

Academic Senate Chair Candidate Statement

Rita Kumar

April 2024

Dear Senate Colleagues,

I am honored to be nominated for a second year as Senate Chair, and respectfully request your support.

I am a Professor in the Technology and Operations Management Department in the College of Business Administration, and also serve as Director of the College's Singelyn Center for Innovative Analytics. This is my 21st year on the faculty at Cal Poly Pomona, my 7th on the Academic Senate, and my 5th on the Executive Committee (including one year as Vice Chair and the current year as Chair).

During my years on the Academic Senate, and particularly on the Senate Executive Committee, I have developed a deep appreciation for the role that shared governance plays in shaping our future. I view it as a process based on collaboration, consultation, communication, mutual respect, and trust as we work to move the university forward. Its effectiveness rests on a shared set of core values and goals, along with a spirit of collegiality, as our guiding principles.

My service at CPP as it relates to shared governance has spanned department, college, and university levels. The most relevant ones are:

1. **Academic Senate:** When I started as a senator, I served on the Faculty Affairs Committee, and one of the policies we worked on with significant revisions was the RTP Policy. I came to appreciate the key role that senate committees play in developing and modifying policies governing a host of issues from curricular to research to personnel to academic standards and student affairs, and in approving course and program proposals.
2. **Executive Committee:** Serving on the Executive Committee, especially as Vice Chair last year and Chair this year, I am keenly aware that every issue that the EC considers could have wide-ranging impacts, and the importance of clarity, completeness, consultation, and open communication as we work on everything from referrals to reports to resolutions; to faculty appointments on committees ranging from MPP search and MPP review committees to specialized committees or working groups; and to engaging with the President, Provost, and other administrators.

For the past several months (November onwards), I have served as a substitute ASCSU senator. This has helped bring statewide senate issues more sharply into focus for me, most notably the discussions around AB 928 and CSU GE Breadth. With EC's support, I drafted a resolution supporting ASCSU and opposing changes to CSU GE Breadth, reinforcing prior senate sentiments about the value of arts and humanities, and life-long learning. Our senate adopted this resolution at our March meeting.

I also serve as the senate representative at ASI Board meetings, which enables me to bring relevant issues to EC's attention. Further, as a member of the CSU Council of Senate Chairs, I have gained a deeper understanding of issues affecting other campuses.

3. **Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation:** I have served on my department as well as on college curriculum committees, and the college Graduate Studies Committee. We worked on developing and modifying courses and curriculum, and I co-authored ECOs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. I served as assessment coordinator for the College of Business for both undergraduate and graduate programs, and on working groups for both AACSB (college) and WSCUC (university) accreditation efforts.
4. **RTP Committees:** I have served on RTP committees at the department, college, and university levels, including as Chair for DRTPC and CRTPC. Working on these committees reinforced for me the importance of developing clear criteria for RTP documents, and evaluating fairly based on established criteria and policies.
5. **Search Committees:** I have served on four search committees for the College of Business Dean, including as Chair for the most recent one, and on multiple search committees for department tenure-track faculty. I am currently serving on the Provost search committee. In these committees, I experienced working with colleagues sharing the common goal of finding the best candidates for the position, and upholding the importance of clear communication and of following policy.

The Academic Senate in 2023-2024:

When I started my term as Senate Chair in the summer of 2023, I did not foresee what Fall 2023 would bring – I'm not sure any of us did.

A confluence of issues, on campus as well as system-wide, and a senate resolution of non-confidence in the university president (the first such senate resolution on our campus, to the best of my knowledge) put us in uncharted territory. I found myself trying to understand what we were going through, consult with others with more experience than me, communicate with colleagues and invite colleagues to meet with me and share perspectives, organize and host a town hall on the issue, research the topic, and prepare for the December senate meeting. During the meeting, you saw me struggle to balance the spirit of collegiality enshrined in the senate's constitution ("*Central to collegiality and shared decision-making is respect for differing opinions and points of view, which welcomes diversity and actively sponsors its opinions.*"¹) with Robert's Rules referenced in senate's bylaws ("*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the proceedings and conduct of meetings*"²), and you saw my distress when I felt that I had not adequately achieved

¹ Policy 121 - Constitution of the Academic Senate

² Policy 122 - Academic Senate Bylaws

that balance. This was a learning experience like no other, and I appreciate your patience and understanding on this.

As I reflect on what we as a senate have accomplished this year, I'd like to highlight a few items (this is not an exhaustive list). Huge thanks to each of you for your hard work on behalf of senate – this would not happen without your commitment, and I appreciate it. A special thank you to Val and Casandra too!

Senate committee reports that have already been adopted or have had their first readings and are scheduled for second reading on April 10:

1. **Policy on Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement:** This policy will guide our implementation of GWAR, which will be a key issue for the upcoming year
2. **Other educational policies:** Institutional Learning Goals for Graduate Programs, Blended Programs, Concurrent Enrollment for Graduate Students, Mandatory Writing Requirements, Priority Registration Unit Limit
3. **New programs:** New programs spanning degrees, minors, or certificates in Computer Science, Statistics and Applied Math, Global Humanities, Sustainability Education, Cyber Security, Information Security, Financial Analytics, Human Resources Leadership
4. **Senate representation for part-time lecturer faculty:** The potential adoption and approval of this policy through all the process steps would be historic and senate will be poised to welcome two part-time lecturer faculty for the first time!
5. **Program reviews:** Electrical Engineering, Math, Computer Science
6. **Faculty affairs policies:** Emeritus Policy, Market Salary Increase Policy

Transparency, data sharing, searches to fill MPP positions, faculty support:

Working with EC, and during Chair and Vice Chair meetings with President and/or Provost, we have:

1. Pushed for and received **greater transparency and access to data**, e.g., data about interim MPP positions and how long an interim has been in that position; college and department level data on tenure density.
2. Pushed for moving forward with **searches for permanent incumbents**, e.g., for Provost, AVPs, Ombuds, and Dean of Ag. These searches are either currently in progress or have a defined timeline.
3. Continued to ensure that **faculty support remains a high priority for the university** (e.g., chair support, teacher scholar funding increases, tenure track hires).

4. Followed up on **issues that colleagues have brought to my attention.**

Shared governance encompasses shared decision-making and responsibility. As I continue to prioritize our concerns, I am mindful that among the Chair's responsibilities, as specified in senate's bylaws, is to "*Act as liaison between the Academic Senate and all other agencies having business with the Academic Senate.*"³ I consider working on shared goals with the President, Provost, and other administrators as part of this responsibility.

If I have the opportunity to serve another year as Chair, I will work with you to identify priorities. Here are some of my current thoughts on priorities:

1. **Uniting the campus around GE:** The Board of Trustees voted last week to make Cal-GETC the lower division GE pattern for all CSU students. This has been a disappointment, and my goal will be to work collaboratively to identify ways to preserve the valuable coursework in arts and humanities, and life-long learning, while following policy.
2. **Engagement with budget:** Advocate for increased faculty participation (beyond the Budget Committee) in conversations and decisions about budget, particularly as it relates to Academic Affairs; and in how data informs budget and resource allocation decisions.
3. **Curricular innovations:** Continue to support curricular innovations. We have seen high numbers of proposals for new programs and certificates this year, particularly at the graduate level and self-support modalities. These are likely to continue next year as well, and we may see our first blended program proposal.
4. Continue to follow up on issues that have been raised in meetings with President/Provost this year: e.g., **Streamlining payroll and travel reimbursement, Support for faculty** (e.g., teacher scholar funding increases), **Tenure-track faculty hiring.**
5. **Cozen implementation, Ombuds, Black student success:** Engage with the Cozen implementation team (they are scheduled to provide an update to senate on April 10), the new ombuds (the search is continuing), and implementation of the CSU workgroup recommendations for Black student success (endorsed by ASCSU in November 2023) as they relate to faculty.

My work ethic is rooted in fact-based data-driven decision making, an attention to details, and a commitment to meeting deadlines. I view my role through a lens of pragmatic optimism. I strive for open, honest, and transparent communication, and an approach based on fairness, consultation, soliciting feedback, and building consensus. I value completeness and clarity in communication, am mindful of everyone's time, and prioritize being prepared for meetings so that our time can be used productively. This year, I am holding office hours as an opportunity for me to engage with

³ Policy 122 – Academic Senate Bylaws

you on issues that you consider important for senate. If elected to another year, I will continue that practice, and try to be more proactive in meeting you where you are rather than inviting you to come to where I am.

Finally, I'd like to address the issue of continuity in senate leadership. There is a natural learning curve for the role of Senate Chair, and in its 60 years of history, senate appears to have recognized that. On the Academic Senate website is a list of past Chairs and Vice Chairs (<https://www.cpp.edu/senate/about/past-chairs.shtml>). In an overwhelming majority of cases, the Chair has held that position for more than one year, and the Goldilocks period for a Senate Chair appears to be two years. While I recognize that each situation is unique, for the most part senate appears to have supported continuity in leadership for two years. I respectfully ask you for that consideration.

We have an exciting year ahead for senate, and I will be honored to serve as your Chair for another year!

Thanks,

Rita

Jonathan Puthoff | Academic Senate Chair Candidate

I am an associate professor in the Chemical and Materials Engineering Department in the College of Engineering. I have been at Cal Poly since 2014, have been in the Academic Senate since 2016, have served on the Executive Committee under 3 different chairs, and have chaired the Elections and Procedures Committee. Additionally, I am the vice president of the CPP chapter of the CFA and have served in many other roles at eh University, College, and Department level.

With respect to shared governance, I perceive that the challenges we face in the CSU (and in higher ed. In general) arise from two contending philosophies. For the CSU system, one of the contending poles is located in the Chancellor's Office and the Board of Trustees meeting spaces (i.e., at the system level). The other resides (in the official sense) in the faculty and student governance structures on the CSU campuses, though there are local representatives of the former on the various campuses in the presidents' offices. These two philosophies differ in the way that they would allocate resources, structure educational programs, and organize academic labor. At the system level, financialization, streamlining, and centralization dominate approaches to governance. On the local campuses, faculty autonomy, harmonization of curricula, faculty maintenance/development, and an emphasis on instructional facilities primarily drive this other philosophy of governance. I expect that most faculty who serve on the Academic Senate are aligned with the latter, campus-centric philosophy. I would use my role as Senate Chair to defend and advance this perspective. Maintaining faculty control over hiring/RTP, program review and development, and the policies that influence student achievement is crucial to fulfilling the mission of the CSU system.

Thank you.