. Just as importantly, these committees include cross-departmental, cross-functional, and cross-constituency representatives in their membership to provide a variety of viewpoints which ultimately produce informed, impactful, and tenable outcomes for the campus community. Appointees don't need to be an expert on the area of focus; their own expertise and experience is what is going to make the work of the group valuable!

These bodies are often the starting point for policy and decision making. As such, they have significant influence in shaping policy adopted by leadership. It is important to note that most governance bodies are fundamentally "recommending" bodies. This means they are not the ultimate decision-making body, but their recommendations are weighed heavily in Leadership's final decisions.

Most governance committees and governance bodies forward recommendations either to College Council or directly to responsible Leadership. College Council is the highest body within the college's participatory governance structure. It fulfills the role of the President's cabinet and serves as a central communication body representing all constituencies. College Council will often solicit input directly from campus constituencies bodies (Senate) on items it receives from governance bodies, but has the authority to review, suggest edits, recommend edits and/or approve matters in front of it for final consideration by the President and/or the Board of Trustees. Final authority for all decisions rests with the President and/or the Board of trustees.

3. Role of the Classified Senate

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The Classified Senate is the vehicle by which classified professionals engage in the participatory governance structure of the college. The Classified Senate serves as the collective voice of classified professionals, and functions as a centralized communication point, gathering and disseminating information pertinent to classified professionals across all constituent bodies. The Senate gathers input, communicates updates, and ensures classified perspectives are included in institutional decision-making.

All appointments to governance committees are made by the authority of the Senate given to it by Article 19 of the CSEA CBA in accordance with AB 1725; Title 5 §51023.5; and, Education Code Sections 70901(b)(1)(E) and 70902(b)(7), subject to the current bylaws of the Senate.

4. Role of the Representative

Representatives appointed by the Classified Senate must adhere to the relevant sections of the Classified Senate Bylaws. Representatives are encouraged to read and regularly familiarize themselves with the Senate's bylaws.

Representatives appointed by the Senate are expected to:

- Be familiar with the charter, bylaws and or charge of the governance bodies upon which they serve.
- Become familiar with the Brown Act and Robert's Rules of Order.
- Regularly attend meetings of the governance bodies they are appointed to.
- Attend meetings fully prepared and actively engage in committee work.
- Be an active contributor to discussions.
- Provide classified and operational perspectives.
- Regularly exercise voting rights where applicable.
- Act as mentor to newly appointed members.
- Communicate with the Classified Senate regarding relevant activities.
- Report to the Classified Senate at the request of its Executive Board.
- Report to the Classified Senate on major decisions either made or in consideration of the body which would have a profound impact on Classified members.
- Attend Senate meetings as a content expert when items before the Senate include work related your appointed governance body and/or could otherwise intersect with ongoing of future work of said body.

Failure to fulfill these obligations may result in forfeiting their appointment per Senate bylaws.

5. Participating Effectively

- Ask clarifying questions when items are unclear.
- Request additional time if materials are complex or newly introduced.
- Identify operational impacts ("How will this work in practice?").
- Listen for assumptions that may not consider classified workflows.

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- Speak early – waiting often means missing the opportunity to influence.

Common Challenges and How to Navigate Them

1. *“I’m not sure what to say”*

Share what you know operationally; it’s valuable.

2. *“The group is moving too fast”*

Ask if the item will return or request time for review.

3. *“I don’t know the classified perspective”*

Flag the issue and bring it to the Senate.

4. *“My supervisor is hesitant”*

Refer to Section 7 and seek Senate support if needed.

6. Communication Expectations

Representative appointees are an extension of the Classified Senate and integral to its role in disseminating information and participatory governance decision making. As such, regular and ongoing communication with the Senate is imperative. Communication can take several forms, including written updates and attending Senate meetings to formally address Senators directly. Choosing which communication strategy is warranted and what updates to prioritize is largely the responsibility of the representative and should reflect their understanding of the workflow of the governance body, its current and future timelines, and potential impact; however, it may be helpful to assess communication needs in the following tier structure:

Tier 1 – Routine Updates:

Submit a brief written update to the Executive Board of the Classified Senate after meetings including key topics, actions, upcoming items.

Scenario: Committee was engaged in regular or ongoing work, is not considering or taking action on policy or large scale budgetary recommendations.

Tier 2 – Flagged Issues:

In addition to a Tier 1 update, include an additional call out when any item before the governance body involves policy changes, workload impacts, budget considerations, or significant institutional impact.

Scenario: Committee is considering changes to, or has been tasked with reviewing an Administrative Procedure (AP).

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Tier 3 – Senate Reporting:

In addition to Teir 1 and 2, provide verbal or expanded reports directly to the Senate.

Representatives may request to be agendized in a future senate meeting by reaching out to the Executive Board. Whenever work concluded by the governance body is before the Senate, representatives should be in attendance.

Scenario: An AP has been reviewed and approved for recommendation by an appointee’s committee and is now up for final review by the Senate. In this case, the representative should attend the Senate meeting to add insight into the recommendation before the Senate votes on the AP.

When in Doubt, escalate to the Senate.

7. Representing Classified Perspectives

Representatives should participate fully in discussions and decision making, bringing forward informed perspectives reflective of operational knowledge and awareness of classified roles, Representatives’ opinions and decisions remain separate from the official positions of the Senate, and are not required to represent unanimous consensus from any bodies. Representatives are free to vote their honest conviction. However, representatives are encouraged to gather input from colleagues and/or the Senate in making these decisions, and should consider the broad impacts such decision may have..

When the work of a representative’s governance body is before the Senate, that body’s representative should be in attendance to provide perspective and context during Senate discussion.

8. Working with Supervisors

Engaging in participatory governance work requires meeting attendance, preparation, ongoing work, and communication with the Classified Senate. Representatives should reach out to their governance body chair(s) to understand workflow and expected workloads of their respective governance bodies. Understanding of the requirements and commitment necessary to be an effective representative needs to be communicated to the representative’s supervisor so they can best support the representative’s involvement. When possible, these expectations should be discussed early in the appointment to avoid misunderstandings.

Participation in governance work is considered normal district work and is allowable under all classifications. It does not require the representative to use any acquired leave. As the college is committed to including classified voices in governance work, supervisors should not be unilaterally denying participation; however, operational obligations do need to be considered in balancing department needs with the commitment level of the governance body. It is the representative’s responsibility to have these conversations with their supervisor to ensure operational needs are met. When needed, the Classified Senate is available to support representatives in navigating these conversations.

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9. **Best Practices**

- Be prepared and review materials in advance.
- Ask questions and engage in discussion.
- Communicate clearly and consistently.
- Think institutionally, not just locally.
- Follow up on action items.
- [Calendar meetings as they are known and share your calendar with your supervisor](#)

10. **First 30 Days Checklist**

- Review applicable documents to your governance body, including charter, bylaws and/or charges.
- Review recent agendas and meeting minutes.
- Connect with previous representative if available.
- Attend a Classified Senate meeting.
- Understand reporting expectations.
- Identify key contacts and resources.

11. **You Got This!**

Becoming a representative member on a governance body is an important step towards helping shape the future of Butte College. The work that you will be a part of will drive the College's programs, priorities and strategies. But don't let that overwhelm you. A representative's role isn't to know everything or solve every problem. The job is to approach the work on governance bodies thoughtfully from your own experience, expertise and perspective while considering how to best engage fellow classified. And the Senate and fellow representatives are there to support. You're not alone. You got this!

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