



A Philosophical Foundation: CSI Instruction and Academic Affairs

Preface

This document has evolved (and grown) since I first wrote it in 2015 or thereabouts, and I do try to do periodic updates. I've done many edits over the years, which demonstrates the fluid nature of philosophical foundations: our views change and evolve.

After over eight years as the Chief Academic Officer (and now Provost) at CSI, I can say I've learned a lot. For all the years of experience in education (over 30 now), between the classroom, the degrees, the research, and the dissertation, there is no substitute for the day-to-day dynamics of the job and all that it entails. I've gained a lot of experience to be sure: I'm currently the longest serving President/Provost/or State Board of Education member in Idaho. I'm not sure if I should be making that public ... all it means is I've seen a lot of people come and go and learned a lot from them.

One of the things I've learned is that true "team" cohesion can only exist if there is agreement on the fundamental philosophy of purpose: agreement on the "why" of the enterprise. There can be little agreement if there isn't a definition, and lack of clarity leads to assumptions. I'm hopeful that by expressing my point of view, it may help deans, chairs, and others understand where I'm coming from when I make decisions attempt to steer the course. I am writing this as a description of my own philosophical foundation, and as the Provost, I believe it is my responsibility to share it.

This is not intended to be a mandate or policy, it is intended to simply communicate how I see the instructional realities of community colleges in general, and more specifically here at CSI. Neither am I looking for agreement and approval. I hope that it causes some discussion and reflection and alleviates some concerns I hear from time to time.

I realize that anyone in the position I hold (I know many of them and we talk about this) is not going to be uniformly accepted. I fully expect that some of you reading this might even be offended by it. But this is a sincere effort to be transparent. Few things are as interesting to me as development of a group or team that is committed to common goals, and how best to mobilize movement towards the fulfillment of those goals. I've tried to be clear with you, that my *notions* continue to evolve. I hope yours do as well.

Revised: 6.13.2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd', is located at the bottom left of the page.

Introduction

For all the policy and procedure discussion and publication, strategic and unit planning activity, meetings, forums, and all manner of e-communication, there are times when our operations and expectations remain unclear. This document is intended to communicate a fundamental philosophical and operational foundation for the College of Southern Idaho instructional effort that may support a general understanding of the expectations of the Office of the Provost, and what you can expect from us.

Commitment to Students

Early in 2014, the College launched the Student Success Initiative (SSI) in order to formally address and implement our commitment to the national and state completion agenda. Like most community colleges, CSI had been primarily concerned with access and getting students up to and through the front door.

The SSI and a change in leadership prompted the most widespread organizational and procedural restructure in the history of the College to that point. But at the heart of all the change and the SSI intent was to reinforce our commitment to our students and their respective success.

Success is not only defined by graduation or completion. Our commitments include attention to many facets of their experiences:

- Our interactions with them and a commitment to engage with them
- Providing the highest instructional quality possible, no matter the venue or methodology
- Offering valuable services and experiences beyond the classroom
- Providing an instructional schedule that works well for them

The CSI Strategic Plan, which is designed to support the College mission, reinforces these tenets, primarily in Strategic Goal 3: *Drive Student Success*.

CSI recognizes that without our students, we are a non-entity. For this reason, *all* instructional decisions will be made, policies, practices, and procedures crafted, and resources allocated with the best interests of our *students* as the highest priority. This doesn't mean that students are the *only* thing, but they are the *primary* thing. Sometimes we might disagree on what is best for students, but that conversation is always welcome.

Context and Philosophical Foundation

While our mission is clear (*what* we do) and our Strategic Plan describes *how* we will carry out our mission, context is important. Southern Idaho is unique to the rest of the state culturally and economically, and alongside that particular context is the unique state of our student circumstances. CSI recently became the first Idaho postsecondary institution to be identified as an HSI or Hispanic Serving Institution.

Contrary to what we might think (as largely university-educated employees), our students are not necessarily mobile. Their intentions are not ours. A very small percentage of our students

actually transfer (go on) to a second postsecondary institution (less than 10% of all majors, and less than 50% of all transfer graduates). Of those *graduates* who transfer, less than 20% of them earn a bachelor's degree, and of all CSI transfer students, less than 5% do so¹. Over the past few years, the percentage of CSI students in career and technical education (CTE) programs has been in decline, as has the decline in traditional on-campus instruction. At this writing, over 50% of our headcount consists of dual credit high school students and we have the smallest number of students on our campus that we've had in over 15 years.

Online and concurrent enrollment delivery has commoditized higher education, and competition is fierce for students. Competition prompts response in order to maintain market share and sustainability and in the current higher education landscape, those responses can define an organization. Possible responses or tactics might include price point, ease of access, level of service, quality of content, among others. The College of Southern Idaho is committed to responding to the emerging marketplace by demonstrating the highest levels of quality and the student experience, while remaining at a competitive price point, and continuing to focus on access for all. We must be an agile and responsive institution in how we address these challenges. The newly created Idaho Course Exchange *Online Idaho* could be a gamechanger.²

Our students, in particular our regional service area students, are somewhat place bound. They tell us that while they might be in a transfer program, that it will likely be a terminal degree. If they're in a CTE program, they are most likely to be preparing for local work. Given our commitment to this community and the community's commitment to the College, high priority must be given to providing the students what they need to be successful right here at CSI and in south central Idaho. "What they need" is subject to debate, of course, and that debate or discourse is one of the best things about being part of an institution of higher education: we don't need to completely agree on this point. Much social science research has been conducted in pursuit of a clear answer: should we be distilling everything down to the specific requirements of the workplace or community, or should the experience be broader and therefore, more of a liberal education? It is up to each of us to formulate our own philosophy of education, and perhaps I should share mine in the interest of communicating my position. I couldn't state it nearly as well as one of my personal heroes:

It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life. ...

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the

¹ This is based on long term data that was aggregated at least five years ago. It is assumed that the precise figures have changed, but not the overall circumstances.

² Or a colossal waste of resources based on a false premise. Time will tell.

race but also the accumulated experience of social living.

*:: Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1947
writing as a student at Morehouse College*

What this means to me is that we should not be making distinctions about *which* is *more* important, but instead focus on *what* is *most* important: student (human) development. And there is powerful evidence that this must include attention to the development of our students' self-efficacy and a growth mindset. If a student graduates with little confidence in their abilities and themselves, we have failed to complete their education. Our graduates should believe they have been and will continue to be successful, that they can and will thrive.

It is easy, if not irresistible, to become infatuated with the content we teach, to the exclusion of other things like the craft of teaching, the nuances of student learning, and the overall student experience. While the content itself is of obvious relevance to the education of our students, I believe that the content is secondary to most of these other things and can even distract us from what is truly important. A holistic view of the student's journey from the front door to graduation day should always be the preferred vantage point, not the individual lecterns of our classrooms.

Our aspiration and our commitments

It may not be appropriate to state *our* aspiration without first getting your support, so perhaps this is *my* aspiration: ***instructional excellence in support of student success***. All we do and how we do it should support this goal.

To this end we make commitments, in the form of a common philosophical foundation (described herein), institutional strategy (CSI Strategic Plan), and guiding principles: how we will go about our work. I developed these guiding principles many years ago and they resonate with me still:

- Create value in all we do
- Transform challenges to opportunities
- Bring out the best in everyone
- Stay positive and respectful
- Continuously improve ourselves and programs

From the philosophical foundation, the institutional strategy and guiding principles, priorities for action arise, which require the action of people working in concert: faculty, me, my staff, and others. Through effective relationships, the end result is an improvement in our practice: the instructional excellence that is the goal of the instructional operation.



This can all be encapsulated into an overarching strategy for instruction at CSI:

- Develop people
- Develop relationships
- Develop practice

The community college mission

It is important to make distinctions between the community college and a university in both form and function, and there are many. A university's primary function, by virtue of its title, is to provide advanced graduate studies once a person has satisfied basic, baccalaureate degrees of understanding, and accomplish this through research activities. Some university faculty seldom if ever teach, and sometimes delegate instruction to graduate assistants whilst they conduct their research and publication efforts, again with the support of student assistants and co-researchers. The community college is all about teaching and learning, which is why many of us have chosen this path. We love to teach, and our students to learn.

Our students are not necessarily *university* students. They are often challenged, and these challenges are typically non-cognitive: financial, social, lack of support, lack of prior success, and in many cases, lack of any understanding of postsecondary education. While community colleges are often the butt of jokes suggesting a lack of rigor and instructional quality, the true story is that community colleges, and especially CSI, are entirely committed to student learning and achievement. I believe that CSI offers an equivalent or superior instructional experience to our students, no matter where they have come from.

I consider our students to be "educational immigrants," and arrive at CSI as lost as refugees to Ellis Island: penniless, lacking skills, unfamiliar with the culture, and in need of special assistance, patience, and empathy. Unlike universities with admission standards, we take *everyone*. This is the special pride we can take as a community college: often we are the only hope for our students. A colleague of mine in Virginia once compared community colleges to the emergency rooms of higher education, where the most dire cases of need come through the doors, where none are turned away, and "patients" with scarce ability to pay for services.

Role of Faculty

College of Southern Idaho faculty are the practitioners and purveyors of the instructional excellence to which we aspire. Just as we would have no function without students, we would have no activity without the faculty.

CSI faculty are strong voice in many facets of academic design and delivery, along with the shared governance model of the institution. But with that participation comes tremendous responsibility, in particular those full time continuing employment faculty.

The Profession

Faculty are typically hired primarily due to their subject matter expertise, rather than their demonstrated (or assumed) ability to teach. In order to support the degree of excellence expected in the classroom, faculty are expected to develop and maintain themselves not only as subject matter experts, but as professional educators.

For our CTE faculty, this is not only an institutional expectation, but a legal requirement to practice in Idaho: all CTE faculty must secure and maintain teaching credentials as required by the Idaho Division of Career and Technical Education. This means that development in the areas of instructional methods, curriculum development, assessment, and other crucial techniques must be addressed formally and informally.

For other faculty members unaffected by the State of Idaho requirements, there is no less an expectation that our instructors seek to become and remain the best teacher they can be. Many opportunities are afforded our faculty in support of this expectation including participation in best practice discussions, access to instructional designers, clear pathways to continue their education, and opportunities for travel to professional development activities. The existence of the Teaching and Learning Center demonstrates the administrative commitment to faculty development.

One of the most difficult transitions our new faculty make is that from subject matter expert (demonstrated either through education and degrees or employment experience) to teacher. For most new teachers at CSI, each moves from being an expert in their discipline to a newbie educator and likely their only direct experience with higher education is what they've experienced as *students*. It's difficult sometimes to move from seeing oneself as an engineer, mathematician, scientist, nurse, or other profession to being a teacher. Our Effective Teaching Academy is intended to help make that transition and to introduce and develop the concepts of sound instructional practice. At CSI, our instructors are both subject matter experts *and* teachers. But our hope is that they are *teachers first*.

It's important to understand that teaching and learning are discrete concepts: teaching can happen with no consequent learning, and learning can (and does) occur independent of formal instruction. While both are connected, it is very important that we study and understand each and their relationship to each other. Further, we have a responsibility to *measure* learning and the achievement of student learning outcomes.

At CSI, the Rank Promotion practice that is defined and managed by the Faculty Senate provides an avenue to demonstrate instructional excellence and to be recognized for it. As faculty are promoted, it is not only a recognition, but an entry into a new position with new responsibilities and additional compensation for contributions to the campus community as defined by the Faculty as a body politic. It is important to understand that rank advancement is not a reward for past work, but a promotion to a higher degree of responsibility and service just as any employee might be promoted to a new position.

Full time faculty members do much more than teach, depending on their rank. This is what separates the responsibilities of adjunct faculty (purely instruction), from our full-time faculty: service to the institution and the community, which comes at great *cost* to the institution, but with a significant return on that investment. In simple financial terms, the cost of 30 credits of instruction delivered by adjunct faculty costs \$27,000 in salary as I write this. The cost of a full-time faculty member is well above \$60,000 annually at a minimum in salary and benefits. That shows any reasonable person that the instructional cost is less than half of the full compensation, and thus emphasizes the *additional service and participation* expected of our full-time faculty members.

Leadership

All CSI Faculty members are afforded the opportunity to lead. A common misconception about this is that one requires someone to supervise in order to lead. Leadership is considered the ability to contribute to the overall success of those around a person and the institution at large. Whether this contribution is around a major, program, course, colleagues, their students or something else entirely, a key responsibility of our Faculty is to provide leadership.

The Three C's: Collaboration, Collegiality, and Civility

The success of our instructional effort at CSI is dependent to a large degree on the strength of the relationships we have with one another and our students. As with most relationships, ours will suffer when there is not an element of trust. Within the instructional function, we must work under the assumption that we are sharing goals, and those goals being in support of our Strategic Plan and our commitment to students. If there is doubt that we are not all working in the same direction, trust is lost and our relationships suffer.

For these reasons, our collective success requires that we collaborate effectively, operate in an environment of collegiality, and interact by way of civil discourse. While it is a tired cliché to say that “we’re all on the same team,” it is likely the best analog for how we must conduct our responsibilities and ourselves in order to achieve our greatest collective performance and resulting student achievement.

The strong voice that Faculty bring to the institutional conversation is also subject to these concepts. Regardless of whether the discussion regards instructional issues or parking policy, our common goals, responsibilities, and expectations are no less important to the nature of our environment and how we choose to conduct the operation of the College.

Governance and Academic Freedom

Higher education is a unique setting in many ways, including such concepts as shared governance and academic freedom. These concepts are hallmarks of higher education and the role of faculty, but I believe are also the most misunderstood. There are good definitions and helpful resources found in our accreditation standards that can separate fact from fiction, but they are also subject to interpretation. Some of those standards and other references are included in the sections below.

Governance

The term *shared governance* is commonly used in higher education and seems to imply that all members of the organization have some governing or decision-making authority. But shared governance simply means that everyone has a voice and will be heard, although not necessarily for every decision that needs to be made. Further, if governance is indeed shared, a significant responsibility emerges for those participating. Shared governance is as much a duty as it is a right. I include a number of accreditation standards below, and add emphasis here and there:

2.A.4. The institution's decision-making structures and processes, which are documented and publicly available, must include provisions for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which each has a direct and reasonable interest.

Note that the standard doesn't indicate the necessity of faculty involvement in institutional decision making, but that our accreditation requires that the College "make provision for the consideration of the views" of faculty, alongside those of staff, administrators, and students and further, where there is a "direct and reasonable interest."

We are accountable to two governing boards: the State Board of Education, and our locally elected Board of Trustees. In differing ways, each actually hold the ultimate governing authority for the College, and this is defined in Idaho statute (Sections 33-101 and 33-2107). But our local Board delegates the operation of the College to the President:

2.A.3 The institution employs an appropriately qualified chief executive officer with full-time responsibility to the institution. The chief executive may serve as an ex officio member of the governing board(s) but may not serve as its chair.

An [article in The Chronicle of Higher Education](https://www.chronicle.com/article/Exactly-What-Is-Shared/47065)³ does a nice job of explaining shared governance and was actually written by a former Provost at Idaho State University.

Where the faculty have a primary decision making and governance function is with regard to the College curriculum and assessment of student learning:

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

³ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Exactly-What-Is-Shared/47065>

Although the faculty exercise *a central role* with regard to the curriculum, the final authority lies with the Provost, more fully described in a section below.

Faculty hiring processes are another good example of how the faculty are involved, have an active role, and provision is made for the consideration of faculty views. Yet final decisions for faculty hires lie with administration, in particular the President (Idaho Code Section 33-2109). It is interesting to note that this section also mentions that Board's responsibilities for "fixing salaries," "prescribing" duties, and even textbook selection. That provides a clear sense of who is truly in charge.

It is worth noting that there was at one time (and may continue to be) concern over CSI's shared governance as identified in an institutional survey conducted around 2018. An outcome of that activity was an institutional guidebook and definition for shared governance at the College. It is available on the [CSI Connect site](#).

The role of standing committees and councils

A visible manifestation of shared governance at the institution can be seen in the institutional standing committees and councils, where two-way communication is applied to assist in shaping institutional policy, procedure, and strategy. Examples of these include:

- Curriculum Committee
- Council of Department Chairs
- Sustainability Council
- Professional and Classified Employee Association (PACE)
- Faculty Senate
- Faculty and Staff Connections Committee
- Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is a fascinating topic and I could go on for pages and pages, with multiple citations of case law. That level of detail is not warranted here. As a summary, I would make the following points:

- Most academic freedom case law revolves around free speech issues. Most court decisions have ruled that free speech rights of faculty in classrooms are constrained to the course topical content.
- Faculty have freedom to deliver course content as they see fit, including the assignment of grades and assessment, except when the methods deviate from the approved student learning outcomes, institutional policy, civil discourse, conditions of employment, and the rule of law. [Wirsing v. Board of Regents of the University of Colorado]
- Instructional design of courses independent of administrative oversight is not an academic freedom right. In Lovelace v. Southeastern Massachusetts University, the court ruled that colleges and universities retain the authority to create policy with regard to "matters such as course content, homework load, and grading policy" and that

"the first amendment does not require that each nontenured professor be made a sovereign unto himself."

- Faculty have no right to dictate to another instructor how to deliver their course. However, a degree of collegiality and cooperation is necessary within departments where common curriculum is being delivered and/or team teaching is occurring.
- While the assignment of grades is a basic academic freedom right, the grade once posted may be acted upon by the institution. The institution may not direct an instructor to change a grade, but may elect to change a grade administratively (e.g. grade appeals). [Parate v. Isibor]
- Academic freedom rights apply not only to faculty, but to the institution, administration, staff, and students. [NWCCU standards]
- Academic freedom case law resolution more frequently supports the institutional freedom rights above those of individual faculty. The institution is seen as an employer and therefore has certain responsibilities of oversight and supervision.

There are two accreditation standards applying to academic freedom:

2.B.1 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution adheres to the principles of academic freedom and independence that protect its constituencies from inappropriate internal and external influences, pressures, and harassment.

2.B.2 Within the context of its mission and values, the institution defines and actively promotes an environment that supports independent thought in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It affirms the freedom of faculty, staff, administrators, and students to share their scholarship and reasoned conclusions with others. While the institution and individuals within the institution may hold to a particular personal, social, or religious philosophy, its constituencies are intellectually free to test and examine all knowledge and theories, thought, reason, and perspectives of truth. Individuals within the institution allow others the freedom to do the same.

During the 2021 Idaho Legislative Session, [HB 377](#) was signed into law, which creates statutory definition of what college faculty can and can't do in their classrooms, mostly around the topics of social justice and critical race theory. Legislators seemed to be convinced that indoctrination efforts were well underway by instructors and institutions. The law states that compelling any student to adhere to a specific ideology is illegal, while not forbidding the introduction of certain topics and teaching about them.

While this may be considered an impingement of academic freedom rights of faculty, it is practically a reiteration and reinforcement of the Idaho Constitution. Faculty have a responsibility to be presenting specific facts and developing knowledge, rather than engaging in ideological activism. Academic freedom does not provide the right to "do whatever you want," but to exercise a high degree of creative control in how instruction is delivered.

During the summer of 2021, a group of Idaho college and university faculty, as well as a university provost and I were invited by the State Board of Education staff to work on a revision and update [SBOE Policy III.B. Academic Freedom and Responsibility](#). I was impressed with the diligence and thought that went into this activity and while the policy does not technically apply

to CSI, it is worth reading. It is segmented between the academic freedom of faculty, of students, and institutions, and emphasizes not only academic freedom, but the responsibilities associated with it.

Administrative role

While the sections above may seem to indicate or reinforce the subordination of faculty with regard to governance and academic freedom, the College administration strives to be extremely respectful of these issues. Faculty input is sought in many forms and unless problems arise, administration tends to stay out of the mechanics of instruction and how course content is delivered. The following sections set out to describe the respective roles and responsibilities of the administrative arm of instruction at the College: the Office of the Provost.

Role of the Office of the Provost: Instruction and Academic Affairs

Often referred to as “Instructional Administration,” the members of the Office of the Provost staff are tasked with the maintenance and *improvement* of instructional quality and adherence to internal and external standards for performance and compliance.

Why Instruction and Academic Affairs?

Instruction involves the process of educating our students and all that that entails. The term *academic affairs* refers to the administrative operation that provides oversight, administration, quality controls, policy making, and compliance to those internal and external requirements.

The Office of the Provost is made up of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or Provost and instructional deans with varying responsibilities. The deans are supported by office staff and the Executive Assistant to the Provost.

The responsibilities of the office are many, but a common misconception is that the curriculum, instructional programming, and methodology of instruction at the College is dictated out of this office. The development and management of the College curriculum is primarily a function of the Faculty (as described above), which is consistent with our accreditation standards. Guidance for methodology is provided, but not typically mandated. The Office of the Provost provides technical assistance, distributes resources, interfaces with the State Board of Education, supervises department chairs, ensures compliance with accreditation standards, is responsible for instructional quality (including resolution of academic grievances), and from time to time, deals with legal issues arising out of the instructional areas.

The Office of the Provost fulfills these responsibilities in part by the establishment of various policies, procedures, and standards. It conducts long term strategic and annual operational planning in support of the CSI Strategic Plan. The assessment of course and program performance is facilitated by the deans, who are assigned that responsibility by the Provost. These efforts are intended to be collaborative, collegial, and civil and always in the best interests of our students. To facilitate the management of the CSI curriculum, faculty representation in the form of Department Chairs make up the Curriculum Committee who make recommendations to the Provost for final approval of curricular additions, retirements, and changes. The chairs also participate in the Council of Department Chairs which provides an avenue for interactive communication between administration and academic units.

Provost

The Provost is the final authority (and accountability) with regard to all things instructional at CSI. Acting as the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), the Provost represents the College within the state peer group, to the State Board of Education, our own Board of Trustees, and for purposes of accreditation. In general I act as the de facto Executive Vice President, which carries with it the more traditional definition of “who is in charge when the President is not,” along with the general operation of the College at large, not just instruction and academic affairs.

The Provost has responsibility for the responsive operation of the office and team members but is also expected by the President to maintain a positive working relationship with the Faculty. This goal is supported by many objectives and activities, including regular meetings with the President of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (both formal and informal), engagement with Department Chairs, and as time allows, engagement with members of the faculty.

The position also requires a high degree of time “out-facing,” and engaging in discourse and relationship-building with community stakeholders, business and industry, public policymakers, legislators, and sister institutions.

Instructional Deans

In a university setting which is divided organizationally into individual colleges and departments, deans provide the oversight of those colleges and delegate to department chairs to manage subsidiary instructional units or other functions. University Deans typically report to and are accountable to the Provost.

Since CSI is a college itself, Instructional Deans have administrative responsibility directly to departments, both instructional and functional. More of the day-to-day operation of the Office of the Provost is conducted by these Instructional Deans than the Provost.

The leadership team meets weekly in order to stay conversant in the workings of the College: the Provost provides federal and state external factor updates, along with President’s Cabinet updates, while the deans are involved in updating the Provost and each other on any issues (positive or negative) that are happening at the departmental level. Annual and semi-annual retreats and planning functions are engaged to develop and deliver coherent operational strategy.

Deans are the connecting points for Unit Planning, Program Review, Outcomes Assessment, Resource Allocation, and Budget Management for their respective departments. They conduct annual evaluations of their direct reports (primarily department chairs) and are expected to read all faculty evaluations within their respective unit(s). They have primary responsibility in addressing academic grievances and ensure that such grievances are effectively resolved. Additionally, they provide signatory decision-making authority with regard to departmental expenditures, faculty travel, faculty hires (in concert with the Provost), course schedules, and faculty load. In general, they are the administrative leaders of instructional and instructional support units.

The state of Idaho expects that an administrator at the dean level is the primary point of contact with the Division of Career and Technical Education (DCTE), and that person’s responsibilities

typically span across multiple units and departments, while maintaining a collaborative relationship with the other deans. Each of the instructional deans at CSI oversee a combination of CTE and transfer programs so their individual scopes require that they work very closely together.

Role of the Department Chair

I've often said that beyond the position of President, that of Department Chair may be the most challenging on campus. Chairs are expected to simultaneously represent administrative action to the faculty, and faculty concerns to administration. They are a critical connecting point and communication channel between administration and faculty.

Department Chairs for the most part are considered members of or representatives of the faculty body, and as a group, form a faculty voice with regard to oversight of the college curriculum (Curriculum Committee), discussion of academic affairs policy, and work with Deans on various instructional initiatives (Council of Department Chairs). Teaching responsibilities for chairs vary with the size of the department and other factors, but the desire is that we do our best to retain teaching chairs in order to maintain close contact with the realities of instructional delivery.

The Instructional Deans work closely with the chairs and are expected to provide support and technical assistance to achieve quality of curriculum and instruction, while promoting good sustainable practice and continuous improvement. Regular inputs with the deans include program review, outcomes assessment, academic grievances, personnel issues, appeals, unit planning, budget management, and resource allocation.

Organizational structure is often determined by the specific talents of the various leaders within the organization, and CSI is no different in this regard. Instructional departments are organized generally by discipline, but this is not always the case. The leaders of each instructional unit are appointed by the Provost after consultation with faculty and discussion within the administrative unit. The selection process may vary depending on the department and circumstances, but the final decision resides with the Provost, in concert with the President and Instructional Deans.

Department Chairs occupy a key role in institutional governance; their collective work includes not only department-specific interface with the Deans but are relied upon to assist in the governance of the institution. Their responsibilities aren't constrained to instructional issues, but also provide input into the operation of the College at large. The specific responsibilities of the Department Chair are too numerous to list here, and that is not the purpose of this document. Suffice it to say, that our chairs are kept very, very busy.

Role of the Program Manager

If the Department Chair provides an intersection between departments and the Office of the Provost, in some cases there is a necessary degree of management at the program (or major) level. Program Managers are faculty members that have specific responsibilities with regard to the management of program budgets, curriculum, oversight of faculty including adjuncts, dual credit, advisory committees, program-level accreditation, advising, recruiting, and admission

standards. This is not an exhaustive list and may vary by program and not every program requires this level of management, but it is nevertheless a key role when it is warranted.

Role of Administration

When I left the private business and industry sector to teach at CSI, I found myself in a new world. I was startled by what I saw to be a very autonomous environment, with very little administrative oversight (or meddling). I was used to being micromanaged by my various supervisors, and oft-critiqued. That all changed when I was hired at CSI and I was almost alarmed by it.

That being said, everyone has had their own experiences with supervision, leadership, employment, and workplace dynamics, but personally I am continually perplexed by the occasional sentiments expressed within the *shared governance* organization that we are. And this appears to be true at nearly all institutions of higher education: a tangible suspicion amongst faculty with regard to the motives and decision-making of administration.

Just as decision-making authority of the Board(s) is delegated to the President, the President also delegates decision-making to others and so on. Our administrative and governance structure is not so much a democracy as a benevolent monarchy. It is the role of administration in general to accept the delegated responsibilities of the Board(s) for purposes of governance and decision-making, with the expectation that where appropriate and necessary, input is sought from the College stakeholders, just as our accreditation standards and the Idaho rule of law dictate.

But it is unlikely that most College employees understand the scope, context, and possible consequences of the decisions that must be made. Nothing other than the direct experiences I've had over these past 15-20 years prepared me for these factors requiring consideration, and a primary decision-making filter of mine and other administrators is risk management.

I've said many times that a lack of trust stems from lack of understanding, and that most people have no idea what anyone else does in their work. (I include myself in that characterization: I know very little about what most employees do outside of instruction.) Perhaps that's where some of the lack of trust originates: most people simply don't know what administration is dealing with. But I would summarize administrative work as *insulating the faculty and staff from the difficulties that would preclude them from doing their work, while protecting the integrity and stability of the institution.*

Role of Student Affairs

I was fortunate enough to get to spend about a year in the acting role of Vice President of Student Services and for a brief period, Dean of Students. If not for that, I would not have the understanding of and appreciation for what those services and operations are. Further, it is worth noting that the concept of student services within higher education is a relatively new development, originating with the vast numbers of returning GI's after World War II who needed a better understanding of how to navigate this "college thing," including the disposition of their financial aid in the form of GI benefits.

Strictly speaking, Student Affairs is a subset of what is more broadly known as Student Services or Enrollment Management. Student Affairs is not financial aid, or registration, or advising so much as the student life and student advocacy parts of their educational experience. A great deal of learning that happens here is a function of their total experience, much of which occurs outside classroom walls. The Dean of Students provides a focal point for students to bring concerns, and to mete out disciplinary action where it is appropriate, but from the behavioral perspective. Classroom management and instructional disputes are part of Academic Affairs. But both Student and Academic Affairs work in concert to ensure that student grievances and appropriate disciplinary actions are addressed in a fair and timely way, always with due process for students.

Student Affairs provides avenues for activities that extend students' education into new or non-traditional environments: clubs and organizations, intramural athletics, student government, student activities, recreation, and general entertainment and networking. All contribute to the education and overall development of the student and that "accumulated experience of social living" as described by Dr. King.

Curriculum Development and Management

By now it should be clear that the development and management of the College curriculum is a *central* function of the faculty, as defined by our regional accreditation standards. Faculty responsibility lies at both the narrow view of the department level and within majors and programs, but faculty also significantly contribute to the content of the College's program of general education. The content of our programs is defined primarily by the student learning outcomes of the program of study, including that of the General Education program. As our accreditation standard 1.C.5. states, "The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to **establish curricula**, assess student learning, and improve instructional program."

All faculty share this role and function, which is vital to the institution. The role of the Office of the Provost in this regard is to shepherd the management and provide guidance and other technical assistance at the Dean level, and final approval by the Provost. The formality of process is carried out within the Curriculum Committee, as noted above and in the Committee Bylaws, but also within CSI Academic Affairs policy V.003 Curriculum Management.

Assessment

Outcomes Assessment

The NWCCU accreditation Standard 1.C.5. cited above also mentions the faculty responsibility to "assess student learning." This is done continuously at both the course and program level. Our institutional outcomes assessment practices and procedures are outlined and further described in the CSI Outcomes Assessment Handbook.

In addition to 1.C.5., other accreditation standards related to curriculum, outcomes, and outcomes assessment include a significant focus on student learning. In fact an entire section is dedicated to the topic and yet another on student achievement. Here are those standards that impact faculty with regard to the establishment of outcomes and the assessment of those outcomes:

1.C.1 The institution offers programs with appropriate content and rigor that are consistent with its mission, culminate in achievement of clearly identified student learning outcomes that lead to collegiate-level degrees, certificates, or credentials and include designators consistent with program content in recognized fields of study.

1.C.2 The institution awards credit, degrees, certificates, or credentials for programs that are based upon student learning and learning outcomes that offer an appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing, and synthesis of learning.

1.C.3 The institution identifies and publishes expected program and degree learning outcomes for all degrees, certificates, and credentials. Information on expected student learning outcomes for all courses is provided to enrolled students.

1.C.5 The institution engages in an effective system of assessment to evaluate the quality of learning in its programs. The institution recognizes the central role of faculty to establish curricula, assess student learning, and improve instructional programs.

1.C.6 Consistent with its mission, the institution establishes and assesses, across all associate and bachelor level programs or within a General Education curriculum, institutional learning outcomes and/or core competencies. Examples of such learning outcomes and competencies include, but are not limited to, effective communication skills, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and logical thinking, problem solving, and/or information literacy.

1.C.7 The institution uses the results of its assessment efforts to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices to continuously improve student learning outcomes.

Program Review

After many fits and starts over a number of years, we now have a coherent annual plan for program review, which merges our assessment of student learning outcomes with analysis of system outcomes data (retention, completion, placement, transfer, etc.), alongside resources, resource allocation, general program information, and facilities.

The Program Review process informs short term and long term planning in the form of Individual Development Plans (IDP's) and Unit Development Plans (UDP's) with attendant budget requests.

Institutional Stabilization and Optimization (ISO)

As the Program Review is utilized primarily by faculty and department chairs to evaluate and determine program quality, ISO takes the process one additional step to determine program necessity, sustainability, and value to the institutional mission. Instructional Deans apply additional performance criteria (including program quality) to make recommendations to the President, Provost, and Board of Trustees regarding potential problem areas for improvement as

well as areas of excellence. This process was launched as of summer 2021 and continues to evolve and undergo refinement, especially across non-instructional units.

Expectations

Expectations of faculty, expectations of myself

I believe that everything above describes the utopia of the instructional unit at CSI, at least in that singular perfect (but imaginary) world. Do I expect CSI deans, chairs, and faculty to simply fall into line behind everything I've written above?

Nope.

What do I expect from faculty? The same things I expect from myself (and believe me, I am often disappointed in my own performance). I desire passion and commitment to the students and the craft of teaching. I try to be efficient, and fiscally conservative, and work hard, without sacrificing my family and other relationships. I attempt to provide a full measure, to prove my worth, and perform my duties and responsibilities in a moral and ethical manner. I try to be a good leader and a good servant; that I respect the fact that taxpayers and students pay my entire salary.

I attempt to communicate clearly and without deception. I try to get along, to be civil, collegial, and collaborative. I try not to raise my voice, and to smile as much as I can. Laughing is even better and having fun the best of all. I try to remember that I am here to serve the students, and all of you, by supporting our mission and staying focused on what is truly important.

I love this place and what we do. I hope you do as well.

Setting Ourselves Apart

CSI is different. We aren't normal. I love that about us. In my dealings with my counterparts and with direct observations and communications, this is our reputation. We are an institution that others aspire to be, with a culture that others wish to own. We can only do this if we remain committed to our mission, to each other, to this community, and to our students. I believe what truly sets us apart from others is our ability to forge relationships, not just as an institution, but at the individual level. These relationships are a vital element of who we are and require tending and reinforcement of trust. The preservation and improvement of every relationship we forge must remain a high priority in order to maintain and enhance the special nature of CSI.

Conclusion

"The journey is the reward?" Well, maybe. If you remember one thing about this document, let it be this: *there is no better work to do than what we do here, and for whom we do it.*