



FY 23 - 05 (submitted via email 2/13/2023)

***DRAFT (for Review/Comment)***

## **SHARED GOVERNANCE COUNCIL (SGC)**

### **RECOMMENDATION FORM**

Please submit to: [Presidents-Office@stcc.edu](mailto:Presidents-Office@stcc.edu)

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***“Formally endorsed by Trustees, the Shared Governance Council (SGC) will serve as a high level advisory body to the STCC President on the recommendations developed by the College community that are then submitted to the Board of Trustees. The body will operate on a consensus mode rather than voting. The President will present to the Board of Trustees recommendations via consensus by the SGC with his/hers/their view as to what action the Trustees should take.”***

Additional Detail/ ACCT Consultant Report (June 2022):

*“Proposals may come to the SGC from any constituent group via written request.” “The SGC considers fiscal, union, student, administrative impact of the proposal.”*

*“The President decides to accept, modify or reject the proposal if it is an administrative procedural matter; the President decides to recommend to the Board of Trustees any policy recommendation accompanying it with a statement of support or concern.”*

This form is to be used for generating recommendations for shared governance consideration that potentially lead to changes in policy and/or practice-protocols. For an overview of topics to be considered by the STCC Shared Governance Council, please confer with your appropriate representative. The comprehensive consultant report prepared for the college (June 2022) is readily available, and a public-facing website is currently in development that will ensure information, and the availability of agendas, minutes, and decision/actions.



*DRAFT (for Review/Comment)*

**I: Proposed Recommendation**

[The following section is to be completed by the body bringing forward the recommendation] **Name of Entity Making Recommendation: AUC**

a. Nature of the Recommendation:

\_\_\_\_\_ Academic

\_\_\_\_\_ Student Success/Systems of Operation

\_\_\_\_\_ Budget/Fiscal

\_\_\_\_\_ Health-Safety-Security (Students, Employees, Campus)

\_\_\_\_\_ Technology/Innovation

\_\_\_\_\_ Facilities

  x   Other: \_\_\_\_\_SGC Process\_\_\_\_\_

b. Describe current policy/ protocol/ challenge:

There is no protocol or policy for consensus in the SGC meetings. It has been stated that the President wishes to not be prescriptive about consensus. President Cook asked for AUC to prepare a proposal.

c. Describe recommended policy/protocol change, and the benefit/impact: see attached

d. Describe background and rational for how the recommendation was generated (involvement of staff-faculty-students-governance bodies), include any supporting data, reports, survey results, research, et al.: see attached

**Date submitted: 02 February 2023**



*DRAFT (for Review/Comment)*

**II: Recommendation Review**

Shared Governance Council Review and Consideration (Date):

Generated Consensus (minutes made available):

Next Steps (as needed):

**III: Presidential Action**

Decision on the Recommendation:

Rationale/Summary:

Date of Presentation to STCC Trustees:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature) (Date)

## **Consensus Proposal From AUC:**

### **Section c-Describe recommended policy/protocol change and the benefit/impact:**

**First as a note, the document shared by Dr. Marti (the consultant who led our Shared Governance discussions), is attached. This document details the principles of consensus decision making as being: Inclusive, participatory, collaborative, agreement speaking, and cooperative.**

**We feel that consensus will be used at two times during the SGC process.**

**Consensus Time 1: When proposals are first submitted to the SGC they are brought to the entire committee from any of the individual members (AUC, MCCC, AFSCME, Students, Cabinet). Reviewing and reading the initial proposal together will allow the committee to ensure that no member's individual rights or contracts are overlooked. The SGC may notice that the proposal may contradict management's rights if considered by the college. Similarly, the SGC may note that the proposal impacts one of the Union contracts. In these situations, this discussion will allow the committee to speak openly and candidly about the way in which the proposal (if improved) could move forward.**

**For example, a proposal is brought to the SGC from students regarding the need for additional parking *attendants*. This is meant to enhance security and perhaps reduce a recent increase in campus crime. During consensus Time 1, management may call attention to the personnel issue surrounding hiring parking attendants, budgetary**

concerns resulting, etc. Therefore, the proposal may still move forward but with a less focused emphasis on the attendant *position* and more focused on calling attention to enhanced security in parking lots and the ability for the college to respond to that need. This relates to the “Test for Consensus” then “Modification to Proposal” pathway in the consensus flow chart.

This Consensus Time 1 allows all members of the SGC to feel comfortable in bringing issues (no matter how big or small) to the SGC; and for these matters to be considered and advanced in the method that relates to how resources are initiated and considered, on our campus. Therefore, proposals will ONLY move forward to the AUC for the campus voice when there are no other obstacles or clarifying considerations. In the document provided by Dr. Marti, it is mentioned that “each individual’s preferences should be voices so that the group can incorporate all concerns into an emerging proposal” but that individual preferences should not impede the progress of the group. He also states, “The unions review the recommendations to determine if there is any impingement on the jurisdiction established by the collective bargaining agreements. The students, through its elected governing body (SGA) determine how the recommendations affect their interests. The Cabinet members, as staff to the President, determine the fiscal or procedural feasibility of the recommendations. “ (page 14)

**Consensus Time 2:** When reviews are done of proposals by all parties, an emphasis should be placed to discuss these findings, as equals at the SGC table. This allows all parties to provide input to the SGC from their constituents, with the sole impetus of being productive within

**the SGC to move proposals forward, as quickly and efficiently as possible. During this discussion, some contingencies may occur from differing entities. This will allow those contingencies to be documented so that when management or Trustees make their final decisions, they can consider those as well. Every voice should be as important as the other. Student voice equal to faculty, equal to staff, equal to Cabinet; for discussion of proposal findings.**

**Note again, the document regarding consensus, shared by the consultant who led our Shared Governance discussions. In this document the author speaks about the test for consensus. After findings are discussed and noted in the minutes, the convenor should ask, “Is this proposal something the parties you represent can live with?”**

**A yes response from at least 80% should be required (5 cabinet members and 5 college community representatives).**

**An opportunity for anyone who would vote no, to “stand aside with comment” should be allowed. These individuals could make a distinct statement, i.e., “The AUC stands aside from this vote with the distinction that they have a strong opinion that security cameras should be installed in all parking lots and roadways to be able to document any crimes that take place and this proposal does not include that.” Stand aside votes would then be considered yes votes with that documentation.**

**In very rare cases, SGC members would have the ability to block completely with a NO vote. By following the details in the document provided by Dr. Marti; this would be done in very extreme cases that relate to two or more parties feeling strongly about an issue, this would also require at least one of the individual blockers to have alternative solutions or a plan to generate an alternate process, and finally limiting that blocking vote to one time per semester. Under**

**these situations, still the goal is not merely to veto but instead to encourage collaboration until the “block” is removed. The minimum goal would be that the individual(s) are willing to “stand aside with comment.” It is noteworthy, that since it takes a minimum of two people to “block,” it only takes one of those two people to “stand aside” to remove the block.**

**The development of a conjoined mission for the SGC may also assist to continually the focus the group on the overall goal which is towards progress and effectively moving well-developed proposals forward. Neither consensus testing and modification, nor blocking should be considered methods to impede the process but instead to create an environment of “rigorous search for full agreement before finalizing decisions.”**

**Section d: Prepared by C. Atwater with literature from Shared Governance consultant Dr. Marti.**

**Provided to AUC for consensus on 2-2-23**

**ATTACHED DOCUMENT FROM Dr. Marti**

# The Basics of Consensus Decision Making

By Tim Hartnett, PhD

<http://www.groupfacilitation.net>

## The Definition of Consensus

Consensus is defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as "general agreement" or "the judgment arrived at by most of those concerned."

## The Principles of Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision making is a process used by groups seeking to generate widespread levels of participation and agreement. There are variations among different groups regarding the degree of agreement necessary to finalize a group decision. The process of group deliberation, however, has many common elements that are definitive of consensus decision making. These include:

- **Inclusive:** As many stakeholders as possible are involved in group discussions.
- **Participatory:** All participants are allowed a chance to contribute to the discussion.
- **Collaborative:** The group constructs proposals with input from all interested group members. Any individual authorship of a proposal is subsumed as the group modifies it to include the concerns of all group members.
- **Agreement Seeking:** The goal is to generate as much agreement as possible. Regardless of how much agreement is required to finalize a decision, a group using a consensus process makes a concerted attempt to reach full agreement.
- **Cooperative:** Participants are encouraged to keep the good of the whole group in mind. Each individual's preferences should be voiced so that the group can incorporate all concerns into an emerging proposal. Individual preferences should not, however, obstructively impede the progress of the group.

## An Alternative to Common Decision Making Practices

Consensus decision making is an alternative to commonly practiced non-collaborative decision making processes. Robert's Rule of Order, for instance, is a process used by many organizations. The goal of Robert's Rules is to structure the debate and passage of proposals that win approval through majority vote. This process does not emphasize the goal of full agreement. Nor does it foster whole group collaboration and the inclusion of minority concerns in resulting proposals. Critics of Robert's Rules believe that the process can involve adversarial debate and the formation of competing factions. These dynamics may harm group member relationships and undermine the ability of a group to cooperatively implement a contentious decision.



Consensus decision making is also an alternative to “top-down” decision making, commonly practiced in hierarchical groups. Top-down decision making occurs when leaders of a group make decisions in a way that does not include the participation of all interested stakeholders. The leaders may (or may not) gather input, but they do not open the deliberation process to the whole group. Proposals are not collaboratively developed, and full agreement is not a primary objective. Critics of top-down decision making believe the process fosters incidence of either complacency or rebellion among disempowered group members. Additionally, the resulting decisions may overlook important concerns of those directly affected. Poor group relationship dynamics and decision implementation problems may result.

Consensus decision making addresses the problems of both Robert’s Rules of Order and top-down models. The goals of the consensus process include:

- **Better Decisions:** Through including the input of all stakeholders the resulting proposals can best address all potential concerns.
- **Better Implementation:** A process that includes and respects all parties, and generates as much agreement as possible sets the stage for greater cooperation in implementing the resulting decisions.
- **Better Group Relationships:** A cooperative, collaborative group atmosphere fosters greater group cohesion and interpersonal connection.

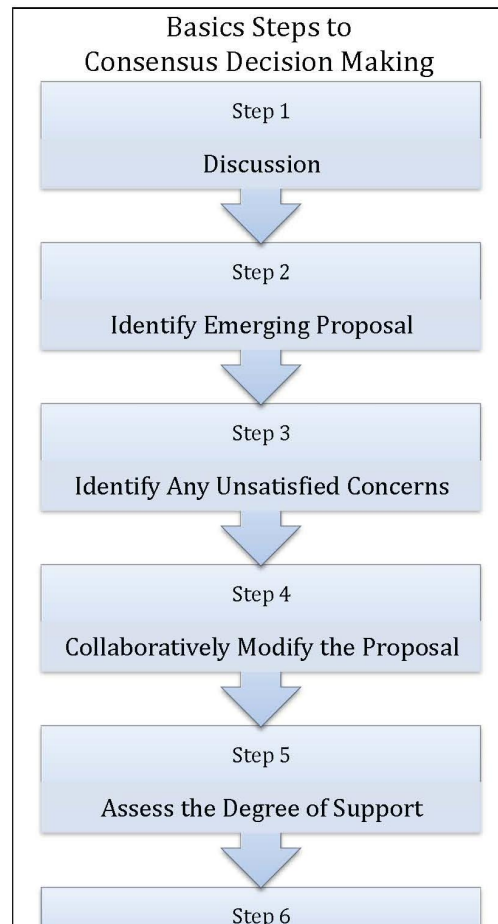
### The Process of Consensus Decision Making

There are multiple stepwise models of how to make decisions by consensus. They vary in the amount of detail the steps describe. They also vary depending on how decisions are finalized. The basic model involves collaboratively generating a proposal, identifying unsatisfied concerns, and then modifying the proposal to generate as much agreement as possible.

### Finalizing a Decision

The level of agreement necessary to finalize a decision is known as a *decision rule*. The range of possible decision rules varies within the following range:

- Unanimous agreement
- Unanimity minus one vote
- Unanimity minus two votes
- Super majority thresholds (90%, 80%, 75%, two-thirds, and 60% are common).
- Simple majority



- Executive committee decides
- Person-in-charge decides

Some groups require unanimous consent (*unanimity*) to approve group decisions. If any participant objects, he can *block consensus* according to the guidelines described below. These groups use the term *consensus* to denote both the discussion process and the decision rule. Other groups use a consensus process to generate as much agreement as possible, but allow decisions to be finalized with a decision rule that does not require unanimity.

### Consensus Blocking

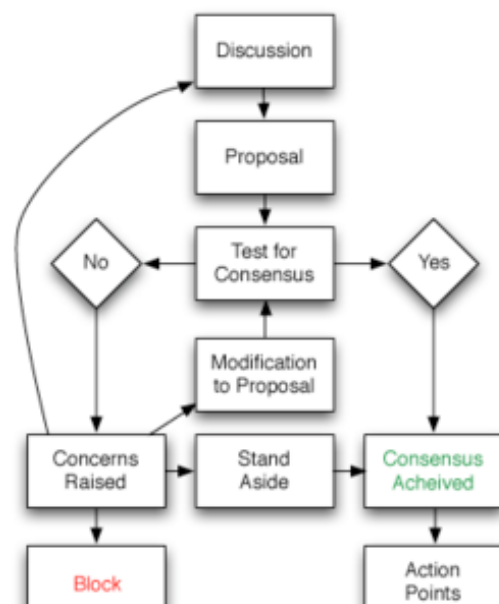
Groups that require unanimity allow individual participants the option of blocking a group decision. This provision motivates a group to make sure that all group members consent to any new proposal before it is adopted. Proper guidelines for the use of this option, however, are important. The ethics of consensus decision making encourage participants to place the good of the whole group above their own individual preferences. When there is potential for a group decision to be blocked, both the group and any dissenters in the group are encouraged to collaborate until agreement can be reached. Simply vetoing a decision is not considered a responsible use of consensus blocking. Some common guidelines for the use of consensus blocking include:

- Limiting the option to block consensus to issues that are fundamental to the group’s mission or potentially disastrous to the group.
- Providing an option for those who do not support a proposal to “stand aside” rather than block.
- Requiring two or more people to block for a proposal to be put aside.
- Require the blocking party to supply an alternative proposal or a process for generating one.
- Limiting each person’s option to block consensus to a handful of times in one’s life.

A basic outline of consensus decision making that allows consensus blocking is outlined in this flow chart.

### Agreement vs. Consent

Unanimity is achieved when the full group *consents* to a decision. Giving consent does not necessarily mean that the proposal being considered is one’s first choice. Group members can vote their consent to a proposal because they choose to cooperate with the direction of the group, rather than insist on their personal preference. Sometimes the vote on a proposal is framed,



“Is this proposal something you can live with?” This relaxed threshold for a *yes* vote can help make unanimity more easily achievable. Alternatively, a group member can choose to *stand aside*. Standing aside communicates that while a participant does not necessarily support a group decision, he does not wish to block it.

### **Debate Over Decision Rules**

Critics of consensus blocking object to empowering individuals to block otherwise popular proposals. They believe this can result in a group experience of widespread disagreement, the opposite of a consensus process’s primary goal. Further, they believe group decision making may become stagnated by the high threshold of unanimity. Important decisions may take too long to make, or the status quo may become virtually impossible to change. The resulting tension may undermine group functionality and harm relationships between group members.

Defenders of consensus blocking believe that decision rules short of unanimity do not ensure a rigorous search for full agreement before finalizing decisions. They value the commitment to reaching unanimity and the full collaborative effort this goal requires. They believe that under the right conditions unanimous consent is achievable and the process of getting there strengthens group relationships.

### **Conditions that Favor Unanimity**

The goals of requiring unanimity are only fully realized when a group is successful in reaching it. Thus, it is important to consider what conditions make full agreement more likely. Here are some of the most important factors that improve the chances of successfully reaching unanimity:

- Small group size
- Clear common purpose
- High levels of trust
- Participants well trained in consensus process
- Participants willing to put the best interest of the group before their own
- Participants willing to spend sufficient time in meetings
- Skillful facilitation and agenda preparation

### **Using Other Decisions Rules with a Consensus Process**

Many groups use a consensus decision making process with non-unanimous decision rules. The consensus process can help prevent problems associated with Robert’s Rules of Order or top-down decision making. This allows majority rule or hierarchical organizations to benefit from the collaborative efforts of the whole group and the resulting joint ownership of final proposals. For instance, a small business owner may convene a consensus decision making discussion among her staff to generate a proposal for changes to the business. After the proposal is developed, however, the business owner may retain the authority to accept or reject it.

The benefits of consensus decision making are lost, however, if the final decision is made without regard to the efforts of the whole group. When group leaders or majority factions reject proposals that have been developed with widespread agreement of a group, the goals of consensus decision making will not be realized.

### **More Elaborate Models of Consensus Decision Making**

As the field of group facilitation has evolved, more detailed models of consensus decision making have been developed. One example is the CODM model (consensus-oriented decision making). Newer models focus on the process of group collaboration, increasing understanding within the field of how collaboration can be best fostered and what facilitation techniques can promote it.

### **Origins of Consensus Decision Making**

Historical examples of consensus decision making include the Iroquois Confederacy Grand Council, or Haudenosaunee, who finalized decisions with a 75% majority. Modern usage is often traced to the Quakers, or Religious Society of Friends, who practice unanimity. Activists groups, intentional communities, collective businesses have all developed and refined the process. Professional group facilitators now use the process in a large variety of settings, further developing the model and its effective application.



<http://www.groupfacilitation.net>