

Candidate Statements for AS Senator

The following statements were submitted before the deadline of March 4th, and are in alphabetical order.

Daniel Ante-Contreras

Hi everyone! I am Daniel Ante-Contreras, Letters instructor since 2017. I hope to join the Academic Senate guided by the primary goal of my teaching: to find joy in providing space for students to thrive, grow, and enjoy learning. The Academic Senate is where we come together to brainstorm how to best do that - and that's where I thrive, in the ability to collaboratively tinker with innovations. In my teaching, I style myself as Virginia Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway: anxiously preparing a party, meticulously putting elements together, so that I can watch everyone, at the end of the day, discussing, sharing, and finding new perspectives. This is the energy I'd bring to the Academic Senate. With a background in game studies, disability studies, and gender/sexuality studies, I bring with this party planner identity the ethos of a game master and someone attuned to equity, accessibility, and the need for safety, comfort, and coziness. To quote one of my heroes, Pascal the Otter from the video game *Animal Crossing*, "Talking's pretty good, as things to do with your head go, but listening is where it's at, maaan."

Which committees have you served on and when?

Academic Affairs (AAC) for about six years. On AAC, I serve on the subcommittees for hiring and calendar. Hiring has been some of the most meaningful work I've engaged in because of how much I've learned about the campus and the needs of different departments. I also serve on the SAS Advisory and the Honors Advisory.

Which leadership roles have you held?

I am currently serving as temporary co-coordinator of MiraCosta's Honors Program, am a founding member and primary faculty contact for the Rainbow Collective (a group for LGBTQIA+ MiraCosta employees), and have been the Faculty Advisor for student clubs on campus, including the newly formed Game Design Club (tell your students!).

What do you think are the five most pressing issues facing the Academic Senate today, and how has your work over the past three to five years shown your commitment to these issues?

In no particular order, I'd say:

Innovations in teaching and learning - The pandemic fundamentally changed student perspectives on education in their lives - how they can access that education, why it matters, and how they can advocate for themselves as learners. Old ways won't work, and there can't be a "new normal" - we must consistently engage with new pedagogies, new ways of thinking, and new ways of organizing our academic initiatives. As a scholar of digital pedagogy, I keep currency in my field about innovative teaching techniques related to AI, digital media, and technoculture.

Changing demographics - We need to engage with data differently. The pandemic has changed *who* our students are, with online accessibility changing how students fit education into their lives as they leave San Diego county in large numbers due to being priced out. This leaves our classes - online and in-person - fundamentally different, and offers exciting opportunities to rethink how to serve students with a global view of education in a world of expanded online education and shifting skill needs tied to tech

Academic freedom (and AI) - This is fruitful ground for new ways to engage students in meaningful work. Change gives us opportunities to reformat our disciplines and how we express knowledge. I experiment with AI tools in my classrooms, and my students find joy in engaging with these technologies - finding their limitations and pushing at boundaries. As instructors, we should approach this with the same sense of joy.

Facilitating and encouraging conversations, communication, and community - As work on calendar and scheduling demonstrate, there is a need for constituencies on campus to come together for better solutions for our students. The Academic Senate has been fundamental over the last few years in engaging different departments collaboratively, and we must continue to dedicate ourselves to this. In Academic Affairs, I have had high stakes conversations with people across departments, which has allowed me to build relationships and see the needs of others on campus.

Mental Health and Success/Growth - Through my dissertation, which centralized disability studies approaches, I learned a lot about cultural shifts regarding mental health - we no longer should accept needless difficulty: educationally, institutionally, or socially. Most students are perfectly capable of succeeding in classes, but the reasons they don't are often not academic. How can we as instructors emphasize the jubilation and innovation of our disciplines in order to find new paths for students, and for ourselves, and to resist the push for more content, more pressure, more rigid structures, and more imbalance? How can we foster *our own growth* under these conditions?

What would you do to keep your constituents informed, and what would you do to elicit feedback on important issues from your constituents?

I am accessible and quick to respond to messages. I am happy to provide in-person constituent office hours and interact in other spaces (Discord, Zoom, anonymous forms). I also enjoy using simple, reflective questions to encourage dialogue, so can host discussions using questions to elicit philosophical conversations about teaching and learning. For example: What is the most joyful moment of teaching you've had? Why does a learning objective *matter*? These are conversations I'd love to have across campus to bring to Academic Senate, to get to the root of our teaching joys.

Thanks for taking the time to read my statement and for considering our wonderful choices for Academic Senate - as I look at this next step in my time at MiraCosta, I hope to bring a sense of warmth and growth while not shying away from tough conversations. To quote Pascal the Otter once more, "Lots of folks try to take the easy road, but, maaan, that just means you've gotta deal with a lot of traffic."

Leigh Cotnoir

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Simply put, I am excited to run for Academic Senate. I have had the pleasure of working directly with many of you in varying capacities over the years, but for those of you who don't know me well, I'm happy to share some values and experiences I believe are core to who I am as a Media Arts & Technologies instructor, as a colleague, and as a person.

First, I am collaborative, conscientious, and a good listener. I genuinely want to hear everyone's perspectives, and I think critically about the academic and personal impacts of issues facing our students and how those impacts necessarily affect faculty decision-making and action. I also believe that with listening comes the responsibility of asking questions, actively seeking knowledge, and having a voice in shared governance. My efforts are always punctuated by the sincere desire to do good, to do no harm, and to know when those objectives might be at odds.

My years on Faculty Assembly Council have helped me truly understand how diverse our faculty body is. I know and respect that different areas face unique challenges in helping students succeed, whether faculty come from classroom or non-classroom experience, large departments or small ones, credit or non-credit, Career Education or more transfer-oriented programs. With that knowledge, I have a deep collegial trust that each of us is motivated by the common goal of how to best serve our students. I understand that representing all faculty means taking a balanced approach in analyzing and considering policies and implementations that might affect students and programs differently across varied disciplines and support systems. To that end, I believe inclusion is key to a cohesive faculty that solves problems together.

I am earnest and hard-working. I do not shy away from responsibility, and I welcome meaningful work. Some highlights of my institutional service and leadership over the years have been: Faculty Assembly Council (2016-present), FA Communications Chair (2019-2020), FA Media Communications Coordinator (2022-Sp2023), Strong Workforce Advisory Group (2018-present), MAT Department Chair (2020-22), TRC Chair (2021-present), PRC Chair (2020, 2023), Tenure Review Committees across different departments (2020-present), Tenure-Track Hiring Committees across different departments (2019-present), MAT Associate Faculty Hiring Committees (2015-2022), Classified position Hiring Committee (2021), the Arts/Media Building User Group Committee (2021-present), the Hatoff Tapestries Foundation Fund Committee (2020-21), and the Arts/Media Building Vendor Selection Committee (2020).

Beyond the classroom, my leadership roles and institutional service have provided me broad perspective on many of the work items and issues facing us, including but not limited to AB 928, AB 1111, dual enrollment, OER/ZTC, adequate technology access, student well-being, and prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion action in our practices and policies regarding both students and faculty. This broad perspective comes not only from my immediate experiences that affect my own department's functioning and students, but it comes from observing the challenges and needs of other departments in Department Chair meetings and retreats, years of participation in committees that consider and weigh funding proposals from all over the college, observing and deliberating on a very wide range issues affecting faculty working conditions, working with administrators to handle student issues as Department Chair, participating in hiring and evaluation processes for both full-time and part-time faculty, and consistently writing grants each year that fill technology funding gaps and/or Work-Based Learning opportunities to provide equitable experiences for DI populations. Furthermore, my previous FA outreach and

communication leadership role has well-prepared me for doing regular outreach and getting updates to constituent faculty. I would likely send a newsletter or a recorded update and allow people multiple methods of response to suit their communication styles, including in-person conversations. I believe in being flexible and adaptive. I look forward to the opportunity of working with and for faculty on these important topics, as well as other topics that will undoubtedly arise in the next two academic years.

In the meantime, I welcome any questions and am happy to chat. Please feel free to reach out and share your thoughts.

With good cheer,
Leigh

Jeff Murico

Dear Colleagues,

Before I introduce myself, I wanted to say how delighted I am to see so many of our colleagues accepting their nominations to serve on Academic Senate. I have no doubt that each of them is more than qualified to serve as senators and I am honored to be considered among them.

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Jeff Murico and I primarily teach religious studies at MiraCosta College. I was born and raised in Vista, California and I've lived in North County/San Diego most of my life. After attending the local public school district (K-12), I completed a B.A. in Religious Studies (2007) at San Diego State University, an M.A. in Religion (2010) at Claremont Graduate University, a second M.A. in Religion, Ethics, and Society (2014) at Claremont School of Theology, and a Ph.D. in Religion, Ethics and Politics (2018) at Claremont School of Theology, where my dissertation focused on philosophical and sociological theories of secularization. I teach a variety of courses here at MiraCosta, including World Religions (Relg101), Eastern Religions (Relg105), Philosophy of Religion (Phil221), and Religion in America (Relg103). When I am not teaching, you can find me alpine backpacking, reading fiction, travelling the world, or spending time at home with my wife Debbie, our daughter Jo (3 years old), and our dog Baxter (8 years old).

As I enter my 9th year as a full-time faculty member at MiraCosta College, I have decided to accept the nomination to serve as senator for Academic Senate. Below you will find my brief responses to the prompts provided, but please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any further questions. (Note: I am currently on sabbatical and will be out of the country until mid-May, so my correspondence may be slightly delayed)

Which committees have you served on and when?

I have had the pleasure of serving on five committees – DEqCC (5 years), Honors Advisory Committee (5 years), International Education Committee (2 years), TREC (1 year), and AMEMSA+ (8 years). During my time on these committees, I have organized conferences, led numerous trainings, and developed productive and positive relationships with faculty, staff, and administration across campus. Below is a summary of when I served on these committees.

- Tenure Review & Evaluation Committee: Aug 2023 - Current
- International Education Committee: Aug 2022 – Current
- Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, South Asian+ Committee: Aug 2017 - Current
- Diversity, Equity, Cultural Competency Committee: Aug 2016 – May 2021
- Honors Advisory Committee: Aug 2016 – May 2022

Which leadership roles have you held?

Almost immediately upon joining MiraCosta, I began taking on a variety of leadership roles, ranging from departmental responsibilities to college-wide initiatives. For example, before receiving tenure, I volunteered to serve as Honors Coordinator (Fall 2018) while Christopher Sleeper was on sabbatical. In this role, I hired, managed, and worked alongside student “navigators,” organized the OMNI conference, led multiple field trips to visit local universities, and conducted all of our Honors Advisory Committee meetings.

Once I received tenure, I served as chair of the philosophy and religious studies department and successfully hired, mentored, and evaluated new associate faculty members in both philosophy and religious studies. Because I am the only full-time religious studies instructor, I have taken on the responsibility of completing program review for my discipline, I authored a new course (Relg103 – Religion in America), and chaired my colleague Isabel Luengo's PRC.

Some of you may recognize my name from the three years I served as the Social and Behavioral Sciences Instructional Faculty Liaison for the Academic & Career Pathways initiative. In this role, I organized and led campus events to engage students in career exploration with discipline experts, counselors, and student peers. I also had the opportunity to join a cohort of fellow MiraCostans, including Sunny Cooke, Alketa Wojcik, Jim Julius, and others to attend the 2020 DREAM Conference in Washington D.C. We attended workshops all week and convened with others to assess and reflect upon our college's involvement with the program. Similarly, I joined Dr. Cooke, Leila Safaralian, Zhenya Lindstrom, and others at the California Guided Pathways 2.0 Institute in Spring 2023 where we attended conference meetings and worked collaboratively to further implement and institutionalize our Guided Pathways work.

What do you think are the five most pressing issues facing the Academic Senate today, and how has your work over the past three to five years shown your commitment to these issues?

The implementation of Guided Pathways remains a crucial initiative to enhance student success and streamline academic journeys. My leadership roles related to Guided Pathways (see above) have given me greater insight to these developments and I am eager to share my perspective and experience. Our college is actively adjusting to the implementation of SB 1705, which is anticipated to have a significant impact. My experience as department chair (scheduling, writing curriculum, etc.), my time on DEqCC, and the work I have done related to Guided Pathways have prepared me for the complexity of these developments. I look forward to productively working with our faculty and administration while we undergo these significant changes. Additionally, the emergence of artificial intelligence, (ChatGPT, e.g.) require us to rethink numerous institutional presumptions related to teaching and learning. I have actively participated in these discussions, both internally within my department and externally as a college. As we navigate these evolving landscapes, open dialogue and collaboration will be essential in shaping our educational strategies for the future and I am committed to ensuring an inclusive and participatory environment where all voices are heard and valued.

What would you do to keep your constituents informed, and what would you do to elicit feedback on important issues from your constituents?

My aim in assuming this Senator role is to ensure you are kept abreast of important issues and inquiries confronting the Senate. Accordingly, I will regularly provide Senate agendas (via email) and, when applicable, succinct summaries of meeting discussions. Most importantly, my intent is to best represent all of your voices and perspectives.

Ghada Osman

It is my honor to be considered for a Senator position for this cycle. In my roles as a faculty member, mental health counselor, clinical supervisor, and team co-leader, I work closely with a multitude of faculty, staff, and classified administrators across various departments on a daily basis, physically at both the Oceanside Barnard and San Elijo campuses, and with both credit and non-credit students. I have served on TREC since Fall 2022, on PDP since Fall 2023, on AAC between Fall 2021 and Spring 2023, and on numerous smaller department, division, and cross-department committees. In addition to my current position that I have held in an interim capacity since January 2019 and permanently since July 2020, I have held various part-time roles at the College for most of the decade before that, have 15 years of experience as tenured classroom faculty at San Diego State University where I served as Department Chair and on the University Senate, and am myself a community college alum.

I believe that the five most pressing issues facing the Senate are:

- 1) building community across the College for students, faculty, and staff, especially in this era of crucial shifts including the increased centrality of online work, the burgeoning role of AI, growing mental health needs, and the complex repercussions of almost two years of solely remote work;
- 2) expanding supports for student success that include greater access to low-cost/ no-cost options and grants, and reimagining support to serve all students including those who may not be as well-served by more typical methods;
- 3) translating the concepts of a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion into actions that truly bridge equity gaps, via both faculty's continuous education and critical self-examination as well as through concrete actions on the part of faculty, departments, and the College;
- 4) improving students' learning experiences both through current District-level efforts to revamp the calendar and scheduling processes, as well as via continued thoughtful exploration of innovative, student-centered practices at the individual and department levels;
- 5) envisioning more holistic development of students' experiences beyond information and skill acquisition and into accessible opportunities for the multi-faceted growth, development, and empowerment of the whole person.

My work in the last 3-5 years has very much focused on these priorities, from emphasizing work that centers student wellbeing and empowerment, to strengthening partnerships that build community and growth opportunities for students both on and off-campus, to facilitating in-depth discussions and actions aimed at reducing equity gaps within my department and beyond.

I would keep constituents informed and elicit feedback through the excellent methods devised by my predecessors in the role that have included regular email updates and Google poll forms, and would also explore the benefit of sending topic-focused updates that summarize developments on a specific issue of concern over a period of time.

Kris Peck

Which committees have you served on and when?

Academic Affairs 2022-Current

Committee of Exceptions 2019-2022

Which leadership roles have you held?

I have not held any "leadership roles" at the college.

What do you think are the five most pressing issues facing the Academic Senate today, and how has your work over the past three to five years shown your commitment to these issues?

- **Student Equity:** I work in a variety of roles, including an instructor, counselor, and disabilities specialist, which provides me with a diverse range of perspectives and experience. This multifaceted experience allows me to approach challenges and situations from different angles. I understand the academic, emotional, and accessibility needs of students, viewing them through the lens of both instruction and counseling.
- **AI:** I have engaged recently with the following resources to gain a greater understanding of the evolving role and impact AI is having in higher education: Duke University; Artificial Intelligence and Assignment Design (Jan.2024); Transforming Education: The Rise of AI in California Community Colleges; Academic Senate for California Community Colleges
- **Class Scheduling:** As a member of the Academic Affairs Committee over the past few years, the issue of the academic schedule has been a critical part of our many discussions.
- **Student Retention:** Within the scope of counseling, this is a topic of frequent discussion. In SAS we have developed a summer workshop to address issues that traditionally impacted student retention. I have contributed to the development of this workshop and facilitated this workshop.
- **Academic Calendar:** As a member of Academic Affairs Committee I have been part of many discussions about the need to examine our current calendaring system and work as an institution to develop a calendar that addresses all stakeholders' needs.

What would you do to keep your constituents informed, and what would you do to elicit feedback on important issues from your constituents?

I regularly engage with the Counseling Faculty via email and scheduled weekly and/or monthly meetings. I will utilize these opportunities to bring information to the Counseling Faculty and elicit feedback.

Afifa Zaman

Dear Colleagues,

I'm Afifa Zaman (pronouns: she/her/hers), a dedicated and experienced faculty member in the Academic Counseling department. I have had the immense privilege of serving at MiraCosta College for over 12 years and as a full-time faculty member for the past 8 years. I'm honored at the prospect of continuing my service to students and the college through academic senatorship and hopeful that my knowledge, skills, and experience will contribute to the collaborative and student-centered work of the Academic Senate.

Many years ago, my family resettled in Oceanside as refugees seeking safety and a better life. I consider North County to be my home and I'm passionate about contributing to our community through educational opportunities. I believe in the powerful mission of our college and in implementing educational practices and policies that further student equity and success. In my role as an academic counselor, I provide precise and culturally informed academic, career, and personal counseling to support students as they navigate college. As a SSSP counselor, I provide tailored services for SSSP populations, including students experiencing academic difficulties and first-time college students, as well as many others who benefit from educational guidance to achieve their goals. I also have experience in instruction, having taught Coun 100 (College and Career Success) and Coun 105 (Transfer Success).

I am currently completing a Doctorate of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership with a concentration in Educational Psychology at the University of Southern California (USC). I am excited to put my learnings about equitable educational research and policy into practice. I am confident that I, or any of my esteemed colleagues who are nominated for Academic Senate, will have a positive impact.

Which committees have you served on and when?

I have had the opportunity to serve on a number of committees during my time at MiraCosta as listed below. I have also served on a number of subcommittees and task forces within the Student Services Division and Counseling Department contributing to internship programs, probation support services, cross-departmental initiatives, and more.

- AMEMSA+ Committee (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian) (2017-Present)
- San Elijo Advisory Group (Fall 2022)
- Diversity, Equity, and Cultural Competency Committee (DEqCC) for three years (2018-2021).
- EOPS Advisory Committee (2018-2019)

Which leadership roles have you held?

Over the past eight years as a full-time faculty member, I have served in a number of leadership roles both in and out of my department. For six years, I served as chair of AMEMSA+ (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian), leading a diverse group of faculty, students, and staff that engage in awareness efforts and community-building to foster an inclusive campus. I also served as a counseling lead for probation services, collaborating with a variety of departments to provide support for students experiencing academic difficulties. I have also served as a co-coordinator for the MiraCosta College General Counseling Faculty Internship

program (2018-2020). In this capacity, I helped to develop and implement an internship program to recruit and train counseling interns from historically marginalized communities. Outside of MiraCosta, I have also had the opportunity to engage in statewide work by participating in the Academic Senate Faculty Leadership Institute (FELA), including attending the Academic Senate Faculty Leadership Institute in 2022. In this program, I received mentorship and specialized leadership coaching to prepare me for faculty leadership. I also was able to co-author an Academic Senate Rostrum in November 2022.

What do you think are the five most pressing issues facing the Academic Senate today, and how has your work over the past three to five years shown your commitment to these issues?

Higher education is a quickly changing landscape with many pressing issues present for the Academic Senate and college as a whole. Some topics that I think are especially relevant are listed below, as well as a description of how my work over the past years shows both commitment and preparedness.

- Ongoing curricular changes such as the implementation of the California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC).
- Guided Pathways and institutional redesign efforts
- Scheduling and overall strengthening student enrollment
- Continued efforts to actualize student equity and close long-standing gaps in educational access and attainment
- Professional Learning

Through the course of my career and ongoing professional learning, I am committed to learning and supporting student equity and a racially and socially just educational environment. I also believe that my knowledge, experience, and perspective as an academic counselor can provide important insight into student impacts relating to academic planning and more that will benefit the Academic Senate as these topics and more are broached. In addition, pursuing an Ed.D. has helped to prepare me to better understand educational research, policy, and practice.

What would you do to keep your constituents informed, and what would you do to elicit feedback on important issues from your constituents?

In serving as an academic senator, ensuring that the voices of my constituent colleagues are heard would be of the utmost importance to me. In order to stay connected with constituents, I would maintain consistent, open, and active communication. This would include proactively sharing information and garnering feedback on critical topics relevant to the Senate and my constituent colleagues. I would be responsive over email and available to meet with constituents at their request. I would put effort into connecting with constituents I am not yet familiar with and providing opportunities for them to get to know me as well.