

Academic College Council Update

Published 3/16/2018 by [Ashley Ribbel](#)

by **JoAnn Purcell, Academic College Council Chair**

in the **March 2018 issue**

The winter semester is well underway and, at Academic College Council (ACC), we've had two very productive meetings. We continue to work on reviewing and updating all of the college policies and procedures to bring them in line with current practices, PEQAB and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development requirements. We approved three more revised and updated college policies and created action plans and delivery dates for a few more. We are definitely on target to complete the process before summer. The systematic review of the college policies and procedures is a large part of the important work the council has committed to this year.

We also had a conversation about how best to communicate as a college community, specifically about those timely issues as they arise. There was some consideration to an online forum and, of course, the usual channels through Chairs and Deans, via the Coordinators Forum or by means of the various committees in the college. What did come out in the discussion is there has not been time for unstructured dialogue at ACC for a number of years. We are all so busy and focused on our own work sometimes that we forget that ACC is a place where we do stop and come together regularly. We've come a long way from the College Committee as recommended by the Department of Education in 1966 when colleges were established in Ontario, but the intent and purpose of the meeting is still relevant. An excerpt from "Basic Documents Relating to Colleges of Applied Arts" (1967) outlines the original context and purpose of the College Committee:

The faculty and student population of a COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY will be more diverse than that of other educational institutions. This fact suggests some problems, but it should be possible to develop a strong sense of unity within the College, thus preventing the rather rigid class system that often prevails in other educational institutions. The result should be a broader vision of education than exists at present, among students and faculty, and so, among the general public. An active Students' Association should be a determining factor here and in the establishment of the community role of the College.¹

With this preamble, the document went on to state:

A College Committee, consisting of an equal number of student and faculty, with the President of the College as advisor, is proposed.

Today, this basic structure endures in an altered form in the current ACC as an advisory council to the Vice-President, Academic, and an annual report to the President. An interesting fact (and a nod to their importance) in this early document was the recommendation that meetings be weekly with a college shutdown to allow attendance:

For the convenience of student and faculty committees, provision should be made in the timetable for their operation. A complete shutdown of academic procedures for a two-hour period weekly is suggested. Meetings could take the form of luncheon meetings, if the shut-down period were from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Academic College Council has evolved tremendously since then, so, of course, we won't be shutting down the college and attendance is usually restricted to members and invited speakers. In the spirit of reinstating egalitarian information exchange, though, I invite you to bring forward timely items related to academics and student experience to be discussed at ACC under 'Other Business.' Please bring forward either by emailing me (joann.purcell@senecacollege.ca) or to your ACC member. The next meeting is **Monday, March 19, 2018**. I look forward to hearing from you!

¹Department of Education. (1967 – 3rd printing, orig. 1966). *Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology: Basic Documents Relating to Colleges of Applied Arts*. Toronto, Ontario.

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tags : academic-policy, committees, march-2018