Shared Governance

Faculty Personnel Office
Office of the Provost
What Is Shared Governance?

Shared governance, sometimes also called collegial governance, is the set of principles and practices through which faculty and staff members participate in the important decisions regarding the operation of the university. Collegial governance is a system based on the idea that authority and responsibility are shared among colleagues, some of whom are primarily faculty members and some of whom are primarily administrators. Successful shared governance depends on the good faith consultation among these colleagues prior to decision-making; such consultation should also include staff members and students whenever policy or personnel decisions are likely to affect them and whenever policy or personnel documents do not explicitly exclude them.

The University of Louisville’s Commitment to Shared Governance

On July 23, 2001, the Board of Trustees endorsed a position paper on university governance that was produced by the Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leadership (COSFL) in the state of Kentucky. COSFL’s paper was itself an endorsement of the 1966 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). These documents establish that collegial governance should be characterized by the following principles:

- The recognition of and respect for the many and varied roles that members of the academic community perform
- The timely disclosure of information needed to participate meaningfully in the discourse that makes good policy and practice
- The opportunity for members of the academic community to provide input for decisions that will affect them before those decisions are made
- The principle of dissent, which makes it imperative that dissent from the majority view be respected by all

As a practical matter, shared governance in a complex institution is seldom practiced in the committee of the whole, but instead, the various stakeholders speak through groups or offices: governing boards, administrative officers, faculty, staff, and students and their representative bodies.

The Redbook and University Governance

The Redbook is the official statement of the organizational structure, governance rules and procedures, and the university-wide policies of the University of Louisville; the most up-to-date version can be found on the Provost’s website at http://louisville.edu/provost/redbook. The Redbook recognizes the complicated network of relationships between the Board of Trustees, the president and the executive vice president and university provost, vice presidents, deans, chairs and other administrators, faculty, staff and students, and establishes a system of shared governance. Further, The Redbook establishes the Faculty Senate (3.4.2), the Staff Senate (5.7.1) and the Student Government Associa-
tion (6.5) as the official representatives of the faculty, staff and student bodies, and each senate is responsible for eliciting and expressing the opinions of its constituency on matters of concern to the whole. The principle of administrative consultation with appropriate individuals, groups and organizations is explicit throughout *The Redbook* (e.g., 2.1.2.B, D, H, K {duties of the president}; 2.2.2, 3.2.1, 3.3.5 {appointments of provost and vice presidents, deans, and chairs}).

### Shared Governance in the Units

The University of Louisville currently has 13 academic units in which faculty may hold appointments (e.g., Arts and Sciences, Medicine, Law; see *The Redbook* 3.1.1. for a complete list). *The Redbook* specifies that each unit’s faculty “shall have general legislative powers over all matters pertaining to its own personnel policies, criteria, and procedures, to its own meetings, and to the admission requirements, curricula, instruction, examinations, and recommendations to the Board of Trustees for granting degrees in its own academic unit” (3.3.2). Units must have by-laws detailing organizational and governance structures that are consistent with the provisions of shared governance specified in *The Redbook* (3.1.3) and personnel documents detailing criteria for faculty status and appointment, tenure and promotion reviews, annual reviews, and career reviews that are consistent with those specified in *The Redbook*. Personnel documents and by-laws should be published on each unit’s web site, but they are also available on the provost’s website at http://louisville.edu/provost/faculty-personnel/unit. Changes to unit personnel documents and by-laws are reviewed by the Faculty Senate and the provost’s office before they are forwarded to the president and Board of Trustees for approval.

As noted above, *The Redbook* 3.3.2 gives unit faculties legislative authority over personnel policies, governance and curriculum, among other things. Thus, unit faculty share responsibility for 1) academic matters, including academic planning, the approval of academic degree programs, curriculum decisions, admissions and graduation requirements, issues related to academic freedom and policies regarding student grievances about academic work; 2) personnel matters, including academic personnel decisions (appointment, tenure and promotion, dismissal of tenured faculty), establishing criteria for review of faculty and for distributing salary increases and participation in the grievance process; and 3) governance matters, including development and approval of unit by-laws and rules for meeting, and the establishment of standing committees and other procedures by which the unit will govern itself. While each unit is different in the procedures it establishes for governing itself, each must do so in ways consistent with the policies and procedures outlined in *The Redbook*.

### What Is My Role in Shared Governance?

For shared governance to be successful, each member of the university community must understand his or her role, must know the policies outlined in *The Redbook* and unit by-laws and personnel documents, and must take responsibility for his or her part.

**University administrators** (the president and the provost, as well as vice presidents) provide leadership in their particular areas of responsibility. Typically, the president and the provost must make final decisions for which their offices have been delegated responsibility, but such actions are usually taken after consultation with various concerned individuals, groups or organizations. The president and provost regularly consult with the Faculty Senate, often through the executive committee, on academic and research matters, on economic welfare issues and on changes to administrative structures or policies. The president and provost also may appoint university-wide committees, which include faculty (and staff and students when appropriate), to address such matters.

**Unit administrators** (deans and divisional or departmental officers) likewise provide leadership and must make final decisions for which their positions have been delegated authority, but they should do so by working through the appropriate faculty committees within their
units, departments or divisions as outlined in their unit’s by-laws. Deans on Belknap Campus report directly to the executive vice president and university provost, while deans on the Health Sciences Campus report to the executive vice president for health affairs; divisional or departmental officers report to the dean of their unit. Faculty committees typically include elected members.

**Tenured faculty members** have a responsibility to serve on departmental, unit and university committees as either appointed or elected members. In such service, they are expected to voice their opinions honestly and to serve the best interests of the institution as a whole rather than their own personal interests. Faculty members are expected to understand the policies of the university, particularly those in *The Redbook*, and to participate in the governance of their units and the university at large. In particular, unit faculties have responsibility for academic matters, faculty personnel matters and governance.

**Probationary faculty members** are usually asked to serve on fewer committees than tenured faculty (and may actually be prohibited from serving on some committees, such as departmental or unit personnel committees), but they should be free to contribute to conversations on academic and governance matters. Since proficiency in service is a requirement of all those who expect to be tenured, probationary faculty should participate in some service and governance activities. They should consult with their chairs about service assignments.

**Term and part-time faculty members** may participate in some service and governance activities, depending on the unit’s by-laws and the individual faculty member’s contract or work assignment. Part-time faculty may be elected to the Faculty Senate.

**The Role of the Faculty Senate**

As noted previously, the Faculty Senate, the Staff Senate and the Student Government Association are the official, elected representatives of the faculty, staff and students. The Faculty Senate is responsible for reviewing policies and documents that affect the faculty and making recommendations regarding these policies to the university administration. Similarly, a primary responsibility of the senate is eliciting and representing the opinions, suggestions and recommendations of the faculty on all matters of concern to the faculty as a whole; the senate responds to questions or issues that arise from individuals or groups of faculty members, particularly when those questions or issues apply to the faculty as a whole. The Faculty Senate also makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees about the establishment, suspension or termination of academic programs. Finally, the Faculty Senate and its executive committee respond to requests for consultation from the administration, Board of Trustees and others.

The Faculty Senate has 70 members, including 62 full-time faculty members who serve three-year terms and six part-time faculty members who serve one-year terms. The Staff Senate and Student Government Association each have one representative on the Faculty Senate.

**Good Faith and the Principle of Dissent**

Successful shared governance depends on all participants acting in good faith, with everyone having enough information to offer sound opinions. Shared governance is sometimes a slow process, and consultation with all concerned individuals, groups and organizations is not always possible, but every effort should be made by both administrators and faculty to share information in a timely fashion. Universities have a unique mission—the creation and dissemination of knowledge—and shared governance is a means of ensuring that academic decision-making on matters such as curriculum, the allocation of resources and the appointment, promotion and tenure of academic colleagues is largely independent of short-term managerial, political or financial concerns. The
American Federation of Teachers’ Higher Education Program and Policy Committee recently issued a statement in 2002 on the importance of shared governance and concluded that “Shared governance is vital to maintain the academic integrity of our colleges and universities, to prevent the pressures of commercialization from distorting the institution’s educational mission or eroding standards and quality, and to uphold the ideals of academic freedom and democratic practice.”

Finally, in a system of shared governance, respect for the diversity of opinion is of the utmost importance. The Board of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff and students will not always be of one voice on matters of policy and practice, and dissent from the majority view must be respected by all involved. No stakeholder should fear retaliation for expressing dissent from the majority opinion or from the opinion of a superior.

Shared governance is happening at the University of Louisville. All of us must do our part to uphold the ideals of academic freedom and democratic practice inherent in a system of shared governance.

**Links to Works Cited**

“Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities.”
American Association of University Professors

“Shared Governance in Colleges and Universities: A Statement by the Higher Education Program and Policy Council.”
The American Federation of Teachers

*The Redbook*
[http://louisville.edu/provost/redbook](http://louisville.edu/provost/redbook)

Unit Personnel Documents and By-laws
[http://louisville.edu/provost/faculty-personnel/unit](http://louisville.edu/provost/faculty-personnel/unit)
The Values and Principles of Shared Governance

By Enid Trucios-Haynes
Trustee and Chair of the Faculty Senate
July 19, 2018
Shared Governance as a Value

One of higher education’s most distinctive values is its commitment to shared governance. It is a fundamental principle of inclusion in key areas of institutional responsibility and decision making.

Governing boards hold ultimate authority for an institution, as defined in bylaws and other foundational documents, as well as state fiduciary principles.

Board authority is delegated to—or “shared with”—institutional leaders and faculty.

From the AGB Board of Directors’ Statement on Shared Governance (2017)
Why Shared Governance Matters

Universities have a unique mission – the creation and dissemination of knowledge – and shared governance ensures that decision-making affecting the academic mission is largely independent of short-term managerial, political, or financial concerns – UofL Provost’s Office

A sound system of institutional governance is a necessary condition for the protection of faculty rights and for the most productive exercise of essential faculty freedoms, including academic freedom - AAUP
Core Principles of Shared Governance

• Accountability, Transparency, and Disclosure

• Regular communication and shared data - creating a culture of evidence

From: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)
Key Constructs of Good Governance

1. **Mechanisms of Shared Governance** - Regulations, Policies, Procedures created with the involvement of stakeholders

2. **Compliance** - Processes that demonstrate Accountability, Transparency, and Disclosure

3. **Outcomes (Performance)** - Data and a culture of evidence

From: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)
Key Constructs of Good Governance

Mechanisms of Shared Governance - Regulations, Policies, Procedures created with the involvement of stakeholders

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation:

• Faculty - CS 3.7.5: The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters

• Students - CS 3.9.1: The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community
Key Constructs of Good Governance

• Compliance - Processes that demonstrate Accountability, Transparency, and Disclosure
  • Through the *Redbook*, UofL has guidelines that support the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters and the principle of consultation with staff and students

• Outcomes (Performance) – Sharing Data and Creating a Culture of Evidence
  • SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation
  • CR2.5: The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution wide . . . evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review . . .

*From: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)*
UofL Board of Trustees’ Position on University Governance – adopted July 23, 2001

• The Board endorsed a position paper of the Coalition of Senate and Faculty Leadership (COSFL) in the State of Kentucky

• COSFL’s paper was an endorsement of the 1966 “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)

• These documents establish the core principles of collegial (shared) governance
Principles of Shared Governance at UofL

• Recognition of and respect for the many and varied roles that members of the academic community perform

• Timely disclosure of information needed to participate meaningfully in the discourse that makes good policy and practice

• Opportunities for members of the academic community to provide input for decisions that will affect them before decisions are made

• Respect for the principle of dissent - it is imperative that dissent from the majority view is respected by all
Good Faith and the Principle of Dissent at UofL

• Successful shared governance depends on all participants acting in good faith with everyone having enough information to offer sound opinions

• Respect for the diversity of opinion is of utmost importance

• Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students will not always share one voice on matters of policy and practice, and dissent from the majority view must be respected by all involved

• No stakeholder should fear retaliation for expressing dissent from the majority opinion or from the opinion of a superior.
The Role of Faculty in Decisions Allocating Financial Resources

• Allocating resources among competing demands is the responsibility of the governing board, the president and administration, and the faculty

• Each have a voice in the determination of short and long range priorities

• Each should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short and long range budgetary projections

• Decisions having an university-wide impact necessarily affect the educational mission of the university and require consultation before decisions are made
The Redbook at UofL

• The official statement of the organizational structure, governance rules and procedures, and university-wide policies

• Establishes the Faculty Senate (3.4.2), the Staff Senate (5.7.1) and the Student Government Association (6.5) as the official representatives of the faculty, staff, and student bodies

• The principle of administrative consultation with appropriate individuals, groups and organizations is explicit throughout The Redbook
Faculty Senate Chair Report
February 5, 2020

Provost Search Timeline:
- Mid-February – Search committee meets to review the finalist pool and recommend a small group for airport or skype interviews (approximately 10 candidates).
- Late February – Search committee conducts airport interviews of finalists and creates a shortlist of 3-5 individuals to bring to UofL for campus interviews.
- March/April – On-campus interviews with candidates.
- April – Final search committee meeting to go through campus feedback, discuss the finalists, and develop a recommendation to the president. President Bendapudi will ask the committee for an unranked list of the strengths and weaknesses of any candidates that the committee feels are viable choices.

Call for Faculty Senate Representation:
Please contact Senate Chair Krista Wallace-Boaz if you are interested in being nominated to the following workgroups:

- Shared Governance Workgroup
- Strategic Plan Implementation Sub Committees

**Shared Governance Workgroup:**
This workgroup will be co-chaired by Michael Wade Smith (President’s Office), John Smith (Staff Senate Chair) and Krista Wallace-Boaz (Faculty Senate Chair). Topics of the workgroup include:

- Reaffirmation of the University of Louisville’s commitment to Shared Governance
- Shared Governance Best Practices (Policy/Procedures)
- Recommendations to further strengthen Shared Governance Governance and Consultation in policy, budget (prior to Board approval), Communication: Timing, method, order of events

**ULAA Bylaws**
Revised bylaws were approved by ULAA and the Board of Trustees.

**Board of Trustees**
Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities

The statement that follows is directed to governing board members, administrators, faculty members, students, and other persons in the belief that the colleges and universities of the United States have reached a stage calling for appropriately shared responsibility and cooperative action among the components of the academic institution. The statement is intended to foster constructive joint thought and action, both within the institutional structure and in protection of its integrity against improper intrusions.

It is not intended that the statement serve as a blueprint for governance on a specific campus or as a manual for the regulation of controversy among the components of an academic institution, although it is to be hoped that the principles asserted will lead to the correction of existing weaknesses and assist in the establishment of sound structures and procedures. The statement does not attempt to cover relations with those outside agencies that increasingly are controlling the resources and influencing the patterns of education in our institutions of higher learning: for example, the United States government, state legislatures, state commissions, interstate associations or compacts, and other interinstitutional arrangements. However, it is hoped that the statement will be helpful to these agencies in their consideration of educational matters.

Students are referred to in this statement as an institutional component coordinate in importance with trustees, administrators, and faculty. There is, however, no main section on students. The omission has two causes: (1) the changes now occurring in the status of American students have plainly outdistanced the analysis by the educational community, and an attempt to define the situation without thorough study might prove unfair to student interests, and (2) students do not in fact at present have a significant voice in the government of colleges and universities; it would be unseemly to obscure, by superficial equality of length of statement, what may be a serious lag entitled to separate and full confrontation.

The concern for student status felt by the organizations issuing this statement is embodied in a note, “On Student Status,” intended to stimulate the educational community to turn its attention to an important need.
This statement was jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). In October 1966, the board of directors of the ACE took action by which its council “recognizes the statement as a significant step forward in the clarification of the respective roles of governing boards, faculties, and administrations,” and “commends it to the institutions which are members of the Council.” The Council of the AAUP adopted the statement in October 1966, and the Fifty-third Annual Meeting endorsed it in April 1967. In November 1966, the executive committee of the AGB took action by which that organization also “recognizes the statement as a significant step forward in the clarification of the respective roles of governing boards, faculties, and administrations,” and “commends it to the governing boards which are members of the Association.” (In April 1990, the Council of the AAUP adopted several changes in language in order to remove gender-specific references from the original text.)

1. Introduction
This statement is a call to mutual understanding regarding the government of colleges and universities. Understanding, based on community of interest and producing joint effort, is essential for at least three reasons. First, the academic institution, public or private, often has become less autonomous; buildings, research, and student tuition are supported by funds over which the college or university exercises a diminishing control. Legislative and executive governmental authorities, at all levels, play a part in the making of important decisions in academic policy. If these voices and forces are to be successfully heard and integrated, the academic institution must be in a position to meet them with its own generally unified view. Second, regard for the welfare of the institution remains important despite the mobility and interchange of scholars. Third, a college or university in which all the components are aware of their interdependence, of the usefulness of communication among themselves, and of the force of joint action will enjoy increased capacity to solve educational problems.

2. The Academic Institution: Joint Effort

   a. Preliminary Considerations

   The variety and complexity of the tasks performed by institutions of higher education produce an inescapable interdependence among governing board, administration, faculty, students, and others. The relationship calls for adequate communication among these components, and full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort.

   Joint effort in an academic institution will take a variety of forms appropriate to the kinds of situations encountered. In some instances, an initial exploration or recommendation will be made by the president with consideration by the faculty at a later stage; in other instances, a first and essentially definitive recommendation will be made by the faculty, subject to the endorsement of the president and the governing board. In still others, a substantive contribution can be made when student leaders are responsibly involved in the process. Although the variety of such approaches may be wide, at least two general conclusions regarding joint effort seem clearly warranted: (1) important areas of action involve at one time or another the initiating capacity and decision-making participation of all the institutional components, and (2) differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be
determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand, as developed hereinafter.

b. **Determination of General Educational Policy**

The general educational policy, i.e., the objectives of an institution and the nature, range, and pace of its efforts, is shaped by the institutional charter or by law, by tradition and historical development, by the present needs of the community of the institution, and by the professional aspirations and standards of those directly involved in its work. Every board will wish to go beyond its formal trustee obligation to conserve the accomplishment of the past and to engage seriously with the future; every faculty will seek to conduct an operation worthy of scholarly standards of learning; every administrative officer will strive to meet his or her charge and to attain the goals of the institution. The interests of all are coordinate and related, and unilateral effort can lead to confusion or conflict. Essential to a solution is a reasonably explicit statement on general educational policy. Operating responsibility and authority, and procedures for continuing review, should be clearly defined in official regulations.

When an educational goal has been established, it becomes the responsibility primarily of the faculty to determine the appropriate curriculum and procedures of student instruction.

Special considerations may require particular accommodations: (1) a publicly supported institution may be regulated by statutory provisions, and (2) a church-controlled institution may be limited by its charter or bylaws. When such external requirements influence course content and the manner of instruction or research, they impair the educational effectiveness of the institution.

Such matters as major changes in the size or composition of the student body and the relative emphasis to be given to the various elements of the educational and research program should involve participation of governing board, administration, and faculty prior to final decision.

c. **Internal Operations of the Institution**

The framing and execution of long-range plans, one of the most important aspects of institutional responsibility, should be a central and continuing concern in the academic community.

Effective planning demands that the broadest possible exchange of information and opinion should be the rule for communication among the components of a college or university. The channels of communication should be established and maintained by joint endeavor. Distinction should be observed between the institutional system of communication and the system of responsibility for the making of decisions.

A second area calling for joint effort in internal operation is that of decisions regarding existing or prospective physical resources. The board, president, and faculty should all seek agreement on basic decisions regarding buildings and other facilities to be used in the educational work of the institution.

A third area is budgeting. The allocation of resources among competing demands is central in the formal responsibility of the governing board, in the administrative authority of the president, and in the educational function of the faculty. Each component should therefore have a voice in the determination of short- and long-range priorities, and each should receive appropriate analyses of past budgetary
experience, reports on current budgets and expenditures, and short- and long-range budgetary projections. The function of each component in budgetary matters should be understood by all; the allocation of authority will determine the flow of information and the scope of participation in decisions.

Joint effort of a most critical kind must be taken when an institution chooses a new president. The selection of a chief administrative officer should follow upon a cooperative search by the governing board and the faculty, taking into consideration the opinions of others who are appropriately interested. The president should be equally qualified to serve both as the executive officer of the governing board and as the chief academic officer of the institution and the faculty. The president's dual role requires an ability to interpret to board and faculty the educational views and concepts of institutional government of the other. The president should have the confidence of the board and the faculty.

The selection of academic deans and other chief academic officers should be the responsibility of the president with the advice of, and in consultation with, the appropriate faculty.

Determinations of faculty status, normally based on the recommendations of the faculty groups involved, are discussed in Part 5 of this statement; but it should here be noted that the building of a strong faculty requires careful joint effort in such actions as staff selection and promotion and the granting of tenure. Joint action should also govern dismissals; the applicable principles and procedures in these matters are well established.1

d. External Relations of the Institution

Anyone—a member of the governing board, the president or other member of the administration, a member of the faculty, or a member of the student body or the alumni—affects the institution when speaking of it in public. An individual who speaks unofficially should so indicate. An individual who speaks officially for the institution, the board, the administration, the faculty, or the student body should be guided by established policy.

It should be noted that only the board speaks legally for the whole institution, although it may delegate responsibility to an agent. The right of a board member, an administrative officer, a faculty member, or a student to speak on general educational questions or about the administration and operations of the individual's own institution is a part of that person's right as a citizen and should not be abridged by the institution.2 There exist, of course, legal bounds relating to defamation of character, and there are questions of propriety.

3. The Academic Institution: The Governing Board

The governing board has a special obligation to ensure that the history of the college or university shall serve as a prelude and inspiration to the future. The board helps relate the institution to its chief community: for example, the community college to serve the educational needs of a defined population area or group, the church-controlled college to be cognizant of the announced position of its denomination, and the comprehensive university to discharge the many duties and to accept the appropriate new challenges which are its concern at the several levels of higher education.

The governing board of an institution of higher education in the United States operates, with few exceptions, as the final institutional authority. Private institutions are established by charters; public institutions are
established by constitutional or statutory provisions. In private institutions the board is frequently self-perpetuating; in public colleges and universities the present membership of a board may be asked to suggest candidates for appointment. As a whole and individually, when the governing board confronts the problem of succession, serious attention should be given to obtaining properly qualified persons. Where public law calls for election of governing board members, means should be found to ensure the nomination of fully suited persons, and the electorate should be informed of the relevant criteria for board membership.

Since the membership of the board may embrace both individual and collective competence of recognized weight, its advice or help may be sought through established channels by other components of the academic community. The governing board of an institution of higher education, while maintaining a general overview, entrusts the conduct of administration to the administrative officers—the president and the deans—and the conduct of teaching and research to the faculty. The board should undertake appropriate self-limitation.

One of the governing board’s important tasks is to ensure the publication of codified statements that define the overall policies and procedures of the institution under its jurisdiction.

The board plays a central role in relating the likely needs of the future to predictable resources; it has the responsibility for husbanding the endowment; it is responsible for obtaining needed capital and operating funds; and in the broadest sense of the term it should pay attention to personnel policy. In order to fulfill these duties, the board should be aided by, and may insist upon, the development of long-range planning by the administration and faculty. When ignorance or ill will threatens the institution or any part of it, the governing board must be available for support. In grave crises it will be expected to serve as a champion. Although the action to be taken by it will usually be on behalf of the president, the faculty, or the student body, the board should make clear that the protection it offers to an individual or a group is, in fact, a fundamental defense of the vested interests of society in the educational institution.3

4. The Academic Institution: The President

The president, as the chief executive officer of an institution of higher education, is measured largely by his or her capacity for institutional leadership. The president shares responsibility for the definition and attainment of goals, for administrative action, and for operating the communications system that links the components of the academic community. The president represents the institution to its many publics. The president’s leadership role is supported by delegated authority from the board and faculty.

As the chief planning officer of an institution, the president has a special obligation to innovate and initiate. The degree to which a president can envision new horizons for the institution, and can persuade others to see them and to work toward them, will often constitute the chief measure of the president’s administration.

The president must at times, with or without support, infuse new life into a department; relatedly, the president may at times be required, working within the concept of tenure, to solve problems of obsolescence. The president will necessarily utilize the judgments of the faculty but may also, in the interest of academic standards, seek outside evaluations by scholars of acknowledged competence.

It is the duty of the president to see to it that the standards and procedures in operational use within the college or university conform to the policy established by the governing board and to the standards of sound academic practice. It is also incumbent on the president to ensure that faculty views, including dissenting
views, are presented to the board in those areas and on those issues where responsibilities are shared. Similarly, the faculty should be informed of the views of the board and the administration on like issues.

The president is largely responsible for the maintenance of existing institutional resources and the creation of new resources; has ultimate managerial responsibility for a large area of nonacademic activities; is responsible for public understanding; and by the nature of the office is the chief person who speaks for the institution. In these and other areas the president’s work is to plan, to organize, to direct, and to represent. The presidential function should receive the general support of board and faculty.

5. The Academic Institution: The Faculty

The faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process. On these matters the power of review or final decision lodged in the governing board or delegated by it to the president should be exercised adversely only in exceptional circumstances, and for reasons communicated to the faculty. It is desirable that the faculty should, following such communication, have opportunity for further consideration and further transmittal of its views to the president or board. Budgets, personnel limitations, the time element, and the policies of other groups, bodies, and agencies having jurisdiction over the institution may set limits to realization of faculty advice.

The faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in course, determines when the requirements have been met, and authorizes the president and board to grant the degrees thus achieved.

Faculty status and related matters are primarily a faculty responsibility; this area includes appointments, reappointments, decisions not to reappoint, promotions, the granting of tenure, and dismissal. The primary responsibility of the faculty for such matters is based upon the fact that its judgment is central to general educational policy. Furthermore, scholars in a particular field or activity have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues; in such competence it is implicit that responsibility exists for both adverse and favorable judgments. Likewise, there is the more general competence of experienced faculty personnel committees having a broader charge. Determinations in these matters should first be by faculty action through established procedures, reviewed by the chief academic officers with the concurrence of the board. The governing board and president should, on questions of faculty status, as in other matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.

The faculty should actively participate in the determination of policies and procedures governing salary increases.

The chair or head of a department, who serves as the chief representative of the department within an institution, should be selected either by departmental election or by appointment following consultation with members of the department and of related departments; appointments should normally be in conformity with department members’ judgment. The chair or department head should not have tenure in office; tenure as a faculty member is a matter of separate right. The chair or head should serve for a stated term but without prejudice to reelection or to reappointment by procedures that involve appropriate faculty consultation. Board, administration, and faculty should all bear in mind that the department chair or head has a special obligation to build a department strong in scholarship and teaching capacity.
Agencies for faculty participation in the government of the college or university should be established at each level where faculty responsibility is present. An agency should exist for the presentation of the views of the whole faculty. The structure and procedures for faculty participation should be designed, approved, and established by joint action of the components of the institution. Faculty representatives should be selected by the faculty according to procedures determined by the faculty.5

The agencies may consist of meetings of all faculty members of a department, school, college, division, or university system, or may take the form of faculty-elected executive committees in departments and schools and a faculty-elected senate or council for larger divisions or the institution as a whole.

The means of communication among the faculty, administration, and governing board now in use include: (1) circulation of memoranda and reports by board committees, the administration, and faculty committees; (2) joint ad hoc committees; (3) standing liaison committees; (4) membership of faculty members on administrative bodies; and (5) membership of faculty members on governing boards. Whatever the channels of communication, they should be clearly understood and observed.

On Student Status

When students in American colleges and universities desire to participate responsibly in the government of the institution they attend, their wish should be recognized as a claim to opportunity both for educational experience and for involvement in the affairs of their college or university. Ways should be found to permit significant student participation within the limits of attainable effectiveness. The obstacles to such participation are large and should not be minimized: inexperience, untested capacity, a transitory status which means that present action does not carry with it subsequent responsibility, and the inescapable fact that the other components of the institution are in a position of judgment over the students. It is important to recognize that student needs are strongly related to educational experience, both formal and informal.

Students expect, and have a right to expect, that the educational process will be structured, that they will be stimulated by it to become independent adults, and that they will have effectively transmitted to them the cultural heritage of the larger society. If institutional support is to have its fullest possible meaning, it should incorporate the strength, freshness of view, and idealism of the student body.

The respect of students for their college or university can be enhanced if they are given at least these opportunities: (1) to be listened to in the classroom without fear of institutional reprisal for the substance of their views, (2) freedom to discuss questions of institutional policy and operation, (3) the right to academic due process when charged with serious violations of institutional regulations, and (4) the same right to hear speakers of their own choice as is enjoyed by other components of the institution.

Notes

1. See the 1940 “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure,” AAUP, Policy Documents and Reports, 11th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 13–19., and the 1958 “Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings,” ibid., 91–93. These statements were jointly adopted by the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities) and the American Association of University Professors; the 1940 “Statement” has been endorsed by numerous learned and scientific societies and educational associations. Back to text
2. With respect to faculty members, the 1940 “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” reads: “College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution” (ibid., 14). Back to text

3. Traditionally, governing boards developed within the context of single-campus institutions. In more recent times, governing and coordinating boards have increasingly tended to develop at the multi-campus regional, systemwide, or statewide levels. As influential components of the academic community, these supra-campus bodies bear particular responsibility for protecting the autonomy of individual campuses or institutions under their jurisdiction and for implementing policies of shared responsibility. The American Association of University Professors regards the objectives and practices recommended in the “Statement on Government” as constituting equally appropriate guidelines for such supra-campus bodies, and looks toward continued development of practices that will facilitate application of such guidelines in this new context. [Preceding note adopted by the AAUP’s Council in June 1978.] Back to text

4. With regard to student admissions, the faculty should have a meaningful role in establishing institutional policies, including the setting of standards for admission, and should be afforded opportunity for oversight of the entire admissions process. [Preceding note adopted by the Council in June 2002.] Back to text

5. The American Association of University Professors regards collective bargaining, properly used, as another means of achieving sound academic government. Where there is faculty collective bargaining, the parties should seek to ensure appropriate institutional governance structures which will protect the right of all faculty to participate in institutional governance in accordance with the “Statement on Government.” [Preceding note adopted by the Council in June 1978.] Back to text
Shared Governance in Colleges and Universities

A Statement by the Higher Education Program and Policy Council

A Union of Professionals
AFT Higher Education
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Foreword

For a number of years, we have been hearing calls for a new, more “efficient” way of administering our institutions of higher education. It is said that:

- times have changed;
- colleges and universities ought to be run more like businesses;
- the rapid technological changes taking place—computerization, the Internet, Web-based courses—require adaptability;
- the marketplace of higher education is rapidly changing, with wholly online institutions and for-profit universities creating competitive challenges to our traditional ways;
- faculty are too slow to make decisions to adapt to change and cling to outmoded models of deliberation and reflection when action is required;
- faculty resist efforts to keep the curriculum up to date and inappropriately inject politics—multiculturalism, liberalism—into it; and
- the tenure system stands as an obstacle to greater accountability and improved performance.

Because an ever-growing number of board members and administrators with this mindset have reached positions of responsibility on campus, a direct assault is being launched on the practice of shared governance in higher education. There is a feeling among political leaders, boards of governors (regents or trustees) and top administrators (chancellors, presidents and the like) that any sharing of authority impedes their “right” to make the big decisions. They believe that they know what is best and that faculty and staff should step aside and let the managers take charge.

The American Federation of Teachers, on the other hand, believes this is exactly the wrong way to run a successful college or university. **We believe that all college and university employees—top tenured faculty, junior faculty, temporary and part-time/adjunct faculty, graduate teaching and research assistants, professional staff with and without faculty rank, the classified and support staff that keep the educational enterprise going—should have a guaranteed voice in decision-making, a role in shaping policy in the areas of their expertise.**

1 Throughout this document, terms such as “faculty,” “professional staff” and “staff” (which includes classified and support staff as well as professionals) will be used to refer to the wide variety of college and university employees listed above. The broad range of job titles, nomenclature and ranking systems at each institution makes it impossible to use more specific or uniform terminology.
What Is Shared Governance? Why Is It Important?

Shared governance is the set of practices under which college faculty and staff participate in significant decisions concerning the operation of their institutions. Colleges and universities are very special types of institutions with a unique mission—the creation and dissemination of ideas. For that reason, they have created particular arrangements to serve that mission best. For example, academic tenure protects the status, academic freedom and independent voice of scholars and teachers. Shared governance, in turn, arose out of a recognition that:

- academic decision-making should be largely independent of short-term managerial and political considerations;
- faculty and professional staff are in the best position to shape and implement curriculum and research policy, to select academic colleagues and judge their work; and
- the perspective of all front-line personnel is invaluable in making sound decisions about allocating resources, setting goals, choosing top officers and guiding student life.

It is widely understood that broad participation in decision-making increases the level of employee investment in the institution’s success. As a result, organizational theorists for many years have recommended shared decision-making as a key strategy to improve productivity in all kinds of organizations. In higher education, due to the high turnover rate of top administrators, the faculty and staff are often in the best position to provide the institutional history so valuable to institutional planning. Without that institutional history, institutions are apt to repeat past failures.

Why Is Shared Governance Under Attack?

Until recently, top college administrators, boards of trustees and political leaders could be counted on to recognize and defend the right of individual faculty and staff members and their representative assemblies to participate in the design and implementation of the educational goals and policies of the institution. But no longer. Why?

Increasing numbers of public officials, institutional board members and administrators have come to view higher education as a multi-billion-dollar industry, with money and power to be amassed and used for purposes remote from core academic values such as contemplation, reflection, neutrality, objectivity and critical thinking. To exploit the commer-
cial and political potential of this industry, they seek to run our colleges more on a “corporatized” business model. The corporate model is characterized by commercializing and breaking apart the elements that make higher education great.

The corporatized college president has become the CEO, no longer the academic leader. The agendas of the top administrators in public colleges often are informed by political considerations, not academic ones. The educational mission is seen as just one aspect of a multi-faceted “business” in which the institution is engaged, which may include job training, entertainment, sports, housing, health care, and private corporate research and development. Under the guise of efficiency and confidentiality, top administrators are being recruited by professional search firms with a diminished faculty role in their selection. The voice of the faculty and staff is relegated to an advisory role rather than that of a full partner in the institution’s success.

The Real Crisis In Shared Governance

The corporatized model of college governance has engendered a real crisis in higher education. It threatens the integrity of the key educational and research functions that faculty and staff perform, through:

- outsourcing jobs essential to instruction, including the design of courses and introduction of computer-based teaching elements;
- redirecting the teaching of courses from full-time dedicated professionals to exploited part-time and temporary faculty, graduate teaching and research assistants, with low pay, little security and no academic freedom;
- re-orienting the curriculum toward business-oriented coursework, including more courses designed to “train” students for the “real-world.” Traditionally “academic” courses are pressured to be more “practical,” and generally there is less concern for a broad-based liberal arts curriculum intended to help students develop and mature intellectually into critically thinking democratic citizens;
- buying and selling “courseware,” through the appropriation of computer-based intellectual property for purposes of commercial exploitation;
- developing for-profit teaching and/or research subsidiaries of colleges and universities, which are out of the reach of public scrutiny; and
- forming commercial consortia with other universities and private investors.

Increased workloads, restrictive tenure standards, pressures to incorporate new technologies in teaching and demoralization resulting from top-level assertions of power have had the predictable, if perverse, effect of decreasing the willingness of faculty and staff to participate in the shared governance of their institutions.

The erosion of shared governance imperils the elements that produce quality education and scholarship. Shared governance is like the system of checks and balances in state and federal government. Excessive power and control concentrated in any one level of the institu-
tion virtually guarantees that there will be a distorted perspective on crucial aspects of the academic enterprise. When politicians, boards and administrators seek to “corporatize” higher education, they hurt the recipients of educational value, namely students and the public.

Shared Governance Should Be Strengthened and Expanded
The interdependence among constituent groups at all levels of the college requires complex coordination, excellent communication among the levels, and appropriate joint planning and execution. Faculty and administrators depend on a wide variety of specialist co-workers to perform their academic functions. In the increasingly complex world of higher education, many of the traditional duties of those holding faculty rank have been reassigned or shared with other professionals. For instance, many groups of specialists assist in key ways:

- student counselors provide academic and career guidance;
- information technologists help enhance teaching, learning and research; and
- laboratory managers and assistants maintain and teach scientific work in laboratories.

Part-time/adjunct faculty used to be literally adjunct to the central instructional function, but they have become indispensable and ubiquitous, though overused and exploited, in many colleges. Classified and support staff, traditionally not represented at the table, also deserve representative participation in making decisions related to their areas of expertise.

Employees of all kinds have long sought vehicles for effective voice in workplace decisions, often through unions and professional associations. In some states and institutions, staff members without faculty rank have been explicitly included—sometimes mandated by statute—in representative decision-making and planning committees, task forces and assemblies. At hundreds of institutions, academic and classified staff have expressed their right to be heard through engagement in collective bargaining. In still other cases, their voice is ignored. When their influence is denied a place in policy making, the institution and its students suffer.
The following are six basic principles of shared governance that should be observed in establishing, maintaining and strengthening our institutions.

**Faculty and professional staff set academic standards and curriculum**
Faculty and professional staff, particularly those directly involved in teaching and conducting research, should have the lead role in determining the content of the curriculum, degree and certificate requirements, standards of instruction, student achievement standards, grading, and all matters relating to student progress in academic programs. To fulfill this responsibility effectively, faculty and professional staff must be given access to information and resources. Their judgments should be subject to overrule only rarely, with compelling reasons provided in writing and with an opportunity for response by the faculty and professional staff.

**Faculty and professional staff require academic freedom**
Faculty and professional staff must be able to exercise independent academic judgment in the conduct of their teaching and research. Administrators should not interfere in these matters except in proven cases of academic incompetence or wrongdoing. A strong tenure system is the bulwark of protecting academic freedom against intimidation and arbitrary dismissal. Beyond that, protections of free expression should be extended to all staff to ensure openness, objectivity and creativity.

**Faculty and professional staff should have primacy in decisions on academic personnel and status**
Faculty should have the primary role in interviewing and recommending candidates for academic appointment to the faculty, for tenure and promotion, research support, sabbaticals, and other incentives and measures of academic quality. Similarly, professional staff should have the primary role in interviewing and recommending candidates for appointment to their ranks, for advancement in academic status and promotion and for other incentives and measures of professional quality. Administrative overrule of these decisions should be rare and for compelling reasons, given in writing, and be subject to individual and collective response.

**Participation in shared governance should be expanded**
A well-functioning college or university is one that ensures that all faculty and all staff—from full professors to adjunct lecturers, from librarians to departmental support staff—
have suitable arrangements for their voices to be heard and given proper weight in decisions that affect the mission and operation of the institution. For example, all faculty and staff should play a direct and prominent role in developing and advising on institutional budgets. All faculty and staff should have a leading role on institutional committees, task forces and decision-making bodies that affect their work and are within their areas of expertise, including search committees for choosing presidents and administrators.

Given the growing interdependence among faculty, staff, students, administrators and institutional boards, all of those who aid in the design and/or implementation of the academic mission of the college or university have a stake in shared governance. While full-time faculty have traditionally been able to claim a central role along with top administrators and boards, a number of trends, accelerating since the last quarter of the twentieth century, favor the expansion of governance roles to other staff. For instance, the increased specialization of traditional academic functions, away from active faculty involvement and toward professional and technical personnel, necessitates the inclusion of these experts into appropriate roles in shared governance. Similarly, the enlargement of the role of non-tenure-track and part-time/adjunct faculty, as well as of graduate employees (teaching and research assistants) calls for the development of appropriate means and mechanisms to draw them into shared governance.

The forms of shared governance and degrees of participation will vary according to the particular institutional arrangements currently in place, but each group whose work contributes to the academic enterprise should be involved in a manner appropriate to its institutional function and responsibilities.

Unions, representative assemblies and faculty senates all can have significant roles in shared governance

The organizational forms of shared governance differ among institutions, depending on institutional history, norms and customs. In many institutions, these forms are called senates or assemblies, though these terms are not definitive, for faculty senates may include or exclude administrators, non-teaching professionals, non-tenure-track and part-time faculty.

In many colleges and universities, faculty and staff have turned to collective bargaining, both as a way to increase the influence of their voices, to provide institutional means for their voices to be heard and represented in the absence of pre-existing roles for them in shared governance, or to support and bolster the existing structures of shared governance. Unionization is a basic democratic right of all employees. Higher education unions are democratically elected representatives of these employees with a legitimate role in shared governance.

A standard management tactic, however, is to attempt to convince faculty and staff—especially during campaigns to establish collective bargaining—that the existence of a faculty or staff union will destroy the “collegiality” of the shared governance process. In particular, the argument goes, the union will take over the powers and responsibilities of the faculty senate or whatever the governance body is called.
The position of the American Federation of Teachers has always been that the functions of the union and the governance bodies complement, rather than compete with, each other. Despite predictions by opponents of unionization that the presence of a faculty or staff union would destroy the shared governance body and shatter collegiality, this observation is unfounded. In fact, the opposite is often true.

Unions and collective bargaining do not and should not supplant effective structures of shared governance, i.e., those structures that derive their legitimacy from genuine representation of faculty and staff. When faculty and staff choose unions and collective bargaining, they do so because a clear majority believe that the existing structure is not sufficient to guarantee full and true collegiality—the kind that comes from working with top administrators and board members as equal partners on the basis of legally enforceable rights and responsibilities.

Specifically, collective bargaining strengthens collegiality by establishing and enforcing contractual ground rules supporting it. Typically, committee procedures developed in the institution’s shared governance traditions have been incorporated into union contracts, strengthening the senate’s (or other body’s) role and preserving collegial practices. One can think of it in the following way: the union itself is one form of shared governance, but one that is able to create the conditions under which other shared governance mechanisms like the faculty senate can operate successfully and without administrative interference. In the end, we believe that the strongest shared governance systems are based on sound collective bargaining contracts that clearly delineate an active role for faculty and staff at the institution.

On a college-by-college basis, it is important that the respective roles of the union and the shared governance structures be understood mutually. There is no one template for shared governance for all institutions of higher education, nor should there be. Differences among colleges will be based, among other things, on the federal, state and local legal mandates governing particular colleges and universities, on the requirements of applicable labor laws, on institutional traditions, on the terms of the collective bargaining agreement and on the institution’s circumstances of labor-management relations.

Accrediting agencies should support fully the concept of shared governance in their standards

Regional and specialized accrediting agencies, whose role it is to establish standards for higher education institutions, should guarantee that enforceable shared governance procedures are not only included in written institutional policies, but also are practiced in reality. For instance, as institutions shift more course work into a distance education medium, accrediting agencies should ensure that faculty and staff remain as deeply involved in setting curriculum and academic standards as they are in traditional courses and that their teaching continues to be protected by academic freedom.
In whatever shared governance structures exist or are created, faculty and staff must have representatives of their own choosing. They must respect the rights of other participants in shared governance.

Institutional structures of shared governance should be constructed to incorporate the views of faculty and staff at all levels of decision-making. The institution’s administrators must provide the participants in shared governance time, encouragement and the information necessary to be effective.

Shared governance is vital to maintain the academic integrity of our colleges and universities, to prevent the pressures of commercialization from distorting the institution’s educational mission or eroding standards and quality, and to uphold the ideals of academic freedom and democratic practice. Strengthening shared governance is the responsibility of all colleges and universities, and a priority of our union.
**Which faculty decisions are shared?**

There are many potential topics for shared decision-making in departments. Some of the most common, and most challenging, include:

- Recommending faculty hires to Dean
- Suggesting Chair appointments to Dean
- Adopting/amending bylaws
- Tenure and promotion deliberation process
- Electing faculty to committees
- Changing curricula
- Recommending office space/lab allocations
- Merit deliberations

Faculty can be involved in many other different kinds of decisions, such as identifying speakers to invite to campus, student awards, ensuring faculty and student success, and other activities.

**What problem do we want to solve?**

In many departments, faculty actively discuss and make decisions together through voting or consensus. But decision-making can be fraught, and many departments continue to use decision-making models premised on less diverse faculty bodies.

Members of groups that are underrepresented in the field – by gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, first-generation status, religion, ability status, etc. – often have less influence in decision-making, even in consensus models. Speaking up publicly can be difficult, especially when rank plays into decision-making. For example, Professors may have greater influence in decision-making; tenure track faculty may also have greater influence or voting privileges than non-tenure track faculty. Yet, hiring decisions may matter a great deal to more junior faculty who may be living with a new colleague for more years.

The goal of shared decision-making is for faculty to trust one another and work together to make decisions. Consensus, trust, and communication are key.

*This resource is based on presentations made by James Allan, Itai Sher, and Eve Weinbaum.*

**What does the MSP contract require?**

- Units should follow departmental bylaws for decision-making and votes; bylaws must be voted on by faculty members in the unit.
- Some votes (such as appointing a new Chair/Head) are advisory to the Dean, but the faculty must approve the search committee’s recommendation.
- Only bargaining unit faculty (in MSP) can deliberate and vote on personnel decisions such as tenure and promotion; Chairs/Heads weigh in separately.

**What other principles does MSP recommend?**

- All faculty with 50% or greater appointments should be eligible for committee service, invited to faculty meetings, and given full voting rights as defined in bylaws (e.g. “at rank and above”).
- Departmental PCs ideally will be informed by input from the greater faculty. DPC of the whole (e.g. DPC made up of all faculty or all tenured faculty) might require attendance (e.g. eligible voters must have reviewed the materials and participated in the discussion to vote).
- Any important votes – hiring, chair selection, etc., should be conducted through secret ballot.
- Bylaws should be adopted or amended through 2/3rds or greater votes.
- Faculty retain voting rights while on leave, but are not required to attend meetings or vote when on leave.
- Remote participation (such as Zoom) should be allowed in meetings and voting.
HOW DO MODIFIED CONSENSUS MODELS WORK?
There are many different strategies. The College of Information and Computer Sciences at UMass Amherst, a unit with around 70 faculty members, follows these strategies:

- Most decisions are made by the faculty as a whole under the assumption of collegiality and the ability to come to some consensus.
- Consensus is operationalized as a 2/3rds vote in favor of any proposal (formally making this a supermajority rather than consensus model).
- The department uses anonymous IClickers (checked out from the library) to record votes.
- Some decisions require weekly or biweekly meetings.
- Decisions may be piloted through an elected “executive committee.”
- Committee appointments reflect faculty preferences, except elected Executive and Personnel committees.

HOW SHOULD FACULTY HIRING DECISIONS BE STRUCTURED?

- Faculty should vote on recommended fields for hires; recruitment committees should be diverse by rank and other factors, but include faculty members with relevant expertise.
- Recruitment committee should be responsible for reading files and selecting a long short-list; in some departments, faculty members are allowed to weigh in on those top candidates.
- When short-list candidates are brought to campus, all faculty members should be allowed to view job talk, review materials, meet candidates, and engage in deliberations about which candidates should be hired.
- Allowing faculty to discuss and vote on their top candidates can help guarantee that they have wide support. Only faculty who engage in the hiring process should vote.

WHEN SHOULD DEPARTMENTS USE MAJORITY VOTING?
If there are two choices – Yes and No – or Candidate A or B – majority voting works well. Some departments expect 50% for hiring NTT or untenured faculty, and 66% for hiring tenured faculty.

WHEN SHOULD DEPARTMENTS USE OTHER APPROACHES?
If there are multiple choices, e.g. four job candidates, majority voting can be less effective at identifying those with the most support. Ranked-choice voting or Condorcet voting take into account the full complexity of how multiple candidates are ranked, and only require one ballot to do so.

Ranked-choice voting models use ranked lists to determine who has the most support. If there are candidates A, B, C, and D:

- Ask faculty members to rank A, B, C, and D, as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice (faculty can leave out any candidates that are not acceptable).
- If any candidate wins a majority of votes, that candidate is the top choice. If not, eliminate the candidate with fewest first choice votes, e.g. for all ballots that voted for B first, apportion their second-choice votes to A, C, and D. If any candidate wins a majority of the votes, that candidate is the top choice.
- If still no winner, eliminate candidate with next fewest first choice votes, e.g. if C had the next fewest votes, take all ballots that voted for C first and apportion their second or third choice votes to A and D.
- Winner receives majority of votes. This can be used to identify the order for cascading offers.

Condorcet voting models use ranked lists to run head-to-head votes for each candidate against each candidate. If there are candidates A, B, C, and D:

- Ask faculty members to rank A, B, C, and D, as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choice (faculty can leave out any candidates that are not acceptable)
- Use ballots to run vote for A against B; A against C; A against D. (We can tell who a voter prefers in a head-to-head election from their ranking.)
- Use ballots to run vote B against C; B against D.
- Use ballots to run vote C against D.
- If a candidate wins all matches, they are the winner. If not, use another method (such as ranked choice).

FOR MORE INFORMATION
MSP, Fairvote, UMass ADVANCE

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Shared Governance: What it Is and Is Not

Gen Guanci MEd, RN-BC, CCRN-K is a consultant at Creative Health Care Management.

Shared governance pioneer Tim Porter-O’Grady defines shared governance as “a structural model through which nurses can express and manage their practice with a higher level of professional autonomy.” (2003). When originally introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, shared governance waxed and waned in its popularity. Today, it has become the preferred leadership model for transformational leaders throughout healthcare. Despite its rise in popularity, challenges still remain regarding what shared governance is and more importantly, what it is not.

Shared governance is a structure and process for partnership, equity, accountability, and ownership. It puts the responsibility, authority, and accountability for practice-related decisions into the hands of the individuals who will operationalize the decision. I often hear people say they have shared governance. They then go on to share an example, that for me, is clearly participatory leadership. There is no doubt that clarity about the difference between participatory management and shared governance is needed as organizations implement or strengthen their shared governance culture. Let’s take a closer look at the difference through the following example.

A group of staff is asked to trial several versions of the same product. The group completes this trial by comparing the various products, and then they forward their feedback to leadership. Leadership reviews the staff feedback and makes the final decision on what will be purchased. Leadership may or may not take into account staff feedback, yet, the staff did have the opportunity to participate in the product decision. This is clearly participatory management.
Using a shared governance approach, let’s re-run the same scenario. A group of staff is asked to trial several versions of the same product and identify the product to be purchased. Leadership articulates the parameters or criteria that must be met by the product for it to be purchased. These parameters often include things such as budget amount, vendors in the organization’s buying group, quantity needed, etc. Upon completion of the trial, staff forwards their feedback to leadership. In addition to this feedback, staff informs leadership that the product they have chosen meets all the articulated parameters/criteria. Upon receiving this information, leadership thanks the group and proceeds to order the product identified by the shared decision-making staff group. Because of the articulated parameters/criteria, the response from leadership in a shared governance culture would be “thank you,” and the purchase is processed through the system. This is true shared governance... leadership shared the parameters/criteria, and staff made the decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory Management</th>
<th>Shared Governance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaders request input from staff to determine goals; use of input is optional.</td>
<td>Staff are given the responsibility, authority, and accountability to determine what goals to pursue.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of input</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use of input</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader is not required to use staff input.</td>
<td>Staff obtains input from colleagues and others.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How decisions are made</strong></td>
<td><strong>How decisions are made</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final decision lies with leader, who may accept or reject staff input.</td>
<td>Leaders clearly articulate the guidelines for the decision (e.g., “We have $10,000 to spend on xx”) and staff make autonomous decisions that stay within the guidelines.</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership style</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leadership style</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical leader</td>
<td>Servant leader</td>
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<td><strong>Level at which decisions are made</strong></td>
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<td>Centralized decision making</td>
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So just what IS shared governance? Shared governance IS

- a model that ensure that decisions are made by the people working at the point of care,
- a leadership development strategy,
- a way to identify future positional leader,
- a tenant of professional practice; or
- a key expression of organizational culture.

Shared governance IS NOT

- the replacement or elimination of positional leadership;
- a strategy to support downsizing of leadership;
- self-governance; or
- abdication of leadership responsibilities. (adapted from Guanci and Medeiros, 2018)
All involved in shared governance must have clarity that there are structures, processes, and outcomes that leadership will continue to have responsibility for, such as regulatory requirements, immediate safety concerns, performance management, and operations decisions such as hiring, salary, staffing, etc. Decisions related to practice are the ones that should be decided in a shared decision-making model.

Time spent implementing, strengthening, and/or deepening a shared governance culture is time well spent. The ROI will be seen in the outcomes of shared governance work, including improved patient experience, clinical outcomes, and staff engagement.

What has been your experience with shared governance?

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The commitment to shared governance is too often a mile wide and an inch deep. Board members, faculty leaders, and presidents extol the value of shared governance, but it frequently means something different to each of them. When that is the case, at the first bump in the road, participants can become frustrated, sometimes walking away from a commitment to do the hard work of good governance. Worse yet, when that happens, there may be mutual recriminations that can cripple the institution for years. Much has been written on the benefits of shared governance, but less has been written on practical steps to take to make shared governance work.
Effective and responsive governance is vitally important during times of change in higher education. Sharing governance in the face of sweeping and transformative change can help shift the thinking of boards, faculty, and staff from protecting yesterday’s parochial interests to aligning efforts to address tomorrow’s realities. When efforts are aligned, solutions are often more thoughtful and implementation time is faster.

The trends pressuring many colleges and universities are numerous, and they demand unprecedented cooperation and collaboration among boards, administrators, and presidents. They include:

- Heightened competition from institutions delivering online and non-traditional types of higher education that require faculty and boards to develop timely, unified, and mission-sensitive responses;
- The drumbeat of calls for stronger student outcomes, including better graduation rates and placement rates, which requires building consensus among the board, administration, and faculty; and
- Affordability and accessibility issues that require all within the institution to better focus on doing their part to create the best value for an increasingly diverse set of students.

The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges has called for “integral leadership” from leaders of colleges and universities. Recently, in a publication called Top 10 Strategic Issues for Boards, 2013–2014, AGB provided this compelling definition of integral leadership:

“To accomplish these goals, many governing boards have moved to a model of integral leadership—collaborative but decisive leadership that can energize the vital partnership between boards and presidents.
Integral leadership links the president, faculty, and board in a well-functioning partnership purposefully devoted to a well-defined, broadly affirmed institutional vision.”

The bolded phrases in this definition are areas enhanced and strengthened through strong systems of sharing governance. Effective shared governance increases collaboration, creates useful links between constituencies, and builds needed partnerships.

But it can do so much more. When shared governance is viewed as more than a set of boundaries and rules of engagement, it can create a system where the integral leaders move beyond the fragmentation of traditional governance. They move to shared responsibility for identifying and pursuing an aligned set of sustainable strategic directions. And though it may take time to develop these priorities, once they’re identified, each constituency can be more decisive in implementing tactics to advance them.

There are five best practices that cut across various types of institutions, whether public or private, unionized or non-unionized, four-year colleges or community colleges, traditional or specialized. Although these types of institutions are different in many ways, including how boards and faculties are structured, they still have much in common. Each board has similar fiduciary and supervisory duties, and each faculty has substantial responsibility for the curriculum. And every institution sometimes experiences a degree of tension between faculty members and board members.

The five practices below, when deliberately followed, create the alignment in which administrators, board members, and faculty members become integral leaders.

1. Actively engage board members, administrators, and faculty leaders in a serious discussion of what shared governance is (and
Faculty members and trustees tend to disagree on how to define shared governance and what to expect from it. Faculty members often view it as equal rights to governance. That is the most literal view of the word “shared” in shared governance—as in “share and share alike.” While this view might be attractive in theory, it is problematic in practice. Faculty members do not have veto power over decisions that are within the primary fiduciary and oversight responsibilities of the board. Similarly, although boards are ultimately, as fiduciaries, responsible for the academic quality of their institutions, trustees should only rarely exercise any power they have to veto core academic decisions.

Likewise, board members and administrators sometimes view shared governance as the obligation to consult with faculty before decisions are made, particularly those directly influencing the academic program. But faculty members often expect more than mere consultation prior to implementation of a decision. They expect to be at the table at key junctures in the decision-making process, instead of appearing for a pro forma consultation after the decision is made. Faculty members tend to view accountability differently than do board members, seeing it as steadfast adherence to a collegial process with wide participation, while board members tend to value process less and judge accountability by strong outcomes. Boards lose credibility with the faculty if they shortcut agreed-upon processes.

Board leaders, faculty leaders, and presidents should openly discuss how they view shared governance. How does each constituency define shared governance and how significant are the differences?

The first step to having a meaningful discussion of expectations is for the president, faculty leaders, and board leaders to state publicly their support for shared governance. At the same time, leaders should make it clear that shared governance is not a sword for gaining the upper hand in policy debates. Rather, it’s a system for building communication, respect, and trust—with an eye toward developing integral leaders at all levels.

For institutions that enjoy effective shared governance, faculty
leaders and board leaders should seek agreement on each of these five fundamental propositions:

- Shared governance is a central value of integral leadership that requires continued hard work, open communication, trust, and respect.
- The faculty has the central role in setting academic policy, and the board should hold faculty leaders responsible for ensuring academic quality.
- While board members have fiduciary responsibility for many of the business and financial decisions of the college, they should consider the views of the faculty before making important decisions.
- In cases of disagreement between faculty and board members about decisions where both have responsibilities (e.g., tenure and retrenchment), faculty handbooks and other governing documents should clearly state how disagreements are addressed and by whom.
- The most important aspect of shared governance is developing systems of open communication where faculty members, board members, and administrators work to align and implement strategic priorities.

Though all constituencies may not agree on the details, it is hard to disagree with the spirit of these five propositions and underlying principles. Once constituencies are in general agreement on these propositions, the way is paved to develop a commonly understood view of shared governance and a culture of shared mutual responsibility for the welfare of the institution.

2. Periodically assess the state of shared governance and develop an action plan to improve it.

Shared governance at most institutions is far from perfect, because it is difficult, messy, and imprecise work. The first step to improvement is to develop an accurate assessment of the state of shared governance at the institution. That can be done in different ways. Some institutions may want to develop formal surveys. Others may want more informal discussions through an appointed task force or discussions at board meetings and retreats.
The following questions get to the heart of the “health” of shared governance:

- What does each constituency expect from effective shared governance? What are the benchmarks of good governance? How do these definitions and expectations differ?
- Do faculty members believe that the board and administration are transparent about important college matters? Do board members believe the administration and the faculty are transparent in sharing information about student learning outcomes, how the outcomes are assessed, and how the curriculum supports student achievement?
- Do the faculty and board believe they receive sufficient information from the administration to participate in making good decisions? Is the information presented in an easily understandable form?
- Do faculty members believe that the structure of faculty governance will facilitate shared governance?
- Does the board believe that its own structure encourages sharing governance with faculty?
- Do faculty members understand how board decisions are made and vice versa?
- Is it clear who makes what decisions, who is to be consulted, and who must approve?
- How well are faculty members informed about how the board works and vice versa?
- Is there shared agreement on the strategic priorities of the college?
- In an open-ended question, what suggestions do those who complete the survey have for improving shared governance?

Board members and administrators must be thick-skinned when asking for a candid assessment from faculty members. When members of the faculty, administrators, and board members discuss these questions, each usually progresses toward a more mutual expectation of shared governance. In the process, each gains the trust of the other, strengthening the social capital that will move the institution ahead in difficult times.

As a way of drawing these discussions to a conclusion, the president should consider appointing an ad hoc task force or working group to...
create strategies for improving shared governance by building trust, open communication, and ways to resolve differences amicably.

3. Expressly support strong faculty governance of the academic program.

If a faculty can’t effectively govern itself, it will be too fragmented, or even dysfunctional, to meaningfully and responsibly share in the governance of the institution. A faculty that is able to take strong, unified, and even bold collective action can help move from shared governance to shared responsibility.

Robert Zemsky, the founding director of the Institute for Research on Higher Education, recently put it this way: “I would start by having faculty relearn the importance of collective actions—to talk less about shared governance, which too often has become a rhetorical sword to wield against an aggrandizing administration, and to talk instead about sharing responsibility for the work to be done together.”

While boards and administrations shouldn’t, and really can’t, establish structures that ensure the faculty functions well, they can take several simple steps to encourage effective faculty governance:

- Boards and presidents should reward strong faculty governance by stating the importance of the faculty making appropriate and timely decisions, and valuing those actions. Board chairs should do that at board and committee meetings when faculty members are in attendance, and presidents should make such acknowledgments at faculty meetings and at general “state of the college” addresses.
- Boards should give legitimacy to faculty leaders by inviting them to the table at crucial junctures in a decision-making process. That may include invitations to board committee meetings, full board meetings, and board retreats.
- Board leaders, the president, and the chief academic officer should meet annually with faculty leaders, aside from normal board meetings and faculty meeting times. Doing so allows for a full and open exchange of ideas.
- Presidents should include faculty leaders in leadership programs, particularly in internal programs that the institution
maintains for administrators. Many faculty members have no leadership training and little experience. Supporting faculty leadership development also may have the benefit of grooming the next dean, provost, or even president.

- Board members should avoid circumventing faculty leaders by giving undue attention to those who express individual concerns not widely held by other members of the faculty. When seeking to understand the sense of the faculty, trustees should rely on elected faculty leadership, not that one professor who seeks to get around the faculty governance process by filing a special brief with the board.

Strong faculty leadership, combined with an effective board and integral presidential leadership, leads to a nimble system of shared governance that addresses challenges and seizes opportunities in a timely way.

4. Maintain a steadfast commitment to three-way transparency and frequent communication.

Effective shared governance depends on three-way transparency. The faculty can’t adequately participate in governance if they do not have the information from which to develop informed positions. Board members can’t appropriately exercise their general oversight of the institution’s academic program if the faculty withholds important facts about the value of the program. And presidents who withhold information from either of the other constituencies as a way of consolidating their power or dividing and conquering are not integral leaders.

Best practices for sharing information with the faculty include:

- Prepare and distribute a simple one-page chart describing who makes which decisions. The chart should describe different decisions across the vertical axis and decision makers (e.g., faculty senate, the president, the board, the executive committee) across the horizontal axis. Within each of the boxes, the role of the respective decision makers is listed (e.g., consultation, recommendation, making initial decisions, approving of decision, acting as appellate body). The chart should pay special attention to the budget process and faculty
tenure and promotion.

- Share board and committee agendas with the faculty and other members of the community before board meetings. Include a summary of actions taken by the board shortly after the meeting.
- Clearly communicate decisions being considered by the board and the president’s executive cabinet, why those decisions are before the board or the president’s cabinet, the timetable for the decision, and the extent of the faculty’s opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Give faculty leaders an opportunity to discuss their views.
- Conduct periodic faculty forums with key decision makers presenting. The board chair could present on how the board makes decisions. The chief financial officer could present on how budgets are developed.
- Encourage faculty leaders to observe board meetings and committee meetings, where appropriate.

5. Develop deliberate ways to increase social capital between board members and members of the faculty.

As board members, faculty members, and administrators work together, they will naturally develop social capital. But social capital also can be developed and deepened outside of the formal shared-governance process. Consider these possible practices:

- With faculty members’ permission (and not regularly), consider inviting board members to a faculty meeting, followed by a reception. Board members usually are impressed with the quality of deliberation at these meetings, just as faculty members usually are impressed with the quality of deliberation at board meetings.
- If the institution has a required first-year book to read, consider providing the book to the board with an opportunity before or after the board meeting to discuss the book with members of the faculty.
- Seat board members and faculty members in the same area at athletic events, concerts, and other special occasions, and at board meetings and dinners where both are present.
- Publish trustee and faculty leadership biographies. Let faculty members know that board members may be available as guest
• Invite a board member to participate in part of a study-abroad program or field trip for students.
• Invite board members to celebrations of student and faculty scholarship.
• Hold a reception during each board meeting on campus to give the community the chance to get to know the board, and vice versa.

Following such practices can help institutions build the trust and respect needed to sustain shared governance through good and bad times. In doing so, the institution moves from the traditional approach of shared governance to the more dynamic approach of shared responsibility.
Hurricane Katrina, in September 2005, shut down the Tulane campus for five months.
Over the course of my career, I’ve observed two speeds of governance: foot-on-the-brake for everyday business and pedal-to-the-metal for existential decisions. I’ve also grappled with how to honor the process of shared governance without slowing decision-making to a crawl, especially in situations that require immediate action. A first step is to make sure that everyone understands that the sharing in “shared governance” isn’t equally distributed, nor does it imply decision-making authority. That authority is held by the president and the board, the ones who are accountable for both results and shortcomings.

I used to say that when Hurricane Katrina nearly destroyed Tulane University, in the fall of 2005, it was the temporary suspension of shared governance that allowed us to recover. Our renewal plan, which involved tremendous institutional restructuring in a short time, precluded the lengthy deliberations prescribed by normal governance procedures. But with the benefit of hindsight and another decade of experience in university leadership, I’ve come to realize that what occurred after Katrina was not, in fact, the suspension of shared governance, but rather the emergence of a more effective and unencumbered version of shared governance.

Specifically, the Faculty Advisory Committee, a subgroup of elected representatives that assumes the University Senate’s powers and responsibilities when the Senate cannot function, was key to what happened in the five crucial months when Tulane was closed after the hurricane — when schools were consolidated, several programs eliminated, and a number of staff and faculty positions terminated. The committee members’ commitment to partnering with the administration and the governing board, their constructive critiques of the proposals, and their role as representatives of the full Senate were essential to the renewal plan itself, as well as to its acceptance by the Tulane community.

A transformation as swift and sweeping as the one we underwent generally seems unthinkable in higher education. What made it possible was not only a crisis that forced us to reimagine what Tulane could be, but also a leaner, expedited shared governance that was able to rapidly enact the decisive changes. That is, shared governance is not an
impediment to action — an idea I may have unwittingly communicated in my description of our exceptional governance situation after Katrina — but a competitive advantage, one that differentiates institutions of higher education from many other organizations in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

What does this mean for shared governance at colleges in “normal” times? Crises are energizing — there’s nothing like a hurricane to bring everyone together — but the current climate of uncertainty and upheaval in higher education, with public approval declining, financial stresses increasing, and social issues playing out on campuses, poses its own set of existential challenges. How can colleges generate the sense of purpose, urgency, and unity that follows on the heels of a Katrina, even without Katrina?

The best model, I believe, is a university senate — composed of elected representatives and chaired by a president genuinely open to rational persuasion and debate — that brings together diverse constituents, including faculty, staff, and students, encourages spirited dialogue, and provides a direct line to the institution’s leadership, including its governing board. I would also recommend the creation of an executive committee of the senate, which under ordinary circumstances would periodically interact with trustees to confer on substantive issues regarding the college’s future, but which would also have the authority to act quickly should the need arise.

Defining and communicating “the need” is a crucial element. Though some people may not perceive the gravity of a developing reputational or fiscal crisis, such threats warrant an all-hands-on-deck mentality, and it’s the president’s responsibility to evoke a sense of urgency by making the crisis real for everyone. A crisis narrative, when based on facts and conveyed effectively by a leader, can generate the sense of coherent purpose that pulls the community together and spurs people to action with or without a bona fide crisis.

While not without its critics, Arizona State University is one of those institutions that have undergone a major transformation, in the face of financial pressures, based on the perceived need to change and a strong vision of the future. Under the leadership of Michael Crow and with increasing buy-in from faculty members and administrators over the years, ASU has consolidated academic departments into large units, formed public-
private partnerships, and expanded online offerings in an effort to embody the “New American University.”

Another way to create a sense of communal purpose and a basis for action is through initiatives that encourage reflection about roles and responsibilities. For example, Gustavus Adolphus College hosted a series of open meetings with the theme of “working together on working together.” Another example is Fort Lewis College, where a yearlong process of revising its mission statement involved everyone from administrators to students. Even in a noncrisis situation, a continuing conversation about mission and meaning can elicit enthusiasm, commitment, and esprit d’corps.

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To help colleges survive and thrive in a rapidly evolving environment, we must create space for change through effective decision-making. A new model of shared governance that is inclusive but also nimble and flexible will be necessary.

Faculty and staff members and students will need to understand and accept their roles as advisers, as opposed to decision makers; an executive committee will need to be prepared to step up when the going gets tough and time is of the essence; trustees will need to do justice to the great responsibility they’ve been entrusted with; and the president, who is both leader and follower, will need to hold the conductor’s baton and help everyone keep the tempo. That kind of equilibrium will put us at a competitive advantage during these uncertain times.

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Exactly What Is ‘Shared Governance’?

By Gary A. Olson

JULY 23, 2009
At a recent conference of college administrators, several of us had an impromptu discussion over lunch about the meaning of “shared governance.” The consensus? That term is often invoked but much misunderstood by both faculty members and many administrators.

“Some of my faculty believe that shared governance literally means that a committee votes on some new plan or proposal and that’s it—it gets implemented,” said a seasoned department head. “There is no sense of sharing, of who is sharing what with whom.”

A dean chimed in that a faculty leader at her institution actually told her that shared governance means that professors, who are the “heart of the university,” delegate the governance of their universities to administrators, whose role is to provide a support network for the faculty. “He said, in all seriousness, that faculty have the primary role of governing the university and that administrators are appointed to spare them from the more distasteful managerial labor,” said the dean with incredulity.

That may be a more commonly held notion in academe than it at first appears. I know several faculty senators at one institution who regularly refer to faculty as “governance,” as in “You’re administration, and we’re governance.” That expression reveals a deep misunderstanding of the mechanism of shared governance—and presupposes an inherently adversarial relationship.

The phrase shared governance is so hackneyed that it is becoming what some linguists call an “empty” or “floating” signifier, a term so devoid of determinate meaning that it takes on whatever significance a particular speaker gives it at the moment. Once a term arrives at that point, it is essentially useless.

Shared governance is not a simple matter of committee consensus, or the faculty’s engaging administrators to take on the dirty work, or any number of other common misconceptions. Shared governance is much more complex; it is a delicate balance
between faculty and staff participation in planning and decision-making processes, on the one hand, and administrative accountability on the other.

The truth is that all legal authority in any university originates from one place and one place only: its governing board. Whether it is a private college created by a charter, or a public institution established by law or constitution, the legal right and obligation to exercise authority over an institution is vested in and flows from its board. Typically, the board then formally delegates authority over the day-to-day operation of the institution (often in an official “memorandum of delegation”) to the president, who, in turn, may delegate authority over certain parts of university management to other university officials—for example, granting authority over academic personnel and programs to the provost as the chief academic officer, and so on.

Over time, the system of shared governance has evolved to include more and more representation in the decision-making process. The concept really came of age in the 1960s, when colleges began to liberalize many of their processes. In fact, an often-cited document on the subject, “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities,” was issued jointly by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges in the mid-60s. That statement attempted to affirm the importance of shared governance and state some common principles.

The fact that the primary organization championing faculty concerns, the body devoted to preparing future academic administrators, and the association promoting best practices in serving on governing boards together endorsed the statement illustrates that university governance is a collaborative venture.

“Shared” governance has come to connote two complementary and sometimes overlapping concepts: giving various groups of people a share in key decision-making processes, often through elected representation; and allowing certain groups to exercise primary responsibility for specific areas of decision making.
To illustrate the first notion of how shared governance works, I’d like to revisit a 2007 column, “But She Was Our Top Choice,” in which I discussed the search process for academic administrators and attempted to explain why hiring committees are commonly asked to forward an unranked list of “acceptable” candidates. I wrote that shared governance, especially in the context of a search for a senior administrator, means that professors, staff members, and sometimes students have an opportunity to participate in the process—unlike the bad old days when a university official often would hire whomever he (and it was invariably a male) wanted, without consulting anyone.

“Shared” means that everyone has a role: The search committee evaluates applications, selects a shortlist of candidates, conducts preliminary interviews, contacts references, chooses a group of finalists to invite to campus, solicits input about the candidates from appropriate stakeholders, and determines which of the finalists are acceptable. Then it’s up to the final decision maker, who is responsible for conducting background checks and entering into formal negotiations with the front-runner, and who is ultimately held responsible for the success (or failure) of the appointment.

“Shared” doesn’t mean that every constituency gets to participate at every stage. Nor does it mean that any constituency exercises complete control over the process. A search cannot be a simple matter of a popular vote because someone must remain accountable for the final decision, and committees cannot be held accountable. Someone has to exercise due diligence and contact the front-runner’s current and former supervisors to discover if there are any known skeletons that are likely to re-emerge. If I am the hiring authority and I appoint someone who embezzled money from a previous institution, I alone am responsible. No committee or group can be held responsible for such a lack of due diligence.

That’s a good example of shared governance as it daily plays out in many areas of university decision making. No one person is arbitrarily making important decisions.
absent the advice of key constituents; nor is decision making simply a function of a group vote. The various stakeholders participate in well-defined parts of the process.

The second common, but overlapping, concept of shared governance is that certain constituencies are given primary responsibility over decision making in certain areas. A student senate, for example, might be given primary (but not total) responsibility for devising policies relevant to student governance. The most obvious example is that faculty members traditionally exercise primary responsibility over the curriculum. Because professors are the experts in their disciplines, they are the best equipped to determine degree requirements and all the intricacies of a complex university curriculum. That is fitting and proper.

But even in this second sense of shared governance—in which faculty members exercise a great deal of latitude over the curriculum—a committee vote is not the final word. In most universities, even curricular changes must be approved by an accountable officer: a dean or the university provost, and sometimes even the president. In still other institutions, the final approval rests with the board itself, as it does for many curricular decisions in my own university and state.

Clearly, when it comes to university governance, “shared” is a much more capacious concept than most people suspect. True shared governance attempts to balance maximum participation in decision making with clear accountability. That is a difficult balance to maintain, which may explain why the concept has become so fraught. Genuine shared governance gives voice (but not necessarily ultimate authority) to concerns common to all constituencies as well as to issues unique to specific groups.

The key to genuine shared governance is broad and unending communication. When various groups of people are kept in the loop and understand what developments are occurring within the university, and when they are invited to participate as true partners, the institution prospers. That, after all, is our common goal.
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