RESOLUTION WRITING AND GENERAL ADVICE

*Adapted from the ASCCC's "Resolution Writing Advice"

Since the resolution process can be an extremely effective mechanism for guiding the work of the Foothill College Academic Senate and/or Curriculum Committee, care should be taken when developing the resolutions. The following are some guidelines for resolution writing. When in doubt, consult with the Academic Senate president or Curriculum Committee faculty co-chairperson.

1. **Four is the Limit**: Resolutions cannot contain more than four "whereas" or "resolved" statements.
2. **Homework**: Foothill College already has many policies and procedures in place to guide our work. It is possible that one already exists that directly relates to the position or action you wish to take; therefore, make sure to consult the appropriate administrators or faculty leaders first so that duplication can be avoided.
3. **An Introduction**: Consider using the first "whereas" as an introduction, outlining the situation in general or providing background and indicating the people or groups involved before justifying your resolutions in the other "whereas" clauses.
4. **Acronyms**: Write out the names of groups or organizations in your first reference to them. The full name may be followed by a parenthetical abbreviation, which you may then use for future references.
5. **Make the Point**: Be as direct and to the point as possible. Cleverness that makes a resolution less clear will likely cause that resolution to be amended or defeated.
6. **Avoid Lumping**: Limit yourself to one reason in support of or in defense of your resolution per "whereas" statement. Lumping too much into one statement can cause confusion and is likely to provoke calls for revision.
7. **Professionalism Preferred**: Avoid personal attacks or insults of any person or group, regardless how subtle. No matter how justified the statement or how offensive the target, such attacks will almost inevitably draw opposition from some members.
8. **Only Senate/Curriculum Committee Action**: Remember that resolutions can only direct the Academic Senate and/or Curriculum Committee to take action. Your resolution can do such things as request or recommend actions from others, or it can endorse or support a position, but it can only direct action from the Foothill Academic Senate or Curriculum Committee.
9. **Reality Check**: If your resolution directs an action by the Senate or Curriculum Committee, be certain that the action may be reasonably accomplished. Specifically, remember that the Senate or CC cannot absolutely ensure or prevent the actions of any other body. Some qualifying or alternative terms, such as "work with {other body} to ensure" rather than "ensure", or "oppose" rather than "prevent," may help to produce a more realistic resolution.
10. **Facts**: Resolutions are best received when the focus is on facts versus rhetoric.

11. **Word Choice**: Words that make sweeping generalizations such as “any,” “every,” “all,” “never,” “none,” etc. should be used judiciously.
12. **Models**: You may benefit from reading some past examples of resolutions for ideas about structuring and phrasing your resolution.
13. **Resolution** Title: Be sure that the title of the resolution accurately reflects the content of the resolution.
14. **Citing Legislation**: Cite the dates on legislation or regulations referenced in the resolution.

Advice on Wording for Resolutions

The wording of a resolution is an important matter that can sometimes prove tricky or confusing. A resolution with controversial, unclear or offensive wording can lead to prolonged debate and might ultimately cause a resolution to be delayed or rejected even when its ideas are worth approving. The following advice is offered in order to help resolution authors avoid wording and issues that may raise objections:

1. **Recommend**: If using the word “recommend” within your resolution, be very clear and cautious about what you are recommending and to whom. Make certain that any recommendation is directed to a specific body with authority over the issue in question, and make certain that the Academic Senate and/or Curriculum Committee has standing to make such a recommendation.
2. **Ensure**: If using this term, be certain that the Senate has the power to fulfill the goal of your resolution. The Senate (or CC) may not have the power to ensure many outcomes, especially on its own. In many cases, better phrasing might ask the Senate/CC to work in cooperation with another group to ensure or accomplish the outcome.
3. **Assert or Affirm**: These terms imply that the Senate/CC is taking a specific, formal position on an issue. Accordingly, take care to allow these bodies enough time to research and discuss such matters. It may also be the case that the Senate or CC has previously taken a position contrary to one you now propose to affirm. Please take time to review past resolutions and speak with Senate leadership to see if a prior position on your resolution has been determined. After such review and consultation, you can then decide if you want the Senate/CC to take a new position on the issue because evidence or recent developments now indicate a need to reconsider. It is not necessary to recommend to affirm a previously stated position that remains valid.
4. **Reaffirm**: If you ask the Senate/CC to reassert a position, make certain that it is indeed a position that has been established previously and is not an interpretation of or extrapolation from a previous Senate statement or document. In addition, make certain that such a reaffirmation is indeed necessary and not merely repetitious. In general, reaffirming previous positions is discouraged due to the conflict that will arise if the body votes not to reaffirm.
5. **Require**: As with “ensure,” make certain that the Senate/CC has the authority to require the proposed action. In many cases, these bodies may not have the power to fulfill the action requested.

6. **Support**: Directions to support students, other organizations, documents, etc. are acceptable as desired actions of the Senate/CC. It is worth nothing, however, that these bodies typically do not have the wherewithal to provide financial support to individuals or organizations, but resolutions may direct the Senate/CC to support funding from the state or other resources.
7. **Work With**: When directing the Senate/CC to work with another official body, be certain that the body in question has appropriate involvement in or authority regarding the issue at hand. Often, the action "work with" is followed by another direction to accomplish something. Consider which is more important to the intent of your resolution: that the Senate/CC work with another group, or that the action is accomplished? Then, word your resolution in the manner that best emphasizes the goal you most wish to accomplish.
8. **Verbs**: At past ASCCC plenary sessions, the following verbs have sometimes raised fewer issues and received less negative responses than those listed above. As such, you might consider whether calling for one of the following actions would make your resolution more likely to be well-received:

- Urge
- Research
- Develop (a position, materials, etc.)
- Distribute
- Oppose
- Publish
- Survey
- Encourage
- Conclude
- Adopt
- Request
- Express
- Form
- Collect
- Communicate
- Recognize