

**Chaparral Article**  
**“Catch the Bug, Join Leadership!”**  
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Normally your Academic Senate President, Michael Scott, would pen this column, but this month I am taking over in order to address an issue of importance to the college: the health of the Senate, and more broadly, of participatory governance at GCC.

After reading my annual requests for contributions to the Academic Senate Scholarship Fund and/or General Fund, you probably already know many of things that the Senate does on your behalf. We fund three major student scholarships that are awarded every Fall. We recognize teaching excellence and service to the college through the annual Distinguished Faculty Award, Exceptional Adjunct Faculty Award, and the Parker Exceptional Service Award. We organize social events and parties to give the faculty an opportunity to relax and enjoy time with their colleagues without any work-related pressures. And that is just the start.

Though these are among the most visible of the Senate’s activities, they are not the most important. By law, the Academic Senate has specific policy development and implementation responsibilities (in conjunction with the college administration) over broad areas of academic importance. These areas include curriculum, degrees and certificates offered, educational program development, program review, grading policies, professional development activities, faculty roles in college governance and accreditation, and more. The Senate is responsible for establishing and maintaining the quality of the educational programs offered by the college, ensuring their academic integrity, and protecting the academic freedom of the faculty.

The elected Senate representatives and officers do their best to uphold these responsibilities, but they cannot do it alone. They need your help. Of course, one way to help is to make a modest financial contribution to the Senate. About 100 of our colleagues (including both full- and part-time faculty members) provide support for the Senate General Fund or the Scholarship Fund, or both, through modest monthly payroll deductions. Perhaps another dozen prefer to contribute by check. If you are one of our regular supporters, thank you very much. If you are not, please consider becoming one. If we could double the number of full or part-time faculty supporters, even if they each contribute just two dollars a month, our Fall scholarships would be fully funded every year. Currently we have to draw on our Foundation scholarship account to help cover part of the cost of providing these important scholarships to some of our most successful and promising students. This is okay for now, but in the long-run we will need to generate more ongoing support from the faculty. Remember, it's never too late to contribute. Forms are still available in mail room, if you are interested.

A second way to help the Senate do its important work on campus is to pick a governance committee (or two) that you would be willing to attend and respond when the call goes out for volunteers. Counting

both Senate and Guild appointments, right now only about half of the full-time faculty serve on governance committees. Those that do participate, on average, serve on two committees. Let's spread the work around a little more. Most of these committees only meet for about an hour, usually once a month. With holidays and final exams, that really only means maybe eight meetings a year, sometimes even less. I know meetings are not your favorite things, but this is not an unreasonable commitment for any of us to make to keep the governance system running properly.

If you think you might want to delve in even deeper, consider becoming a Senate representative from your division, or even running for an at-large seat. Speak to your current representative, or any Senator, about what it is like to serve on the Senate, or even attend a meeting. The Senate meets twice a month for about an hour and a half, and we have in-depth discussions on some of the most important issues that impact the educational policies and programs at this college. You do not have to be a member to come and observe what a meeting is like.

After serving on the Senate, if you catch the bug, you could then move up to a position as a Senate officer, or even Senate president, if you really want to get intimately involved with the decision-making process at the highest level on campus. Being on the Senate is not for everyone, but like most anything, you get out of it what you put into it. I find it fascinating and rewarding. Maybe you will, too.