**Consensus decision-making** is a group decision-making process in which group members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole.

* May be defined professionally as an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the "favorite" of each individual.
* It has its origin in the Latin word *cōnsēnsus* (agreement), which is from *cōnsentiō* meaning literally *feel together*.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making#cite_note-1)
* It is used to describe both the decision and the process of reaching a decision.
* The process of deliberating and finalizing a decision, and the social, economic, legal, environmental and political effects of applying this process.

What might that look like to us?

* Sharing responsibility equally amongst all of us
* Regular meetings to discussion departmental decisions
  + Maintain values and community agreements defined by the group
  + Ensure schedule in OneDrive Folder is accurate as well as personal calendars
  + Separate from social hour lunches or other non-work times
* Making informed decisions about reports, budget, hiring, new/updated curriculum
  + Working on annual reporting together
    - Need to request a schedule for deadlines from the VPI so we can plan meetings ahead of time
    - Deadline leads to maintain structure for paperwork
      * Everyone in the group is equally responsible for the work. The group must decide how to divide up tasks. Everyone will need to understand the full content of the report when it is complete.
      * Lead will be responsible for submitting the final product. This person is NOT more responsible than anyone else for the content of the report, simply for turning it in on time.
      * There shall be no complaints after the report is turned in. Any issues must be raised well before the due date. The group can assist in working out problems that arise. Request a meeting or agenda item for help.
  + Discussion and approval a yearly budget with breakdown by area
    - Update of spending/planning at each meeting
      * Specifically – how much we have spent per area, what are the expected expenditures for the rest of the semester per area, what are ideas for any extra funds (Gen Bio, A&P, Micro, Bioman)
        + Template for reporting provided
      * Reported by Linghui and Gary at meeting (with amounts by area)
    - Determine a timeline for overall budget discussion and decision
      * Fall expenditures may affect Spring planning
        + End of semester summary for early planning
      * Approval of yearly budget request (with more detail than the dean

requests) to be reviewed, discussed and decided upon

* + - * + Review budget for Fall of next year in March
  + Discussion and approving semester schedules including time/staff changes and modifications
    - Make changes to the excel spreadsheet at the meeting
    - Timelines are often quick, so may need special meeting called
  + Discussion and approval of class additions and changes to schedule
    - Need person in META for approval, but should be agreed upon by group
    - Presentation of changes to COR or new ideas to group by author
    - Group discusses impact, etc.
  + Concerns about hiring, pre-req waivers, classroom issues, part-time evals, SLOs
    - Lead faculty for each area will handle paperwork concerning their area if it is area specific. Information will also be brought to the group as informational or discussed if there is time and the lead person feels it would be helpful
  + Student Concerns/Complaints
    - Student issues can be presented to the group and then discussed as the best way to handle the issue
      * If we are between meetings, report out on the process
      * If before a meeting, bring the issue to the meeting
    - Guidelines for working with student complaints provided by department with review and training
    - Lead faculty as mediator with assistance or appoint a person
      * Use the buddy system in the beginning
        + Or appointee by the lead if there is an issue concerning them
  + Part-time Participation
    - Part-time faculty are encouraged to attend meetings and participate in department meetings
    - Lead faculty for area are responsible informing part-time faculty of the issues and ask for feedback
* Monthly Department Chair Meetings
  + We each take a turn attending the department chairs meeting
    - Attend meetings in pairs:
      * Faculty A (primary) and Faculty B attend meeting in September
      * Faculty B (primary) and Faculty C attend meeting in October, etc.
        + Provides overlap and verification of information
  + Same could be true for less regular division chair meetings
* Monthly Department Meetings
  + Person who attended the chair meetings as primary runs the department meeting where they update everyone on what happened as well as create the agenda of topics, mediate the conversation, call for vote if need be
    - They send out the link to the agenda to everyone and the link after with the meeting notes
    - They get to choose the talking piece from the Giant Microbes box (😊)
    - They will be the note-taker for the next meeting
  + One meeting midmorning Friday and one Tuesday or Wednesday evening to accommodate PT faculty and dependent on availability
  + Meeting calendar is kept in Excel with the agendas and minutes
  + Start with Community Agreements as Reminder
    - Make Space, Take Space
    - Consider the impact of our actions/words
    - Confidentiality (be clear if the conversation is confidential)
    - Treat each other with respect (listen and respond with honor)
      * Respect the “talking piece” in meetings
    - We will try to consider intent in the actions/words of others
  + Once a month presentation of budget with specifics (see Budget area)
  + Specify if meeting requires a vote or just discussion
  + Items that need Consensus or Majority vote
    - Goal is consensus for everything – subject to change
    - New topics
      * Ask if we should decide by consensus or majority
      * Ask for a vote if no consensus is reached

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| **Consensus** | **Majority** |
| Budget | Curriculum |
| Schedule |  |
| Written Communications for Department |  |
| Program Review/APU |  |
|  |  |

* Hiring Process
  + To ensure our hiring is more equitable and supportive, we promise to:
* Be sure to include a prepared teaching demo to ensure we provide interviewees a chance to demonstrate different skill sets
  + Begin with the prepared teaching demonstration, to provide the candidate an opportunity to start off well and gain confidence.
* Allow interviewees a few minutes (at least) to review the questions and jot down some notes
  + Allow interviewees to see the questions in a different zoom space if possible
  + Allow for question revisiting if time allows or address aspects of the answer appear in other questions
* Include questions that are specific to teaching philosophy, equitable teaching practices, and personal growth as these are priorities of our department
* We support the committee being a diverse representation of our community including representation from classified professionals, faculty and administration from the Division of Math and Sciences.

**Biology Department Lead Breakdown**

For prerequisite waivers, hiring concerns, course updating information, part-time faculty evaluations, please contact the follow faculty dependent on the course:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Courses** | **Faculty** | **email** |
| 1A/1B (10, 70 back-up) | Leslie Blackie | [lblackie@peralta.edu](mailto:lblackie@peralta.edu) |
| 2,4 (20A/B, 24back-up) | Rebecca Bailey | [rbailey@peralta.edu](mailto:rbailey@peralta.edu) |
| 3 | Rajeev Banerjee | [rbanerjee@peralta.edu](mailto:rbanerjee@peralta.edu) |
| 10/11 (1A/1B back-up) | Amy Bohorquez | [abohorquez@peralta.edu](mailto:abohorquez@peralta.edu) |
| 70 series, 28 | Doug Bruce | [dbruce@peralta.edu](mailto:dbruce@peralta.edu) |
| 20A/B, 24, 28, 201 & 202 | Laurie Allen-Requa | [lallenrequa@peralta.edu](mailto:lallenrequa@peralta.edu) |

**Communication in the Biology Department**

In communicating with each other, it is important that we balance ensuring all members of the community have access to information as well as honor each other’s time. Consider our community agreements when you are thinking to communicate with others. Given this, that means decisions need to be made concerning the importance of the conversation and which mode to utilize.

***To help you determine the importance:***

1. Can it wait for the meeting?
   1. Community communication agenda item is there to discuss almost anything
   2. If your concern is that there isn’t time in the meetings, how can you help to encourage efficiency in time use during the meetings? (make space/take space)
      1. Time limits for items being honored
      2. Agenda item review - should we reorder topics, does it need to be covered in the meeting or is email okay
2. Is it urgent? Considering that urgency is an aspect of heteropatriarchal, white supremist culture that we do not wish to perpetuate, would the other person also consider if it is truly urgent?
   1. We agree student access to classrooms, posting notes on doors, etc. are urgent
   2. We don’t all have the same priorities in life or at work
   3. Is there a deadline that is informing your thought?
      1. Deadlines that are priorities: spending deadlines, reports, planning guides, curriculum approvals.
   4. Is it a reminder so that we are not trying to complete the item at the last minute?
      1. How far in advance should it be completed?
      2. Can you agree on a timeline?
3. What is the best way to communicate your thoughts?
   1. For this we have to address the modes available
4. Consider our Community Agreements that include respecting each other
   1. Try not to hold a grudge if folks are setting boundaries themselves

***We have multiple ways in which communicate. These include (more information of each below):***

* In person
  + Two meetings a month for face to face conversations with the group
    - Partially as method to avoid separate conversations and “gossip” talk
  + Non-planned interactions
    - Seeking out someone to discuss a topic
    - Random interactions: running into each other
* Email: two list-servs
  + The Biology Department – full-time faculty and staff members (FT)
  + Bio-faculty listserv – inclusive of all department members (ALL)
* Slack: two channels
  + Thebiologydepartment - all faculty and staff (ALL)
    - Multiple threads: Biz and for fun
  + Bio-faculty - Full-time faculty and staff members (FT)
    - Multiple threads: urgent, general, random, inspirational

*For in person situations***,** the questions will be dependent on the situation. We have a policy to always ask if the person is busy before you start a conversation. Especially if you are approaching someone else in their office, lab, other area. This also means that it is important that the other person is honest about their time.

When you consider approaching someone:

* Be clear if you are asking for someone to listen or asking for advice
* Is this a casual conversation and are both people aware of that?
* Are they the best person for this conversation?
  + For instance, amy is not a fan venting, so she might not be the best for that
* After you ask if they are busy,
  + If the person is busy
    - Please respect their time and not ask again or say “this is real quick” unless it is truly time dependent
    - If you are asked, consider offering another time if you that available to you
    - If you are the asker, please deter from asking them when they will have time at that moment if it is not offered. Instead, consider a follow up email to ask them when they might have time. Email allows for that person to decide on a time that fits their schedule as well
  + If that person is not busy
    - Set a time limit for the conversation to ensure all time is honored
      * If it is a casual conversation, being clear about time is important
    - Set goals for the meeting
      * What is the topic you are addressing and what is the hopeful outcome

*For virtual conversations,* the question of email versus Slack arises. The decision needs to be made about which to use and the best option for responses. Given the current situation, in person options are limited, so it is even more crucial to ensure the best option.

Please consider a few things

* Email versus Slack (see chart below)
  + Email is mainly for work-related communications with our department, admin, etc.
    - Provides opportunity for folks include to take time in reading and responding
    - Helps development/maintain healthy work-life balance as it keeps work at work
  + Slack is mainly for urgent communications or communications that are protected from district review similar to union use of non-Peralta addresses
  + Questions to help you decide which to use:
    - What is the Importance/Urgency level? (see above)
    - Would the message be easier to explain in email? Is it a long message?
    - Could you choose the “High Importance” to indicate importance and send a slack message to let folks know?
    - Will this make it more difficult for folks to see truly urgent/important communications?
      * Could you use a different thread or channel?
* If you are using Slack for community development, consider to whom you are sending the information
* We are not all working “business hours” or have work email on our phones
  + If off hours and need reply, consider using Slack
  + Some of us have Slack on off at certain times or do not check all the time
    - Might not get to entire thread for awhile

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| **Mode** | **Purpose** | **Examples** |
| ***Email*** | Sharing of information so everyone is aware. Conversations that need documentation or longer consideration of time for responding |  |
| *FT listserv* | Communications with admin, drafts before they go to the group, updates on on-going campus actions actionable items | Emails to dean or vpi, drafts of reports/planning guides, hiring considerations, curriculum approvals, campus policy updates, post-committee updates |
| *All listserv* | To reach entire department (PT & FT members) | Meeting agendas, Report & Planning Guide circulation, Syllabus reminders, cool events that benefit all students |
| ***Slack*** | More urgent communication, non-work email for protection of open topics, community building | Going to be late to meeting or other event, information that would be similar to our union not using our Peralta address. |
| *FT channel* | If only need reply from FT faculty |  |
| Urgent |  | Need to unlock door for students, student that needs assistance asap, request for folks to check email and reply, campus activities (closing campus for emergencies, etc.) |
| General | Non urgent, but protected (similar to union use), questions about campus activities that are more important than email would allow | Reminder to check an email (use subject line to help folks find it) |
| Random | Not sure how to describe this one, but maybe for less important topics? |  |
| Inspiration | Community building, fun science images |  |
| *All channel* |  |  |
| Biz | Communicating with entire department if you 1) don’t have email access at the moment or 2) need urgent reply | Notification of an important email that needs review, could be used |
| For fun |  | Interesting articles, images, etc. |

Maybe we should name these?