

**COLUMBIA COLLEGE**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
SURROUNDING FORMING COMMITTEES**

<b>NOTE:</b>	<b>Clarification of Terms</b>
<b>Must; Shall; Will:</b>	These words or phrases indicate actions or activities that are <i>essential</i> or <i>mandatory</i> .
<b>Should:</b>	This word implies that it is highly desirable to perform certain actions or activities, but not essential or mandatory.
<b>May or Could; Can:</b>	These words imply freedom or liberty to follow an alternative to the action or activity being presented in a document.

**RATIONALE FOR COMMITTEES**

Perhaps one of the most important impetus of an organization is capturing allegiance - committing the staff to the institution. Successful organizations in business and education have found that involving people in committee work, which in turn influences the decisions made by the organization, is one of the best ways of developing commitment to the institution. Commitment is solidified by encouraging participation, ensuring opportunity for individual initiative, and building a sense of common purpose through a strategic mission. People tend to feel committed to any decision in proportion to the extent to which they have participated in making a decision.

Columbia College has a unique structure, in that programs are diverse in their client focus, program structure, funding, and actual program content. It is obvious that open, honest and effective communication within the programs, and with the president, is essential to their continued success. Committee work, on the other hand, can be viewed as a vehicle for horizontal communication between staff. Committee work can involve staff communication, regardless of program function. Committees can be a means of coordinating and integrating diverse organizational functions. They are another avenue in an organization that espouses participatory management.

**WHAT IS A COMMITTEE**

A committee, at Columbia, is comprised of one or more people who have joined together to work on task(s) or assignment(s).

**TYPES OF COMMITTEES**

There are two types of committees at Columbia. These are standing committees and special committees. Standing committees are formed to meet on an ongoing basis to address ongoing needs in select areas. Examples of ongoing committees include the Social Committee and the President's Academic Advisory Committee. These committees meet periodically to discuss issues or concerns that relate to the smooth operations in their respective areas.

Special committees are formed to address specific challenges or problems faced by various members or projects within the organization or issues affecting the organization as a whole. Examples of special committees include the Open House Committee and the Friday P.M. Social Review Committee. Special committees normally meet to deal with one issue or item and is disbanded once resolutions, decisions, or recommendations are made.

**STRIKING COMMITTEES**

There are several reasons why a committee may be struck. Any one or a combination of these may provide sufficient reason to establish a committee.

A committee may be established when an issue, concern (problem) or project is identified that requires more time to perform research, investigation, review and/or discussion. A committee may be struck when it is felt that it would be a more efficient use of manpower to have a small group of people investigate and review an issue or project rather than a larger group. A committee may be struck when it is felt that a broader representation of personnel or projects needs to be involved in finding resolution to a problem or in dealing with a project/matter.

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## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Due to the size of workload that each staff member carries it is important to keep committee size as small as possible, yet representative. In some cases it may be possible to establish a committee consisting of one member.

Given these statements, it is still important to recognize that the committee should consist of a fair and balanced representation of staff who wish to serve or who are directly involved and/or impacted on the committee. Special circumstances may warrant inclusion of outside persons.

The committee should represent the various personnel/projects that may be most affected by a recommendation and eventual decision. The committee should also accept the divergent views of those who may want to respond to an issue/problem/project. It is quite understandable that certain programs or personnel will not have the time to commit to a committee and therefore the committee must accept as part of its duty to do its best to represent the views of all staff or programs as it proceeds.

## PRIORITIZING NEEDS

Every staff member must recognize that there are only so many hours in the day and week to devote to work related activities, and he or she must also prioritize their time according to student, program, department, staff and other company related commitments. This means there are only so many hours in a week left to devote to committee work. A rule of thumb may be one to three work hours per week for special committee meetings and special committee related work. With this in mind, those who are establishing committees need to be reminded from time to time of the limited availability of staff.

With a limited number of staff members, this means that Columbia can only support a limited number of active committees at one time. It is important that senior staff are aware of the number of committees that are operating and do not establish new committees until old ones have concluded their work. This may mean that a priority list may need to be established of all committees needing to be formed, and that the list may need to be re-prioritized before each new committee is struck.

## COMMITTEE AUTHORITY

Committee authority is limited to the power<sup>1</sup> placed on it by its sponsor's body<sup>2</sup>. Committees are normally recognized as advisory bodies set up to provide input in specific or general areas. For example, the President's Academic Advisory Committee was established by the President, to create a forum to discuss areas of common concern. Through communication, co-operation and collaboration, it was anticipated that this body could address issues related to the every day and ongoing running of Columbia as well as advise the President on matters related to the development of philosophy, policy, principles, procedures, planning and development of Columbia.

<sup>1</sup> The power of a sponsoring body is directly related to it by the president. The limit of its power may be described in a contract of employment or a position description or by other documents that have been prepared or approved by the President.

<sup>2</sup> A sponsoring body is an individual or group. It may be the president or a project manager. It may be a program team or it may be an individual staff member. A sponsoring body could be one committee which decides to strike another which then acts as a special committee.

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From time to time, committee members may become uncertain about their role, responsibility, accountability, power, limitations, or extent of their authority. This is natural since the sponsoring body may not have anticipated all the changes that would occur inside the organization, nor forces that would appear outside the organization. These items of concern need to be identified and communicated to the sponsoring body so that direction may be provided.

## COMMITTEE MANDATE

In order to ensure an efficient and effective operation each committee should be formed under specific directions that are stated in writing. These directions should include:

1. Assess the situation.
2. Identify the problem/issue or project to focus on.
3. Define the goal(s).
4. Selection of chairperson.
5. Identify committee member(s). Numbers 4 and 5 may be reversed in order.
6. Establish meeting date, time, and place.
7. Agreeing on the first interim report date and/or final report date.
8. Identify any special authority, limitations or directions the committee should be conscious of as they proceed.
9. Identify whom the committee should report to when it has completed part or all of its task.

## ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBER

It is the responsibility of the Chairperson to provide a leadership role for a committee. These responsibilities may be performed directly or delegated to other members.

### *This includes:*

1. To develop a proposed time line for a committee to be reviewed and agreed upon at the first meeting.
2. To gather and distribute any pertinent information prior to each meeting.
3. To develop an agenda for a meeting(s) and distribute it to committee members.
4. To review the purpose of the committee and prepare to clarify any confusion regarding it, with the sponsoring body.
5. To keep it focused and on task as it works its way through the decision making process.
6. To be fair, democratic, open, supportive, and a good listener and speaker at each meeting. While attempting to reach consensus on items of discussion to realize that majority votes may be required from time to time.
7. To prepare reports (interim or final) to the sponsoring body so as to make it clear what the findings and recommendations of the committee are.
8. To remember that speed of response is very important but even more important is the quality of the result.
9. Prepare minutes from each meeting, if required, and distribute them to fellow members or other designates within 48 hours of the meeting.

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**It is the responsibility of all committee members to:**

1. Be prepared as much as possible for each meeting.
2. Focus on the discussion at hand and contribute what you view as relevant information.
3. Try to understand others' views and show respect for each person's opinion.
4. Use discretion and diplomacy when disagreeing with other members by focusing on what they are saying, not who they are.
5. Be prepared to gather other information, materials, documents, articles and/or opinions of other personnel. Objectivity is most essential.
6. Be prepared to do homework related to each meeting.
7. Recognize that giving, supporting, understanding, and compromising are all essential elements in any group process.
8. Try to remain focused on the task at hand, even though other issues may continue to surface. These issues could be recommended for future committees or committee work.

**SOLVING PROBLEMS/ISSUES**

When faced with problems/issues a sponsoring group or committee has two choices to make. It can either take the time to solve it or strike a special committee. It is advised that a time assessment be made. If it assesses that the problem or issue will take longer than thirty to forty-five minutes to solve, then, based on the degree of urgency, it should form a special committee. Once this is determined, it needs to give the committee some very clear directions.

The document titled "Process in Problem Solving" can be used by the sponsoring body or committee to proceed through the problem solving steps on their own or to establish a special committee. Items A1 to A4 have been developed to assist in clarifying responsibilities. It is important that these items be clearly described in writing and agreed to by all members of the sponsoring body or committee before work commences that follows either alternative.

If the special committee's alternative is chosen it should be advised to proceed through items B1 to B5 in the document. It is understandable that it may need to return to the sponsoring body or committee from time to time for clarification or direction or to report on progress. Once this group has delivered its final report and/or recommendation(s) its work will be completed and its members should be thanked and the committee dissolved.

It is then up to the sponsoring body to review the report, consider the recommendation (Item B5) and determine what its position on the issue (project) will be.

Its next step, if it decides to proceed, would be to make a presentation and recommendation(s) to the President (Item C1). The President may agree, modify, alter or disagree with the sponsoring body or committee and may choose to accept or challenge the decision. If the committee accepts the President response, and it was supporting/positive, then the committee should proceed with items C2 to C4.

If the committee wishes to challenge the President it would need to sit down and, through discussion, attempt to change his mind or position.

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