

Joan Schroeder

Professor of Accountancy
Chair, Academic Senate

Joan Schroeder, professor of accountancy, first chaired the Academic Senate in 1979. She recalls that there was a tie vote and as chair, her vote determined the final outcome. "I often find myself in the midst of controversy," she says. "But I enjoy the challenge."

As the Academic Senate chair, Schroeder serves as both its leader and moderator, recognizing differences of opinion and trying to encourage the membership to initiate workable university policies. She is responsible for creating a positive atmosphere in which controversial matters can be resolved.

According to Schroeder, having a "good sense of humor" is an important part of her job. When she chaired her first senate meeting following reelection in 1983, a professor was making some significant comments about a serious issue. At that moment, the Coalinga Earthquake struck, severely rocking the building. "You certainly made some very moving comments!" Schroeder responded, sparking spontaneous laughter from the members and relieving, to some extent, the tensions and anxieties caused by the earthquake. Normally, however, the senate's meetings are serious affairs, following a specific published agenda and prescribed parliamentary procedures.

Schroeder first began participating in campus policy development in the Academic Computer Planning Subcommittee; she was later appointed to its parent committee, the Academic Policy and Planning Committee (AP&P), a standing committee of the Academic Senate. After serving on the AP&P Committee for four years, she became its chair. She chaired the Academic Senate from 1979-81 and returned as chair beginning in the fall of 1983, continuing until the present. As a professor of accountancy, Schroeder is entering her 16th year at CSU, Fresno.



What has impressed you most about CSU, Fresno?

I have always been impressed by the friendliness of everyone. I find people generally pleasant to work with, cooperative, and interested in the academic programs of the campus. For example, there is considerable opportunity for interaction among students and between faculty and students. One of the main reasons for this rapport is that classes here are generally small, often 30 students or fewer. I think this conveys a feeling of friendliness that you might not find on a campus where students in large classes seldom talk to the instructor.

As the chair of the Academic Senate, how would you describe its composition?

The membership of the senate consists of persons elected by various constituencies from the campus community. In other words, if we are talking about a departmental representative, then that person is elected by his or her colleagues in the department. The student representatives are chosen by the Associated Students. Thus, we have a senate of approximately 65 members.

Can you say something about the purpose and goals of the organization?

The purpose of the senate is to deal with issues that affect both students and faculty, such as those of a curricular, personnel, budgetary, or affirmative action nature. I would say, perhaps, one primary concern to students would be the curriculum. For example, the General Education Requirements, which were developed through the senate structure, impinge on the program of every student graduating from this university.

What are the academic goals for the next 75 years?

The senate has always participated in developing curricula, in enhancing faculty expertise, and in looking toward programmatic directions for the university. The most important goal should be to offer quality programs in as many areas as are needed and to make sure that the degrees we offer are the best possible. Our university has a good reputation and it continues to grow. An interesting prospect is the possibility that campuses in the CSU System may be able to offer doctorates. If doctoral programs are seriously considered on this campus, the senate would