

# **Reinventing Governance at Bellevue College**

A Report to the President from the Reinventing  
Governance Task Force

Presented on April 7, 2015

## Background & Rationale

The Strategic Goal, “Rebuild Our Foundations: Create Effective Support Systems for a Large College,” emerged from the AY 2013-14 strategic planning development process as an immediate issue to address during AY 2014-15. The Strategic Planning Task Force described the current governance system as one that allows for inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and miscommunication. A new governance structure is needed to address these shortcomings, specifically concerning the following priority initiatives:

- Reinvent governance and operational decision-making structures
- Create uniform and efficient processes based on guiding principles and best practices
- Establish effective communication systems
- Develop sustainable planning

A new system of governance also offers the opportunity to more closely align the college with stated values and policy and with NWCCU accreditation standards.

In fall 2014, President Rule convened an Annual Planning Task Force (APTF) charged with developing recommendations for an effective annual planning process that would position the college to adapt to an environment that is continuously changing. Following the delivery of recommendations from the APTF to the president and President’s Cabinet, an Annual Planning Development Task Force (APDTF) was established to develop specific criteria for annual planning during winter 2015.

In tandem with the APDTF, President Rule established the Reinventing Governance Task Force (RGTF) to develop a set of recommendations to address the college’s governance structure. The RGTF was comprised of representatives from all constituency groups—staff, faculty, and students—and convened by three members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee: Patty James, Rob Viens, and Tracy Biga MacLean. Additionally, the conveners recommended the deliberations of the RGTF would benefit from expertise of an external facilitator skilled in organizational and cultural change, Dan Leahy.

## Reinventing Governance Task Force Membership

Jason Aqui (exempt staff)	Ana Blackstad (exempt staff)
Doug Brown (faculty)	Kelly Davidson (exempt staff)
Steve Downing (exempt staff)	Jason Fuller (faculty)
Marshall Sherrell (classified staff)	Alicia Tarigan (exempt staff)
Janee Sommerfeld (classified staff)	Svetlana Sundeeva (student)
Brandon Unti (faculty)	Patricia James (co-convener)
Tracy MacLean (co-convener)	Rob Viens (co-convener)
Dan Leahy (facilitator)	Peyton Mizell (administrative support)
Kendra Rosencrans (Saybrook student)	

## Charge from the president

President Rule attended the first meeting of the Reinventing Governance Task Force on January 26, 2015. He began by putting the work of the task force in the framework of the last year’s successful effort to develop major strategic, academic master, and student affairs plans and in the context of a process for annual unit planning currently in development.

Statement of the problem: In 2015, our governance structure no longer fits who we are. The college systems for decision-making have no overarching structure or feedback loop. BC requires a unified

governance system with stakeholder involvement at all levels, clear pathways for sharing information, as well as checks and balances. Cross-pollination of information that is already happening at BC needs an effective format.

Work of the task force: Examine models from other institutions and determine the parameters for a successful governance system. Recommend two or three models that demonstrate potential and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Solutions shouldn't be constrained by concerns about resources, but should focus on communication—both vertical and horizontal—and opportunities for stakeholder involvement.

## Philosophy

Bellevue College governance provides a well-defined process for evidence-based decision-making. It establishes who has the authority to make decisions, how influence is distributed across the campus, and how assessment and review can be systematized. The structure allows for a high degree of communication and is transparent, trustworthy, responsive rather than reactive, and sustainable across time. Decisions should be made within a well-understood process with broad participation and drawing on expertise existing across the campus.

## Governance model ideals

1. Be well defined, including consistent structures on a large and small scale as well as defined roles and naming conventions.
2. Have a clear decision-making structure and defined authority and responsibilities.
3. Have a clear way to resolve conflicts.
4. Be transparent.
5. Be accountable and have a built-in self-evaluation and reporting structure.
6. Have a built-in way to communicate up, down and horizontally, including public agendas and minutes.
7. Be efficient, sustainable and supported by appropriate resources (money, release-time, space, etc.)
8. Be inclusive, with appropriate representation that includes staff, faculty, administrators, and students, and have clear expectations about involvement.
9. Have a clearly defined way to start/end committees, select membership and plan for succession.
10. Be adaptable to change.

## Disclaimers/limitations

This document does not supersede Washington State Law, collective bargaining agreements, administrative policies not related to governance, or intra-departmental decision-making.

## Key issues

### System of governance

Models of governance currently in place at other institutions are frequently described as “collegial,” “shared,” and “participatory.” These types of governance have a great deal of overlap and varied definitions. The task force chose not to adopt any of these terms at this time, instead adopting a set of governance ideals.

The traditional notion of shared governance can be found in the influential 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities (AAUP), which says,

In some instances, an initial exploration or recommendation will be made by the president with consideration by the faculty at a later stage; in other instances, a first and essentially definitive recommendation will be made by the faculty, subject to the endorsement of the president and the governing board. In still others, a substantive contribution can be made when student leaders are responsibly involved in the process.

A “Statement on Shared Governance: A Resolution of the UVU (Utah Valley University) Faculty Senate,” which the task force considered, derives from the 1966 Statement, assigning “primary responsibility in areas of academic status and related matters including appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, dismissal, research, teaching methods and curriculum” to the faculty; and “primary responsibility to coordinate the operations of the university, including but not limited to, defining and attaining institutional goals, procuring and managing funds, representing the institution to the legislature and the public, overseeing the development of institutional policies and procedures, and representing views of faculty, staff, students and other constituents to the governing board” to the administration. The task force considered that in academic standards, faculty members have a special expertise, and the governance structure might allow for them to have “primary responsibility” without the possibility of being overruled by other constituencies.

The task force also considered a newer form of higher education governance known as “participatory.” In *Governance Reconsidered: How Boards, Presidents, Administrators, and Faculty Can Help Their College Thrive*, Susan Resneck Pierce reviews some of the “pressures on shared governance,” including economic concerns and a rapidly changing external environment forcing the need to make decisions more quickly than before. The following describes the decision-making philosophy of the College of the Siskiyous (CA) Governance Model:

As indicated by our core values, the college needs the active participation of the entire campus community to effectively accomplish its mission. Our philosophy is that diverse perspectives make us stronger and lead to better decisions. This philosophy fosters a climate in which participation and input is routinely sought, provided to, and accepted by those responsible for making decisions. This shared involvement: does not always imply agreement; does not always require the same level of involvement by all participants at all time; and places the ultimate responsibility for decisions with the President and the Board of Trustees.

In broad terms, participatory models seem to distribute decision-making *involvement* more *widely* across the campus and decision-making *authority* more *explicitly* with the office of the president and board of trustees than shared governance models. However, the differences are ones of emphasis and either a shared or participatory system could, and must be, compatible with the internal and legislative climate in which BC operates, including

- BC Policy 1100: Delegation of Authority to President
- BC Policy 2650 Student Participation in College Governance
- BC Policy 1300 College Planning
- WAC Chapter 132H-106: Bylaws and Standing Orders of Community College District VIII

- RCW 28B.10.528 Delegation of power and duties by governing boards
- RCW 28B.50.145 Community or technical college faculty senate
- NWCCU Standard 2.A.7

### Managing the governance structure

The task force considered the question of how to manage the new governance structure. Some institutions, such as Montgomery College (MD), employ a governance coordinator, who helps educate participants in the system, ensures that obligations are being met, and assists in directing issues to the proper venues. The College of Marin (CA), like others, has established a governance group. The Governance Review Council at Marin “monitor[s] and evaluate[s] the governance process....”

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**The task force recommends that there be some system of maintaining, evaluating, and revising any governance system adopted with a goal of continuous improvement. Some task force members suggest that a governance coordinator or committee report to President’s Office, some suggest Effectiveness and Strategic Planning.**

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The importance of providing end dates for governance entities, when appropriate, was frequently brought up. The use of short term ad hoc committees, task forces, or work groups for specific issues was seen as crucial to an efficient system. Well-drafted bylaws, outlining roles and responsibilities, will help maintain the governance system.

### The question of an all college council

For each of the models put forward, the presence of a College Council, or an All College Council is an option. The task force considered the advantages of a broadly representative college council.

- College council members are able to represent the interests of the college as a whole rather than the interests of a particular group or constituency.
- Communication is facilitated by having all issues announced or discussed at a centralized forum.
- The proposals/issues that are passed up to the president are thoroughly vetted and reduced in number.

The task force also considered disadvantages of a college council.

- Some matters, such as academic standards, are best left within the province of a particular constituency.
- It’s possible that good ideas could be rejected at this stage and never reach the president.
- Constituencies unhappy with the college council’s decisions could circumvent the system and go directly to the president.
- Using the term “All College Council” might create confusion given that this entity would function differently than the current All College Council.

The task force discussed various ways to solve issues that might arise from one option or the other. For instance, if there isn’t a college council, we considered how to replace the communication function by using liaisons between the constituency and/or functional councils. In the case of using a college council, we discussed how certain issues within the province of a particular constituency could be announced at

college council and pass directly to the office of the president. The task force feels confident that these issues could be addressed with either an all college council or in the absence of one.

#### All models include constituency councils

One consistent feature across each of the three models put forward is the presence of constituency councils representing students, staff, and faculty. None of the models from other institutions that were examined by the task force operated without constituency councils or senates. The task force considered the reason for this, as well as the purposes and value of constituency councils for

- Ensuring that decision-making is broadly based because there is a venue for everyone.
- Acknowledging the special expertise and perspectives that different groups might bring to an issue—for instance the special expertise of the faculty on academic matters—which might allow them to have “primary responsibility” for that issue.

One question that arose around all governance entities discussed, but particularly around the constituency councils, was whether all meetings should be open to the public. Some members argued for the option to have a closed meeting, part of a meeting, or an executive session, in certain circumstances. Although there was no clearly defined circumstance where this would be advisable, this issue requires further study and discussion. Another area for discussion is whether staff should be represented by a single council or by two—one for classified and one for exempt.

#### Selection of members

One of the earliest discussions that was raised during the task force meetings concerned the importance of inclusion. How will the college ensure, through its governance system, that all voices can be heard? There are a number of factors that contribute to an atmosphere in which all individuals have the opportunity for influence. For instance, task force members frequently noted that participation in governance needs to be supported with training, stipending in some cases, and time built-in to all job categories. The task force identified membership selection to councils and committees as a key area for creating an inclusive system. Most task force members described the current system as unclear about appointments, terms, and obligations, and these should be addressed in clearly stated bylaws. The task force also suggested that the use of elections, for some governing entities and/or some positions within those entities should be considered. Appointments may make the most sense in the case of advisory cabinets; and elections might be preferred for officers.

#### Separation of governance from management

Many of the discussions of the task force were related to the question of what properly belongs within a governance system and what is really management or operations. Members believed that the current committee structure confused governance and management. There was general agreement among the members that goals, major initiatives, strategic direction, limitations and accountability are in the realm of governance, but day-to-day implementation is a management issue. For instance, the decision to provide additional parking and general policies might be governance issues, but the adjudication of parking citations is a purely operational exercise. As Montgomery College’s Governance Handbook (MD) puts it, “A governance system provides opportunities to talk about a vision for the institution and the translation of that vision into policy.”

## Bylaws

Task force members propose that the work of all councils should be determined by clearly defined and publically disseminated bylaws, with committees following the bylaws of the relevant council. Bylaws should include the following

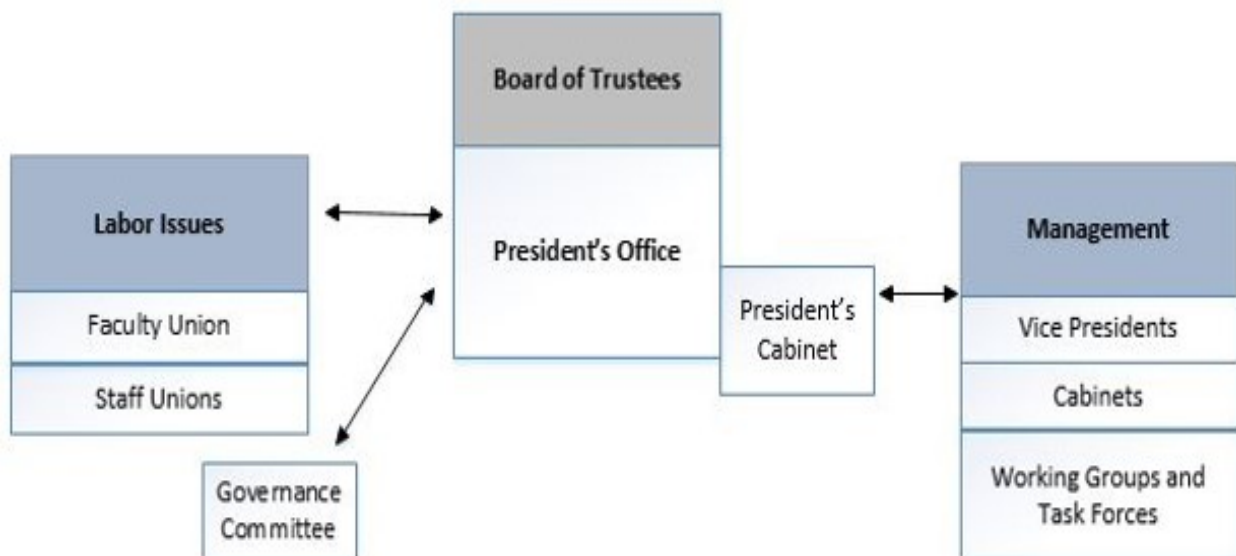
- membership—stipulating officers, duties, selection, adding and removing members, terms
- meetings—stipulating quorum, notice of meetings, form and distribution of minutes
- scope of work and obligations—stipulating the relationship and reporting structure between governance entities, process for recommendations, process for communication, system for amending bylaws.

For the most part, the task force didn't address specifics regarding the bylaws, with the exception of the selection of members (discussed above) and the transparency of governance processes. Members agreed that all materials, such as agendas, minutes, recommending documents, and written responses, should be housed on a BC public-facing webpage devoted to governance issues.

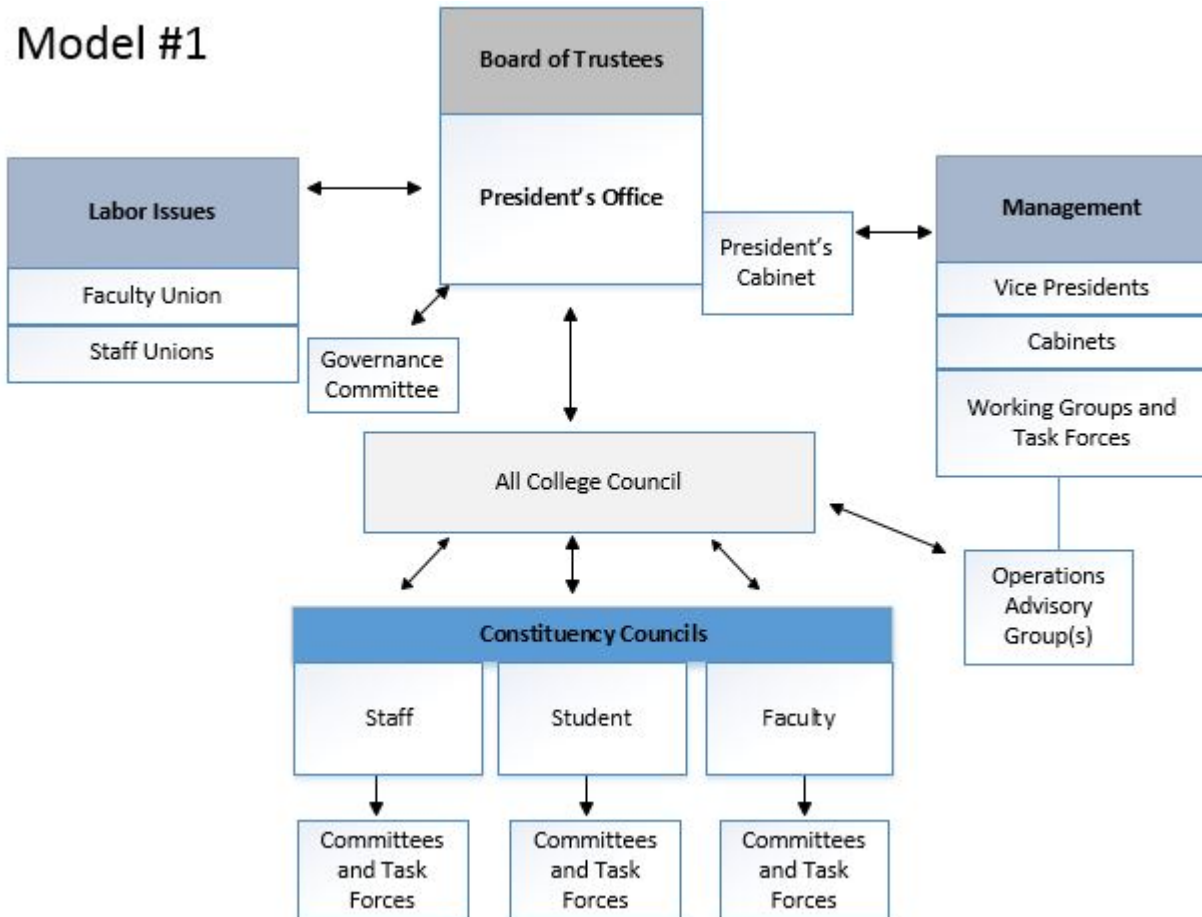
## Three models for consideration

Note on models: The task force began by considering six potential governance models broadly derived from other institutions. These were reduced to the three models presented below. However, these models shouldn't be considered as fully developed or as structures that need to be adopted in their entirety. The key issues discussed above can be decided in various ways within each of the models. Because of the direction of the task force's work, model #3 includes the most detail regarding definitions and group functions. Much of what is described in any of the models could be applicable to the others.

### Common elements of all models:



## Model #1



### Description of overall structure

Model 1 is set up to focus on constituency input so that there is one clear channel to propose new ideas/initiatives. This model also establishes that operational groups are NOT the place where new ideas/initiatives originate, but that operations will act as the “checks-and-balances” counterpoint to the ideas/initiatives that rise up from the constituency groups.

### Process

- New ideas/initiatives are introduced by individuals/groups through one of the constituency councils or they can originate from within a committee.
- The constituency council then uses committees and task forces to flesh-out and formalize a particular idea/initiative.
- The constituency council proposes the formalized idea/initiative to All College Council.
- All College Council prioritizes the idea/initiative and provides a rationale for the prioritization.
- All College Council delegates to the appropriate Operations Advisory group(s) to determine feasibility of the idea/initiative.
- After gathering input from Operations Advisory group(s), the All College Council forwards on recommendations, along with a summary of feedback, to President's Office for approval.



The management arm deals primarily with daily management issues that are handled by the vice presidents (and advisory cabinets made up of senior staff). They may recommend new policies and procedures, but those should then be reviewed through the regular governance system

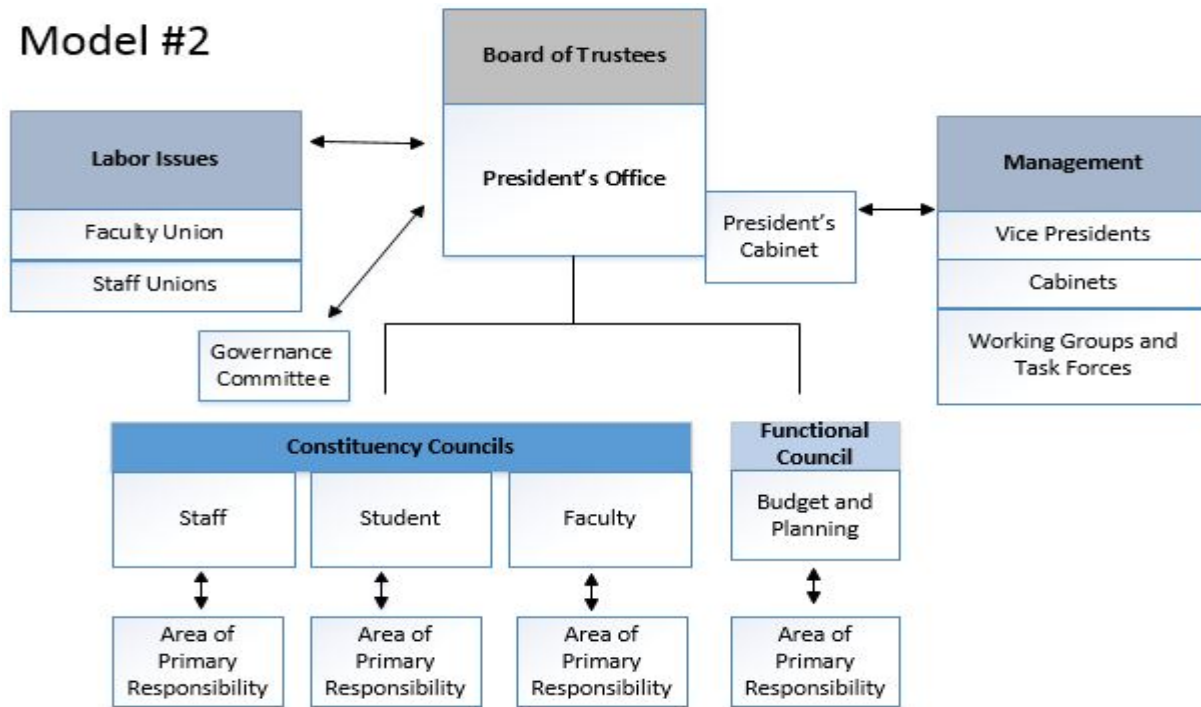
**Functions of major entities**

*All College Council*—Determines prioritization of the idea/initiatives that have been submitted. The All College Council delegates to Operations Advisory group(s) to determine whether or not an idea/initiative is executable based on available resources.

*Operations Advisory groups*—May be established as necessary to tackle the tasks at hand.

BENEFITS of Model #1	CHALLENGES of Model #1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less work due to less duplication.</li> <li>• Operations advisory groups, appointed based on expertise, would possess needed knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not clear who owns an initiative when it crosses constituencies.</li> <li>• Not clear where accountability rests.</li> <li>• The make-up and function of these advisory groups isn't clear and might require heavy staffing.</li> </ul>

## Model #2



### Description of overall structure

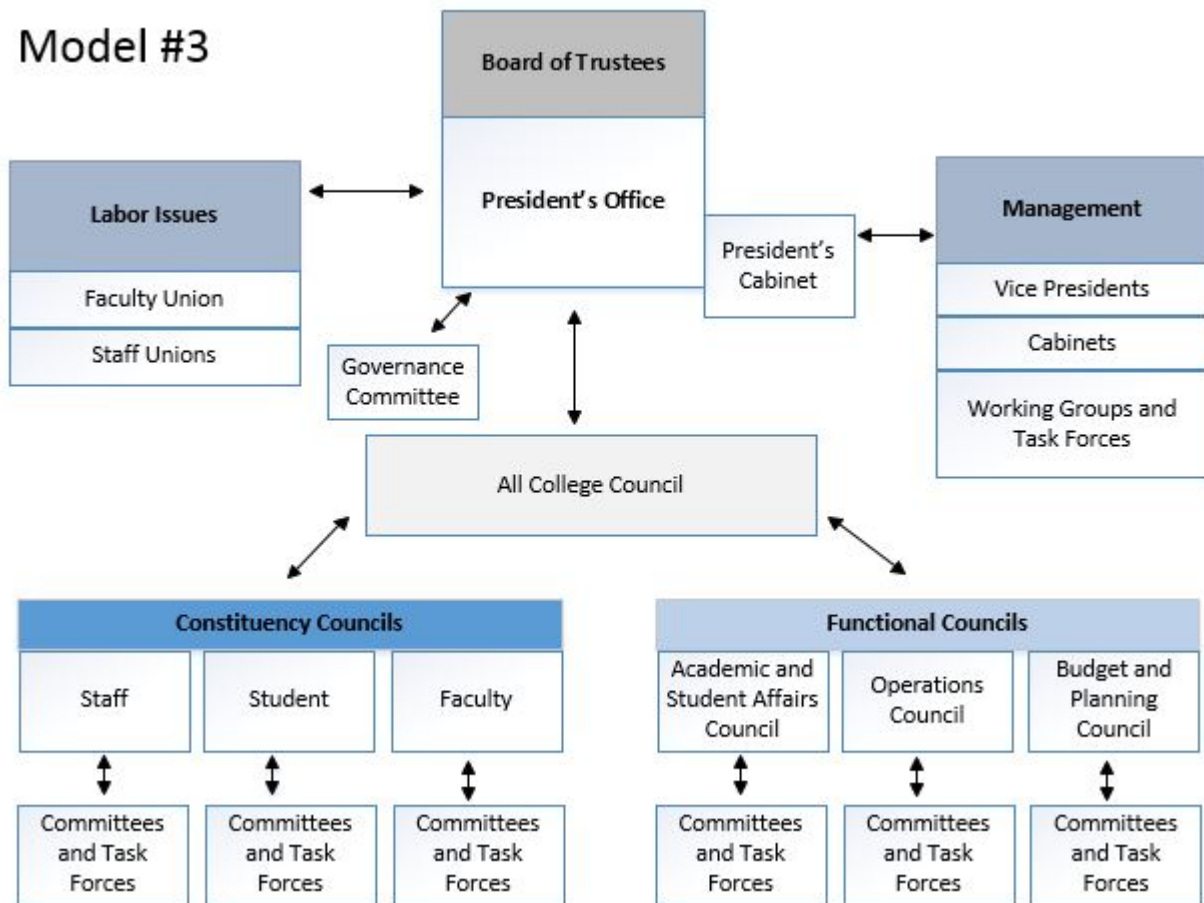
This model, particularly in the variation that was most discussed—without a college council, is perhaps closest to the traditional shared governance structure. It is primarily based on constituency councils, each of which has well-defined primary responsibilities. A Budget & Planning Council, with representative membership, would coordinate the proposals of the constituency councils. Members of the Budget & Planning Council would also serve on Budget & Planning committees within each constituency council.

Liaisons between councils would be appointed to overcome the lack of consultation and cross-fertilization provided in an All College Council. Each council would include at least one non-voting liaison from each other council.

Model #2 is the most explicit about identifying management issues not related to governance and keeping them outside of the governance structure.

BENEFITS of Model #2	CHALLENGES of Model #2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows groups with appropriate knowledge to make recommendations.</li> <li>• Input from constituency councils regarding a matter of its central responsibility would not be filtered, mediated, or frustrated by divergent perspectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy workload and responsibilities for liaisons between councils.</li> <li>• Because areas of responsibility are separate and defined, many issues would receive input from only one constituency.</li> </ul>

## Model #3



### Description of overall structure

Model #3 provides maximum input from both constituency and functional groups. It separates management/operations and labor issues from governance issues. Proposals are introduced through any council or from within a committee. Councils can charge committees and task forces to provide groundwork. Councils pass issues or recommendations to the All College Council, which discusses and distributes the matter to all councils for comment. After gathering and assimilating feedback, All College Council forwards recommendations, including a summary of feedback, to President's Office for approval.

### Naming conventions

**Council**—Primary recommending units of the governance structure. Councils present a collective viewpoint/review from the point of view of a particular constituency group (faculty, staff, and students) or functional group (Academic & Student Affairs, Operations, Budget & Planning).

**Cabinet**—Cabinets serve as advisory groups to decision-making bodies, as well as sounding boards for communication within an area. For example, President's Cabinet works directly with the president, while many vice presidential areas have advisory cabinets (Instructional Cabinet, Student Affairs Cabinet, and Administrative Services Cabinet).

*Committee*—Committees are standing groups that handle ongoing issues and generally report to councils. They channel material to the councils, as well as to other groups that can delve deeper into issues.

*Task Force*—Perform short-term tasks and report to councils and cabinets

*Working Group*—Report to vice presidents and their cabinets and are primarily concerned with management issues.

## Function of major entities

### Office of the President/President's Cabinet

Bellevue College Policy 1100 establishes the delegation of authority from the board of trustees to the president. “[T]he board of trustees delegates to the president of Bellevue College all powers and duties and all expressed or implied authority to carry out the administration and operation of Bellevue College, except the authority to hire the college president and the authority to grant tenure.” The president receives recommendation from All College Council and can task any council with governance work.

### All College Council (ACC)

A College Council or All College Council represents the entire campus, including representation from all the underlying councils, as well as the administration. The ACC's main role is to review college-wide governance issues and to assure that all constituency and functional councils, as appropriate, have had a chance to provide input. Based on this work they make recommendations to the President's Office.

### Governance Committee

Reports directly to President's Cabinet. Responsible for governance logistics including elections, appointments, managing agendas, minutes, reports, reviewing and proposing updates to the governance system. Membership should be representative with election of its members handled through President's Cabinet.

### Faculty Council

Allows for faculty input on all college-wide governance issues. In addition, this council has recommendation authority for issues that deal only with faculty, and therefore may not need to be fully addressed by All College Council. Labor issues related to faculty members are addressed by the faculty union. Faculty Council makes recommendations to All College Council, which may be referred for additional review by one or more functional councils or one or more additional constituency councils.

### Staff Council

Allows for staff input on all college-wide governance issues. In addition, this council has recommendation authority for issues that deal only with staff, and therefore may not need to be fully addressed by All College Council. Labor issues related to staff are addressed by the staff unions. Staff Council makes recommendations to All College Council, which may be referred for additional review by one or more functional councils or one or more additional constituency councils.

### Student Council

Allows for student input on all college-wide governance issues. In addition, this council has recommendation authority for issues that deal only with students, and therefore may not need to be fully addressed by All College Council. Student Council makes recommendations to All College Council,

which may be referred for additional review by one or more functional councils or one or more additional constituency councils.

**Academic & Student Affairs Council (ASAC)**

Allows for function-related input on all college-wide governance issues around academics and student affairs. This council plays an important role in introducing new proposals for major changes to academic or student affairs policies and procedures. Committees that report to this council may include those that handle academic integrity, curriculum revision, advising, etc. ASAC makes recommendations to the All College Council, which may refer the issues to constituency councils and other functional councils, and may have some functions that report directly to the vice president of instruction or the vice president of student affairs.

**Operations Council**

Allows for function-related input on all college-wide governance issues around campus operations. This council plays an important role in introducing new proposals for major changes to operational policies and procedures. Committees that report to this council may include those that handle parking issues, risk management technology, etc. Operations Council makes recommendations to All College Council, which may refer the issues to constituency councils and other functional councils, and may have some functions that report directly to the vice president of campus operations.

**Budget & Planning Council (B&PC)**

Allows for function-related input on all college-wide governance issues around budget and planning. This council plays an important role in strategic planning, resource allocation, and budget review. Committees that report to this council may include those that handle annual planning, budget allocations, event planning such as College Issues Day, etc. B&PC makes recommendations to All College Council, which may refer the issues to constituency councils and other functional councils, and may have some functions that report directly to the vice president of campus operations.

**Unions/ASG**

These entities are defined by their contracts. All labor-specific issues are handled through the unions.

BENEFITS of Model #3	CHALLENGES of Model #3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple venues in which to raise issues.</li> <li>• Many opportunities to communicate to groups and to the larger college community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because of the number of governing entities, there may be some duplication of efforts.</li> <li>• Number of councils may lead to some duplication.</li> </ul>